

would herself take charge of them, she placed them about her, greatly to her own inconvenience, and looked perfectly happy when she saw their little faces brighten up, and heard them lisp forth their innocent delight. Grace, at first looked rather annoyed, but she marked Castleton's eye beaming tenderly upon Clara, and in imitation of so beautiful an example, she condescended to take Rosa Dorracott under her especial care, promising to be answerable for her safety.

She, however, soon repented of her benevolence, if it be possible so to term any action that is prompted by a purely selfish motive—for the child was restless, as children ever are, continually reaching over the edge of the boat to grasp the water lilies that floated on the surface of the waves, or clapping her little hands and dancing with delight, as they sailed among the fairy islands, and saw their banks gay with wild roses, and tufts of winter green with its bright glossy leaves and clusters of exquisite, wax-like flowers. Obligated thus to bestow her attention almost exclusively upon her young charge, Grace became heartily weary of her self-imposed task, and would not have attempted to conceal her chagrin had she not been conscious that Charles was observing her—for he had again renewed his devotion to her, and she flattered herself that her empire was becoming firmly established. But she dreamed not how greatly to her disadvantage was the parallel which all that time, he was drawing between her undisciplined, and selfish and exacting mind, and the self-sacrificing, serene, and benign spirit of his lovely cousin.

That day's experience had indeed rivetted fast the golden links of affection that bound his heart to Clara, and though he still rendered external homage to Miss Morley, his eyes continually strayed from her dazzling beauty, to the speaking face of Clara, as, beaming with kind and tender emotions, it looked down on the little dependant beings, who clung with such fond and trusting confidence around her. She seemed indeed as guileless, and as childlike in her sweet simplicity as themselves, and as Charles thought what a fountain of deep and pure and holy feeling dwelt within her heart, he wondered at his own strange infatuation, that had pledged him, though but for a day, to the service of another—and yet he blessed his folly, since it had shewn him more strikingly than ever, the true value of the gem, that he might else have cast away, for one that sparkled indeed, and attracted by its outward brilliancy, but could boast no intrinsic virtue to render it precious.

Long before their sail terminated, Miss Morley had grown very weary of her little protégé, and so far relaxed in care and vigilance, as frequently to alarm Clara for the child's safety. Grace, however, ridiculed her fears, and by assuring her that she kept a firm hold of the little girl's clothes, made her tolerably easy. But as they again came into shall-

ow water on their return to the shore, Rosa's anxiety to obtain the water lilies revived, and Grace exhibited much impatience in endeavouring to restrain her efforts. The little girl, notwithstanding, continued to persevere, and in an unlucky moment, when Miss Morley's attention was given to Castleton, she lost her balance, as having fairly grasped one of the lilies she was striving to drag it up, and fell over the side of the boat. Grace screamed, and all started with dismay to their feet, but Clara's watchful eye had marked her danger, and her ready hand caught her as she fell, and snatched her back from death.

"Good heavens! how these children terrify one!" exclaimed Miss Morley, pale with mingled terror and anger.

"God bless you, my sweet Clara," cried Charles, "but for your presence of mind, the child had surely been lost!"

Clara could make no reply; but these words uttered in a tone of impassioned tenderness, were not even in that moment heard without emotion, and clasping the terrified little creature closely in her arms, her agitated feelings found relief in tears. There were few words spoken during the brief moments that elapsed before the boat touched the shore, excepting indeed the clamorous exclamations and unceasing prattle of the children. When they had all landed, Grace, as if instinctively aware that her reign of power over Castleton was finally ended, took Mr. Grey's offered arm, and walked away, her beautiful features clouded by an expression of chagrin and vexation, that she no longer endeavoured to conceal. The children bounded away to where the sylvan board, seen through the trees, was spread for their repast, and Charles and Clara followed at a slower pace, and by a more circuitous path—and then it was that Castleton made the fond avowal of his love, and as Clara listened with a downcast eye and glowing cheek to the tale of his heart's wanderings, for he sought to conceal nothing from her, and heard how every roving thought had at length returned to its true allegiance, acknowledging only the influence of her sweetness and purity, she felt that the self denial and patient forbearance of years, would have been more than repaid by such moments of happiness as those.

From regard to Miss Morley's feelings, nothing would have been said of Rosa's danger, had not the little girl told the tale herself, and when Clara appeared, she was overwhelmed with the mother's grateful thanks, whose expression, however, served not to heighten Grace Morley's good humour, though she had so far recovered her spirits, as already to have commenced a flirtation with Mr. Grey.

The dinner in that old woods was a joyous one, and it was not till the tall beeches were tinged with the golden light of declining day, and their length-