

bitterly at the idea of parting from her, that Sir Alexander yielded to the earnest entreaties of his only child, and the young heiress and the huntsman's blooming daughter were seldom apart.

From Miss Moncton's governess, the beautiful, but wayward Alice, received the same lessons, and made rapid progress, so that Sir Alexander would often say that Alice would be the learned lady of the village.

Old Dinah exulted in the growing charms of her grandchild; if the old hag regarded any thing upon earth with affection, it was the tall fair girl so unlike herself; and Alice too—I have often wondered how it were possible—Alice loved, with the most ardent affection, that hideous old crone. To me, since the death of my mother, she had been civil, but sullen, and I neither sought nor cared for her regard. It was on the return of one of these holidays, when I sought my home with eager joy, that I first beheld that artful villain, Robert Moncton. It was a lovely summer evening, and on entering the pretty cottage, with my scanty luggage, contained in a small black portmanteau, on my back, I found the lawyer engaged in earnest conversation with my grandmother.

Struck by the appearance of the man, I paused for some minutes on the threshold, unobserved by the parties. Like you, Geoffrey, I shall never forget the impression his countenance made upon me. The features so handsome, the coloring so fine, the person that of the perfect gentleman, and yet all this pleasing combination of face and figure, marred by that cold, cruel, merciless eye. Its icy expression, so dead, so joyless, sent a chill through my whole frame, and I shrank from the idea of encountering its baleful gaze, and was about quietly to retire to another part of the cottage, when my attention was arrested by the following brief conversation:—

“I should like to see this lad.”

“Your wish will soon be gratified—we expect him home from school tonight.”

“What age is he?”

“Just sixteen.”

“What does Sir Alexander mean to do for him?”

“I don't know—he is very fond of him.”

“Humph, we will soon settle his business—leave him to me, Dinah. Sir Alexander will send him to London, to make a lawyer of him. His own headstrong passions, unrestrained by any guiding hand, will destroy him. Ha! ha! Dinah, I will make a solicitor of him. I have taught many a bold heart and reckless hand to solicit the charity of others.”

“Devil doubt you!” rejoined the fiend, with a gurgling in her throat, which was meant for a laugh. “But you may find the boy one too many for you, with all your cunning. He'll not start at shadows, nor stumble over straws. Robert Moncton, I have tamed many a proud spirit in my day, but that boy

defies my power—I fear and hate him, but I cannot crush him. But hush, here he is!”

I bustled forward, and flung my portmanteau heavily on the ground.

“I'm heartily tired, grandmother—how are you—how is dear Alice?”

“Well—did you see this gentleman, Philip?”

“Gentleman—I beg his pardon—a fine evening, sir.”

I turned to the lawyer, and coolly returned his deliberate stare. His face betrayed no emotion, but his cold searching glance brought the blood to my cheek. He rose, and nodding to Dinah, left the cottage. The next minute Alice was in my arms.

“Brother, dear brother, welcome home.”

Oh, what a contrast to that dark, joyless countenance, was the cherub face of Alice, laughing in the irrepressible glee of her happy heart. I forgot my long tiresome walk from the next market town, as I pulled her on to my knee, and covered her rosy cheek with kisses.

“What news since I left you, Alice?”

“Sad news,” says she; “dear Margaret is in London, on a visit to her aunt, and there is a dull cross boy staying at the Hall, with a very hard name—Theophilus Moncton—Margaret's cousin; but he is nothing like her, though he calls her his little wife—but Margaret says she will never have him, though his father is very rich. I am sure you will hate him, Philip, for he calls us beggar's brats, and wonders dear Sir Alexander suffers Margaret to play with us. I told him he was very rude, and he had better not affront you, for you would soon teach him better manners—but he only sneered at me, and said, “my father's a gentleman,” and Sir Alexander told me I had better not come up to the Hall, until Mr. Moncton and his son were gone.”

Whilst little Alice ran on thus to me, I felt all the pride of my nature rising within me. For the first time in my life, I felt the great difference of rank that existed between me and my benefactor. I was restless and unhappy, and determined not to go near the Hall, until Sir Alexander bade me to do so himself. But days passed, and I saw nothing of the good Baronet, and Alice and I were obliged to content ourselves by roaming through all our old beloved haunts, and talking of Margaret. Returning one evening through a long avenue of fine old oaks, that led towards the huntsman's lodge, a pony rushed past us at full gallop—a boyish impulse tempted me to give a loud halloo, in order to set the beautiful animal off at his wildest speed. In a few minutes we met a lad of my own age, booted and spurred, with a whip in his hand, running in the same direction the pony had taken. He seemed in a great passion, and as he approached us, he exclaimed:—

“You impudent fellow! was it you who shouted