

"Since you have introduced a subject so painful to my feelings, pray proceed."

"I am sorry to witness this unnatural disunion, as I am confident that had you met as strangers, each would have appreciated the other's worth. Surely, Sophia, this state of things ought not to be! Speak, dearest cousin. Tell me candidly why you look upon Alice, who appears so kind and amiable, with fear and aversion?"

"We do not possess kindred hearts."

"In what respect do you differ?"

"In every thing," said Sophy, regaining her presence of mind. "Alice can neither enter into my feelings, nor participate in my pursuits. She is so intolerant and so bigotted to her own way of thinking, that she will never allow another to be in the right, who is so unfortunate as to differ with her in opinion. If I do not happen to agree with her on the same points, I draw upon myself a long lecture. If I would escape from a series of endless disputes, I must quietly submit to be thought in the wrong. She considers the most innocent amusements criminal; and without I dress as prim as a quakeress she rails at my vanity and extravagance. You heard the provoking speech she made at the milliner's?"

"I heard it repeated," said Arthur, gravely. "But are you quite sure that your own resentful feelings did not give different meaning to the words than was intended by the speaker?"

Sophia's eye kindled, and somewhat of her haughty and vindictive spirit crimsoned her cheek, as she replied, with great warmth. "No. It was said to wound and mortify my feelings, and render me contemptible in the eyes of Mrs. Lawrence, and her customers; and I did not repeat it with the coarseness and illnature with which it was said."

"But was it acting like a sister, to repeat it at all? I was a stranger to Alice, and the exposure of this unamiable trait in her character could not fail to produce an unfavourable impression on my mind. In so doing you were guilty of the same fault which appeared so reprehensible in her."

"I see that you think me wholly to blame in this 'unpleasant affair,'" said Sophy, bursting into tears of unfeigned anger and vexation. "If it had been the first, or the second time, that Alice had lectured me in public, I should not have thought so much of it. But she constantly finds fault with me before those to whom she wishes to appear interesting, and me ridiculous. Did she attempt to deny the charge I brought against her?"

"Perhaps she forbore from motives of delicacy."

"Oh, you don't know Alice!" said Sophia bitterly. "From my infancy, she has exercised an authority over me which has cancelled all the bonds of affection between us. I am sure she has little reason to be jealous of one so every way inferior to herself. But it is the most charitable motive I can assign for her conduct."

"I am sorry to hear this," said Arthur, suppressing a sigh while he thought that the latter part of Sophy's statement might be true. "What a pity that so much gross mingles with the purest gold. My dear cousin, take into careful consideration this great moral truth. That the interest of one sister, should be as dear to the other as her own. When the members of a family are united within themselves, they may defy the malice and illnature of the world—but our blessed Lord has said, 'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' Many young people err in this respect, from not fully understanding the relative duties they owe to each other. This excuse cannot be urged in the present case. You and your sister were instructed by an excellent father, in the knowledge of these important truths; and if Alice neglects the performance of these moral obligations, you are not less guilty in suffering yourself to be influenced by a bad example."

"But my sensibility is so acute that these ill-natured sarcasms wound me to the heart, and expose me to constant temptation."

"Then, my dear cousin, you should make the suppression of these evil passions the subject of earnest prayer—for you know not to what dreadful length the indulgence of them may carry you. 'He that hateth his brother is a murderer.' What an awful sentence, yet spoken by lips which could not lie. Hatred, Sophy, does not spring up in a moment. It is the work of time, which every rash and inconsiderate word we fancy spoken against us, strengthens, until the mass of unforgiven injuries corrodes the heart, and makes it the fit receptacle for the most dreadful crimes."

"Do not say any more, Mr. Fleming. You have convinced me that we are both in error, so let us drop this unpleasant subject, for the ruins are close at hand."

It was a fine warm evening, at the latter end of June; and the setting sun shed a flood of golden light through the magnificent arch which had once contained the chancel window of the Abbey. A young ash had sprung from a cleft in the broad marble slab, which once formed the covering of the altar, and its elegant foliage, pencilled on the crimsoned sky, formed a beautiful contrast to the time-worn edifice. It was an emblem of youth, waving its graceful tresses over the hoary locks of age.

Fleming seated himself upon one of the fallen pillars which had once adorned the stately aisles. The scene exceeded his expectations. The quiet beauty of the evening, the far off dash of the ocean, which bounded the prospect to the east with a silver girdle, the vast extent of the ruined edifice, with its picturesque groups of broken arches, and fallen columns overgrown with ivy, gave rise to reflections of a melancholy, but not displeasing cast. The reign of superstition is over—but the monuments of