

It was of Henry St. John, the handsome and elegant brother of Mrs. Belmont, a being she had never met but once, and that only for a few minutes, in the company of his sister; but whose high-bred politeness, and evident admiration of herself, had left a deep and durable impression on her mind. 'Twere hard to say, how many aerial castles she had constructed during the hour she had sat wrapped in silent reverie; but however wild or improbable they may have been, she ever finished the construction of each, by the sober, natural thought:

"I shall at least see him, for he will be there, and surely he will ask me *once* to dance."

But her mother's address dispelled, at least for the moment, her fleeting visions, and after replying to her question, she suddenly remembered that her dress, that dress whose vast importance she alone could thoroughly appreciate, had not yet come home. Looking at the time-piece, however, she saw it was still early, and after reviewing again, every article, to see that all was complete, she sat down to her instrument, to wile away the time, and practise a few songs and pieces, in case she should be called on to play; but hour after hour passed on, and still the priestess of fashion, with her priceless treasure, the dress, came not. Poor Alice, who had long previously abandoned her instrument, and endeavoured to dispel her nervous impatience, by pacing the room with rapid steps, felt her hopefulness gradually ebbing, and at length, when ten o'clock struck, her fortitude completely overcome, she flung herself on the sofa, in a paroxysm of tears. Mrs. Sydenham, really sympathizing with her natural distress, kindly endeavoured to soothe her, reminding her it was not yet too late for fashionable hours, and that Mrs. Graham, the lady who had undertaken to *chaperone* her, being an ultra-fashionable, would not probably call for some time to come.

"Dry your tears, my own Alice," she said, raising carefully the rich tresses of her daughter, which the latter in her emotion had entirely forgotten. "See, your curls are already commencing to droop; they are positively damp, and your eyes, my dear child, will be quite red."

"'Tis useless! mother, useless!" was the sobbing reply; "and there is Mrs. Graham's ring," she added, starting, as the hall bell pealed violently, from the sofa, on which she however immediately threw herself again with a fresh burst of grief. "Go, and tell her 'tis impossible for me to go."

With a slow step Mrs. Sydenham left the room, but she almost immediately returned, and, with a beaming countenance, exclaimed:

"'Tis not Mrs. Graham, Alice, but the girl with your dress. Quick, quick, here it is!"

Her daughter sprang to her feet with a bright smile, though the tears yet hung on her long lashes, and proceeded to try on the dress. But alas! fresh disappointments! slight, graceful, as Alice's figure was, the milliner had thought fit to improve on it, and accordingly had made the dress so tight that, when strained to the utmost, the lower hooks were still nearly an inch apart.

"Positively, this is too provoking!" exclaimed Mrs. Sydenham, almost as much annoyed as her daughter. "Why, it would not fit an infant. 'Tis no use," she added as the girl, after another superhuman effort, fell on a chair in sheer exhaustion, her face scarlet with her exertions. "Take it off again," said Alice quietly, seating herself, with the calmness of despair. A solemn pause succeeded during which the spectators looked at each other in funereal silence, when suddenly a bright idea entered the head of Alice's humble tirewoman:

"Sure, Miss, you can hide it with your sash." The suggestion was like the plank to the drowning mariner, the well spring in the desert, and was promptly, eagerly acted upon; but many a crease, and ungraceful fold, was the sad consequence. This, however, was of minor importance, as the milliner, who was anything but a proficient in her art—poor Alice could not afford to procure the services of a better—had left so many proofs of her skill in the shape of numberless awkward discrepancies and creases, that those formed by the subterfuge of the sash, passed undistinguished, if not unobserved. The dress, however, was at length adjusted; and, now, the gloves had to be tried, but they were certainly many removes from French kid, for with the first effort made to draw them on, one finger tore from top to bottom. Poor Alice was by this time, however, inured to misfortune, and the only additional evidence of annoyance perceptible was in the deepening of her former faint flush, into intense scarlet. The glove, however, was at length mended, the white rose placed in the dark hair, and the last act of the drama, the large cloak thrown over her, when a furious peal at the bell announced the arrival of her *chaperone*.

With a hasty kiss from her mother, Alice, without a parting look at her mirror, hurried down stairs, sprang into Mrs. Graham's carriage, and, secure in the consciousness that all her dreams, her hopes, were now on the point of fulfilment, sank back with a sigh of relief on its cushioned seat. Mrs. Graham happened to be in a very ill temper, and it was not therefore in the most amiable of tones, she exclaimed: "I hope