Chapter XVII - Esther's Narrative

Richard very often came to see us while we remained in London (though he soon failed in his letter-writing), and with his quick abilities, his good spirits, his good temper, his gaiety and freshness, was always delightful. But though I liked him more and more the better I knew him, I still felt more and more how much it was to be regretted that he had been educated in no habits of application and concentration. The system which had addressed him in exactly the same manner as it had addressed hundreds of other boys, all varying in character and capacity, had enabled him to dash through his tasks, always with fair credit and often with distinction, but in a fitful, dazzling way that had confirmed his reliance on those very qualities in himself which it had been most desirable to direct and train. They were good qualities, without which no high place can be meritoriously won, but like fire and water, though excellent servants, they were very bad masters. If they had been under Richard's direction, they would have been his friends; but Richard being under their direction, they became his enemies.

I write down these opinions not because I believe that this or any other thing was so because I thought so, but only because I did think so and I want to be quite candid about all I thought and did. These were my thoughts about Richard. I thought I often observed besides how right my guardian was in what he had said, and that the uncertainties and delays of the Chancery suit had imparted to his nature something of the careless spirit of a gamester who felt that he was part of a great gaming system.

Mr and Mrs Bayham Badger coming one afternoon when my guardian was not at home, in the course of conversation I naturally inquired after Richard.

'Why, Mr Carstone,' said Mrs Badger, 'is very well and is, I assure you, a great acquisition to our society. Captain Swosser used to say of me that I was always better than land a-head and a breeze a-starn to the midshipmen's mess when the purser's junk had become as tough as the fore-topsel weather earings. It was his naval way of mentioning generally that I was an acquisition to any society. I may render the same tribute, I am sure, to Mr Carstone. But I--you won't think me premature if I mention it?'

I said no, as Mrs Badger's insinuating tone seemed to require such an answer.

'Nor Miss Clare?' said Mrs Bayham Badger sweetly.

Ada said no, too, and looked uneasy.

'Why, you see, my dears,' said Mrs Badger, '--you'll excuse me calling you my dears?'

We entreated Mrs Badger not to mention it.

'Because you really are, if I may take the liberty of saying so,' pursued Mrs Badger, 'so perfectly charming. You see, my dears, that although I am still young--or Mr Bayham Badger pays me the compliment of saying so--'

'No,' Mr Badger called out like some one contradicting at a public meeting. 'Not at all!'

'Very well,' smiled Mrs Badger, 'we will say still young.'

'Undoubtedly,' said Mr Badger.

'My dears, though still young, I have had many opportunities of observing young men. There were many such on board the dear old Crippler, I assure you. After that, when I was with Captain Swosser in the Mediterranean, I embraced every opportunity of knowing and befriending the midshipmen under Captain Swosser's command. YOU never heard them called the young gentlemen, my dears, and probably would not understand allusions to their pipe-claying their weekly accounts, but it is otherwise with me, for blue water has been a second home to me, and I have been quite a sailor. Again, with Professor Dingo.'

'A man of European reputation,' murmured Mr Badger.

'When I lost my dear first and became the wife of my dear second,' said Mrs Badger, speaking of her former husbands as if they were parts of a charade, 'I still enjoyed opportunities of observing youth. The class attendant on Professor Dingo's lectures was a large one, and it became my pride, as the wife of an eminent scientific man seeking herself in science the utmost consolation it could impart, to throw our house open to the students as a kind of Scientific Exchange. Every Tuesday evening there was lemonade and a mixed biscuit for all who chose to partake of those refreshments. And there was science to an unlimited extent.'

'Remarkable assemblies those, Miss Summerson,' said Mr Badger reverentially. 'There must have been great intellectual friction going on there under the auspices of such a man!'

'And now,' pursued Mrs Badger, 'now that I am the wife of my dear third, Mr Badger, I still pursue those habits of observation which were formed during the lifetime of Captain Swosser and adapted to new and

unexpected purposes during the lifetime of Professor Dingo. I therefore have not come to the consideration of Mr Carstone as a neophyte. And yet I am very much of the opinion, my dears, that he has not chosen his profession advisedly.'

Ada looked so very anxious now that I asked Mrs Badger on what she founded her supposition.

'My dear Miss Summerson,' she replied, 'on Mr Carstone's character and conduct. He is of such a very easy disposition that probably he would never think it worth-while to mention how he really feels, but he feels languid about the profession. He has not that positive interest in it which makes it his vocation. If he has any decided impression in reference to it, I should say it was that it is a tiresome pursuit. Now, this is not promising. Young men like Mr Allan Woodcourt who take it from a strong interest in all that it can do will find some reward in it through a great deal of work for a very little money and through years of considerable endurance and disappointment. But I am quite convinced that this would never be the case with Mr Carstone.'

'Does Mr Badger think so too?' asked Ada timidly.

'Why,' said Mr Badger, 'to tell the truth, Miss Clare, this view of the matter had not occurred to me until Mrs Badger mentioned it. But when Mrs Badger put it in that light, I naturally gave great consideration to it, knowing that Mrs Badger's mind, in addition to its natural advantages, has had the rare advantage of being formed by two such very distinguished (I will even say illustrious) public men as Captain Swosser of the Royal Navy and Professor Dingo. The conclusion at which I have arrived is--in short, is Mrs Badger's conclusion.'

'It was a maxim of Captain Swosser's,' said Mrs Badger, 'speaking in his figurative naval manner, that when you make pitch hot, you cannot make it too hot; and that if you only have to swab a plank, you should swab it as if Davy Jones were after you. It appears to me that this maxim is applicable to the medical as well as to the nautical profession.

'To all professions,' observed Mr Badger. 'It was admirably said by Captain Swosser. Beautifully said.'

'People objected to Professor Dingo when we were staying in the north of Devon after our marriage,' said Mrs Badger, 'that he disfigured some of the houses and other buildings by chipping off fragments of those edifices with his little geological hammer. But the professor replied that he knew of no building save the Temple of Science. The principle is the same, I think?'

‘Precisely the same,’ said Mr Badger. ‘Finely expressed! The professor made the same remark, Miss Summerson, in his last illness, when (his mind wandering) he insisted on keeping his little hammer under the pillow and chipping at the countenances of the attendants. The ruling passion!’

Although we could have dispensed with the length at which Mr and Mrs Badger pursued the conversation, we both felt that it was disinterested in them to express the opinion they had communicated to us and that there was a great probability of its being sound. We agreed to say nothing to Mr Jarndyce until we had spoken to Richard; and as he was coming next evening, we resolved to have a very serious talk with him.

So after he had been a little while with Ada, I went in and found my darling (as I knew she would be) prepared to consider him thoroughly right in whatever he said.

‘And how do you get on, Richard?’ said I. I always sat down on the other side of him. He made quite a sister of me.

‘Oh! Well enough!’ said Richard.

‘He can't say better than that, Esther, can he?’ cried my pet triumphantly.

I tried to look at my pet in the wisest manner, but of course I couldn't.

‘Well enough?’ I repeated.

‘Yes,’ said Richard, ‘well enough. It's rather jog-trotty and humdrum. But it'll do as well as anything else!’

‘Oh! My dear Richard!’ I remonstrated.

‘What's the matter?’ said Richard.

‘Do as well as anything else!’

‘I don't think there's any harm in that, Dame Durden,’ said Ada, looking so confidingly at me across him; ‘because if it will do as well as anything else, it will do very well, I hope.’

‘Oh, yes, I hope so,’ returned Richard, carelessly tossing his hair from his forehead. ‘After all, it may be only a kind of probation till our suit is--I forgot though. I am not to mention the suit. Forbidden ground! Oh, yes, it's all right enough. Let us talk about something else.’

Ada would have done so willingly, and with a full persuasion that we had brought the question to a most satisfactory state. But I thought it would be useless to stop there, so I began again.

'No, but Richard,' said I, 'and my dear Ada! Consider how important it is to you both, and what a point of honour it is towards your cousin, that you, Richard, should be quite in earnest without any reservation. I think we had better talk about this, really, Ada. It will be too late very soon.'

'Oh, yes! We must talk about it!' said Ada. 'But I think Richard is right.'

What was the use of my trying to look wise when she was so pretty, and so engaging, and so fond of him!

'Mr and Mrs Badger were here yesterday, Richard,' said I, 'and they seemed disposed to think that you had no great liking for the profession.'

'Did they though?' said Richard. 'Oh! Well, that rather alters the case, because I had no idea that they thought so, and I should not have liked to disappoint or inconvenience them. The fact is, I don't care much about it. But, oh, it don't matter! It'll do as well as anything else!'

'You hear him, Ada!' said I.

'The fact is,' Richard proceeded, half thoughtfully and half jocosely, 'it is not quite in my way. I don't take to it. And I get too much of Mrs Bayham Badger's first and second.'

'I am sure THAT'S very natural!' cried Ada, quite delighted. 'The very thing we both said yesterday, Esther!'

'Then,' pursued Richard, 'it's monotonous, and to-day is too like yesterday, and to-morrow is too like to-day.'

'But I am afraid,' said I, 'this is an objection to all kinds of application--to life itself, except under some very uncommon circumstances.'

'Do you think so?' returned Richard, still considering. 'Perhaps! Ha! Why, then, you know,' he added, suddenly becoming gay again, 'we travel outside a circle to what I said just now. It'll do as well as anything else. Oh, it's all right enough! Let us talk about something else.'

But even Ada, with her loving face--and if it had seemed innocent and trusting when I first saw it in that memorable November fog, how much more did it seem now when I knew her innocent and trusting heart--even Ada shook her head at this and looked serious. So I thought it a good opportunity to hint to Richard that if he were sometimes a little careless of himself, I was very sure he never meant to be careless of Ada, and that it was a part of his affectionate consideration for her not to slight the importance of a step that might influence both their lives. This made him almost grave.

'My dear Mother Hubbard,' he said, 'that's the very thing! I have thought of that several times and have been quite angry with myself for meaning to be so much in earnest and--somehow--not exactly being so. I don't know how it is; I seem to want something or other to stand by. Even you have no idea how fond I am of Ada (my darling cousin, I love you, so much!), but I don't settle down to constancy in other things. It's such uphill work, and it takes such a time!' said Richard with an air of vexation.

'That may be,' I suggested, 'because you don't like what you have chosen.'

'Poor fellow!' said Ada. 'I am sure I don't wonder at it!'

No. It was not of the least use my trying to look wise. I tried again, but how could I do it, or how could it have any effect if I could, while Ada rested her clasped hands upon his shoulder and while he looked at her tender blue eyes, and while they looked at him!

'You see, my precious girl,' said Richard, passing her golden curls through and through his hand, 'I was a little hasty perhaps; or I misunderstood my own inclinations perhaps. They don't seem to lie in that direction. I couldn't tell till I tried. Now the question is whether it's worth-while to undo all that has been done. It seems like making a great disturbance about nothing particular.'

'My dear Richard,' said I, 'how CAN you say about nothing particular?'

'I don't mean absolutely that,' he returned. 'I mean that it MAY be nothing particular because I may never want it.'

Both Ada and I urged, in reply, not only that it was decidedly worth-while to undo what had been done, but that it must be undone. I then asked Richard whether he had thought of any more congenial pursuit.

'There, my dear Mrs Shipton,' said Richard, 'you touch me home. Yes, I have. I have been thinking that the law is the boy for me.'

'The law!' repeated Ada as if she were afraid of the name.

'If I went into Kenge's office,' said Richard, 'and if I were placed under articles to Kenge, I should have my eye on the--hum!-- the forbidden ground--and should be able to study it, and master it, and to satisfy myself that it was not neglected and was being properly conducted. I should be able to look after Ada's interests and my own interests (the same thing!); and I should peg away at Blackstone and all those fellows with the most tremendous ardour.'

I was not by any means so sure of that, and I saw how his hankering after the vague things yet to come of those long-deferred hopes cast a shade on Ada's face. But I thought it best to encourage him in any project of continuous exertion, and only advised him to be quite sure that his mind was made up now.

'My dear Minerva,' said Richard, 'I am as steady as you are. I made a mistake; we are all liable to mistakes; I won't do so any more, and I'll become such a lawyer as is not often seen. That is, you know,' said Richard, relapsing into doubt, 'if it really is worth-while, after all, to make such a disturbance about nothing particular!'

This led to our saying again, with a great deal of gravity, all that we had said already and to our coming to much the same conclusion afterwards. But we so strongly advised Richard to be frank and open with Mr Jarndyce, without a moment's delay, and his disposition was naturally so opposed to concealment that he sought him out at once (taking us with him) and made a full avowal. 'Rick,' said my guardian, after hearing him attentively, 'we can retreat with honour, and we will. But we must be careful--for our cousin's sake, Rick, for our cousin's sake--that we make no more such mistakes. Therefore, in the matter of the law, we will have a good trial before we decide. We will look before we leap, and take plenty of time about it.'

Richard's energy was of such an impatient and fitful kind that he would have liked nothing better than to have gone to Mr Kenge's office in that hour and to have entered into articles with him on the spot. Submitting, however, with a good grace to the caution that we had shown to be so necessary, he contented himself with sitting down among us in his lightest spirits and talking as if his one unvarying purpose in life from childhood had been that one which now held possession of him. My guardian was very kind and cordial with him, but rather grave, enough so to cause Ada, when he had departed and we were going upstairs to bed, to say, 'Cousin John, I hope you don't think the worse of Richard?'

'No, my love,' said he.

‘Because it was very natural that Richard should be mistaken in such a difficult case. It is not uncommon.’

‘No, no, my love,’ said he. ‘Don't look unhappy.’

‘Oh, I am not unhappy, cousin John!’ said Ada, smiling cheerfully, with her hand upon his shoulder, where she had put it in bidding him good night. ‘But I should be a little so if you thought at all the worse of Richard.’

‘My dear,’ said Mr Jarndyce, ‘I should think the worse of him only if you were ever in the least unhappy through his means. I should be more disposed to quarrel with myself even then, than with poor Rick, for I brought you together. But, tut, all this is nothing! He has time before him, and the race to run. I think the worse of him? Not I, my loving cousin! And not you, I swear!’

‘No, indeed, cousin John,’ said Ada, ‘I am sure I could not--I am sure I would not--think any ill of Richard if the whole world did. I could, and I would, think better of him then than at any other time!’

So quietly and honestly she said it, with her hands upon his shoulders--both hands now--and looking up into his face, like the picture of truth!

‘I think,’ said my guardian, thoughtfully regarding her, ‘I think it must be somewhere written that the virtues of the mothers shall occasionally be visited on the children, as well as the sins of the father. Good night, my rosebud. Good night, little woman. Pleasant slumbers! Happy dreams!’

This was the first time I ever saw him follow Ada with his eyes with something of a shadow on their benevolent expression. I well remembered the look with which he had contemplated her and Richard when she was singing in the firelight; it was but a very little while since he had watched them passing down the room in which the sun was shining, and away into the shade; but his glance was changed, and even the silent look of confidence in me which now followed it once more was not quite so hopeful and untroubled as it had originally been.

Ada praised Richard more to me that night than ever she had praised him yet. She went to sleep with a little bracelet he had given her clasped upon her arm. I fancied she was dreaming of him when I kissed her cheek after she had slept an hour and saw how tranquil and happy she looked.

For I was so little inclined to sleep myself that night that I sat up working. It would not be worth mentioning for its own sake, but I was wakeful and rather low-spirited. I don't know why. At least I don't think I know why. At least, perhaps I do, but I don't think it matters.

At any rate, I made up my mind to be so dreadfully industrious that I would leave myself not a moment's leisure to be low-spirited. For I naturally said, 'Esther! You to be low-spirited. YOU!' And it really was time to say so, for I--yes, I really did see myself in the glass, almost crying. 'As if you had anything to make you unhappy, instead of everything to make you happy, you ungrateful heart!' said I.

If I could have made myself go to sleep, I would have done it directly, but not being able to do that, I took out of my basket some ornamental work for our house (I mean Bleak House) that I was busy with at that time and sat down to it with great determination. It was necessary to count all the stitches in that work, and I resolved to go on with it until I couldn't keep my eyes open, and then to go to bed.

I soon found myself very busy. But I had left some silk downstairs in a work-table drawer in the temporary growlery, and coming to a stop for want of it, I took my candle and went softly down to get it. To my great surprise, on going in I found my guardian still there, and sitting looking at the ashes. He was lost in thought, his book lay unheeded by his side, his silvered iron-grey hair was scattered confusedly upon his forehead as though his hand had been wandering among it while his thoughts were elsewhere, and his face looked worn. Almost frightened by coming upon him so unexpectedly, I stood still for a moment and should have retired without speaking had he not, in again passing his hand abstractedly through his hair, seen me and started.

'Esther!'

I told him what I had come for.

'At work so late, my dear?'

'I am working late to-night,' said I, 'because I couldn't sleep and wished to tire myself. But, dear guardian, you are late too, and look weary. You have no trouble, I hope, to keep you waking?'

'None, little woman, that YOU would readily understand,' said he.

He spoke in a regretful tone so new to me that I inwardly repeated, as if that would help me to his meaning, 'That I could readily understand!'

‘Remain a moment, Esther,’ said he, ‘You were in my thoughts.’

‘I hope I was not the trouble, guardian?’

He slightly waved his hand and fell into his usual manner. The change was so remarkable, and he appeared to make it by dint of so much self-command, that I found myself again inwardly repeating, ‘None that I could understand!’

‘Little woman,’ said my guardian, ‘I was thinking--that is, I have been thinking since I have been sitting here--that you ought to know of your own history all I know. It is very little. Next to nothing.’

‘Dear guardian,’ I replied, ‘when you spoke to me before on that subject--’

‘But since then,’ he gravely interposed, anticipating what I meant to say, ‘I have reflected that your having anything to ask me, and my having anything to tell you, are different considerations, Esther. It is perhaps my duty to impart to you the little I know.’

‘If you think so, guardian, it is right.’

‘I think so,’ he returned very gently, and kindly, and very distinctly. ‘My dear, I think so now. If any real disadvantage can attach to your position in the mind of any man or woman worth a thought, it is right that you at least of all the world should not magnify it to yourself by having vague impressions of its nature.’

I sat down and said after a little effort to be as calm as I ought to be, ‘One of my earliest remembrances, guardian, is of these words: 'Your mother, Esther, is your disgrace, and you were hers. The time will come, and soon enough, when you will understand this better, and will feel it too, as no one save a woman can.'‘ I had covered my face with my hands in repeating the words, but I took them away now with a better kind of shame, I hope, and told him that to him I owed the blessing that I had from my childhood to that hour never, never, never felt it. He put up his hand as if to stop me. I well knew that he was never to be thanked, and said no more.

‘Nine years, my dear,’ he said after thinking for a little while, ‘have passed since I received a letter from a lady living in seclusion, written with a stern passion and power that rendered it unlike all other letters I have ever read. It was written to me (as it told me in so many words), perhaps because it was the writer's idiosyncrasy to put that trust in me, perhaps because it was mine to justify it. It told me of a child, an orphan girl then twelve years old, in some such cruel words as those which live in your remembrance. It told me that the writer had bred

her in secrecy from her birth, had blotted out all trace of her existence, and that if the writer were to die before the child became a woman, she would be left entirely friendless, nameless, and unknown. It asked me to consider if I would, in that case, finish what the writer had begun.'

I listened in silence and looked attentively at him.

'Your early recollection, my dear, will supply the gloomy medium through which all this was seen and expressed by the writer, and the distorted religion which clouded her mind with impressions of the need there was for the child to expiate an offence of which she was quite innocent. I felt concerned for the little creature, in her darkened life, and replied to the letter.'

I took his hand and kissed it.

'It laid the injunction on me that I should never propose to see the writer, who had long been estranged from all intercourse with the world, but who would see a confidential agent if I would appoint one. I accredited Mr Kenge. The lady said, of her own accord and not of his seeking, that her name was an assumed one. That she was, if there were any ties of blood in such a case, the child's aunt. That more than this she would never (and he was well persuaded of the steadfastness of her resolution) for any human consideration disclose. My dear, I have told you all.'

I held his hand for a little while in mine.

'I saw my ward oftener than she saw me,' he added, cheerily making light of it, 'and I always knew she was beloved, useful, and happy. She repays me twenty-thousandfold, and twenty more to that, every hour in every day!'

'And oftener still,' said I, 'she blesses the guardian who is a father to her!'

At the word father, I saw his former trouble come into his face. He subdued it as before, and it was gone in an instant; but it had been there and it had come so swiftly upon my words that I felt as if they had given him a shock. I again inwardly repeated, wondering, 'That I could readily understand. None that I could readily understand!' No, it was true. I did not understand it. Not for many and many a day.

'Take a fatherly good night, my dear,' said he, kissing me on the forehead, 'and so to rest. These are late hours for working and thinking. You do that for all of us, all day long, little housekeeper!'

I neither worked nor thought any more that night. I opened my grateful heart to heaven in thankfulness for its providence to me and its care of me, and fell asleep.

We had a visitor next day. Mr Allan Woodcourt came. He came to take leave of us; he had settled to do so beforehand. He was going to China and to India as a surgeon on board ship. He was to be away a long, long time.

I believe--at least I know--that he was not rich. All his widowed mother could spare had been spent in qualifying him for his profession. It was not lucrative to a young practitioner, with very little influence in London; and although he was, night and day, at the service of numbers of poor people and did wonders of gentleness and skill for them, he gained very little by it in money. He was seven years older than I. Not that I need mention it, for it hardly seems to belong to anything.

I think--I mean, he told us--that he had been in practice three or four years and that if he could have hoped to contend through three or four more, he would not have made the voyage on which he was bound. But he had no fortune or private means, and so he was going away. He had been to see us several times altogether. We thought it a pity he should go away. Because he was distinguished in his art among those who knew it best, and some of the greatest men belonging to it had a high opinion of him.

When he came to bid us good-bye, he brought his mother with him for the first time. She was a pretty old lady, with bright black eyes, but she seemed proud. She came from Wales and had had, a long time ago, an eminent person for an ancestor, of the name of Morgan ap-Kerrig--of some place that sounded like Gimlet--who was the most illustrious person that ever was known and all of whose relations were a sort of royal family. He appeared to have passed his life in always getting up into mountains and fighting somebody; and a bard whose name sounded like Crumlinwallinwer had sung his praises in a piece which was called, as nearly as I could catch it, Mewlinnwillinwodd.

Mrs Woodcourt, after expatiating to us on the fame of her great kinsman, said that no doubt wherever her son Allan went he would remember his pedigree and would on no account form an alliance below it. She told him that there were many handsome English ladies in India who went out on speculation, and that there were some to be picked up with property, but that neither charms nor wealth would suffice for the descendant from such a line without birth, which must ever be the first consideration. She talked so much about birth that for a moment I half fancied, and with pain-- But what an idle fancy to suppose that she could think or care what MINE was!

Mr Woodcourt seemed a little distressed by her prolixity, but he was too considerate to let her see it and contrived delicately to bring the conversation round to making his acknowledgments to my guardian for his hospitality and for the very happy hours--he called them the very happy hours--he had passed with us. The recollection of them, he said, would go with him wherever he went and would be always treasured. And so we gave him our hands, one after another--at least, they did--and I did; and so he put his lips to Ada's hand--and to mine; and so he went away upon his long, long voyage!

I was very busy indeed all day and wrote directions home to the servants, and wrote notes for my guardian, and dusted his books and papers, and jingled my housekeeping keys a good deal, one way and another. I was still busy between the lights, singing and working by the window, when who should come in but Caddy, whom I had no expectation of seeing!

'Why, Caddy, my dear,' said I, 'what beautiful flowers!'

She had such an exquisite little nosegay in her hand.

'Indeed, I think so, Esther,' replied Caddy. 'They are the loveliest I ever saw.'

'Prince, my dear?' said I in a whisper.

'No,' answered Caddy, shaking her head and holding them to me to smell. 'Not Prince.'

'Well, to be sure, Caddy!' said I. 'You must have two lovers!'

'What? Do they look like that sort of thing?' said Caddy.

'Do they look like that sort of thing?' I repeated, pinching her cheek.

Caddy only laughed in return, and telling me that she had come for half an hour, at the expiration of which time Prince would be waiting for her at the corner, sat chatting with me and Ada in the window, every now and then handing me the flowers again or trying how they looked against my hair. At last, when she was going, she took me into my room and put them in my dress.

'For me?' said I, surprised.

'For you,' said Caddy with a kiss. 'They were left behind by somebody.'

'Left behind?'

‘At poor Miss Flite's,’ said Caddy. ‘Somebody who has been very good to her was hurrying away an hour ago to join a ship and left these flowers behind. No, no! Don't take them out. Let the pretty little things lie here,’ said Caddy, adjusting them with a careful hand, ‘because I was present myself, and I shouldn't wonder if somebody left them on purpose!’

‘Do they look like that sort of thing?’ said Ada, coming laughingly behind me and clasping me merrily round the waist. ‘Oh, yes, indeed they do, Dame Durden! They look very, very like that sort of thing. Oh, very like it indeed, my dear!’