

sionary still lingered at the cottage door, in earnest conversation with Mrs. Featherstone, and Fleming's misery was complete.

When the party entered the ruins, they found the Captain and Sophia there before them. Sophia was seated upon a fragment of the broken wall. The glow of happiness was upon her cheek, and few who looked upon her smiling, animated countenance, could have imagined that the shades of envy and discontent could ever cloud a brow so calm and beautiful.

Fleming recalled with feelings of painful regret the evening he first visited the ruins with Sophia, and the affection and respect he then entertained for her; and contrasted, with a sigh, the different sentiments with which he now regarded her. He no longer felt any esteem for her character. She had proved to him, that she was not worthy of his good opinion. Yet, he could not wholly divest himself of the strong interest which he felt in her future welfare. "How many difficulties must she encounter," he thought, "before the conquest over self is achieved. Yet there is something about her which leads me to hope that, in spite of all this vanity and frivolity, she will not ultimately be lost to the prayers of the friends, to whom her beauty and winning manners, in spite of all her faults, render her so dear."

Sophia rose in the most easy and graceful manner to receive her friends, expressing the most lively pleasure at Miss Featherstone's return to B——; and this was done with such apparent sincerity that it deceived every one present, Alice excepted, who, aware of her sister's real sentiments, estimated her politeness and professions of attachment as they deserved. She knew that if Jane had not been leaning upon Miss Ogilvie's arm, her welcome from Sophia would have been cold and distant, and she could not help secretly condemning the worldly and selfish motives which influenced her sister's conduct.

Impressed with feelings of a very different nature, Sophia Linhope gave her hand to Stephen Norton. She had always felt a particular affection for the grave but gentle companion of her infancy; and could have loved him, but that she ever feared his serious admonitions, and dark earnest eyes. How she dreaded at this moment to meet that reproving eye. She always fancied that he could look into her heart, and read the motives which actuated her conduct, and became pensive and silent in his company. Stephen was perfectly aware of the weak points in her character, and of this too she was painfully conscious. Of all her friends, there was not one who thought so kindly of Sophia as Stephen, who was so ready to excuse her faults, and to foster, and draw out the better traits of her character. He knew her heart was naturally warm—her affections, to those whom she did love, strong, and he pitied and forgave her for a thousand errors, which

others condemned without attempting to reform. When he left her father's roof she was a giddy playful child, just stepping into womanhood—a creature of impulses, all smiles and tears, and until he had met with a being more congenial to his taste and feeling, he had felt, though unknown to Sophia, a boyish love for the fair little romp, whose delight it was to mock his gravity, and make him laugh in spite of himself. Yes, our grave missionary had once loved Sophy, and still felt for her an interest he could hardly define. He did not expect to see her quite so beautiful, but he was forcibly struck by the alteration in her manners, so unlike her former simplicity, and with the gay style of her dress, so different from the neatness which he had always advised the sisters to adopt, and which, when adopted, had met with his entire satisfaction. During their walk to the Abbey farm, he drew Sophia away from her military companion, and privately questioned her on the reason of this change, in which he considered that he was acting the part of an elder brother.

"My dear Sophia, I fear you are not glad to see me."

"What makes you think so?"

"Your welcome was so cold and distant. You no longer regard me as a friend and elder brother."

"As both," said Sophia, raising her eyes to his. She met those fine expressive eyes, so full of truth and gentleness, and her conscience smote her. "Oh," thought she, "how I wish, Stephen Norton, that I was as good, as high minded as you are."

"If you indeed regard me as such, Sophia, will you allow me to speak as freely to you as of old?"

"Yes, if you will promise not to scold me very much!"

"Do you think you deserve it?"

"Perhaps I do—but every body scolds me, and it does me no good, it only makes me more fierce and obstinate."

"Well, then, I will not scold you—we will only talk a little reasonably together. Don't you remember, Sophia, when we used to gather nuts in that hazel copse to the right. You used to laugh at me, and tell me that I was such a formalist that I could even adduce a reason to prove that my method of gathering nuts was better than yours."

"I dare say it was," said Sophy, laughing; "but for all that, I always filled my lap the first."

"That was because you took my advice. Will, Sophy, take my advice still?"

"Yes, if it pleases me—but remember, I was always wilful, Stephen—I promise nothing beyond that."

"Well I must make a beginning with what I am sure will meet with your disapprobation. What has induced you, dear Sophy, to exchange your modest and neat attire for a costume so preposterous and