

of affection, of friendship, penetrated to her listener's heart, but yet it inspired no thought of confidence and in a voice almost inaudible, she exclaimed:

"No, no, Lucy! My grief is beyond the reach of your tenderness. 'Tis a grief you cannot even comprehend."

"Her companions cheek and brow were instantly suffused with crimson, and for a moment she remained silent; but fortunately for her, Ida was too sadly preoccupied to observe her emotion. At length she murmured.

"Ida, you are mistaken; I divine the cause of your sorrow. I feel, oh! how deeply I feel for you."

The trembling earnestness with which she spoke, an earnestness so unusual in the gentle, the calm Lucy, awoke even the observation of Ida, and she raised a quick glance to her countenance, exclaiming:

"How! You, Lucy! Can it be? But no," she added, as the latter buried her crimsoning face in her bosom. "No, 'tis impossible! You are yet happily ignorant of the source of my grief, as you are of the reflections which add so much to its bitterness. May you ever remain so! But you deserve your happiness. Your pure, gentle heart, has never known the jealousies, the hatreds, the wild ambitions, that have agitated mine. But, Lucy, though perfect confidence may not exist between us, friendship may. Thanks, a thousand thanks, for the uncomplaining gentleness with which you have borne the sallies of my ungovernable temper. Thanks for the tenderness and sympathy you have ever displayed towards me, even when I was most unworthy of it. Continue it to me. Forgive my past unkindness, and for the future I shall endeavour to respond at least to your love; that love I have never appreciated till now; till my hour of trial has arrived. Henceforth your affection is the only hope, the only solace left me;" and leaning over Lucy, she imprinted a fond kiss on her white brow. It was the first caress, the first mark of sensibility the cold and haughty Ida had ever bestowed on human being, and whatever may have been the thoughts that had previously agitated the heart of Lucy, all gave way before the certainty that she was at length beloved, by the one to whom her heart had yearned with such gushing affection, from their first interview. From that moment those two beings so dissimilar by nature, so opposite in every particular, were united by the ties of a friendship whose warmth, no event in after life, no separation, however distant, could in the slightest degree abate. With the refined delicacy which seemed to form a part of

her very nature, Lucy never again alluded to Ida's confession of her unhappiness. When she saw her sad or depressed, she strove only by a thousand arts to divert her mind, and if unsuccessful, she at least consoled her by the marks of an affection which Ida the more valued, as she knew it was the only one entertained for her. Claude made no remark on the growing intimacy of his sister and Ida, who were now inseparable; but at times, when Lucy declined sharing some walk or amusement, in which the latter did not participate, an almost imperceptible smile would curl his lip. He at length, however, began to perceive that his marked coldness towards Ida greatly annoyed Lucy, and her manner gradually became less frank, less affectionate than before. She was still the same gentle, loveable being, but she no longer possessed the trusting confidence, the entire sympathy, she had formerly displayed towards him. This was a sharp pang to the heart of Claude, but its only effect was to increase his coldness towards her to whose influence and counsels he attributed the change. Meantime the period assigned by the Marquis of Pemberton for his visit had rapidly approached, but no allusion was ever made to the expected arrival.

One evening while Lucy was fulfilling her usual task of arranging the flowers in the drawing room, the door opened, and without further announcement the Marquis entered. For a moment she remained motionless, and then timidly replying to his salutation, exclaimed, as she turned away; "I shall inform Miss Beresford."

"Not so," returned Pemberton, placing himself before the door. "Much as it may surprise you, I have come, not to see Miss Beresford, but yourself, Miss Vernon." Taking advantage of the speechless amazement of his companion, who remained motionless with surprise, he rapidly continued:

"From the first moment I saw you, your gentleness, your graceful timidity, even more than your beauty, captivated me, and that one short interview, made me more completely your slave than the potent charms of beings, even lovely as yourself, have ever done, and to whose fascinations I have been exposed for months. Pursuant to the determination I formed during my last visit here, a determination which deep reflection has but confirmed, I now return to lay my heart and fortune at your feet."

Slowly the truth dawned upon the bewildered mind of his listener, and at length she comprehended that the high and powerful Marquis of Pemberton,—the one who, of late, despite her utmost efforts, had so often mingled with her thoughts and imaginings, but whom she had