

She would have said more had not servants quietly filed into the Hall; she beckoned to a respectable-looking, middle-aged woman.

"Mrs. Grant, pray assist these ladies to change their wet clothes, and provide them with dry ones. Send a messenger, also, to the Farm, and let Mr. Bach know that his nieces are safe."

We followed Mrs. Grant upstairs, to a large room which was furnished in such quaint style that I felt as if we must be dreaming, for I could not have imagined such a place to exist. The impression grew stronger when we had divested ourselves of our wet clothes, and had been induced to put on old dresses of stiff silk, with large sleeves and high frills round the neck.

"I do not like to come to a strange place and give so much trouble," said Ruth, bluntly. "I'd rather go home. Claudine, let us go home."

"Madam would not allow you to do so," said Mrs. Grant. "Pray, do not think of such a thing."

"What a country this is," said Ruth in an under tone, "to call a housekeeper, Madam!"

"Excuse me, Miss, I heard what you said. You are misinformed; I am the housekeeper. When I spoke of Madam, I meant Mrs. Montford."

Ruth and I exchanged glances of annoyance and surprise, and I said, "We did not know there was a Mrs. Montford."

"She has rarely stayed here," said the housekeeper. "She dislikes the dull old place."

"Give me my waterproof," said Ruth, with decision. "I am going home. We would not have come for the world had we known."

"Not without permission from Madam," said the housekeeper steadily. "You would greatly annoy her if you were to leave when she wishes you to stay."

"I do not like to stay, and I am going," said Ruth with determination;

but I whispered to her that it would not be polite to leave, and so we stayed.

The housekeeper left us, and Ruth with a sudden transition from the doubtful to the positive, skipped to the mirror and surveyed herself with some degree of satisfaction.

"I am very glad that we are so pretty," she said. "Now, Claudine, do not frown. We *are* pretty, we are healthy-looking, and that goes a long way towards good looks, and these old dresses are vastly becoming."

Poor Ruth, to turn round, surprised at my silence, and see Madam quietly smiling at her speech!

"I quite agree with you in my admiration for healthy appearance," said she. "Nay, my child, do not blush so; if you were not ashamed to think it, it was surely no shame to say it."

"I suppose not," said Ruth, as firmly as she could. "I believe I generally *say* first and think afterwards."

We all laughed then, and felt more at home with Madam.

"I came to show you the way to my sitting-room," said Madam, kindly. "This old wing has so many turns and small flights of steps that it would exercise your minds too much to find your way alone, and Mrs. Grant, I see, has disappeared."

There was so much to see and wonder at in the old house that we were quite at ease with Mrs. Montford before we arrived at her sitting-room; and once there we grew so much interested in talking to one another, that it was quite an unpleasant break when Ruth started up and said with decision that we must go home. Much to our surprise and inward delight, Mrs. Montford told us that she had written to our uncle, and that she expected him in the evening, and that if we would consent to her doing so, she should entreat of him to let us stay for a week or two at the Grange.

"We are very quiet folks, my son and I," said Madam, smiling,— "hardly