

the well-intended but rather trying sympathy of the relatives who had collected at Fairmount Grange for the funeral of her uncle and adopted father, the only one she had ever known.

Only a few days before, the Grange, over whose quiet rural beauty so dark a cloud seemed now to rest, had been as happy a home as could easily have been found. Mr Howard, a quiet and studious recluse, had been one of the most loveable of men; and, having taken his orphan niece into his heart as well as his home, he had left nothing undone that indulgent affection could do for her happiness and welfare. Some people said, indeed, that her mother, whom she strikingly resembled, had been the object of his own early love, and that her marriage to his brother had made him a bachelor for life. Certainly no father could have been more affectionate and thoughtful; and, as his adopted daughter, and the future mistress of Fairmount Grange, Ethel had had as happy a life, with as hopeful a future, as could fall to the lot of any girl. At least she had thought so until she had met Edgar Fane, and discovered that the only lack in her little paradise was now supplied in his evident devotion and unconcealed pleasure in her society. He had first found his way to Fairmount Grange as the young tutor of a reading party, one of whom was a near connection of Mr Howard, and a frequent visitor at the Grange. Mr Howard had been much taken