

than a sister's interest in Charles, and it was only by an accidental circumstance that she was made aware of the real state of her heart.

One morning, a few days before Charles was to leave, she called upon Charlotte Stacy, a friend of hers, where she was introduced to a Miss Warton who was visiting the Stacy family. She was a young lady from B—, the town where Charles had spent the last five years. After chatting for some time, and as Julia was about leaving, Charlotte said:

"I have just heard a piece of news which surprises me a good deal, though I suppose it is no news to you—of course you know all about it."

"I can tell better when I have heard what it is," she replied.

"Well I have heard upon very good authority, that Charles Willis is engaged; now what do you think of that? For my part I am quite surprised, all the old women here have been prophesying that you and Charles were made for each other."

"Think!" replied Julia, while the blood mounted to her very brow; "I think that if it is so, the family know nothing about it, at least this is the first intimation that I have had of anything of the kind, and I can hardly believe it now."

"I assure you, Miss Prescott, it is so," said Miss Warton, "at least it is a current report in B—, and I have not the slightest reason to doubt it, though it is not likely they intend to be married at present, and then I hear that he is going back there to study law, and that looks as if there was some attraction there."

"I do not think that is any proof of its truth," said Julia; "he has become acquainted there, and of course it would be pleasanter than going among strangers; but who is this person to whom he is engaged, do you know her?"

"Oh, no! nor do I wish it," returned Miss Warton, with a toss of the head, "her name is Madeline Cameron; she is very poor and proud, and just manages to support herself and mother (who is blind.) by taking in sewing. She is called handsome, though people differ in their opinions of beauty, for my part I never saw anything very attractive about her."

"Madeline Cameron, that is really a pretty name, and quite romantic," said Charlotte. "I wonder how Mr. Willis will like it; I should think they would look rather higher than a sewing girl?"

"I do not think," said Julia, "either Mr. or Mrs. Willis would consider industry as any objection; and as to her supporting her poor blind mother I think it speaks well in her favour. But really I must not linger any longer, I have other calls to make and must away," she added gaily.

"Perhaps, Miss Prescott, it would be as well not to mention this in Mr. Willis's family, as perhaps the young gentleman would not wish it to be known, and after all it is possible there may be nothing in it, though I have good reason to suppose that there is."

Julia made no more calls, but hastened home and went immediately to her chamber, where the emotions she had so long suppressed found vent in tears. The information she had received had torn the veil from her heart, and she found to her mortification that she had unconsciously been cherishing sentiments, which, if the report proved true, would be a lasting source of unhappiness to her. She thought at first that it might all be false, and then again she could imagine no possible reason for Miss Warton reporting such a thing if it were untrue; she recalled every look and action of Charles, and she could not believe him capable of acting with so much duplicity, for though he had never expressed more than a brother's regard for her, yet, if eyes speak the language of the heart, he had told her so many times. However, perhaps, he did not mean any thing, for she would not for a moment harbour the thought that he would trifle with a lady's affections. As to Miss Warton's caution it was perfectly unnecessary; she would not have spoken of it for the world, indeed she could not, it was a subject in which she felt too deeply interested. She determined to appear as she ever had done, and strive to subdue those sentiments which she felt should not now have a place in her heart. Assuming as much cheerfulness as she could, she descended to the parlour, but her heart almost misgave her as she found Charles alone.

"Why, Julia," he said, "you have been out a long time, I had just made up my mind to go in search of you."

"I have been at home this half hour, I only called at Mrs. Stacy's."

"I wish you had told me you were going, I should like to have accompanied you; that Miss Stacy seems to be a fine girl—is she an intimate friend of yours?"

"I cannot say that we are very intimate, though we are very good friends."

In spite of Julia's efforts to appear at ease, there was a forced calmness and formality about her quite unnatural, and which Charles could not avoid noticing.

"Julia," he said, seating himself beside her, "I have been thinking how much happiness I have enjoyed in the last few weeks, but I must soon leave, though I could linger here for ever. Yet, may I not hope to take with me your good wishes, and the hope that I shall not be forgotten?"