

passing the Christmas holidays with my aunt Julia, and I may thank her for the privilege of going last night. I was included in her invitation, and was, of course, half crazy to accompany her; so she joined me in teasing mamma, till she was wearied into granting me the permission I desired."

"You are really too young to mingle in such a scene, Grace; you are yet a school-girl, recollect, and I am sure such early dissipation must unfit your mind for study."

"Not in the least, Cecilia: and as for my youth, pray consider, staid matron as you are, that I am scarcely two years your junior; and if I am to take upon myself, as early as you have done, the most responsible duties of life, it is quite time that I should begin to taste some of its pleasures—so pray, in your wisdom, do not put it into mamma's head, that I ought still to be kept in the nursery."

"Ah, dear Grace, do not be impatient to overpass the happy bounds of childhood—there are few of us, believe me, who do not, too soon look back to its innocent and simple pleasures with fond regret, and an earnest longing to recall them—ay, and with vain self-reproach, too, that we so early and so eagerly pressed beyond them, in search of happiness less pure, and seldom more enduring."

"Bless me, Cecilia! you moralize like Doctor Johnson this morning! Who would expect such sentiments from the lips of a young bride, whose beauty, whose establishment, and whose husband, proverbially the handsomest and most agreeable man of the day, make her an object of universal admiration and envy. Now I declare, Cecilia, you look more annoyed than pleased at all this," continued the light-hearted girl, quite unconscious how much her gay words pained her sensitive friend. "But I must just tell you, for I do not think you are in the least aware of it, what a model of elegance Evelyn is considered, though some are tasteless enough to award the palm of superiority to your cousin Arthur Mayburne."

"That, in my opinion, argues no want of good taste," said Cecilia, quietly. "There are few, indeed, who surpass Arthur in personal graces, and none—no, I know not one—who can compare with him in purity and excellence of mind and heart."

"Ah, well, all have their favourite fancies. Cecilia, and it seems you had yours, or you would not have chosen Maurice in preference to Arthur. I know two young ladies in Mrs. Devereaux's school, who promenade Chestnut-street every day, on purpose to meet your fascinating caro, they admired him so prodigiously; and—don't be jealous now—if you are, I will not tell

you that I spent a good half-hour with him in the library, before I thought of coming up to you."

"You are an untamed child, Grace," said Cecilia, with a faint blush, and a fainter smile; "and if you run on thus with your wild prattle to Maurice, you must have put to flight all his grave thoughts, and sadly hindered his writing."

"Writing, Cecilia! it was nothing of importance—only a note to Mrs. Sinclair, which he had sealed before I went in, and —"

"To Mrs. Sinclair!" repeated Cecilia, in dismay.

"Why, yes—how astonished you look," said Grace, unconsciously. "She wrote him about the tableaux; and, as I passed the library door, I caught a glimpse of him, half buried though he was in huge volumes, and piles of engravings, among which he was seeking subjects for representation. So I just stepped in a moment, *en passant*, and, once there, found so much to admire and talk about, that I came very near forgetting every thing except him and the tableaux, for the rest of my life."

"But when and where are these tableaux to be exhibited, Grace? I have heard nothing of them," said Cecilia, in a low, unsteady voice.

"Have you not?" asked Grace. "But no, I recollect now; they were mentioned after you left last night; and this morning Mrs. Sinclair sent an early note to acquaint Mr. Evelyn with her intention of exhibiting, within ten days or a fortnight, at farthest, a series of splendid tableaux vivants, to a party of select friends."

"And why, pray, was it necessary that she should communicate this information to *him*?" faintly enquired Cecilia.

"Why?" repeated Grace, "verily, because he is the 'glass of fashion and the mould of form,' to every aspirant of the day—a sovereign arbiter in all matters of taste—and, consequently, a very proper person to be consulted in the selection and arrangement of subjects which are to form the entertainment of a *recherché* evening, in the brilliant saloons of an admired woman of ton."

Cecilia grew deadly pale, but she struggled against her emotions, secretly reproaching herself with unworthy weakness, and eager to resist the encroachment of that fearful sentiment which she felt was striking its baneful root deep into her heart. The quick eye of Grace, however, marked her changing colour with alarm.

"You are ill, Cecilia," she said, anxiously, "and I am wearying you with my idle gossip. Let me bathe your forehead with lavender—it is burning hot, and this will cool it. But you have tasted nothing this morning—no breakfast—here it all stands, quite cold and spoiled," she con-