

feet. But Charles, instead of picking it up and replacing it as he had formerly so untiringly done, sat immovably still, while Constance herself bent forward and lifted it from the carpet. Fitzgerald quietly resumed his paper, and appeared as intently as ever absorbed in its contents; but to Charles and Constance the easy self-possession which had hitherto attended their intercourse was gone, and they remained silent and embarrassed, until Charles, muttering something which was unintelligible, left the apartment.

Constance and Charles had been educated together, and from a similarity in their tastes, Constance delighted in many of those studies in which Charles excelled. In music and painting Constance was no mean proficient, and now that Charles had returned, those pursuits which she had neglected during his absence were resumed. A small apartment, which in childhood they had called the school-room, and which still bore that name, was once more occupied, and its walls adorned by sketches, the productions of Charles, distinguished by the graphic, masterly touches of his hand, and by the softer, more delicately finished works of Constance. Paintings and pen-cillings in every stage of progress, some merely begun, and others abandoned by the impatience of Charles when half finished, lay scattered about. This apartment was now their favourite resort during the earlier portion of the day, and Captain Fitzgerald often looked in to see how the view of Ardmore, upon which Charles was engaged, was progressing; and also to sit for his own likeness, which he had consented to have taken at the earnest solicitation of Constance, who viewed with delight the resemblance which her partiality for the artist made her consider as perfect, and which, truth to tell, was no mean production.

One forenoon, as the youthful artists sat busily at work at their easels, Charles adding some finishing touches to the well executed representation of Ardmore, and Constance with earnest face bending over a sketch, which she no sooner traced with chalk, than, with a look of disappointment, she erased. Tired after many ineffectual attempts to portray a female face, she threw the pencil aside with an ejaculation of impatience, and Charles, looking up from his landscape, said:

"Constance, does the pencil refuse to obey you, that you look so dismal?"

"Yes! I have been trying for the last hour, Charles, to draw the outline of a female face, and I cannot succeed in delineating one which corresponds to my ideas of the beautiful. I desire to personify female loveliness in my picture according to my own ideas, but I find that

I must leave such a lofty design to hands more capable than mine. I can imagine such a face, but the moment the perverse chalk comes in contact with the canvas, I forget my beau-ideal, and nothing but a very ordinary face rewards my exertions."

"Allow me to try, Constance, whether I can be more successful than you," said Charles, taking up the discarded pencil. "In what style shall this paragon be portrayed? Shall I represent a fair daughter of the north, with golden tresses, azure eyes, and complexion in which the rose and lily strive for pre-eminence? Or shall I go to your own sunny land, Constance, and steal from it the raven hair, the eyes black as night, and the more soul-speaking faces of its beautiful daughters? Say, Constance, which it shall be?"

"Either you like," replied Constance, "I care not which. All I desire to behold is a face beautiful and perfect, and it matters not to what clime it may owe its style of loveliness."

For a few moments Charles shut his eyes, as if to exclude every external object, and appeared lost in deep thought; but suddenly a look, expressive of some bright idea, rewarded his intense study, and without further hesitation the pencil obeyed the ready hand, and as Constance gazed delighted, the outline of a face perfect and beautiful, even as she desired, stood boldly forth from the canvas.

But if Constance was delighted, Charles was completely enraptured with his success, and with an eager hand and a glowing cheek, he imparted the warm colours of life to the beautiful face. With parted lips and steadfast gaze, Constance watched the progress of the picture, which she almost forgot was a painting, so life-like were the animated, expressive eyes, so replete with thought and intellect the open brow, so well defined the faultless outline of every feature, so full of life the ruby lips, and the small dimple that lurked so mischievously upon the chin.

"Beautiful! most beautiful!" exclaimed Constance, as soon as she found words to express her delight.

"Beautiful! most beautiful!" echoed Charles, as he continued intently occupied with his delightful task.

"Oh, Charles! you have succeeded completely in expressing my idea of female loveliness! Who could believe that that eloquent face so replete with life and beauty, is merely a creation of the mind? That it exists only upon that cold canvas. To look upon it one would imagine that in this wide world there could surely be found its counterpart. Thanks, Charles! a thousand thanks; that painting must not be allowed to