



CHAPTER II.

A GATHERING STORM.

‘H! We had better go to dinner, then, had we not? I presume it is about ready.’

‘Stay, will you not wear this at dinner?’ stooping for a pansy that flourished among the late autumn blossoms. ‘Keep it for remembrance when I am away.’

‘Oh, but flowers fade; and I could only remember you for a couple of days.’

‘Why not press it between the leaves of a book?’

‘Oh, I will do that; and I will remember your lecture every time that I open the volume.’

‘Thank you; but if you can’t think a little bit about myself, I don’t want you to bother about my lecture. You can feast yourself in contemplation of your loud and gorgeous friend, Mr. Ham.’

They had entered the house; and at the same moment Aster’s father and Mr. Ham came in. It was quite plain that these two men were confidential friends; for as they entered the room the host had his arm within that of his guest, and both were so engrossed in their subject—talking in a low tone—that they seemed for a time unconscious of the presence of Aster and Roland. When the host did raise his head he simply gave a cold bow to Roland; and then bestowed a sharp glance upon his