

timid and embarrassed in Margaret's presence, yet she never attempted to break through the invisible bonds that were around her. She felt she was not a free agent, yet it was painful to think that her sister was, in fact, her mistress. What Margaret would think, what Margaret would say, what Margaret would have her do, these were the questions that arose in her mind whenever she was left to act for herself in any instance, no matter how trifling it might be. She had no standard, no will, no principles of her own. Margaret was all these to her, and who may estimate the amount of injury done to a young, sensitive, and affectionate spirit, by training such as this. The influence of this quiet unacknowledged tyranny brought in something of that fear which should be cast out by perfect love, and at the same time, nurtured a helplessness and dependence of mind, which caused Agnes to clasp her chain, and refer every circumstance, however unimportant to the decision of her eldest sister. Agnes Vernon was very lovely, but her beauty might only be compared to Margaret's as that of the violet to the stately lily. Some family likeness existed between them, but Agnes had a less brilliant complexion, and a far less striking expression of countenance. There was a gentle, subdued look about her, that might have been mistaken for the effect of secret sorrow, even before her young heart had known its bitter visitings. Was it the foreshadowing of her future destiny that was already casting its darkeess on her brow?

There was one circumstance, however, on which Agnes Vernon did not consult her sister. It was a matter vitally connected with her happiness, yet she durst not have spoken of it for the world. She had already given her heart freely, fully, and alas! unsolicited, to Charles Willersley, the eldest son of a neighbouring clergyman.

In ordinary cases, such a family as the Vernons would have had little intercourse with that of a country pastor, poor and undistinguished as the Rev. George Willersley. Their acquaintance would have been confined to "the parson's" being formally asked to dinner three or four times a year, and the parson's wife exchanging stiff morning visits with the ladies of the family. But Mrs. Wil-

lersley was a Vernon, a distant relative of the Baronet's, and the very pride that would have kept Sir Gilbert aloof from any other family of merely middling rank, prompted him to show that no one of his name and blood however humble in circumstances, could be unworthy of notice. The Willersleys, therefore, were frequent visitors at the hall, and Agnes being of the same age as Rosa Willersley, a girlish friendship sprang up between them, which however, was jealously watched by Margaret, who was very unwilling that Agnes should have any one as counsellor and *confidante* except herself, and was peculiarly averse to her being on terms of close intimacy with one whom she considered their inferior. Permission for Agnes to visit the rectory was therefore always accorded reluctantly. Still Agnes's happy hours there were neither few nor far between; they were the sunbeams of her life—the times from which she dated, and to which she looked forward, and though Rosa Willersley's society was the ostensible pleasure she sought in them, the image of another arose in her heart, though his name passed not her lips, and the thought of one far dearer than Rosa, or any other on earth, sent the eloquent blood burning to her cheek and brow.

As to the young man himself, he loved Agnes with all the abandonment of a passion, which is so bestowed, that it admits of neither hopes nor fears. To wed Agnes Vernon, was a purpose that never presented itself to his mind in any defined shape, even in his wildest dreams. To love her was the continual action of his soul. That her affection for him exceeded that of a sister and friend, was an idea which never entered his thoughts. The daughter of Sir Gilbert Vernon, endowed with all the advantages that wealth, and rank, and beauty can bestow, was a being removed from even the ambition of the poor country curate he was designed to be. He never sought to win her affections, he never told her he loved her, he was not even jealous of her; but he loved on day after day, year after year, ardently and unchangeably, and she, to whom the knowledge of that love would have been dearer than all the treasures of the earth, whose own timi-