

"They may be there already, for all I know. It was last Sunday Sir John told papa they were coming."

At this moment Charles Ashton, with Ada and Lucy Mornington, emerged from a bridle path through the woods that separated Elm Grove from Ashton Park. Greetings were warmly exchanged, and then amid a cross-fire of questions and small talk, they proceeded to the house, where they found Mrs. Mornington and Lady Ashton. The latter insisted upon the young ladies and Everard returning with them to spend a few days at the Park.

Isabel declined to accompany them. At which, Lucy fairly shed tears, and every one seemed so much annoyed, that she finally consented.

Her position of friend and governess combined, when alone, was pleasant enough; but with strangers, of course, she was still only Mrs. Arlington's governess, and was treated accordingly. That is, when it was known; as people at first did not usually suppose that the beautiful and attractive Miss Leicester was only the governess. And Isabel was sometimes amused, as well as annoyed, to find people who had been very friendly, cool off perceptibly. This she attributed to the circumstance that she was 'only the governess.' Lady Ashton, especially, had been very anxious to be introduced to that "charming Miss Leicester;" and Isabel had afterwards heard her saying to a friend: "Well! you surprise me! So she is 'only the governess,' and yet has the air of a princess. I'm sure I thought she was 'somebody.' But then, you know, there are persons who don't seem to know their proper place." All this had made Isabel cold and reserved in company; for her high spirit could ill brook the slights and patronising airs of those who in other days would have been glad of her acquaintance.

Thus Isabel was deemed haughty and cold; few, if any, perceiving that this cold reserve was assumed to hide how deeply these things wounded her too sensitive feelings. So it was with more pain than pleasure that she made one of the party to Ashton Park, having a presentiment that vexation and annoyance would be the result; as she was quite sure that it was only to please Ada, that Lady Ashton had included her in the invitation.

Nor did it tend to disperse these gloomy apprehensions, when Isabel found that the room assigned her was at the extreme end