

"Gilbert, what is the matter with you?—why are you so changed?—It is a very indiscreet question, I know," she hastened to add: "perhaps a very rude one—don't answer it if you think so—but I hate mysteries and concealments."

"I am not changed, Helen—unfortunately I am as keen and passionate as ever—it is not I, it is circumstances that are changed."

"What circumstances? Do tell me!" Her cheek was blanched with this very anguish of anxiety—could it be with the fear that I had rashly pledged my faith to her?

"I will confess to you at once," said I. "I will confess I came here for the purpose of seeing you (not without some monitory misgivings at my own presumption, and fears that I should be as little welcome as expected when I came), but I did not know that this estate was yours, until enlightened on the subject of your inheritance by the conversation of two fellow passengers in the last stage of my journey; and then, I saw at once the folly of the hopes I had cherished and the madness of retaining them a moment longer; and though I alighted at your gates, I determined not to enter within them; I lingered a few minutes to see the place, but was fully resolved to return to M—— without seeing its mistress."

"And if my aunt and I had not been just returning from our morning drive, I should have seen and heard no more of you?"

"I thought it would be better for both that we should not meet," replied I, as calmly as I could, but not daring to speak above my breath, from conscious inability to steady my voice, and not daring to look in her face lest my firmness should forsake me altogether: "I thought an interview would only disturb your peace and madden me. But I am glad, now, of this opportunity of seeing you once more and knowing that you have not forgotten me, and of assuring you that I shall never cease to remember you."

There was a moment's pause. Mrs Huntingdon