

one of the rose buds, that he had stolen from the vase, he suddenly exclaimed :

"What thoughts are those, dear Clara, that tinge this pure cheek, with such a brilliant hue !—why this bursting bud looks pale beside it, and I could almost fancy it pining with envy to be thus, outvied in loveliness. Would I could look into your mind, fair cousin, that temple of bright and sweet images, and see what is now passing in its innermost recesses."

"Ah, Charles, do not wish so ; all that you beheld there might not appear to you so pure and stainless as should besem a maiden breast. Remember we are yet of earth, and even with our holiest affections, our highest and noblest aspirations, mingles a taint of human frailty and imperfection. But a truce to moralizing, and give me back my rose bud."

"Nay, I must keep this, dear Clara, it is now associated in my mind with the cheek to which I compared it," and he plead so eloquently that although, she said it was the prettiest in the bunch she was attempting to copy, she suffered it to remain in his possession.

"And now let us make arrangements for this picnic, Clara, since I am resolved to be included among the children, and I can answer for Miss Morley, who so loves the country and its simple pleasures, that she will be delighted to join us."

"Does she love them Charles ?" asked Clara in a somewhat doubting tone.

"Yes does she, fair sceptic, as truly and as fervently as yourself," cried a gay voice, in a tone of blended rebuke and playfulness, and Grace Morley entered through the glass door from the terrace, followed by a merry troop of children, dragging forward a huge Newfoundland dog, which they had literally loaded with flowers. But the animal burst from them the moment he saw Clara, and trailing the broken garlands after him, bounded forward and laid his shaggy head, with a whine of joy, in her lap. The children too, clustered around her, each talking with delight of the morrow, and begging that she and cousin Charles, would go with them and share their holiday.

"You include Miss Morley, also !" said Clara.

"No, we do not," answered Lucia, in a subdued voice ; "she does not like us, sister, she says we make her head-ache, and was angry, and left the garden because Neptune sprinkled her dress when he leaped from the water."

Clara could not repress a smile, though she hastened to silence the little girl, lest the object of her complaint, might overhear it and be vexed. But they prattled on upon some other theme, while Clara caressed and listened to them, or seemed to listen, though her attention was in reality attracted by Miss Morley, who had thrown himself listlessly upon a sofa and called Charles to come and fan her. And there he now stood, gently waving the painted feathers, and speaking, as he bent over her, in the softest

and most subdued tone, while with her radiant face upturned to his, she looked, so Clara thought, unutterable things.

She was in truth a creature of matchless beauty, perfect in form and faultless in feature—such an one as Phidias might have chosen for the subject of his chisel. She had a dazzling complexion, a brow like polished ivory, dark, eloquent eyes, that could bewitch at will, that were lovely in tears, and resistless when half veiled by the long silken fringes, and by those snowy lids which made one involuntarily recal that expressive line of Shakspeare :

"As sweet as were the lids of Juno's eyes."

No woman ever understood better than did Grace Morley the management of the eye—and when it was her pleasure so to do, she could make it discourse most eloquently, and in a language not to be misunderstood—as she now lay half reclining on the damask cushions of the sofa, her white dress and ebon hair contrasting with their crimson hue, Clara fancied she had never before seen her look so beautiful—her colour was heightened by exercise, and a half blown rose, which she had gathered in her walk, was placed with careless grace among the soft ringlets that shaded her brow. "How," thought the humble Clara, "when viewed in comparison with this radiant creature, can I hope to retain my empire over the heart of one who so loves beauty, as does my cousin," and instinctively she raised her eyes towards an opposite mirror—but it reflected back so lovely an image, a figure so delicate and sylph-like, a face of such pure and childlike, yet spiritual beauty, that she blushed with conscious pleasure as it met her view.

Her brother Henry, a fine boy of ten, caught her eye in the glass, and laughingly exclaimed :

"Do you blush, sister, because you are so pretty ? well then I will make you blush again, by telling you what I thought this morning, as I read of the three goddesses who quarrelled for the golden apple, that if you had been there they would neither of them have got it."

"Bravo, Hal !" shouted Charles Castleton from the other end of the drawing room ; "as gallant a speech that, my boy, as ever knight of the tourney whisped in the ear of his lady love, and a goodly promise it gives to the rising fair, of your manhood."

"You have no need to laugh, Mr. Castleton," said one of the younger boys, with the air of a champion ; "because Henry told Clara she was pretty, for I am sure no one can look at her twice without knowing it, though she is above making a boast of it herself," and he glanced significantly at Miss Morley.

"And she is good too," lisped little Kate, climbing up and throwing her arms round the laughing but confused Clara ; "she never frowns upon us