

## CHAPTER IV.

**T**HE winter was past, and it was now June—bright, sunny June—and Elm Grove was decked in its richest hues. Down from the house sloped a beautiful lawn, studded with shrubs, and adorned with flower-beds of different sizes and shapes; while in the centre there was a pond and fountain, with a weeping willow shading the sunny side, which gave an appearance of coolness quite refreshing. Beyond was the shrubbery and fruit garden; and to the left the meadow, bounded by a coppice.

The house was of the gothic order: on the right side of it was a beautiful conservatory, filled with the choicest plants; on the left a colonnade and terrace, shaded by a group of acacia trees. In front a piazza and large portico, around which honeysuckle, clematis and roses, shed their sweet perfume. The grounds were tastefully laid out, with due regard to shade; and a grove of elm trees completely hid the house from the avenue: so that in approaching it from the main road, the house seemed still in the distance—even out of sight—until, on taking a half turn round a thick clump of elms, one would unexpectedly come out right in front of the house, almost at the door. It was, as Emily had said, a delightful place.

The children had greatly improved under Isabel's care. Emily was quite like a sister, and even Miss Arlington treated her as an equal. Isabel knew that governesses were not usually so fortunate as to meet with such nice people, and appreciated their kindness accordingly. The walks, too, that she had so much dreaded, had become a pleasure,—not a disagreeable duty. Emily usually joined them, and not unfrequently Everard also. He performed almost impossibilities to get Isabel wild-flowers, of which, Rose had informed him, she was exceedingly fond. These, to his great annoyance, were always carefully deposited in a glass on the dining-room table; for Isabel had remarked in his manner toward her more than mere politeness, and endeavored as much as possible to check his growing attentions. But all his acts of kindness were