CHAPTER XIX.

A FIT OF AMIABILITY IN CRIS.

RUPERT came down to breakfast the next morning. He was cold, sick, shivery; little better than he had felt the previous night; his chest was sore, his breathing painful. A good fire burnt in the grate of the breakfast-room—Miss Diana was a friend to fires, and caused them to be lighted as soon as the heat of summer had passed—and Rupert bent over it. He cared for it more than for food; and yet it was no doubt having gone without food the previous day which was causing the sensation of sickness within him now.

Miss Diana glided in, erect and majestic. "How are you this morning?" she asked of Rupert.

"Pretty well," he answered, as he warmed his thin white hands over the blaze. "I have the old pain here a bit"—touching his chest. "It will go off by-and-by, I dare say."

Miss Diana had her eyes riveted on him. The extreme delicacy of his countenance—its lines of fading health—struck upon her greatly. Was he looking worse? or was it that her absence from home for three weeks had caused her to notice it more than she had done when seeing him daily? She asked herself the question, and she could not decide.

"You don't look very well, Rupert."

"Don't I? I have not felt well for this week or two. I think the walking to Blackstone and back is too much for me."

"You must have a pony," she continued, after a pause.

"Ah! that would be a help to me," he said, his countenance brightening. "I might get on better with what I have to do when there. Mr. Chattaway grumbles, and grumbles, but I declare to you, Aunt Diana, that I do my best. The walk there seems to take away all my energy, and, by the time I sit down, I am unfit for work."

Miss Diana went nearer to him, and spoke in a lower tone. What was the reason that you disobeyed Mr. Chattaway with regard to coming in?"

"I did not do it intentionally," he replied. "The time slipped on, and it got late without my noticing it. I think I told you so last night, Aunt Diana.'

"Very well. It must not occur again," she said, peremptorily and significantly. "If you are locked out in future, I shall not interfere."

Mr. Chattaway came in, settling himself into his coat, with a discontented gesture and a blue face. He was none the better for his sleepless night, and the torment which had caused it. Rupert drew away from the fire, leaving the field clear for him: as a schoolboy does at the entrance of his master.

"Don't let us have this trouble with you repeated," he roughly said to Rupert. "As soon as you have breakfasted, you make the best of your way to Blackstone: and don't lag on the road."

"Rupert's not going to Blackstone to-day," said Miss Diana.

Mr. Chattaway turned upon her: no very pleasant expression on his countenance. "What's that for?"

"I shall keep him at home for a week," she said, "and let him be nursed. After that, I dare say he'll be stronger, and can attend better to his duty in all ways."

Mr. Chattaway could willingly have braved Miss Diana, if he had only dared. But he did not dare. He strode to the breakfast-table and took his seat, leaving those who liked to follow him.

It has been remarked that there was a latent antagonism ever at work in the hearts of George Ryle and Octave Chattaway; and there was certainly ever constant and visible antagonism between the actions of Mr. Chattaway and Miss Diana Trevlyn, as far as they related to the ruling economy of Trevlyn Hold. She had the open-heartedness of the Trevlyns—he, the miserly selfishness of the Chattaways. She was liberal on the estate and in the household—he would have been niggardly to a degree. Miss Diana, however, was the one to reign paramount, and he was angered every hour of his life by seeing some extravagance—as he deemed it—which might have been avoided. He could indemnify himself at the mines; and there he did as he pleased.

Breakfast over, Mr. Chattaway went out. Cris went out. Rupert, as the day grew warm and bright, strolled into the garden, and basked on the bench there in the sun. He very much enjoyed these days of idleness. To sit as he was doing now, feeling that no exertion whatever was required of him; that he might stay where he was for the whole day, and gaze up at the blue sky as he fell into thought; or watch the light fleecy clouds that rose above the horizon, and form them into

groups of many fantastic things—constituted one of the pleasures of Rupert Trevlyn's life. Not for the bright blue of the sky, not for the ever-changing clouds, not even for the warm sunshine and the balmy air—it was not for all these he cared, but for the *rest*. The delightful consciousness that he might be as still as he pleased; that no Blackstone or any other far-off place would demand him; that for a whole day he might be at rest—there lay the charm. Nothing could possibly have been more suggestive of his want of strength—as any one might have guessed possessed of sufficient penetration.

No. Mr. Chattaway need not have feared that Rupert was hatching plots against him, whenever he was out of his sight. Had poor Rupert possessed the desire, he lacked the energy.

The dinner hour at Trevlyn Hold, nominally early, was frequently regulated by the will or the movements of the master. When he said he could only be home at a given hour—three, four, five, six, as the case might be—then the cook had her orders accordingly. It was fixed on this day for four o'clock. At two (the more ordinary hour for it) Cris came in.

Strictly speaking, it was ten minutes past two, and Cris burst into the dining-room with a heated face, afraid lest he should come in for the end of the meal. Whatever might be the hour fixed, the dinner was required to be on the table to the minute; and it generally was so. Miss Diana was an exacting mistress. Cris burst in, hair untidy, hands unwashed, desperately afraid of losing his share.

A long face drew he. Not a soul was in the room, and the dining-table showed its bright mahogany, nothing upon it. Cris pulled the bell.

"What time do we dine to-day?" he asked sharply of the servant who answered it.

"At four, sir."

"What a nuisance! And I am as hungry as a hunter. Get me something to eat. Here—stop!—where are they all?"

"Madam's at home, sir; and I think Miss Octave's at home. The rest are out."

Cris muttered something which was not heard, which perhaps he did not intend should be heard; and when his luncheon was brought in, he sat down to it with great satisfaction. After he had finished, he went to the stables, and by-and-by came in to find his sister.

"I say, Octave, I want to take you for a drive. Will you go?"

The unwonted attention on her brother's part quite astonished Octave. Before now she had asked him to drive her out, and been met with a rough refusal. Cris was of that class of young gentlemen who see no good in overpowering their sisters with attention.

"Get your things on at once," said Cris.

Octave felt dubious. She was writing letters to some particular friends with whom she kept up a correspondence, and did not much care to be interrupted.

"Where is it to go, Cris?"

"Anywhere. We can drive through Barmester, and so home by the cross-roads. Or we'll go down the lower road to Barbrook, and go on to Barmester that way."

The suggestion did not offer sufficient attraction to Octave. "No," said she; "I am busy, Cris, and shall not go out this afternoon. I don't care to drive out when there's nothing to go for."

"You may as well come. It isn't often I ask you."

"No, that it is not," returned Octave, with emphasis. "You have some particular motive in asking me to go now, I know. What is it, Cris?"

"I want to try my new horse. They say he'll go beautifully in harness."

"What! that handsome horse you took a fancy to the other day?—that papa said you should not buy?"

Cris nodded. "They let me have him for forty-five pounds."

"Where did you get the money?" wondered Octave.

"Never you mind. I have paid ten pounds down, and they'll wait for the rest. Will you come?"

"No," said Octave. "I shan't go out to-day."

The refusal perhaps was somewhat softened by the dashing up to the door of the dog-cart with the new purchase in it; and Cris ran out. A handsome animal certainly, but apparently a remarkably restive one. Mrs. Chattaway came through the hall, dressed for walking. Cris seized upon her.

"Mother dear, you'll go for a drive with me," cried he, caressingly. "Octave won't—an ill-natured thing!"

It was so unusual a circumstance to find herself made much of by her son, spoken to affectionately, that Mrs. Chattaway, in very surprise and gratitude, ascended the dog-cart forthwith. "I am glad to accompany you, dear," she softly said. "I was only going to walk in the garden."

But before Cris had gathered the reins in his hand and

taken his place beside her, George Ryle came up, and somewhat hindered the departure.

"I have been to Barmester to see Caroline this morning, Mrs. Chattaway, and have brought you a message from Amelia," he said, keeping his hold on the dog-cart as he spoke—as much as he could do so, for the prancing horse.

"That she wants to come home, I suppose?" said Mrs. Chattaway, smiling.

"The message I was charged with was, that she *would* come home," he said, smiling in answer. "The fact is, Caroline is coming home for a few days: and Amelia thinks she will be cruelly used, unless she is allowed the holiday also."

"Caroline is coming to the harvest-home?"

"Yes. I told Amelia——"

Holding on any longer became impossible; and George drew back, and took a critical survey of the new horse. "Why, it is the horse Allen has had for sale!" he exclaimed. "What brings him here, Cris?"

"I have bought him," shortly answered Cris.

"Have you? Mrs. Chattaway, I would not advise you to venture out behind that horse. I do not think he has been broken in for harness."

"He has," returned Cris. "You mind your own business. Do you think I should drive him if he were not safe? He's only skittish. I understand horses, I hope, as well as you do."

George turned to Mrs. Chattaway. "Do not go with him," he urged. "Let Cris try him first alone."

"I am not afraid, George," she said, in loving accents. "It is not often Cris finds time to drive me. Thank you all the same."

Cris gave the horse its head, and the animal dashed off. George stood watching until a turn in the avenue hid them from view, and then gave utterance to an involuntary exclamation—

"Cris has no right to risk the life of his mother."

Not very long afterwards, the skittish horse was flying along the road, with nothing of the dog-cart left behind him, except its shafts.

CHAPTER XX.

AN INVASION AT THE PARSONAGE.

On the lower road, leading from Trevlyn Farm to Barbrook, was situated Barbrook Rectory. A pretty house, covered with ivy, standing in the midst of a productive garden, and surrounded by green fields. An exceedingly pretty place for its size, that parsonage—it was never styled anything else—but very small. A good thing that the parsons inhabiting it had none of them owned large families, or they would have been at fault for room.

The present occupant was the Reverend John Freeman. Occupant of the parsonage house, you understand; not incumbent of the living. The living was in the gift of a neighbouring cathedral; it was held by one of the chapter; and he delegated his charge (beyond an occasional sermon) to a curate. It had been so in the old time when Squire Trevlyn flourished, and it was so still. Whispers were abroad that when the death of this canon should take place—a very old man, both as to his years and his occupancy of his prebendal stall—changes would be made, and the next incumbent would have to reside on the living. But this has nothing to do with us, and I don't know why I mentioned it.

Mr. Freeman had been curate of the place for more than twenty years. He succeeded the Reverend Shafto Dean, of whom you have heard. Mr. Dean had remained at Barbrook only a very short time after his sister's marriage to Joe Trevlyn. That event had not tended to allay the irritation existing between Trevlyn Hold and the parsonage, and on some promotion being offered to Mr. Dean, he embraced it. The promotion given him was in the West Indies: he would not have chosen a residence there under happier auspices; but he felt sick of the ceaseless contention with Squire Trevlyn. Mr. Dean went out to the West Indies, and died of fever within six months of his arrival. Mr. Freeman had succeeded him at Barbrook, and Mr. Freeman was there still: a married man, without children.

The parsonage household was very modest. One servant only was kept; and if you have the pleasure of making both ends to meet at the end of the year upon the moderate sum of

one hundred pounds sterling, you will wonder how even that servant could be retained. But a clergyman has advantages in some points over the rest of the world: at least, this one had; his house being rent-free, and his garden supplying more vegetables and fruit than his household could consume. Some of the choicer fruit, indeed, he sold: and I hope you won't think any the worse of him for doing so. His superfluous vegetables he gave away; and many and many a cabbage leaf full of gooseberries and currants did the little parish children look out for, and receive. He was a quiet, pleasant little man of fifty, with a fair face and a fat double chin. Never an ill word had he had with any one in the parish since he came into it. His wife was pleasant, too, and talkative; and would as soon be caught by visitors making puddings in the kitchen, or shelling the peas for dinner, as sitting in state, waiting for company.

At the back of the parsonage house, detached from it, was a room called the brewhouse, where sundry abnormal duties, quite out of the regular routine of things, were performed. A boiler was in one corner, a large board or table which would put up or let down at will was underneath the casement, and the floor was flagged. On the morning of the day when Mr. Cris Chattaway contrived to separate his dog-cart from its shafts, or to let his new horse do it for him, of which you will hear more presently, this brewhouse was so filled with steam that you could not see across it. A tall, strong, rosy-faced woman, looking about thirty years of age, was standing over a washing-tub, rubbing away; and in the boiler, bubbling and seething, the white linen heaved up and down like the waves of a small sea.

You have seen the woman before, though the chances are that you have forgotten all about her. It is Molly, who once lived at Trevlyn Farm. Some five years ago she came to an issue with the ruling potentates, Mrs. Ryle and Nora, and the result was a parting. Since then Molly had been living at the parsonage, and had grown to be valued by her master and mistress. She looks taller than ever, but you see she has pattens on, to keep her feet off the wet flags. Indeed, it was much the fashion in that neighbourhood for the maid-servant to go about in pattens, let the flags be wet or dry.

Molly was rubbing vigorously at her master's surplice—which shared the benefits of the wash with more ignoble things, when the church-clock striking out caused her to pause, and

glance up through the open window. She was counting the strokes.

"Twelve o'clock, as I'm alive! I knew it must have gone eleven, though I hadn't heard it strike; but I never thought it was twelve yet! And nothing out but a handful o' coloured things and the flannels! If missis was at home, she'd say I'd been wasting all my morning, gossiping."

An accusation which Mrs. Freeman might have made with great truth. There was not a more inveterate gossip than Molly in the parish: and her propensity had lost her her last place.

She turned to the boiler, seized the rolling-pin, and poked down the rising clothes with a fierceness which seemed to wish to make up for the lost hours. Then she dashed open the little iron door underneath, threw on a shovel of coals, and shut it again.

"This surplice is wearing as thin as anything in front," soliloquized she, recommencing her work at the tub. "I'd better not rub it too much. But it's just in the very place where master gets 'em most dirty. If I were missis, I should line 'em in front. His other one's going worse than this. They must cost a smart penny, these surplices: the linen is—— Now, who's that?"

Molly's interjection was caused by a flourishing knock at the front-door. It did not please her. She was too busy to answer useless visitors; useless because her master and mistress were out.

"I won't go to the door," decided she, in her vexation. "Let 'em knock again, or go away."

The applicant preferred the former course, for a second knock, louder than the first, sent its echoes through the house. Molly brought her wet arms out of the water, gave them a rub upon a towel, and then went on her way grumbling.

"It's that bothering Mother Hurnall, I know! And ten to one but she'll walk in, under pretence of resting, and poke her nose into my brewhouse, and see how my work's getting on. She's an interfering, mischief-making old toad, and if she *does* come in, I'll——"

Molly had opened the door, and her words came to an abrupt conclusion. Instead of the meddlesome lady she had expected to see, there stood a gentleman; a stranger: a tall, oldish man, with a white beard and white whiskers, jet-black eyes, a kindly but firm expression on his sallow face, a

carpet-bag in one hand, and a large red umbrella in the other.

Molly dropped a curtsey, but a dubious one. Beards were not much in fashion in that simple country place, neither were red umbrellas, and her opinion vacillated. Was the gentleman before her some venerable, much-to-be-respected patriarch; or was he one of those conjurors that went about to fairs in a caravan? Molly had had the gratification of seeing the one perform who came to the last fair, and he wore a white beard.

"I have been directed to this house as being the residence of the Reverend Mr. Freeman," began the stranger. "Is he at home?"

"No, sir, he's not," replied Molly, dropping another and a more assured curtsey. There was something about the stranger's voice, his straightforward glance, which insensibly quieted her fears. "My master and mistress are both gone out for the day, and won't be home till night."

This appeared to be a poser to the stranger. He looked at Molly, and Molly looked at him. "It is very unfortunate," he said at length. "I came—I have come a great many hundred miles, and I reckoned very much upon seeing my old friend Freeman. I shall be going away again from England in a few days."

Molly had opened her eyes. "Come a great many hundred miles, all to see master!" she exclaimed.

"Not to see him," answered the stranger, with a half-smile at Molly's simplicity—not that he looked like a smiling man in general, but a very sad one. "I had to come to England on business, and I travelled a long way to get here, and shall have to travel the same long way to get back again. I have come down from London on purpose to see Mr. Freeman. It is many years since we met, and I thought, if quite agreeable, I would sleep a couple of nights here. Did you ever happen to hear him mention an old friend of his, named Daw?"

The name struck on Molly's memory: it was a somewhat peculiar one. "Well, yes, I have, sir," she answered. "I have heard him speak of a Mr. Daw to my mistress. I think —I think," she added, putting her fingers to her temple in consideration, "that he lived somewhere over in France, that Mr. Daw. I think he was a clergyman. My master lighted upon a lady's death a short time ago in the paper, while I was in the parlour helping my missis line some bed-furniture, and he exclaimed and said it must be Mr. Daw's wife."

"Right—right in all," said the gentleman. "I am Mr. Daw."

He took a small card-case from his pocket, and held out one of its cards to Molly; deeming it well, no doubt, that the woman should be convinced he was really the person he professed to be. "I can see but one thing to do," he said, "you must give me house-room until Mr. Freeman comes home this evening."

"You are welcome, sir. But my goodness! there's nothing in the house for dinner, and I'm in the midst of a big wash."

He shook his head as he walked into the parlour—a sunny apartment, redolent of the scent of mignonette, boxes of which grew outside the windows. "I don't care at all for dinner," he carelessly observed. "A crust of bread and a little fresh butter, with a cup of milk, if you happen to have it, will do as well for me as dinner."

Molly left him, to see what she could do in the way of entertainment, and to take counsel with herself. "If it doesn't happen on purpose!" she ejaculated. "Anything that upsets the order of the house is sure to come on washing day! Well, there! it's of no good worrying. The wash must go, that's all. If I can't finish to-day, I must finish to-morrow. Bother! There'll be the trouble and expense of lighting the furnace over again! I think he's what he says he is. I've heard them red umberellas is used in France."

She carried in a tray of refreshment—bread, butter, cheese, milk, and honey. She had pulled down the sleeves of her gown, and straightened her hair, and put on a clean apron, and taken off her pattens. Mr. Daw detained her while he helped himself, asking divers questions; and Molly, nothing loth, ever ready for a gossip, remembered not her exacting brewhouse of work.

"There is a place called Trevlyn Hold in this neighbourhood, is there not?"

"Right over there, sir," replied Molly, extending her hand in a slanting direction from the window. "You might see its chimblies but for them trees."

"I suppose the young master of Trevlyn has grown to be a fine man?"

Molly turned up her nose. She never supposed but the question alluded to Cris, and Cris was no favourite of hers. She had imbibed the prejudice, possibly, during her service at Trevlyn Farm.

"*I* don't call him so," said she, shortly. "A weazened-face fellow, with an odd look in his eyes as good as a squint! He's not much liked about here, sir."

"Indeed! That's a pity. Is he married? I suppose not though, yet. He is young."

"There's many a one gets married younger than he is. But I don't know who'd have him," added Molly, in her prejudice. "*I* wouldn't, if I was a young lady."

"Who has acted as his guardian?" resumed Mr. Daw.

Molly scarcely understood the question. "A guardian, sir? That's somebody that takes care of a child's money, who has no parents, isn't it? *He* has no guardian that I ever heard of, except it's his father."

Mr. Daw laid down his knife. "The young master of Trevlyn has no father," he exclaimed.

"But indeed he has," returned Molly. "What should hinder his having one?"

"My good woman, you cannot know what I am talking of. His father died years and years ago. I was at his funeral."

Molly opened her mouth in very astonishment. "His father is alive now, sir, at any rate," cried she, after a pause. "I saw him ride by this house only yesterday."

They stared at each other, as people at cross-purposes often do. "Of whom are you speaking?" asked Mr. Daw, at length.

"Of Cris Chattaway, sir. You asked me about the young master of Trevlyn Hold. Cris will be its master after his father. Old Chattaway's its master now."

"Chattaway? Chattaway?" repeated the stranger to himself, as if recalling the name. "I remember. It was he who—— Is Rupert Trevlyn dead?" he hastily asked.

"Oh no, sir."

"Why, then, is he not the master of Trevlyn Hold?"

"Well, I don't know," replied Molly, after some consideration. "I suppose because Chattaway is."

"But surely Rupert Trevlyn inherited it on the death of his grandfather, Squire Trevlyn?"

"No, he didn't inherit it, sir. It was Chattaway."

So interested in the argument had the visitor become, that he neglected his plate, and was looking at Molly with astonished eyes. "Why did he not inherit it? He was the heir."

"It's what folks can't rightly make out," answered the woman. "Chattaway came in for it, that's certain. But folks have never called him the Squire, though he's as sick as a dog for it."

"Who is Mr. Chattaway? What is his connection with the Trevlyns? I forget."

"His wife was Miss Edith Trevlyn, the Squire's daughter. There was but three of 'em,—Mrs. Ryle, and her, and Miss Diana. Miss Diana was never married, and I suppose won't be now."

"Miss Diana?—Miss Diana? Yes, yes, I recollect," repeated the stranger. "It was Miss Diana whom Mrs. Trevlyn—— Does Rupert Trevlyn live with Miss Diana?" he broke off again.

"Yes, sir; they all live at the Hold. The Chattaways, and Miss Diana, and young Mr. Rupert. Miss Diana has been out on a visit these two or three weeks past, but I heard this morning that she had come home."

"There was a pretty little girl—Maude—a year older than her brother," proceeded the questioner. "Where is she?"

"She's at the Hold, too, sir. They were brought to the Hold quite little babies, those two, and they have lived at it ever since, except when they've been at school. Miss Maude's governess to Chattaway's children."

Mr. Daw looked at Molly doubtingly. "Governess to Chattaway's children?" he mechanically repeated.

Molly nodded. She was growing quite at home with her guest; quite familiar. "Miss Maude has had the best of edications, they say: plays and sings first-rate; and so they made her the governess."

"But has she no fortune—no income?" reiterated the stranger, lost in wonder.

"Not a penny-piece," returned Molly, decisively. "Her and Mr. Rupert haven't a halfpenny between 'em of their own. He's clerk, or something of that sort, at Chattaway's coal mine, down yonder."

"But they were the heirs to the estate," the stranger persisted. "Their father was the son and heir of Squire Trevlyn, and they are his children! How is it? How can it be?"

The words were spoken in the light of a remark. Mr. Daw was evidently debating the question with himself. Molly thought the question was put to her.

"I don't know the rights of it, sir," was all she could answer. "All I can tell you is, that the Chattaways have come in for it, and the inheritance is theirs. But there's many a one round about here calls Mr. Rupert the heir to this day, and will call him so, in spite of Chattaway."

"He is the heir—he is the heir!" reiterated Mr. Daw. "I can prove——"

Again came that break in his discourse which had occurred before. Molly resumed—

"Master will be able to tell you better than me, sir, why the property should have went from Master Rupert to Chattaway. It was him that buried the old Squire, sir, and he was at the Hold after, and heard the Squire's will read. Nora told me once that he, the parson, cried shame upon it when he come away. But she was in a passion with Chattaway when she said it, so perhaps it wasn't true. I asked my missis about it one day that we was folding clothes together, but she said she knew nothing about it. She wasn't married then."

"Who is Nora?" inquired Mr. Daw.

"She's the housekeeper and manager at Trevlyn Farm; a sort of relation to 'em. It was where I lived before I come here, sir; four year, turned, I was at that one place. I have always been one to keep my places a good while," added Molly, with pride.

Apparently the boast was lost upon him; he did not seem to hear it. "Not the heir to Trevlyn!" he muttered; "not the heir to Trevlyn! It's a puzzle to me."

"I'm sorry master's out," repeated Molly, with sympathy. "But you can hear all about it to-night. They'll be home by seven o'clock. Twice a year, or thereabouts, they both go over to stop a day with missis's sister. Large millers they be, fourteen mile off, and live in a great big handsome house, and keep three or four indoor servants. The name's Whittaker, sir."

Mr. Daw did not show himself very much interested in the name, or in the worthy millers themselves. He was lost in a reverie. Molly made a movement about the plates and cheese and butter; she insinuated the glass of milk under his very nose. All in vain.

"Not the heir!" he reiterated again; "not the heir! And I have been picturing him in my mind as the heir all through these long years!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE STRANGER WITH THE RED UMBRELLA.

When Mrs. Chattaway and Cris drove off in the dog-cart, George Ryle did not follow them down the avenue, but turned to pursue his way round the house, which would take him to the fields, a shorter cut to his own land than if he took the road. For a long time after his father's death, George could not bear to go through the field which had been so fatal to him; but he lived down the feeling by the aid of that great reconciler to all things—Time.

Happening to cast his eyes on the ornamental grounds as he skirted them, which lay on this side of the Hold, he saw Rupert Trevlyn. Leaping a dwarf hedge of azaroles, he hastened to him.

"Well, old fellow! Taking a nap?"

Rupert opened his half-closed eyes, and looked round with alacrity. "I thought it was Cris again!" he exclaimed. "He was here just now."

"Cris has gone out with his mother in the dog-cart. I don't like the horse he is driving her with, though."

"Is it that new horse he has been getting?"

"Yes; the one Allen has had to sell."

"What's the matter with it?" asked Rupert. "I saw it carrying Allen one day, and thought it a beautiful animal!"

"It has a vicious temper, as I have been given to understand. And I believe it has never been properly broken-in for harness. How do you feel to-day, Rupert?"

"No great shakes. I wish I was as strong as you, George."

George laughed pleasantly; and his voice, when he spoke, had a soothing sound in it. "So you may be, by the time you are as old as I am. Why, you have hardly done growing yet, Rupert. There's plenty of time for you to get strong."

"What brings you up here, George? Anything particular?"

"I saw Amelia to-day, and brought a message from her to her mamma. Caroline is coming home for the harvest-home, and Amelia wants to come too."

"Oh, they'll let her," cried Rupert. "The girls can do just as they like."

He, Rupert, leaned his chin on his hand, and began thinking