

of importance occurring to interrupt the even tenor of Amy's existence, and she was just thinking it was time to bring her visit to a close, though Mrs. Neville, and her good natured husband, who listened with intense delight to Amy's sweet voice, as she every evening sang his favorite old ballads, pressed her in the warmest manner to remain. Another letter from Mrs. Morton decided her. After asking if she intended taking up her permanent residence in Neville Park, or at least remaining there till she was as prim and antiquated as its graceful mistress, she proceeded to say that "Sir George, growing weary at length, at so unreasonable an absence, contemplated a visit, accidental of course, to the Nevilles, on the strength of having once picked up the lady's fan at a watering place, where he also had the happiness of sitting beside her at dinner; you can guess what a reception he will have," she continued, "so if you wish to avoid a very unpleasant scene, you had better return at once. Thinking you have by this time provided all the old women and children in the neighbourhood with flannel garments, one of dear, charitable Mrs. Neville's favorite amusements, I have heard, and taken rural drives, and rural walks, till your complexion is charmingly sunburnt and freckled, I shall expect you in two or three days at farthest."

She also informed her, among other important pieces of intelligence, that Miss Aylmer had recovered her truant admirer, having previously tried very hard to fascinate Capt. Delmour, who had remained insensible to her graces, as he was then paying very decided attentions in another quarter, and concluded by again reiterating her advice to Amy to return as soon as possible.

"She is sure of him now," she sighed, as she folded up the letter, "or she would not thus press my return. Well! I was at least prepared for this."

The regret of her kind entertainers was truly great, on hearing her resolution to leave next morning—but on her saying it was Mrs. Morton's request, and she must comply, they forebore to press her further. Accustomed as Amy was to sorrow and disappointment, she could not repress the gushing tears that filled her eyes, as she bade farewell to her kind, perchance her only friends.

"My poor child!" said Mrs. Neville, as she kissed again and again, the pale cheek of her young companion; "I fear much, you have already discovered that happiness is not to be found in rank or riches, and that you are less to be envied than the world imagines. But remember one thing, my Amy, that in the hour of sorrow and anxiety, you will always find a refuge here, and that you

will be welcomed under this roof as a cherished child, not as a guest."

Amy would have spoken her thanks, but she feared to trust her voice, and pressing Mrs. Neville's hand, she entered the carriage.

"Thus must I leave the only abode where I might hope for any happiness or peace," she sadly said; "I must again return to those mis-called scenes of pleasure, once disliked, but now truly abhorred. Yet, 'tis strange, how I should feel this slight trial so acutely. A life passed in the like might have injured me to it."

Though such were the thoughts that formed her sole companions during the drive, she resolved to allow no trace of them to appear. Having thrown off her riding dress, she entered the drawing-room, where Mrs. Morton was seated, with a smile on her lips.

"You are welcome at last, my dear child," said the lady pressing her hand with some warmth; "I thought my threat of Sir George's intended, visit would have brought you home. And how are the dear old souls in the drowsy demesne you have left? I suppose Mr. Neville is sleeping, whilst his wife is cutting out Sunday robes for the suffering children of want, as she no doubt pathetically styles them. Heavens! if poor Sir George had gone, what a ridiculous scene would have ensued. I really would sacrifice the next ball or concert to witness it."

She leant back, and gave way to a hearty peal of laughter. But she started up, saying:

"I am detaining you, when you should be arranging your toilette. Your hair is all in confusion, though it looks exceedingly becoming. Arrange your dress quickly, for I think Sir George will soon be here."

The door opened, as she spoke, and Captain Delmour entered. His glance of surprise on seeing Amy was succeeded by a momentary shade, as if he had heard Mrs. Morton's last words, and been annoyed by them; but he quickly advanced towards Amy, and shook hands with her, exclaiming:

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Miss Morton; I did not think you could prevail on yourself to leave the country, which evidently possesses such charms for you, so soon."

Amy knew well that he had heard Mrs. Morton's last sentence; she knew well how he would misinterpret it. Shame and mortification crimsoned her temples.

"It has at least wonderfully improved her complexion. Do you not think so, Mr. Delmour?" said Mrs. Morton, with a very meaning laugh.

"Yes! we might say so, if Miss Morton's complexion admitted improvement."