

Rosamond many questions about her childhood, which were answered with so much frankness and simplicity, that they won many an approving smile from Mr. Walbrook, and many a half-veiled sneer from her *vis-à-vis*.

"You are a great lover of nature, Miss Sternfield," he said, bending upon her the intent gaze of a singularly intelligent, though plain countenance.

"Who is not?" returned Rosamond, with animation. "Nature is truth. A book laid open by the hand of God, and written in a language that all his creatures may read and understand without the aid of study. When I cease to love Nature, may I cease to be her child."

"Bravo! young enthusiast! Hold fast such sentiments, and thou shalt be the child of Nature, and the child of God."

"Did you ever meet with any one, Mr. Walbrook, who was indifferent to the beauties of creation?"

"Alas! but too many, in this great city,

"Of splendour and wretchedness,"

"There are multitudes whose hearts are so hardened by dissipation and pleasure, by selfish indulgence, and indifference to their own spiritual wants and the wants of others, that they no longer receive impressions from the simple and beautiful scenes of Nature, who like birds of evil omen, shut out light and sunshine, and prefer the red glare of the crowded halls of fashion to the light of day. I hope my cousin Rosamond will never be among these?"

"Nay! God forbid that I should become such a miserable creature," said Rosamond. "I think I should soon die if I were shut out from the country forever, and were condemned to gaze upon stone walls and narrow streets, instead of lofty trees, green grass and flowing streams."

"You were happy at Bramby, then?" said Mrs. Sternfield.

"Yes! but happier still in my humble home, because I did not feel out of my station as I did at Bramby, and as I do here."

"Would you like to return to the country?"

"Not yet, grandmamma. I want to know and love you."

"God bless the child!" said the old lady, overcome to tears. "I have not deserved this from Armin's child. Oh! the past, the past, Arthur! Oh! that I could recall the past!" she said, in mournful tones, as her nephew led her from the room.

"Well, thank goodness! I am not troubled with an evil conscience," said Marianne, shrugging her shoulders and looking up to the stuccoed

ceiling, "and I hate scenes. So you must cry to keep aunt company. A merry set we shall soon be, Miss Sternfield," she said, with an air of mock gravity. "In the absence of beaux, permit me the honor of taking wine with you—port or sherry?"

"Neither," said Rosamond, coldly.

"Phoo, child! you must go through the form. Now for the bow—that stupid piece of ill-acted formality. Now do it gracefully, I beseech you, as befits the heiress of Westholme. Not with a sudden, undignified jerk, as if you meant to strike the bottle with your nose, nor with a formal stiff inclination of the head, as if you were afraid your comb would fall out upon the table, and you were endeavouring to keep your perpendicular in order to prevent it; nor with a mincing, affected smirk, as if you were doing the gentleman (that is me, if you please,) great honor; nor with a languishing, die-away air, as if you were making love to him."

"And how is it to be done?" asked the wondering Rosamond.

"Done—why just as you see me do it," and with an easy, graceful inclination of her proud head, Miss Morton bowed to Rosamond, and drank off her glass of wine, as Mr. Walbrook re-entered the room.

"After dinner, Miss Sternfield, your grandmother wishes your company in the drawing-room. She is greatly agitated just now. Any allusion to the melancholy fate of her family affects her. You must excuse her absence from table."

"Poor grandmother!" said Rosamond; "how deeply I feel for her."

"Yes! she is indeed an object of deep commiseration in one sense, and of hope and assurance in another," said Mr. Walbrook. "It is a melancholy thing to look back upon a long life, and to find memory only allied to the keenest self reproaches and remorse. To find no green oasis in the vast desert of useless, mispent years, in which the soul can rest for one moment with a consciousness of having done its duty to God or man. On the other hand, it is a comfort to see the mercy of God water with late repentance and sincere and humble faith, this barren unprofitable track, and bid the roses of virtue bloom in the winter of old age and desolation."

"And what effected this great change in my grandmother's moral character?"

"We must attribute it to the grace of God. For so wrapped up in frivolity—so wedded to the world, was Mrs. Sternfield, that nothing less than divine interposition could save her from the moral death of the wicked. God worked through