

"I suppose he dropped it," said I. "He came here while you were out."

"What for, I wonder?" she fixed on me a penetrating look of the red-brown eyes.

"He said he came to hear me play." I answered as carelessly as I could, but I know I looked guilty.

"Mamma, only fancy," said the monkey, in the evening, "Bob is growing fond of music! He actually went to the school-room to-day to hear Miss Norton play."

April 9th.—I thought something was coming when I received a message from Mrs. Knollys this afternoon, to the effect that when the lessons were over she would be glad of my company for a drive. Silently wondering at so unusual a request, I sent a grateful acquiescence, and at three o'clock found myself seated in the carriage at her side.

For some time she spoke of nothing but the most ordinary matters.

The day was exquisitely fine, and I enjoyed the drive through the balmy spring air and over the furzy, breezy common, too much to think of anything but the present pleasure. Mrs. Knollys was in her most amiable mood, so that I had no reason to fear that the private conference to which I had been summoned would prove a very disagreeable one. By degrees she insensibly led the conversation from general subjects to more familiar matters. She began with the song of a bird in the leafless hedge; from that diverged to Emily's music, for which the child shows a rare aptitude; this led to a comparison between the two children, and a discussion on Clara's beauty, and from her beauty to Fanny's was but a short stop. That point once touched, a certain satisfaction in the lady's manner told me the discussion had reached its destination.

"Yes, she is very pretty," said Mrs. Knollys, in reply to a remark of mine. "I expect her to be much admired when introduced, and, when her turn comes, she will make a lovely bride."

"And it is not likely but that will be soon," I said, "or gentlemen have less taste than I give them credit for."

Mrs. Knollys looked at me. "Do you not know? Has not my daughter told you that she is engaged to her cousin Everard?"

It all flashed on me; I understood now what had before been dark. The childish engagement, (he had been abroad two years,) the promise given when she knew not to what she pledged herself, the wakening of the woman's heart, the attachment of her cousin, known too late. Poor Fanny!

"Indeed! I was not aware of it," I said. "Miss Knollys has never spoken to me on the subject."