

Blanche, I began to fear that it was not in your nature to love, and this made me feel that you could have no sympathy for me. I am so happy that Lord De Melfort has changed his intention of leaving Woodland at present. I wish to see more of Colonel Lennox, who improves much on acquaintance. The first evening he came here, I thought him plain—now he strikes me as a remarkably fine man—and there is a *tendresse* in his manner, particularly winning.”

Blanche smiled, while a sudden happy thought passed through her mind, but she wisely kept it to herself.

The following day Rosetta felt so much cheered by the presence of her cousin, that, to the delight of Lady Neville, she consented to join the party at the dinner table. Colonel Lennox appeared agreeably struck by her interesting appearance, as she entered the drawing-room, leaning on Blanche, on whose arm was clasped a magnificent bracelet, the parting gift of Lord De Melfort, and the once favourite ornament of his mother, from its containing an exquisite miniature likeness of himself, taken when a child. As he advanced to meet her, she pressed it fondly against her bosom, while she thanked him with her eyes far more eloquently than words could have done.

Rosetta being unequal to join the happy party in their evening walk—Colonel Lennox proposed that a pony which she sometimes rode, should be brought out and which he assisted her to mount, leading it himself round the grounds. Lord De Melfort smiled as he marked his attentions:

“Lennox is touched at last,” he whispered to Blanche; “I never beheld him so assiduous before. That fair and delicate plant has more power to engage his attention, than all the fascinating daughters of ‘*Cara Italia*.’”

“How did you escape their witcheries?” asked Blanche, archly, and fixing her soft eyes upon him. Lord De Melfort coloured at this remark, then replied, half playfully:

“Did I ever tell you that I had escaped?”

“Yes—the first evening we met, you owned to me, that, although you had seen much to admire while abroad, you had met nothing you could love.”

“And you have treasured those words ever since, my own darling Blanche,” he returned, evidently gratified; “believe them to be true—our admiration may be called forth—our senses may be charmed—but our love we can alone give to the pure and good.”

From this day the visits of Lord De Melfort and of Colonel Lennox at the Priory, were constant. The latter frequently spoke of his intended departure for Nice, yet still he lingered, until Rosetta began to feel his presence almost necessary to her, so devoted and so full of thoughtful tenderness were his attentions.

Her best friends viewed this growing partiality with deep interest and pleasure, but abstained from the most remote allusion to it to herself, fearing to crush that which they were anxious to see prospering, for Colonel Lennox combined in mind and heart all that the fondest mother would wish to behold in the future protector of her daughter, added to that rank and station in society, which Rosetta had a right to expect. Lady Neville held frequent conversations with the affectionate Blanche on the subject, who completely entered into her maternal feelings; yet, let it not be thought that their hours were wasted in vain and worldly speculations about the future, which belongs to Him alone, who, it was their earnest desire to serve faithfully. On his goodness, they reposed every earthly care, praying only that he would secure their immortal happiness, so immeasurably beyond, in importance, the most blissful lot which in this lower vale could be their portion. Blanche devoted her mornings entirely to her cousin, which she would improve by reading to her, or conversing on that theme so replete with joy to her own pious heart, and gladly did she perceive the growing interest which the dear girl took in the subject, much of whose wonted cheerfulness, after a few weeks thus spent, had returned, and with it of course her health.

Many little pleasurable excursions were made at this time in the neighbourhood, in all of which Lord De Melfort and his friend participated; yet, notwithstanding the many sources of happiness flowing around them, Blanche beheld with unfeigned regret, the occasional melancholy and fits of abstraction indulged by the Earl, who, though at times full of life and animation, would suddenly become silent, scarcely conscious that she was present, while an expression of care would overcast his fine intelligent face. In such moments she watched him anxiously, but without seeking to obtrude herself on his notice. If he met her soft eyes thus fixed upon him, he would start, and immediately endeavour to assume a playfulness of manner, which her affection soon told her was forced and constrained—blessed as he felt in her pure attachment still, each time that the claims of the hunchback were recalled to his memory, he shrunk from the humiliating reflection, viewing him as the “*Mordecai*” at his gate, who darkened all his happiness.

Blanche confided to her father and Lady Neville her uneasiness on his account; they re-assured her, by expressing their surprise that he bore his very painful position with so much manly fortitude, and could so entirely throw off its distressing recollection as frequently as he did.

“You enable him to do this, my beloved girl,” said Lady Neville, “and you must be satisfied, that you can even in a measure afford him such relief. When the trial is once over, let the result prove what it may, I have no doubt but his mind will be-