

sponge off his more fortunate, because hard-working, brother, who was very generous with him, but absolutely refused to let him share his home and life. This was no more than necessary and right, though Adrian had sometimes a hard struggle to maintain the privacy of his own abode. He had a good many friends, but there was none he more sincerely regarded than Frances Sheldon. He often took her out on Sunday afternoon, and her outings with him were the oasis in the desert of hard-working life. One year had passed since her visit to Castlebar, and during these long months she had been absolutely loyal, writing only when obliged to Mrs. Allardyce, but in no way seeking to foster or increase the regard which they had entertained towards her. To Eleanor she wrote often, and she knew very well how things were at Haugh and at Annfield, since Eleanor kept nothing back from the woman who had befriended her in her most bitter need. It had been a probation for Eleanor at Haugh likewise, and she had stumbled often by the way. For, though her father had forgiven her, and tried to do his best towards her, there were many times when the strong wills clashed, and the scent of battle was in the air.

"I had a letter from Eleanor yesterday," said Frances, as they sat down under a spreading chestnut, after wandering into the deeper shade of Kensington Gardens.

"And how is she?" Adrian asked, deeply interested always.

"Quite well; she sends her remembrances to you, and is talking of coming next month to pay me a visit. It will be very fine to see her again."

"It will. She gets on all right at home?"

"Pretty fair. They are not angels, you know, and there have been one or two perilous moments. But I think they begin to understand each other, and that, after all, is the true secret of all relationship, isn't it?"

"Yes. So she is coming to London, is she? Will you not go to Scotland this year?"