

Lady Dacre has offered me a very lucrative situation in her establishment, and as I love money, and hate to be dependent upon the cold, extorted charity of my relations, I have accepted her proposal, and leave you this evening. It is useless to interfere with my arrangements. I have attained my majority, and, thank God! am a free agent."

"Marianne, I will not urge upon you the plea of obligation, or bid you remember the ignominious obscurity from which I rescued you, for if you are insensible to these benefits, conferred upon you out of compassion to your forlorn and deserted childhood, it is both useless and vain to recall them to your mind. But I had hoped that you regarded me with affection; and to part with you in this cold, heartless manner, causes me severe pain."

Marianne seemed slightly moved by her aunt's appeal to her better feelings, but to yield would have ruined all her deep laid schemes of future advancement; she therefore replied with wonderful composure.

"It is true, Aunt, that you took me from a wretched home, where the guilt of my parents had consigned me to the tender mercies of the wicked; you educated, and placed me around your person; but until this moment I had no idea that you really loved me. Since I have been with you I have endeavoured to earn my living by waiting upon you, and obeying your commands; I have watched beside you in sickness, and tried to amuse you in health; and if you conferred a great obligation upon me, I too have been of great service to you. The debt is mutual. But the galling chain of dependence, if formed of gold, would eat into the heart. I have borne it too long, and now, I trust, it is broken for ever. I shall no longer be second to Rosamond in your estimation, or have to submit to the lectures of my Cousin Wallbrook. To each and all, I bid a hearty farewell," and, curtseying deeply, she withdrew, with a sarcastic smile upon her lip, leaving her aunt in tears, and Rosamond shocked at her audacity.

Yet what a relief it was to Rosamond, to be separated from one who was a constant spy upon all her actions; a cruel animadverter upon all her words; who sought by every means in her power to insult and annoy her; and who, she too truly judged, had been the cause of all her grief.

The next day found her on the long anticipated journey to Bramby; and unconsciously the image of Edgar associated itself with the beautiful memories of the place. No longer with joy she thought of her high minded lover—his image was accompanied with sad and painful regrets.

She had forgotten him for one most unworthy of him and her, one whom she still loved with the tenacity of youth, whom she strove in vain to forget.

Still in her mind there lurked a hope that Major Sternfield would yet be her husband; that time would convince him of his error, and bring him once more to her feet. At such moments the smile would return to her lip, the rose to her cheek, and for a few brief moments she would forget the past in bright anticipations of the future.

Their journey was rather dull, and occupied the best part of two days. On the evening of the second, she found herself once more in her Aunt Dunstanville's arms, who was not a little shocked at her delicate appearance.

"You had better have remained with me, Rosamond. The air of London is killing you."

"All air is alike"—whispered Rose—"to a wounded heart. Even the pure atmosphere of Bramby will scarcely restore me to myself."

"We will find a balm for your sorrow," returned the old lady. "We have a physician here—and you, sister," she cried, turning to Mrs. Sternfield—"you are welcome to my home. There was a time when I could not have held out the right hand of friendship to my brother's wife, and said, 'God bless you!' How happy I feel that that day is past—that we meet as friends."

Mrs. Sternfield silently returned the warm pressure of Mrs. Dunstanville's hand. She felt how deeply they had both erred—she knew by her own experience how sincere had been their repentance, and the tears that flowed down her cheeks, were more convincing to her husband's sister, than words. In a few minutes, harmony was restored, and the parties so long adverse, sat down in cheerful re-union to their evening meal.

"I wish Edward could witness this scene," said Mrs. Sternfield.

"Be assured, grandmamma, he does witness it; that he is one of the party. The spirits of the dead sleep not; but hover around the living objects of their love, to reprove their errors, or strengthen them in the paths of virtue."

"And poor Ardyn!" said Mrs. Dunstanville; "can he reprove or admonish his angel child? Ah! my Rosamond, your theory is very beautiful, but I fear it is fallacious."

"I never knew my father living—I cannot realize him dead. He is surrounded with a tender, melancholy mystery, which pains me when I think about him; but let us change the subject, it distresses my dear grandmother."