

your dainty hand? Let me see. One — two — three, you have rejected already, without any reason, that I could discover, sufficient to warrant such a procedure. You seem bent on breaking hearts, sister."

"Indeed, Alice, you wrong me," said Belinda gravely. "I should be very sorry to feign an attachment where I did not feel one, for the sake of an unworthy triumph. As for the gentlemen to whom you refer, I can conscientiously state, that I never gave them the least encouragement; if they chose to interpret my actions otherwise, I regret it, but do not consider myself to blame."

"Well, well, Belinda, I have no doubt such is the case; but I am really curious to know your reasons for thus summarily dismissing them. We will begin with the first, William Edgington. You cannot deny that he has youth, health, and good looks in his favor; now what did you find to counterbalance these?"

"His egotism. The subject of his conversation, from morning to night, is ever the same. You are continually hearing of his wonderful achievements, the dangers he has experienced, of his fearlessness and courage, and the commendations he has received for the performance of various feats. A miserable woman indeed, his wife will be, continually obliged to hear of his amiable disposition, but never beholding a proof of it. He prides himself on being exceedingly gentle, but to whom? To the poor woman who crosses his path, and who has daily to earn her scanty bread, does he endeavor to mitigate the harshness of her lot by, at least, common civility? No, no, it is reserved exclusively for ladies of wealth; his servants see but little of it, if reports speak correctly. It was but yesterday I overheard him in crossing the street, lecturing to a poor woman, who, with an infant in her arms, was soliciting his charity. In harsh and imperious tones he ordered her away, and I could not help contrasting his behavior to her, with his complaisant and fawning manner to one whom he considers a *lady*."

"But, Belinda, I think you are too severe. What else could he have done?"

"Do as every noble-minded man would have done. First inquire into the merits of the case, and then endeavor to relieve."

"I see," said Alice laughing, "he would never have