

ping her hands and laughing in the uncontrollable glee of her heart at this unexpected change of fortune. "My dear, generous son!" said old Mrs. Fleming, carefully folding his letter, and taking off her spectacles to wipe the tears from her eyes. "Did I not tell you, Anne," she continued, turning to her daughter, "that he would one day restore to you, as the dear children, the property his unfortunate speculations lost?"

"My brother has indeed proved himself a true friend," said Mrs. Linhope. "May God bless him! for he has removed a heavy burden from my heart."

"Ah! dearest mother," said Alice, "never again doubt the mercy of God. To those who believe, all things are possible!"

From that day the most affectionate correspondence was established between the neices and their uncle. From him they derived all their comforts, and he was duly acquainted with the manner in which they spent their time, and expended his bounty. Mr. Fleming was charmed with the simple style of Alice Linhope's letters, whilst the gay vivacity of Sophia amused him.

"Which of these girls would suit you best for a wife, Arthur?" said the old gentleman, in a jocular tone, to his son, after receiving the accustomed packet from England. "This lively rogue, who thanks me for a new gown, and bewails the loss of a favorite bird in the same line, or the quiet, unpretending scribe, who only thinks of her old grandmother, and never mentions herself and her own concerns till the last? There is something in her easy, unaffected letters, which greatly reminds me of that excellent man, her father."

"I think I should prefer my cousin Alice," said Arthur, after carefully perusing the two letters. "There is more heart in what she writes; more effect in the style of the younger sister."

"You are right, boy! Alice is the gold. I'll warrant her heart, a bale of precious merchandise. But you shall see them both, and judge for yourself."

Two years had elapsed since their uncle had come to this determination. Alice had just completed her nineteenth year. At the time of her father's death, Alice was as beautiful as her sister; but a malignant fever, caught while visiting the cottages of the poor, had stolen the roses from her cheeks, and left a marble paleness, which rendered her less striking, but rather gave an additional interest to her delicate, and intelligent countenance.

CHAPTER IV.

ON re-entering the parlor, Alice, to her unspeakable satisfaction, found her grandmother had been induced to join the party below. Mrs. Fleming, though eighty years old, retained the use of all her mental faculties; but her great bodily infirmities

confined her entirely to the house, and generally to her own chamber. Alice usually spent her evenings in her grandmother's apartment, reading aloud to her, or amusing her by relating any entertaining story she might have heard during the day. She loved the old lady, whose character she deeply respected, and her presence at the moment she felt a protection from herself. She cast a timid glance round the room, and silently took her place at the tea-table. Her sister and cousin, already on the most friendly terms, were standing in the recess of a distant window, that opened into the garden, both busily, and apparently pleasingly employed, in looking over Sophia's portfolio. As Alice glided past, Mrs. Fleming, the old lady, took her hand, and said in a low, affectionate tone:

"Why did you absent yourself, Alice, on this joyful occasion? I never knew you to act the prudent before."

"Nor now either, dear grandmamma. I had my reasons for acting as I did—but I cannot explain myself here."

"I guess your secret. And now tell me whom your cousin resembles?"

Alice cast a penetrating glance towards the spot where young Fleming stood. He was so much engrossed with her sister, that he had not noticed her entrance. Sophia was showing him a very elegant group of flowers; and as they bent over the drawing, his dark chesnut hair, and her glossy fair ringlets, nearly mingled together. Sophia was pleased and animated, and looked more beautiful than usual; and Alice, struck by their personal appearance, could not help thinking they would make a very interesting couple. United to a man who possessed sufficient influence over her to correct her faults, and overcome her selfish and extravagant habits, what a charming woman and useful member of society she might become. From these reveries she was again roused by Mrs. Fleming.

"Is Arthur like any one whom you have seen?"

"Yes, he strikingly resembles my mother. The same regular features—hazel eyes, and warm, dark complexion."

"I have his father's face this moment before me," said the old lady. "Yes, yes, he is a Fleming. His Dutch mother has not spoiled his English features. Is he not handsome?"

"No," said Alice. "He is more interesting than handsome; but I think we had better dismiss this subject, for should he overhear us, he will naturally conclude that we imagine him deaf, or at least unacquainted with the English language, by discussing these points before him."

"You need not be under any alarm. He is too much engrossed with your sister to perceive that we are violating Lord Chesterfield's rules of good breed-