

would have given their consent to her alliance with one so obscure. In the family circle, and by the poor in the neighbourhood, Miss Annesley was deeply valued. If a charity was to be performed, she was always one who came forward to lend her aid; if her brother or sister quarrelled, she was ever the peace-maker between them, or if a servant had a favour to ask, it was through her it was proposed. The cares of the household entirely devolved upon her, and most cheerfully and readily did she perform her part, thus relieving her mother, who was naturally indolent, more perhaps from a delicate state of health than from inclination. Two years prior to the present period, Mary had met with a severe accident, by her dress catching fire, and which had laid her on a sick bed for several weeks; yet, during the whole time, though suffering intense pain, no murmur was heard to pass her lips, her first words being, "Oh, how fortunate it was not my beautiful sister Beatrice." She had always possessed a high reverence for religion; but it was during her solitary hours that a clearer light was permitted to dawn upon her soul, and display to her the Saviour in his matchless perfection; that to him alone she owed her hopes of salvation; that her good works were only the fruits of her belief in his atonement. How happy did this knowledge make her, and how deep was the gratitude she felt that her eternal welfare was not left doubtful, but was *promised* to her and to all who would come thus simply and confidently to the feet of Jesus; and how eager became her desire to impart to others the truths she had herself learnt. But as yet she had met little encouragement. Mrs. Annesley was nominally a Christian, who made an effort to attend church regularly on the Sabbath-day; but she had no idea of uniting religion with all she did, all she thought. She could advise and preach, but she could not practice. She would occasionally read long moral discourses to her children and her servants, and feel annoyed and disappointed when her efforts only produced yawning and weariness. She was not aware that consistency of conduct was required to enforce the principles she enjoined; and at length, in disgust, she relinquished her attempts, and constituted Mr. Mortimer the sole guardian of their spiritual concerns. As a mother, she was partial. She could not but respect and value Mary for her amiable qualities and her usefulness; she felt proud of her son; but Beatrice she perfectly idolised, centering in her every maternal hope, every fond desire, while she left, every fault unchecked and unrestrained, from a false and mistaken affection. "She could not bear to see her weep; childhood was formed for smiles alone." Thus she reasoned, and thus she spoiled. She had herself been married when very young to the Hon. Augustus Annesley, a quiet gentlemanly man, who made a kind husband and father, as far as his nature permitted him, but who was more entirely devoted

to scientific pursuits than to his family. Amongst the friends who occasionally paid a visit to Annesley Park, were Sir George and Lady Brereton, of Norwood Abbey, in —shire. Lady Brereton and Mrs. Annesley had been old school-companions, who had suffered that early acquaintance to ripen into a friendship as strong as it can ever become between two persons so very worldly minded as they were. Mrs. Annesley had always indulged a secret wish to see their families united by marriage, till this hope faded away, by the only son of Sir George determining to enter the army, much against the will of his parents, and leaving home, to go abroad with his regiment, at the early age of sixteen. The high interest of his father, however, obtained him rapid promotion, and at the close of ten years, he returned home a lieutenant colonel. During the convalescence of Mary, after the severe accident alluded to, Lady Brereton invited her to the Abbey for change of air. This might have renewed the hopes of Mrs. Annesley; but when she looked in the pale plain face of Mary, good and sweet though it was in its expression, she shook her head in despair. Mary rather dreaded the visit, as she knew that Lady Brereton was very fond of gaiety, and usually filled her house with rank and fashion; but she could not decline it, particularly as she promised to allow her to be as much alone as she liked.

Norwood Abbey was a splendid pile, whose gothic architecture and emerald dark woods bespoke its having descended through many generations ere it came to its present possessor. There was a repose in its silent streams and velvet lawns, shaded as they were by venerable trees, quite in keeping with the sombre monastic character of the place. Mary was so charmed by its magnificence, as suddenly it burst upon her sight, from a turning in the road, that, clasping her hands, she exclaimed: "Surely I am entering the enchanted wood of Armida!"

From Sir George and Lady Brereton she experienced a kind and hospitable reception; but timid as she was, and for the first time thrown entirely amongst strangers, she was thankful to retire to her own apartment, and find herself alone with her old attached attendant, Norris. Although Lady Brereton had assured her that she had very few guests, yet Mary, to her dismay, on entering the drawing-room before dinner, found it filled with splendidly attired ladies and fashionable gentlemen. In vain she looked round for one kind and familiar face—not one presented itself—and she sank into the chair offered to her by Lady Brereton next herself, with a feeling of isolation, which to be understood must be experienced. A voice near her aroused her attention, and on turning towards the spot, she beheld a young man conversing with a lady, whose striking appearance could not fail to arrest her notice. He was rather tall, and finely proportioned, while on his noble brow there sat a regal dignity, which would well