

with me. Your arrival I have looked forward to as an epoch in my life; I trust we shall be friends, for though you are rich, and I am poor, we are very nearly related to each other."

"I will not acknowledge the relationship," said Rose, "unless you remind me of it, by calling me cousin. Remember, I am never Miss Sternfield to you, but plain Cousin Rose, and you shall be Marianne. Will you promise me this?"

"Yes, with pleasure—I am sure we shall love each other."

"I hope so. I have long wished for a friend of my own age, and I rejoice in having found one in you."

Pause one moment, poor, unsophisticated country girl! before you put faith in that handsome, but sinister countenance. Marianne Morton has not a truth-telling face like thine, which reflects, as the lake does the Heavens, every star that shines upon it, every dark cloud that floats above its surface. There is no reflection of the glory of God in that apparently frank, but shut up heart. Her real thoughts and feelings are not for others; they are dark as the night of death, taught in the silent schools of hypocrisy and cunning. She loves thee not. She cannot love aught so unlike herself. She wishes thee far, far away in the dust of oblivion, for thou art come to mar all her deep schemes of self-interest and worldly aggrandizement, and the angel of this world will triumph for a while, and give thee an unresisting victim into her power.

Rose knew little of the intricacies of the human heart; she judged others by a higher standard than herself, and having been brought up in obscurity, she fancied that every one who possessed polished manners, and a dignified appearance, was her superior. Delighted with the beauty and courtesy of Marianne Morton, she rushed eagerly into the friendship she offered, and gave her her confidence without the least mental reservation.

Rosamond did not see her grandmother again that day. The meeting had been too much for the old lady's delicate nerves, and the evening was spent in her own apartment with Mrs. Dunstanville and Marianne. On the morrow, after a conference of several hours in private with her sister-in-law, Mrs. Dunstanville took a tender leave of her niece, begging her to write frequently to Bramby, and let her know how she was coming on.

Rose wept bitterly at parting with her aunt, whom she loved much, and looked upon as a sincere friend.

"Any message for Edgar?" asked the old lady in a whisper.

"Edgar!" exclaimed Rose thoughtfully, for until that moment she had forgotten the letter he had given her at parting. "I forgot all about Edgar!"

"So soon!" said the old lady, gravely. "Poor Edgar!"

"Give my love to him, Aunt, and tell him I have not had time to read his letter, but I will answer it when I write to you."

"How is this, my child, are you in correspondence with Mr. Hartland, and I not know it?"

Rose stammered and blushed deeply.

"Aunt," she said, "you shall know all about it. I have no secrets from you. I do not love Edgar Hartland. He is my friend—as such I may answer his letter."

"If you do not love him, Rosamond, it is most cruel to encourage hopes which can never be realized. Remember, he is not like other men; he cannot speak his grief; sorrow and disappointment would break his heart."

"Ah!" said Rose, sighing deeply, "he must not be unhappy on my account—I will write and tell him so."

As she ceased speaking, she caught the eye of Miss Morton bent sarcastically upon her, and in spite of the friendship she had conceived for Marianne, she shrank from its scornful, searching gaze.

"Who is this Mr. Hartland?" she asked of Rosamond, the moment they were once more alone.

"A deaf and dumb gentleman, of large fortune, who resides at Oak Hall, near my aunt's."

"And he has fallen in love with my pretty cousin?"

"Yes," said Rose, with the greatest simplicity, "and I am very sorry for him, for he is very handsome, and very talented, and an excellent young man."

"Humph! pity, they say, is the parent of love; but for Heaven's sake, Cousin Rose, do not mar your fortunes, by marrying a deaf and dumb man, out of pity. Ha! ha! ha! the thing is so absurd that it amuses me. Come now, do tell me all about this romantic adventure. This tongue-tied Adonis! There's a dear little rustic."

Rose did not much like this sort of bantering, but in the hope of exculpating herself from blame, she informed her new friend of all that had passed between Edgar and herself, and Marianne diverted herself with a hearty laugh at her expense.

"I hope you will make a conquest of my saintly cousin, Arthur Walbrook," said Marianne, still laughing. "I should enjoy no greater fun,