

I had nearly arrived at the end of the fourth closely written sheet, when a light tap at the door of the sitting room, announced the presence of Catharine Lee.

"What, busy writing still, Geoffrey? You must lay by your pens and ink for this day—your cheek is quite flushed and feverish. Come, I must be obeyed."

"Wait a few minutes, my dear Miss Lee, and your will shall be absolute. It was because I was writing of you, that my letter has run to such an unconscionable length."

"Of me, Geoffrey?"

"Yes, of you, my charming friend."

"Nay, Geoffrey, you are but joking—you would never distress me by writing of me to strangers."

"Strangers—oh no—but this is to one most dear to us both. To my beloved and faithful friend, Philip Mornington."

Catharine turned very pale.

"Geoffrey, I hope you have said nothing that I would wish unsaid."

"Do not look so frightened, fair Catharine; have a little patience, and you shall read the letter. If you do not approve of it, I will write another—but you must sit down by me, like a good girl, whilst I tell you first, all I know of my poor friend's melancholy history."

I then recounted to my attentive auditor, the history with which the reader is already acquainted, although the relation was often broken by the tears and sighs of the agitated girl.

After I concluded, a long silence ensued—poor Catharine was too busy with her own thoughts to speak. I put the letter I had been writing in her hands, and retired to compose myself in my own chamber. My letter was but a simple statement of the facts as related above—I had left him to draw from them what inferences he pleased.

When I returned to the sitting room, Catharine was leaning over the balcony, with the open letter still in her hand. Her fine eyes were raised and full of tears. She looked serene and happy—her face reminding me of the sun bursting through an April cloud, which dimmed, only to increase by softening, the beauty it could not conceal.

"Well, dearest Catharine, may I finish my letter to poor George, for George I must call him still."

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because I mean to finish it myself," said Miss Lee, laughing; "will you give me permission?"

"By all means—it will make him so happy."

"And you are not jealous," said Catharine, bending on me a curious and searching glance.

"Not now—a few weeks ago I might have been. To tell you the truth, dear Miss Lee, I am too selfish to love one who cannot love me. I feel proud

of claiming your friendship, and sincerely rejoice in the good fortune of my friend."

"This is as it should be," said Catharine; "yet I must own that my woman's vanity is a little hurt at the coolness of your philosophy. We all love power, Geoffrey, and do not like to lose it. This is the weakness of our nature—yet I am truly glad that you have conquered an attachment which would only have served to render us both miserable. When do you think that you will be able to return to Moncton Park?"

"In a few days, I hope—I feel the return of strength, and my mind recovers its elasticity with returning health. But how, dear Miss Lee, shall I ever be able to repay you and your excellent aunt, for your great kindness to me?"

"Say no more about it, Geoffrey," said Catharine Lee; "your accident has been productive of great good to us all. You have made two whom a cruel destiny had separated, most happy."

CHAPTER XX.

Another week of torturing delay slowly wore on, before I found myself mounted upon my good steed, and once more on the road to Moncton Park. The day was oppressively warm—not a breath of air stirred the branches of the lofty trees that soared up from the high hedges that skirted the road, and cast their cooling shadows on my dusty path. Overcome by the heat, and languid from long confinement to a sick chamber, in spite of my impatience to attain the end of my journey, I often checked my horse and sauntered slowly along, keeping the shady side of the road, and envying the cattle in the meadows standing mid leg in the stream.

"There will surely be a storm before night," I said, looking wistfully up to the then cloudless sky, which very much resembled Job's description of a molten looking glass; "I feel the breath of the tempest in this scorching air—a little rain will render tomorrow's journey more agreeable by laying the dust."

My soliloquy was interrupted by the sharp ringing of a horse's hoofs against the stony ground, and a rider passed me at full speed. A transient glance of the man's face made me suddenly to recoil. It was Robert Moncton. He looked pale and haggard, and his countenance wore its usual heavy immovable expression. He did not notice me, and checking my horse, I felt relieved when a turning in the road hid him from my view.

His presence appeared like a bad omen—a heavy gloom sank upon my spirits, and I felt half inclined to halt at the small village I was approaching, for the rest of the day, and resume my journey in the cool of the evening. Ashamed of such weakness, I resolutely set my face against every house of public entertainment I passed, and had nearly cleared the