

timidity and shyness you extol, would effectually prevent her ever attaining."

Ida felt the cutting reproach, and she crimsoned to her temples, but beyond a quick, indignant glance, she made no reply. Lucy cast a pleading look on her brother, but for once he was cold, insensible to its influence. She then turned to her father and raising her eyes, whose imploring expression the fond parent never could resist, murmured:

"What say you, dear papa? Will you not entreat mamma and Claude to permit me to go?"

"We will have no entreating about the matter. Then cheer up, my darling Lucy, you shall go," said her father, as he parted the golden curls from her brow. "'Tis time you should see a little pleasure. Because the fair bird sings sweetly in its cage, and is contented with its lot, we must not keep it shut up forever."

A fond kiss was his reward, and Mrs. Vernon, whose maternal vanity, as well as affection, loudly seconded her daughter's petition, smiled assent: only premising that Lucy should take upon herself the task of replying to her Ladyship's letter, Claude alone appeared somewhat dissatisfied. He knew well how easily his sister would lose in the society in which she was about to mingle, the freshness, the graceful timidity, which constituted her chief charm, and he almost trembled, for even her candour, her unselfish affection for her family, when he remembered that it was the wordly-hearted, in short, the fashionable Lady Stanhope, who was to be her Mentor. Claude was not blinded by the dazzling distinction of an invitation from her select and exclusive Ladyship. With a brother's clear-sightedness, for 'tis a well known fact that brothers read such matters better than parents, their understandings generally being free from the mist of partial affection which so often clouds the minds of the latter, he saw that Lucy was but invited to further some project of Lady Stanhope's, and that, her purpose accomplished, she would permit her quietly to sink again into obscurity. Yet though all these thoughts were agitating his mind, when his sister, after having procured her father's consent, approached him and laying her little hand on his shoulder, coaxingly exclaimed:

"You are not angry, dearest Claude! If you wish it, I shall remain at home," he could not find it in his heart to utter one word of dissuasion, and fondly rejoined:

"You may indeed go, my dear Lucy. They cannot spoil you, and you will return good, gentle, as you went." Lady Stanhope, being informed by Ida's letter of the precise time when they should be prepared, her splendid carriage was punctu-

ally on the spot, and after a farewell which cost Lucy some tears, though the separation was but for a week, they set out. Ida enlivened the drive by many anecdotes and traits of fashionable life, and ere Lucy was conscious of a feeling of fatigue they had arrived at Elm Grove.

Kind and courteous was the reception of Lady Stanhope, and whatever her real sentiments might have been, she made not the shadow of difference in their respective welcomes. As they prepared to seek their dressing rooms, she expressed her satisfaction at their arrival on that evening as she expected a small but select party of guests. When the two young girls found themselves alone in the splendid apartments destined for their use, Lucy expressed her childish delight at the magnificence she saw around her and the approaching pleasure, but Ida shared not her satisfaction. Struck by the indifference, the weariness, the latter displayed, she turned towards her, exclaiming:

"Ida, you are an enigma to me! You, who every one supposes so passionately devoted to the world, seem so careless, so neglectful of it. I know not how to read your character."

"No, nor you never will, Lucy. Spirits more penetrating, more profound than yours, have failed in fathoming it. They may indeed, easily discover my pride, my selfish coldness, but they can never learn the little weaknesses, as well as the better feelings that lie concealed beneath.

"How superior are you, Ida, in that respect, to myself, to so many others. Whilst we shew but the bright, the fair side of our character, you display all your unfavorable traits, and conceal your good qualities, thus evincing a nobleness which alone is sufficient to place you above us."

Ida smiled sadly as she rejoined.

"You do not perhaps intend to flatter, Lucy, but you are doing so at present without doubt; but we must be quick, the guests are arriving."

She was right in the last respect, and a messenger entered at the moment from Lady Stanhope, desiring them to descend to the drawing room as soon as possible. Hastily completing their toilettes, they proceeded to the saloon. Arrived near the door, Lucy's heart sank, and it required all the encouragement and reasoning of Ida, whose own unembarrassed demeanour was perhaps the most powerful argument she could employ, to induce her to enter. Once in, she lost all the little self-possession she had hitherto retained. She had an indistinct consciousness indeed, of going through the form of introduction, to countless individuals, of being addressed by Lady Stanhope, whose diamonds alone were sufficient to dazzle her, and of Ida's occasionally whisper-