

you this morning. I wish you to make yourself as killing as possible, that my pretty Florence may not be outshone by her ladyship; for I should not wonder if she made a violent assault on the attentions of poor Fred, as his expectations are rather better than those of our other gallants, and I am determined she shall either content herself with the Knight of Lincoln, whom you say has so lauded her beauty, or, throwing poor Ellen in the shade, condescend to smile on Sir Edgar Roscoe."

"I shall not enter into any of your schemes," said Florence, whose heart beat painfully; "so you must not rely on me to assist you in your various plans. But you know we are to walk this morning."

They were soon ready for their walk, and lady Harriet as she placed the neat straw hat on the head of Florence, kissed her cheek and led her from the chamber.

CHAPTER IX.

WHEN they entered the drawing-room they found their companions awaiting them, and all arose at once to leave the room. As they did so, Florence addressed a slight remark to Sir Edgar, who, as he answered, presented his arm. She accepted not unwillingly, for the remembrance of what Sir James had said, made her wish in some manner to avoid lord Frederick. A dark frown gathered on the brow of his lordship as he drew the arm of lady Harriet through his, much to the discomfort of Lawton, who, as if determined that the change in the formerly established arrangement should be general, placed himself beside the lady Julia Gracely.

"That was rather coolly done for so quiet a fellow as Sir Edgar," remarked lady Harriet, as she began to weary of her brother's silence. "I begin to think he has some of the true spirit after all."

"But, Miss Oakley," said Lord Frederick, "does she think thus to trifle with me! She shall find that I will not submit to become the victim of her coquetry! I had thought her good and amiable, as well as beautiful, but I fear I have been deceived: if she will listen to the flattery of Sir James Wilmet, and encourage the attentions of Sir Edgar Roscoe, she is not worthy the regard of one who has studiously endeavored, in every action of his life, to follow the path of rectitude and honor."

"Brother! dear brother! do not judge too hastily! Could Florence, when Sir Edgar presented his arm for her acceptance, consistently have said, 'Excuse me, but I prefer to walk with lord

Frederick,' and on what other pretence could she have declined him? No, brother mine, you must admit that she is entirely exempt from blame; and if you do not abandon at once all your jealous thoughts, and grant her a free and unconditional pardon, I shall pronounce you devoid of even the common feelings of humanity, and proclaim you to the world as a monster of malignity, who should be seen only to be dreaded and avoided."

"But the affair of Sir James," said his Lordship, laughing. "'Twas you, yourself, that intruded on the flirtation, and how will you excuse it?"

"It was too trifling to need to be excused; it merely was, that they, entirely by chance, were the first to enter the breakfast room, though which preceded the other I know not. When I entered, 'tis true they were conversing, but the subject of conversation could have had but little interest for either, for they were speaking of lady Emily Percy, whom the baronet seems to think a paragon of perfection; so now that Florence is exempted from all the accusations laid to her charge you cannot longer withhold your pardon."

"You are so persuasive an advocate, that it were hard to withhold any thing you please to ask; more especially as my own heart adds its pleadings; but, seriously, dear Harriet, did you believe my attentions to Miss Oakley dictated by affection, would you not have hesitated to vindicate her? Would you not rather have cherished the belief that she was unworthy of my love?—and would you not refuse to acknowledge as the bride of your only brother, one so unknown as she is?"

"Seriously, then, if you wish, permit me to say that the dearest wish of my heart is, that dear Florence may become my sister; the bride of my brother; and you know not how I have rejoiced to mark the attachment apparently springing up between you. And now I have one important request to make of you;—it is that when the Lady Emily Percy is added to our party, your devotion to Florence may not be transferred to her ladyship. Promise me this, dear Frederick, if you love me, for believe me, much may depend on your present firmness. I am well aware that to promote a union between you and Lady Emily, is the motive of the present visit. Do you ask for proof? Then know that I learned it from a private conversation which I overheard between the Earl and Countess. They are alarmed at your apparent partiality to Florence, and think this high-born beauty may detach you from her. Be firm in your purpose, and neither by word or act permit them to hope, for