

early," she exclaimed, somewhat surprised, for the latter rarely made her appearance before noon.

"I have risen earlier, because I wished, dear aunt, to make my peace with you," said the young girl, as she seated herself beside her relative. "Is my past offence pardoned?" she continued, taking Miss Murray's hand. "You know I was very provoking yesterday."

"Oh! it is all forgotten, long since," was the kind reply; "but, had you a pleasant evening?"

"Delightful!" and Florence relapsed into silence.

Miss Murray, who had previously called up her patience to hear, as usual, a long sarcastic account of the entertainment, with criticisms on nearly every individual present, was much surprised at this unusual forbearance, and would have hailed it as a good omen, only, glancing at her companion, she perceived her eyelids were half closed, whilst her wearied attitude betokened she was far from recovered, as yet, from the fatigue of the preceding night.

"Were you introduced to any new acquaintances?" she at length asked.

"Oh! yes," returned Florence, instantly brightening up. "An Esquire, a Baronet, and an Earl. A very respectable trio for one night; however, the Esquire could not dance, the Baronet could not talk, and the Earl, though he could do both, through his unaccountable shyness or reserve, was the stupidest companion of the three."

"What was the name of the latter?" inquired Miss Murray.

"The Earl of St. Albans. He asked permission to call."

"When do you expect him?"

"I do not exactly know; he is going out of town," and she turned quickly away, as if to avoid further questioning.

Some days after, Florence, who was seized with occasional fits of industry, escaped to the saloon, and seating herself in her favorite easy chair, took up some Italian work which she was translating, and entered zealously on her task. She was passionately fond of the language; in fact, it was the only pursuit she followed with any degree of application, and though only a short period had elapsed since she had embraced it, her progress was surprisingly rapid. Struck by the peculiar beauty of a passage in the poem, she unconsciously commenced reading it aloud, when the voice of the servant, who announced, "The Earl of St. Albans," brought her speech to an abrupt conclusion. Gracefully shaking back the dark tresses which had completely overshadowed the volume, Florence, with a height-

ened colour, rose to receive her guest, who, after a low, but cold bow, seated himself on a distant ottoman. He was strikingly handsome; dark, deep blue eyes, and masses of wavy, auburn hair, shading a brow of lofty height, but girlish fairness. Indeed, there was something almost partaking of feminine timidity in his whole bearing, in the low, quiet voice, the shy, distant manners, and the rich colour which mounted with every word into his cheek. And yet, few had better foundation for self-confidence than Sydney, Earl of St. Albans; of high and honoured lineage, the possessor of princely wealth, and eminently gifted as he was, in mind and person. His many claims to consideration, however, seemed but to increase his diffidence, and few school boys, but just emancipated from Virgil and Horace, could have felt less self-reliance or confidence in their own powers. Indeed, Florence was sadly puzzled how to entertain her guest. He possessed none of that convenient flow of small talk which frequently passes away an hour as well as the most interesting, profound subject, and in reply to her lively sallies, her animated remarks, she received but monosyllabic replies. All things, however, must have an end, and at length, even her store of jests and sayings was exhausted. An awful pause ensued.

"Does he ever intend to go?" was Florence's inward thought. The Earl, however, displayed no such intention, but fixed his eyes on a small rug at his feet, as if he had just discovered something very fascinating in the representation of a young cat traced upon it.

"Were you at the last Opera?" she at length asked, in sheer desperation.

"No, I was out of town."

"Do you like our new Prima Donna?"

"Yes."

"Are you fond of music?"

"Very."

This was too much, and out of all patience, Florence sprang from her seat with an abruptness which startled her companion, approached the piano, and after a brilliant prelude, ran over some new and popular air. Her movement seemed to have inspired the Earl with a little courage, for after a short time he left his distant corner, and seated himself beside the table, near the chair she had just vacated. Florence, however, took no heed of the change, and more completely tired of her guest than she had ever been with any morning visiter in her life, she continued almost mechanically to run through the brilliant piece she had commenced. With the same lightning rapidity with which her fingers flew over the keys, did her thoughts vary, now