

ing. The exhibition is over—we shall now hear the young gentleman speak for himself.”

“I have been much pleased, cousin Alice, with the contents of your sister’s portfolio. She draws sweetly. Have you devoted any time to the attainment of this delightful art?”

“Very little indeed. A few sketches from nature include all my attempts in that way.”

“Alice would never take lessons,” said Mrs. Linhope, “and she could not reasonably hope to excel.”

Now young Fleming entertained a decided contempt for that species of egotism which leads many young people to imagine that they can effect by their own talents, without the aid of a master, greater things than those who have patiently acquired the technical rules of art. He could scarcely look in his cousin Alice’s face, and unite its modest, unpresuming expression with such affectation and vanity. Sophia’s speech, in the afternoon, it must be confessed, had prejudiced him against her, and her silence on the subject had rather increased than diminished these unfavorable impressions. He was anxious to discover in what manner she so greatly excelled Sophia that she should take upon herself the part of a monitress; and couch her reproof in terms so severe. A person must possess great taste and a decided genius for his beautiful art,” said he, taking up Mrs. Linhope’s remark, “before they can produce anything worthy of notice, without the assistance of a master. Perhaps, Miss Linhope, you found the task more difficult than you at first imagined?”

“Perhaps I did,” said Alice, laughing, and quite unconscious of his drift.

“Will you allow me to look at your drawings?”

“With pleasure—but indeed, they are not worth your notice, cousin Arthur. I have often regretted the time so uselessly employed upon them.

“You must have possessed great perseverance,” said Arthur, drily.

“Not exactly,” said Alice. “At one period of my life my imagination was strangely haunted with ruined towers and old trees. A broken gate, a dismantled cottage, a picturesque turning in the road, a pretty group of ragged urchins at play with a handsome dog, diverted my attention from more important studies, and employed my pencil for hours.”

“From what you have said on the subject, I am convinced,” said Arthur, “that you have a natural taste for the art.”

“Yes. But the want of that technical knowledge which you so strongly recommend sadly puzzled me. Theory and practice, cousin Fleming, are very different things—what appeared easy in the one, the other rendered replete with difficulty. My cottages were often all on one side. My ruined towers, appeared in the very act of falling. My children’s arms and legs were out of all proportion; and my

dogs looked like some strange animals that had perished in the flood. I found that, without a master, I should never excel, and though I must confess, that it was with great reluctance, I gave up the study of drawing.”

“Why did you refuse instruction?” said Arthur.

“We were very poor at that time,” said Alice, “I did not think papa could afford to pay for lessons for us both. Sophia had excellent abilities that way, and wished much to become a proficient in this elegant accomplishment; and I gave up my prior claim.”

“That was generous. But it was a pity to sacrifice your own talents, which might have been rendered useful?”

“The sacrifice was less than you imagine,” said Alice; “Mr. Glover, Sophia’s master, was a very kind man, and allowed me to hear his instructions to my sister, and witness the lessons, so that I acquired almost as much as she did. You will perceive a great improvement in all my little sketches after his visits; and he often put in a few strokes, which added greatly to their appearance.”

This ingenuous confession on the part of Alice produced a favourable change in young Fleming’s mind; and he continued to regard her with an air of interest, almost amounting to admiration, for some minutes after she had ceased speaking. But again the thought occurred to him that she had said that her beautiful sister looked immodestly before the milliner, and he could not excuse such a piece of ill-natured detraction. Sophia broke in upon his reverie, by placing the portfolio which contained her sister’s drawings on the table before him. Not an elegant scarlet and gold morocco one—the splendid outside promising equal magnificence within,—but a plain, unobtrusive looking article, fitted up neatly for the purpose of taking sketches from nature. Sophy hated black-lead pencil drawings, and she thought her sister’s possessed very little merit, and must appear to great disadvantage after her own brilliantly coloured pieces of fruits and flowers. She therefore concluded that she might with safety appear amiable in the eyes of her cousin, by her pretended zeal in shewing off that which she felt confident he would not admire. Her vanity in this instance was doomed to undergo a severe disappointment, as those who make a practice of exalting themselves at the expense of others are too often apt to experience.

Alice Linhope’s drawings far exceeded her modest estimate of their merit. They were beautiful and spirited sketches from nature, and surpassed in real genius and freedom of design any thing that Sophy, with the aid of a master, was able to accomplish. Fleming, who considered himself quite a connoisseur in these things, asked, with some surprise, if they were her own designs.

“Do you think I could deceive you?” said Alice,