

would not listen to the plan. "You know, Aunt Marian, I expect to visit you first—the very moment the doctor says decamp! I am not going to be cheated out of my birthday," and Erica fingered lovingly the little chain at her neck.

"I see you are the fortunate possessor of one present," said Marie, imagining the locket to contain her father's picture.

"I have had a natural curiosity to see the inside of that locket," said her father, "but refrained from gazing on Jack's beaming countenance."

Erica laughed as she undid the chain and, opening the locket, passed it to her father, who gazed at it long and earnestly, then passed it to Mrs. Lennox and Marie.

"A beautiful face," said Mrs. Lennox.

"But a common one—one we often meet with in country lanes," said Marie.

Erica reached for the locket as if the touch of Marie's fingers was a sacrilege, but her father intercepted it, and Erica let it remain in his hand.