

plied Katherine, a little startled by the abruptness of his address; "but I delight rather in the sun's rise than in his setting."

"May I ask why?"

Katherine coloured, and then said:

"The first seems the coming of bright hopes, the last speaks of their departure."

"A very pretty idea, indeed; quite in my taste, I must note that down;" and he took from his vest a small pocket book and pencil as he spoke. Katherine looked and felt annoyed; to her relief, Miss Felicia Sykes ran across the room, exclaiming:

"My dear Mrs. Warburton! I am so happy to see you; I have a thousand apologies to make for not having called, but I was not quite sure that you had returned home. La, Mr. Wilkins! with your ass's skin again in your hand; what are you writing? a recipe for weak nerves, or weak intellects?"

"For neither, ma'am," replied Mr. Wilkins, indignant at this allusion to his profession, of which, as the brother of Lady Marley, he ignorantly began to be ashamed. "Bright hopes—their departure," he continued to himself.

"Ha! the man is moon-struck, I believe," said Miss Sykes, turning from him. "And how did you leave our friends at the Abbey?" she added, to Katherine; "are they not delightful people?"

"They are, indeed," replied our heroine, warmly. "I felt it quite a privilege to spend so many days in their society."

Dinner at this moment being announced, made a pause in the conversation. Sir James Marley paired off with a tall lady in a white satin hat and feathers, the rest following according to some imaginary precedence. Katherine, to her regret, was led out by Mr. Wilkins, while Miss Sykes, disdaining the aid of man, declined the arm of a bustling little personage, who came up to her with a low bow, saying:

"Permit me the honor, madam ——"

"Abominable creature!" mentally inveighed the maiden. "He has been married three times, and I have no doubt would take a fourth wife if he could get one."

The dinner was very sumptuous, and adorned with massive plate, but to Katherine it passed unpleasantly; her ears were so constantly annoyed by the light conversation, bordering on the improper, that was passing around her. The fulsome compliments of Mr. Wilkins fatigued her, while his attempts to be witty, caused her many a forced smile.

"How different is all this to dear Woodford Abbey!" she thought. "Every word uttered there, I could dwell upon with pleasure; here, if I listen, I am pained or vexed."

Lady Marley looked supremely happy, with Captain Warburton on her right, with whom she talked and laughed incessantly; while Sir James gazed on her with eyes of admiration and tenderness, completely lost upon the lady, as she never turned towards him. The more our heroine observed her new acquaintance, the less did she admire her. Her freedom of manner towards gentlemen, her loud laugh at their *double entendres*, her dress almost immodest, from its displaying so much of her person; all betokened a mind far from being delicate, refined or regulated. As the eyes of Katherine wandered from her to the other ladies present, she could perceive in some tokens of disapprobation, while others were too much engrossed with themselves to mind what was going forward. Most heartily Katherine repented that she had willingly entered a circle, where the presence of her God could not follow her, or his holy name be mentioned without profanation.

As there was to be a large evening party, Lady Marley did not remain long after dinner. On re-entering the drawing room, they found several young people already assembled there. Katherine now hoped she might meet some one with whom she could find pleasure in conversing, but she soon discovered that when worldly persons meet together, nothing edifying or improving is encouraged. Dress, scandal, and young men, form the favorite topics; while good sense, religion, and charity towards our neighbours, are banished as stupid and old-fashioned.

A very stout lady in a turban, who was the happy mamma of six daughters, happened to mention the marriage of a friend of hers to a widow with a family, and no money.

"How he could be so imprudent, I am at a loss to know," she said, drawing herself up with a prudish air; "we had considered him so very sensible until he took such a step."

"Fy upon the widow for depriving so many girls of a chance!" said Miss Sykes, sarcastically. "Yet I am told she is an agreeable, amiable woman, and that her children are provided for."

"I am sure there is nothing particular about her; it is quite extraordinary how some people manage to get husbands," rejoined Mrs. Cobb, curling her lip.

"Probably because there is no management in the case, and that they possess qualities which we have not the wit to discover," retorted Miss Sykes. "But, my dear, I cannot wonder at your chagrin when you look at yonder row of maidens. Poor things! it is very hard they remain so long unasked."

"So long unasked! Miss Sykes, I really do not comprehend you," replied Mrs. Cobb, now highly