

of you and Count de Roselt, for he never came near us."

"Then he is a friend of yours?"

"Oh, yes, a very old friend, particularly of my sister's," she continued, with another sly look.

Fleming turned towards Alice, thinking that Sophia was still in joke; but how was he shocked and surprised to see her face bathed in tears, and, hurrying past him, she left the room.

"Is your sister ill?"

"Oh, no, but she don't like to be teased about Marsham. He is desperately in love with her. Alice gives him no encouragement to hope that she will ever be his wife; and latterly the mere mention of his name greatly agitates her. They don't let me into their secrets, and I don't suppose that it will ever be a match."

When Sophia ceased speaking, Mrs. Linhope resumed the subject, and gave Arthur, who appeared strangely interested in the narrative, a history of the Marshams—of Roland's early attachment to Alice—and the reason why her worthy father had strongly admonished her not to become his wife. "I do not think my girl is attached to Roland in the same way that he is to her, for his passion partakes largely of the nature of his malady. It is natural, however, that she should not be indifferent to one who has loved her from a child. The situation in which both are placed is a very painful one. I never question Alice on the subject. I leave the matter entirely to herself—so fully persuaded am I of the integrity of her heart, and the simplicity and purity of her nature, that I am certain that she will do that which is right."

"Poor Alice, these are sorrows which I had no idea you had to contend with," sighed Fleming. "It is this secret wee that has blanched that fair cheek, and given such a shade of tender melancholy to your lofty brow. Yes, it is but too natural to imagine that she does love him. I wish that either I had never seen her, or that Roland and I could change our relative positions."

He sat down, and took up a book; but his eyes wandered at random over the pages. The image of Alice floated perpetually before him—the last tender glance of those dove-like, eloquent eyes, had cast a spell over him, which, though he felt it was madness to dwell upon, he could no longer shut out. The rain continued to fall in torrents, and Sophia made loud and vehement complaints against the weather, and remained stationary at the window, watching the progress of the heavy clouds, as they passed over, at times darkening the atmosphere, and deluging the earth with their watery stores.

"It will not clear up today, Sophy," said Fleming, at length raising his head from his book. "Do you imagine that our discontented revilings will alter the unerring laws of nature, or that the sun will diminish aught of his accustomed heat, or the

clouds cease to refresh with showers the parched earth, out of respect to a new bonnet or a delicate complexion?"

"No, but I am a professed weather grumbler."

"Then you class yourself with a very disagreeable set of people, my little cousin. In the winter, when the ground is covered with snow, and the atmosphere is proportionably cold, the regular weather grumblers exclaim, though seated over a cheerful fire, 'that they are half frozen. The weather is dreadful—intolerable—unbearable; that they never recollect such a severe season before'—though every winter has heard them utter the same complaint. So that if the cold had increased in proportion to their exaggerated statements, this goodly isle would by this time have rivalled Nova Zembla. One would imagine that these salamanders would never find the weather too hot for their chilly temperament. No such thing. The moment the summer commences their lamentations begin. They don't know how to bear the heat—it is too warm to live—and should a few days of rain providentially succeed to cool the atmosphere and refresh the drooping vegetable world, they still continue to murmur, and attack the odious rain, which has obliged him to postpone some previously concerted party of pleasure. Now, Sophia, they do not reflect that it is not only useless, but highly criminal, to arraign the wisdom of that Being who directs the operations of the elements—who makes the storm and calm work together for the benefit of his ungrateful creatures—whose way is in the whirlwind, and his path in the deep waters—who has made nothing in vain—but out of temporary evil produces lasting good."

"I wonder," said Alice, who had re-entered the room and resumed her work, during the latter part of her cousin's speech, "what sort of weather we should have if the elements were at our own disposal?"

"I do not think we should find one person in the world philosopher enough to direct them for a single day," said Fleming, laughing. "My cousin Sophy would re-act the fable of Phaeton, and, in her zeal to produce another hot day, overdo the work and set the world on fire."

"I think the ancients must have invented that fable," said Alice, "to serve as a lesson to those who make a constant practice of quarrelling with the weather. For my own part, I am so fond of spring and summer that if I were prime minister to the sun I much fear that I should never suffer him to enter the winter solstice; and Sophy, who makes such war against rain, would never be prevailed upon to give orders for a necessary shower to refresh the earth."

"I do not say that," replied Sophia; "but it should only rain in the night."

"To the great and serious annoyance of all