

I told you that we should not return with you—therefore Tilly shall ride my horse, and you can lead the other, hey ?

“Whatever the politeness of the Major might have led him to do must remain unknown, as Miss Anson positively insisted upon accompanying the gentlemen, and the whole company soon reached G— in safety.

When the two friends had retired for the night, Frances, seating herself by the side of Emily, said, “Now, dear Emma, tell me when have you seen Foster ?”

“A few days since.”

“And was he well ?”

“Very.”

“Was he happy or sad ?”

“Much as usual.”

“Emily,” cried the vexed Frances, “what is the matter with you ? Why are you so reserved, upon a subject which, you know, is so deeply interesting to me ?

“Permit me to reply by another question—Why should it be so interesting to you ?”

Frances looked suspiciously in her friend’s face—“Are you crazy, Emily ? why should news from Foster interest me ? what a question ! Dear girl, what do you mean ?”

“I will tell you, Frances, and perhaps you will explain the mystery. When I saw you last, your heart and hand were engaged to Foster—to a man who is an ornament to society, and whose noble heart and true affection merited from you a rich reward : your friends smiled upon him—and I hoped that one of the hundred things you had to say to me, was, to bid me prepare to attend your bridal. I arrive here and find you affianced to another—that other of twice your age, and no more to be compared with Foster, than age with youth, or deformity with beauty.—While on the eve of marriage with one, ought you to feel such deep interest in another ?”

Tears fell from the eyes of Frances.

“All this is true Emily, and I have not had courage to tell you of it : but, believe me, I have a very important reason for urging your present visit : and now, how shall I excuse myself, without condemning others ? You know my father’s temper ; since the death of my mother, he will not endure opposition. Foster was unfortunate in business, and my father declared it was occasioned by extravagance, and opposed our marriage—Foster remonstrated, and my father forbade him the house. Major Williams had recently returned from New Orleans, was rich, and paid his court so successfully to Papa, that he obtained permission to address me.”

“This is painful intelligence ; but why do you not frankly tell the Major of your previous attachment ?”

“I have done so, and even told him I would never marry him ; but he persists in his suit.”

“He probably thinks that your father’s influence may alter your determination.”

“To be sure he does—but I told my father I would die before I would become his wife ; and then I was confined to my room, until I consented to see my tormentor again : however, he can never say that I have deceived him, for I assure him every day that I detest him.”

Emily smiled ; “And how does he receive this agreeable communication ?”

“The simpleton laughs, and affects to believe I am in jest ; but I will yet convince him I am in earnest.”

“Is not your wedding-day fixed, dear Frances ?”

“Yes ; a fortnight from Thursday.”

“And poor Foster ?”

“Is aware of it—but what can he do ? I hope much from your influence with my father—he is so fond of you.”

“If I possess any, depend upon my exerting it to the utmost,” replied Emily.

“And now, let us go to bed dear Emily, if you have forgiven me for my silence.”

A kiss from her friend was the only reply, and they were soon wrapped in the sweet slumbers of innocence.

The morning of the day on which the camp-meeting was to commence dawned bright and cloudless, while a fresh breeze cooled the ferrid heat of the sun, and rendered the early drive of those who attended it, both exhilarating and healthy. Col. Hargrave and his family, accompanied by Major Williams, and followed by several servants, arrived early at the place of meeting. It was the level top of a green hill, embowered by lofty forest trees in full foliage : from the foot of the hill issued several springs of delicious water, an article of the first importance in that warm latitude. Within a space of four or five acres, covered with stately trees, but entirely cleared from underwood, were erected rude tents of unplanned boards, large enough to contain several families at the same time : board floors were a luxury to which they did not aspire, but there was an abundance of clean straw, which served as a carpet by day and a bed at night, for such temporary visitors as could not be accommodated with any thing better : and as every tent was free to all comers, these visitors were very frequent. Partitions divided the male from the female part of the family, and the cooking was performed out of doors, in the rear of the tent. In the centre of the circle, enclosed by these edifices, stood a long, shed-like building, covered only with a roof, within which were placed board seats of the roughest material, and at one end was a wooden box, dignified with the name of a pulpit from which the various preachers,