

Colonel, "I always thought it would come to this—knew you far better than you did yourself; I always saw you were made to be a soldier. It would have been as unnatural to make a parson of you, as have apprenticed Napoleon to a tailor. The fire was in you, my boy, and I knew it must come out; but I am sorry to see you look so grave."

Charles muttered, that circumstances of late occurrence had induced him to take this step.

Plans for the future were discussed, arrangements, most advantageous to our hero, made, and the patron and his *protege* parted.

Margaret Vernon sat alone in her boudoir in an attitude of deep and perplexed thought. She was seated in a recess, lighted by an old-fashioned window through whose small panes a dim, softened light fell upon her;—her feet rested on a silken cushion, her fair fingers were interlaced and rested on her knees. On the window seat, beside her, lay an open letter. Her thoughts were too confused to find vent in words; but their general outline may be given as follows:

"So, my fair sister can be confirmed at once in a station worthy of her—worthy of a daughter of our house, and the same act that sets the seal on her rank in life, will remove her from the reach of him—him whom, alas, I love! That I should live to feel it, and own it, even to myself! That I—a Vernon—the head of my house, the upholder of its honour, should thus love, thus be jealous of my young sister for the sake of one so utterly beneath either of us! I know *he* loves her. I have read the silent language of his countenance as none but one who loves can read it. I have seen how common-place and heartless have been his greetings to myself, while he turned with all his soul in his eyes to gaze on her! What if she should ever know it. If her girlish fancy should be deepened into an enduring passion, under the influence of his acknowledged love! Surely, he would hardly dare to approach her with the language of affection, and yet, if it *should* be so? she might renounce my authority, might sacrifice all her splendid prospects to her silly romance—for Agnes

can never know a passion like the fever that consumes a mind like mine; and then they would marry. I could not bear it; I could not survive it. I would not wed him myself, the honour of my house demands that I should not, even had he presumed to love me; but I cannot bear a rival in his heart, and that rival, Agnes. She has been as mine own dear child; I have watched her and cherished with a mother's care, and not for worlds would I see her in a position where I feel any one must be hateful to me. It is mercy to herself to prevent the indulgence of her childish whim. Years hence, how bitterly she would regret it, when she found herself the inmate of a country parsonage, surrounded by a tribe of his needy relations. Mrs. St. Aubyn, the wife of Colonel St. Aubyn, with twelve thousand a-year, and the chance of a peerage! It is my bounden duty not to let this opportunity pass. Agnes is a child, she wants strength and decision of character, and my father knew this when he left her to my care. Can I do a wiser or kinder thing than to give her to the protection of such a man as Col. St. Aubyn?"

Thus meditated Margaret Vernon, and again she took up the Colonel's letter containing a proposal of marriage for her sister Agnes.

When Agnes had first read it she had been overwhelmed with sorrow and shame. She had vainly endeavoured to conceal her real reason for the refusal which she entreated Margaret to return to the Colonel. At length her agony became so extreme that flinging herself on Margaret's neck she confessed her previous attachment, and prayed her sister's kindness and forgiveness.—Her tale was coldly received, and Margaret affected an utter disbelief of Willersleys's love for her sister. She exhorted her to conquer her own predilection, as something that amounted to a crime. She accused her of meanness in loving unsought, and of dissimulation in concealing from her the very first emotion of preference she felt; and she positively refused to write such a letter to the Colonel as should at once extinguish hope. Who may tell the progress of the influence she exercised over her sister's mind? The