

"George Maitland is an insufferable prig, I think, mamma. Our boys are gentlemen at any rate; and it is natural they should wish to enjoy life. I think Marion requires a word as well as the boys. It is twenty minutes to nine, and a quarter past eight is supposed to be our breakfast hour. I have been downstairs since half-past seven, and must confess I should like a cup of coffee now."

"Well, why don't you have it? There is nothing to hinder you."

"No, but it is best to sit down as a family," said Janet, in her prim fashion. "Why, there is Marion coming up the avenue. She is reforming, surely, when she takes a constitutional before breakfast. She looks very sober, as if she had not greatly enjoyed it."

In a few seconds the breakfast-room door opened, and Mrs. Keith's second daughter entered the room, and going up to her mother's side, put her arm round her, and kissed her affectionately.

"Oh, what a cold face, child; you make me shiver!" exclaimed Mrs. Keith, drawing back. "Where have you been? What a colour you have! Quite like a milk-maid's, isn't it, Janet?"

"Rather. It is not for complexion's sake you require a morning's walk, Marion," said Janet Keith, lifting her cold, keen, blue eyes to her young sister's round, ruddy face. "I was saying to mamma you were surely turning over a new leaf."

Marion Keith pulled off her gloves and turned her head quickly away. A hasty retort was on her lips, but she repressed it, and again approaching her mother's chair, knelt down on the hearth. She was the youngest of the family, and the least spoiled. She was only seventeen, but looked young for her years, being still, as Janet often told her, an awkward school-girl. But there was something sweet and winning about her, and the deep brown eye had an

earnest, tender gleam, which betokened a warm and loving heart.

"Child, your nose is as red as a carrot! Where have you been?" pursued Mrs. Keith, looking not with approval on the offending feature.

"I was out, mamma," said Marion, vaguely. "I met the postman in the Grange Road, and there is a letter for you."

"Where is it? Who is it from?"

"It is from Tahai; a black-edged letter addressed in a strange handwriting. What can be wrong?" said Marion, drawing it slowly from her pocket.

"Reach me my eyeglass," said Mrs. Keith, starting up. "I am afraid it will be bad news of your Uncle James. He was poorly last time Airlie wrote."

Marion looked on eagerly while her mother adjusted her eyeglass and broke the seal of the ominous-looking letter; even Janet suspended her work, and waited with some interest to hear the news.

"It is just as I thought, girls; your poor Uncle James has succumbed to that frightful climate at last," said Mrs. Keith, running her eye over the brief communication. "The letter is from the Rev. Mr. Balfour, who fortunately happened to be at the station when he died. This is what he says:

"MISSION STATION,

"TAHAI, LIVINGSTONIA,

"October 14th, 18—.

"MADAM,—It is with deep regret I have to inform you of the lamented death of Mr. Keith, which took place this morning at daybreak. Some weeks ago he was seized with fever, and as this is his third attack, there was no hope entertained of him from the first. He became conscious towards the end, and added a word of happy confirmation to the already glorious and abiding testimony of his noble and unselfish life. He is an irreparable loss to the cause and to the poor creatures among whom he has so heroically laboured and for whom he has given up so much. He will be laid to rest beside Mrs. Keith. Miss Keith is wonderfully sustained by a