

inviting. For an instant she paused before ringing the door-bell, doubtful whether to retrace her steps or enter.

"Why," she thought, "should I seek employment from those in whose view I am degraded by it, when there are others, who also earn their bread by toil, who would grant it to me without a sneer?"

But directly the recollection of her poor mother's entire dependence upon her exertions, rushed across her, and blushing with shame at her momentary irresolution, she hastily rang the bell.

"Let them scorn me, if they will;" she said, "in the estimation of the truly noble, toil never can degrade me—it has been a means of purifying, and disciplining my heart, and if for that alone, I will bless God that I am ordained to it."

The door was instantly opened by a pert looking servant, from whose bold stare Madelaine turned her glowing face, as she asked in a low voice, "If she could see Mrs. Dunmore?"

"I dare say you can, miss, if you will give me your name," replied the man.

"Say, the person whom she met at Madame Merveille's yesterday, wishes to speak with her," said Madelaine.

The fellow gave a familiar nod, as, motioning her to enter, he left her standing in the hall, and disappeared. She sat down on one of the seats to await his return, which was almost immediate, when he conducted her up the broad staircase, past the door of a splendid drawing room, to a smaller apartment tastefully fitted up beyond, where she found the two ladies whom she had met at the milliner's on the preceding day, seated at work—the younger, Miss Maywood, drawing, and her sister, busy with her embroidery.

A young man of striking elegance, lounged in the corner of a luxurious sofa, with an open book in his hand, from which he had been reading aloud; but when Madelaine's lovely face and figure appeared before him, his voice sank into silence, and yielding to the feeling of respect and admiration inspired by the gentle and graceful girl, he threw it aside, and rising, stood while she remained, leaning in silent observation against a marble pier table.

A cloud shadowed the brightness of Lucia Maywood's countenance, as she remarked the interest with which her lover continued to regard the humble flower girl, of whom in revenge she took no notice, except to bestow upon her a haughty glance of inquiry, which dyed her pure cheek with deep and painful blushes.

"You are very punctual to your promise, my good girl," said Mrs. Dunmore, as having just refilled her needle with a new shade of worsted, she looked carelessly over her shoulder at Madelaine. "Lucia," addressing her sister, "did you find the flower you wish to have copied, in your search this morning—if so, pray show it to the young woman

—it is a pity to detain her, as I dare say her time is precious—besides, we cannot tell how long it will take her to complete her task, and hours are not to be wasted now, you know."

As the fair Lucia caught the significant smile, which played on her sister's lip, while uttering these words, a slight blush tinted her unusually pale cheek, but 'it deepened to the scarlet hue of vexation, when, on stealing a glance at Edward Beaufort, she beheld him so absorbed in the study of Madelaine, as to be seemingly unconscious even of her presence. Turning pettishly away, she opened a rosewood work-box, and taking out a small cluster of delicate artificial flowers, alternating with green leaves of a peculiar and graceful form, she threw it across the table to her sister, saying with an air of pique, which lent no charm to her pertness,—

"There it is,—the very sprig which Mademoiselle Dumourin gave me in Paris, and with wreaths of which, she trimmed one of the Countess de Tonnelir's bridal dresses. But I care very little for having any made like it—perhaps they will not be wanted, or if they are, others less unique will answer quite as well. But there it is, and you may do what you like with it," and turning away she resumed her pencil, and spoilt one side of a medallion basket which she was painting, by throwing on a deep shade of blue, where pale green was required.

"It is exquisite, so delicate and tasteful," said Mrs. Dunmore, taking up the flowers. "They certainly do every thing in France, better than any where else. Do you think," addressing Madelaine, "it will be possible for you to execute any thing like these minute flowers, clustered together in such exact imitation of nature?"

"I will attempt it, madam," said Madelaine; "but I should not like to promise too confidently, lest I should not succeed—for I am sensible it must be a difficult task to equal the beauty and perfection of this flower."

There was a charm in the soft low tones of her voice, that thrilled upon the hearer, like a sweet strain of music, while her pure pronunciation, and her correct use of language, seemed to place her at once above the situation in which she appeared,—even had not her air, her manner, the constantly varying expression of her beautiful face, indicated great natural delicacy and refinement, and a degree of cultivation, which surprised Mrs. Dunmore, chagrined Miss Maywood, and aroused the intense curiosity and interest of Edward Beaufort. Greatly to the annoyance of his affianced bride, his attention remained rivetted upon Madelaine, while, with gentle sweetness, she replied to the many frivolous interrogations of Mrs. Dunmore, yielding by his silent observance, a tribute of admiration to her loveliness, which aroused the resentful and jealous feelings of Miss Maywood.