

a manner, that I quite went off into ecstasies, and actually paid her several very pretty little compliments. I was fairly thrown into raptures of admiration upon Cornelia showing me a collection of drawings and water-colours, all the work of her own fair hand, and upon my expressing an especial admiration for one in particular, she kindly pressed it upon my acceptance. I was really having a delightful time, and I rather hoped now that Harry would not come; and as to whether Mr. Jack Morley came or remained away, was a matter of perfect indifference to me. I was getting on well enough without either of them.

Mr. Briarton, on entering the parlour, had retired into his corner more rigid, gloomy and morose than ever, and most of the time had apparently been occupied with a book, but really, I doubted not, had been secretly taking mental and visual note of my every word and act that related in anyway to Miss Morley. I was confirmed in this idea the more, inasmuch as I had detected him several times in the act of casting glances of the deadliest defiance at me over the top of his book, and that I should be confronted with a black and terrible array of my offences at some opportune moment in the near future I doubted not either.

I glanced at my watch; it wanted a few minutes of ten, and for nearly two hours I had been steaming away under high pressure; and the tension had been so severe that I now began to experience serious premonitions of an impending collapse. But I must retire with flying colours, or I might weaken the highly favourable impression I flattered myself I had made. So I rose to go, expressing much regret to my hostess at not having had the pleasure of meeting her son, but hoping that it was only reserved for a future opportunity.

My words seemed to surprise them greatly. They certainly expected me to remain, and trusted that no feeling of delicacy on account of Harry's ab-

sence had induced me to take my departure, as they supposed I fully understood the cause of his detention; and that he would be greatly disappointed at not finding me here upon his return. My room was prepared for me whenever I wished to retire. Cornelia rose, saying that she would see that John carried my luggage up stairs in case it had arrived, and united with her mother and sister in expressing the hope that I would not think of leaving, as they had all expected that I had come to make them a good long visit.

Oh, no! I replied, I had not come to stay; and I thought it highly improbable that Harry would come now. They were exceedingly kind, but I must return to Belmont, though I should be very happy, with their permission, to call again.

I was about to extend my hand to Mr. Briarton, but that gentleman simply made me a distinct bow, in a manner which unmistakably indicated that no nearer approach to acquaintanceship would be tolerated. So, again resisting their urgent entreaties that I would reconsider my purpose and remain, I bid them good night, and started on my walk back to Belmont.

Exceedingly hospitable people, I thought to myself; no doubt they thought I came to stay for a month at least; but I don't see why they should have either. But it's the way they show their plain, old-fashioned hospitality, I suppose.

Despite the efforts I made to banish from my mind all thoughts from my unfortunate performance at the dinner table, they would return to annoy me; for a person so keenly sensitive as I was could not fail to be very disagreeably affected by so humiliating a *contre-temps*. I bitterly blamed Harry as the cause of it all, for had he been there, my services would undoubtedly have been dispensed with. I should be the laughing-stock of the whole family. No; I had not had a good time; I would not admit it. Instead