

formerly occupied in his esteem. Then, he had but pride, arrogance, to reproach her with, but now!—She almost shrank from contemplating the opinion with which he must necessarily regard her. But not for one moment did she regret her sacrifice. She felt that were it to be offered up again, she would act precisely as she had done, and when at length she rose from her sad reverie, her heart was purified by the struggle, ennobled by perhaps the first perfectly unselfish feelings she had ever known. Gently, carefully did she break the tidings to Lucy, and she softened their bitterness by her encouraging prophecies of Pemberton's necessary return in a few months. Though her first paroxysm was passionate indeed, Lucy soon listened to her hopeful words, and under their magic influence she gradually recovered again her former gentle, child-like gaiety, but Ida remained still sad, unhappy as before. Her mind had not been trained with the fostering care that had guided Lucy's. It possessed not its happy elasticity, and while the latter bowed in submission to the weight of sorrow, Ida fretted, chafed against her chains, and saw no hope of happiness save in bursting them asunder. Meantime Mrs. Vernon and her worthy husband, little dreaming of the restless hopes and fears that lurked beneath the outward quiet of their little family, secretly congratulated themselves on the increasing affection and good feeling they manifested towards each other. Lucy and Ida were more inseparable than ever, whilst the bearing of Claude towards the latter, though still distant, was less markedly cold than before. But this was easily accounted for in one of his generous temperaments. Ida's appeal, the confidence she had placed in him, had called forth every noble feeling in his nature, and henceforth, however he might condemn, nay despise her in his secret heart, to others, at least, no disparaging remark, no sarcasm ever escaped his lips.

Some weeks after, an event occurred which though insignificant enough in itself, yet produced no slight sensation in the Vernon family. One evening when they were assembled in the sitting room, Ida beguiling the time by reading aloud, the servant entered and delivered to Dr. Vernon, instead of the usual, plain, unpretending letters, two embossed and perfumed epistles, bearing on their seal a coat of arms which Ida at once recognised as that of the Stanhope family. One was addressed to Miss Beresford, the other to Mrs. Vernon. The latter was couched in the most courteous terms, and earnestly entreated Mrs. Vernon to permit her daughter and Miss Beresford to pass a few weeks with her at her country residence, concluding by promises of watching

over and guarding them with maternal care, and protestations of sincerest friendship and regard. That to Ida was of course frank and familiar, yet withal somewhat obscure, for her Ladyship vaguely hinted at some project she had long had in view, being brought soon to a speedy consummation, at the same time deploring the cruel necessity she was under of inviting that little rustic whom her heart foreboded would prove a dangerous rival—in fact a mar-plot. "But 'tis unavoidable," she added. "Very probably, had the invitation been confined to yourself, your gentle monitress would have refused her consent, but now, she cannot in common courtesy do so. Do your best to discourage the little rustic from coming; for believe me, beautiful, elegant as you are, her delicate loveliness and captivating simplicity may render her a truly formidable competitor."

The perusal of her letter concluded, Ida looked up. Mrs. Vernon had laid hers on the table, but she immediately took it up and read it aloud. "And now, what say you, my children? Ida, I need scarcely ask your opinion—I can easily divine it,—but yours, my little Lucy, who have never yet left the shelter of your home—do you wish to exchange its quiet for a fashionable life?" Lucy was about unhesitatingly to decline, when an eager, meaning glance from Ida, a glance which rapid as it was, Claude had yet marked, caused her to alter her decision. Slightly changing colour, she replied:

"Well, dear mamma, if you have no objections, and papa does not prohibit it, I should like to accompany Ida. You know, 'tis but country life and amusements after all, only a little gayer than what we enjoy here."

How ingenious we are in finding arguments to support whatever the heart desires!

"Ida herself could not have spoken more to the purpose," returned Mrs. Vernon. "But might it not happen, Lucy, that you might grow so attached to this gay country life, as acquire a distaste for your present sober one?"

"Never, dear mamma! Nature never intended me to shine in the circles of fashion."

"And yet, your gentleness and timidity would well adorn them," said Ida.

"For Lucy's sake, I must interfere," exclaimed Claude, who had hitherto remained silent. "Your praise may even injure as much as it may gratify, Miss Beresford. I hope that Lucy's ambition may be the pure and womanly one of shining in her domestic circle and not in the glittering world of fashion, even though she could rule sole empress there,—a dignity, however, that the