

"Let us go," said she, "and get some peaches." To her surprise, Miss Wilmorth suddenly seized her arm, and led her off in another direction. She never saw the supposed gardener again.

On the fifth day after her arrival, when they had become very intimate, and very friendly—five days is a vast era in the date of a girl's friendship—Annie said that she had sent to invite some company for the evening; "And how," said she, "shall we amuse ourselves. Dancing is not orthodox—romping is vulgar—and to entrust you with a secret, the art of conversation is not a *forte* in these parts. What shall we do?"

"I suppose you will have no music again," rejoined Susan.

"Heaven forbid."

"Who are you going to have?"

"Oh! the Danneworth girls, and Mary Grey, and Miss Twankey, Sybella Boxer and young Towerlewin—they are engaged, it would not do to separate them—and all the *beaux* and all the *belles*—in short, all the old set."

"Surely, George Underwood?" said Miss Anstey.

"Oh! yes: surely he."

"Annie!" said Miss Anstey, and she looked at her friend with a soft timid gaze, that was peculiar to her. You will forgive me? I think I have made a discovery: you think oftener of George Underwood than comports with the tranquillity of a young maiden's heart! Am I not right?"

Miss Wilmorth made no reply, but blushed excessively:

"Enough of it for the present," said Susan, changing the subject, seeing that it pained her: "let us now take into contemplation this matter of amusement for the evening. Have you any good fortune tellers lying about?"

"Yes; but we are all sick of that."

"Suppose, then, we attempt some *tableaux vivants*."

"*Tableaux vivants*! a happy thought; and now, then, shall you and I set to work and compose them?"

"I—a poor unfertile brain?" said Susan; "positively, I do not know one that I can think of."

"Now that I recollect," said Miss Wilmorth, "there is a *portfolio* of drawings up stairs, somewhere, which will assist us materially. I have not seen them for some time, but we shall doubtless be able to discover them;" and she ran away in search of them.

After a considerable time of absence, she returned with the prize—a large, old fashioned portfolio, fastened by strong locked clasps.

"Here is a dilemma," said Miss Anstey; "there is no key—no! that would be too much to expect of the destinies, but I shall be a match for them," and seizing a penknife, she ripped up the leather back of the portfolio in an instant.

"What have we here?" said Miss Anstey, looking upon a set of beautiful sketches in oils and in chalk, and in every imaginable form, and which appeared to have been executed by an artist's hand. She was a little of a connoisseur, and gazed upon them with wonder and admiration.

"Have you seen any to suit us?" enquired Miss Wilmorth of Susan, who was for the present more engaged in thinking of their beauty, than of the purpose they were designed to serve.

"They are all so beautiful!" said she.

"You think so—they were done, I believe, by my father. He was a sort of an amateur artist in his youth, and travelled in foreign lands."

Miss Anstey stopped to think for an instant—it was the first time she had ever heard Annie talk of her father. After some time spent in consultation, they set apart seven or eight pictures to serve as copies for the *tableaux vivants*, and then occupied themselves in preparing the necessary costumes, till it was nearly time for their friends to arrive.

They began to appear about eight. It was a bright moonlight night, serenely sweet, after the fervour of a September day; and doors and windows opened, amid flowers, and in shrubberies, and in arbors, the guests wandered "at their own sweet will," diverting themselves, till it was time for the grand scene of the *tableaux* to open. Miss Wilmorth and Susan were, of course, to be the principal performers. "But who," said Miss Wilmorth, as they retired to robe themselves for the exhibition, "shall we choose for the third—there are three figures in all the pictures."

"Oh! somebody dark and tall, and fitted to masquerade as a man. Mary Danneworth will do." And the three slipped away, unobserved together.

Very soon the first *tableau* was announced—the folding doors opened, and the spectators, including Mrs. Wilmorth, in the adjoining room. Every body has seen *tableaux vivants*, and I need scarcely describe what they are. A large contrivance is fitted up to represent a picture-frame, into which some persons go in proper costume, and attitudinize as pictures. When the light is thrown in a particular manner, the effect is exactly that of pictures, large as life. Miss Wilmorth, Susan Anstey, and Miss Danneworth, were the figures about to be grouped, and the first *tableau* on which the folding doors opened, was called,