

THE SECRET GRIEF.

"She never told her love."

[With an Engraving.]

"What a strange girl Alice Graham is; I really believe she thinks more of one of those dull books over which she is forever poring, than of all the beaux in the country round. She'll never get married—she's past nineteen now."

"The better for us, my dear. If she was as affable as she is beautiful, we should have no chance."

"I don't know that—she would be a dangerous rival certainly; but, luckily, there is no likelihood of her powers being put to the test. Do you know that I suspect her insensibility to be sheer pride. She scorns the admiration of which it is impossible she is as unconscious as she appears to be."

"Oh! now you are growing malicious—so, to save your conscience and poor Alice's good name, I propose that we set off *instantly* on our delectable mission, in search of a match for this blue silk."

"I'd rather undertake to find a match for half a dozen 'blue' damsels; the formidable Alice included—but I suppose we must make the attempt. You are forgetting your parasol."

And the ladies departed, leaving all thought of Alice and her oddities behind them.

Alice Graham, the fair subject of the foregoing and many similar conversations, was the only daughter of the oldest and principal physician of our village. She was beautiful—with that purely Grecian outline of feature, and classic form, so rarely met with, save in antique statues; her dark soul-lit eye, and the expression of almost angelic sweetness, which ever rested on her features, betokened truly that the mind and heart within were worthy of so fair a casket. To be sure, a very close observer might have detected a slight expression of pride on that exquisite lip, but I thought it enhanced rather than diminished its beauty. And Alice *was* proud; but hers was true pride, not that petty vanity so often dignified by the name. Her life had been spent in the almost exclusive companionship of books and her own thoughts; she never evinced any inclination for society beyond the limits of her own family circle; and could it be wondered at, that with her superior mind and refined feelings, she derived little satisfaction from the idle chat, and unmeaning gallantries which often compose the chief conversation of young persons of her age. Hearing, however, that several young ladies, whose invitations she had politely declined, were great-

ly displeased at her "airs," she determined to avoid giving such offence in future, by joining in some of the parties to which she was always invited. But, alas for poor Alice! her conciliatory efforts only made matters worse. She possessed a brilliant wit, and happy turn for repartee, by which she often unintentionally wounded the vanity of those who found themselves unable to compete with her in the light, wordy skirmishes which so frequently arise between beaux and belles; and, therefore, she was decided to be "sarcastic." And what more formidable character could a young lady possess? Many a gentleman sat a whole evening longing to approach her, but deterred by the fear of her terrible propensity, while Alice sat apart, the perfect picture of innocent unconsciousness.

When Alice was about twenty, a gentleman of the name of Maitland came to M—, intending to remain a few months, with a view to the perfect restoration of his health, which was enfeebled by a long and severe illness. Although convalescent, he was unwilling to dispense entirely with the care of a physician, and frequently called upon Dr. Graham to obtain his advice in regard to the various little matters so important to a recovering invalid.

I was an intimate friend and almost daily visitor of Mr. Graham's, and in consequence frequently met Mr. Maitland. His appearance was gentlemanly, though not striking, but his voice was music itself, and the charm of his manner and conversation perfectly irresistible. I think he was the most fascinating person I have ever seen. His influence, though felt by all, was most strikingly displayed on the usually indifferent Alice. Her book was readily abandoned at his approach, and he soon entered the "charmed circle," who were allowed to hear her choice songs, and after he read "Paradise Lost" for us, which we plied the "threaded steel," Alice acknowledged that it was pleasanter to listen to a good reader than to read to one's self, which she never before would admit. But these little concessions came in quite naturally—there was nothing in her manner which Mr. Maitland, had he been a vain man, instead of the very reverse, could construe into evidences of a warmer feeling than friendship. And happened to value that friendship highly, though he supposed that the privileges he enjoyed were extended to many others.

"I was spending the afternoon at Mr. Graham's about three months after Mr. Maitland's arrival at M—, and we were all seated in the parlour, when he passed the house in a sulky.

"I wonder what takes Mr. Maitland to S— so often," said Mrs. Graham! "I don't think he can have business there. He must be well