

been enacting; your new friend, Miss Westover, your rival in wit and criticism, your teacher in every other unamiable quality. But listen to me, Florence; you and she must part—you must find some other friend and confidant, since Nina is too simple, too unworthy for your taste. Will you promise me to do so? it will be your interest to comply."

It is probable that had St. Albans asked anything else, even to utter an humble apology to himself, Florence would have unhesitatingly complied, for she was thoroughly weary of the character she had assumed, and longed to lay it aside; but the thing he had just proposed was morally impossible. What! give up her intimacy with so delightful a creature as Miss Westover! Who would enliven her mornings now, who would listen with so mirthful and sympathizing an ear to her mockeries and witticisms? And might she not divine the cause of her sudden coldness—tell it to her witty brother, and then what ridicule would be showered upon her. Oh! Lucinda spoke the truth. Her lover was indeed a tyrant, or he would never have asked anything so unreasonable. Bending over her steed, she carelessly caressed its glossy neck, coldly exclaiming:

"Your lordship is too exacting; you surely cannot expect me to sacrifice my feelings of affection for one who has proved herself a kind friend to me, simply because you have formed a sudden, and, I will dare to say, unfounded prejudice against her."

"Is this my final answer, Florence?"

"Yes, my lord; I am sorry it is not more in accordance with your wishes."

The earl bit his lip, and spoke no more till they had arrived at their destination, when seeing his companion joined by some of the company, he left her and sought not her side again.

Florence had no opportunity of private conversation with Miss Westover beyond a few whispered words, in which she informed her that lord St. Albans and herself had quarrelled, and that she feared much she had gone too far."

"Not at all, not at all," was the low-toned reply of her worthy adviser. "You have acted like a girl of spirit, and will reap the reward. Beware of bestowing on him one conciliating word or smile. To-morrow, he will be humbly suing for your forgiveness."

Florence had some faint misgivings that lord St. Albans would not prove quite as tractable as Miss Westover anticipated; however she strictly obeyed her counsels, instigated by the wish to show her friend, who narrowly watched her, her spirited independence; and the accomplishment

of this was easy enough, for her lover never spoke, or even looked at her. The waterfall was at length admired, the surrounding thickets explored, and the red beams of the setting sun warned the party to turn their steps homewards. Some unavoidable delay occurred, however, owing to the caprice of the lady Jacintha Stanton, who, when the party were all ready for starting, declared she was too weak and fatigued to ride. There was no room for her in either of the carriages, and lord St. Albans immediately despatched one of the servants for his own phaeton. The distance was considerable, but the man returned with all possible haste. A new obstacle now presented itself, for lady Jacintha, after casting a very dissatisfied glance at the slight vehicle and its fiery horses, openly expressed her intention of sleeping all night on the turf beside the waterfall, rather than risk her life in such a conveyance. Here was a dilemma. None of the ladies in the carriage seemed willing to exchange their comfortable seats for a place in the elegant, though perilous vehicle of his lordship, whilst the determined attitude of the young lady herself, as she leaned against a tree, an aggrieved pout on her pretty lip, told that she was resolved to remain firm to her first purpose. In vain the earl remonstrated, encouraged; in vain, promised to drive himself, with most scrupulous caution. All was of no avail, and secretly wearied and sick of the girl's obstinacy, he looked hopelessly around him. Suddenly his eyes encountered those of Nina, and in them he had read her purpose, even before she spoke, as she offered in a low tone to resign her seat to lady Jacintha.

With a grateful smile he sprang forward to assist her to alight, leaving lady Jacintha to the care of the other gentlemen, and as he carefully seated her in his own vehicle, he warmly exclaimed:

"Thanks, dear Miss Aley, I trust you will have no cause to regret trusting yourself to my guardianship."

"I say, St. Albans, are you going to drive yourself?" carelessly asked Clinton, as he approached and patted the neck of one of the steeds.

"Why?"

"Because if you would rather ride, I will willingly replace you, that is, if Miss Aley," and he smilingly bowed to Nina, "has no objections to the arrangement."

"Not the slightest," rejoined the latter with perfect simplicity; "but still I think the horses, accustomed to lord St. Albans' guidance, might prove restive with another; and I am a sad coward."

Clinton approached still nearer, and bending