

"What a strange character," said our heroine, as the door closed; "and yet with all her oddities, I really think she means well."

"You are right, my love," replied Lady Woodford. "Where she takes a fancy, she is exceedingly kind, but she makes many enemies by her blunt and unpleasant remarks: while we revere the truth, we should be careful not to wound the feelings of others. But you are looking pale; a walk with Clara will do you both good, the day is so beautiful."

Willingly Katherine assented to the proposal, and in a few minutes the two friends sallied out, their spirits rising with the vivifying effects of the fragrant air. As they struck into the plantation that divided the grounds of the Abbey from the fields, they perceived Sir Henry and Captain Beauchamp slowly advancing. The heightened colour and slight tremor in the voice of Clara, proclaimed the new feelings which were beginning to spring up in her breast for this truly interesting young man, as she noticed the delighted expression on his countenance, and felt the warm pressure of his hand on their meeting.

"Whither are you bound, fair ladies?" inquired Sir Henry. "Why, Clara, you look amazed; what has happened?"

"We are just escaped from Miss Felicia Sykes," replied Clara, smiling, "and are come to recover ourselves in the open air."

"Miss Felicia Sykes, the man hater," repeated Sir Henry. "Poor things! I pity you, and am almost tempted to give you the pleasure of our escort to recompense you. What say you, Beauchamp, are you inclined for more walking, or shall we return to the house?"

"For more walking, certainly, in such society," he returned, offering his arm to Clara. "Which way shall we go?"

"Into the green lane, where perhaps we may meet Mrs. Atherly, who promised to come early," she said; and into the lane they struck, followed by Sir Henry and Katherine.

Upon what subjects Captain Beauchamp and Clara conversed while thus they walked together we have no right to inquire; both were admirers of nature, and beheld and praised God in all His works. Often they paused to admire, and called upon their companions to admire with them. The hedges were full of the sweet briars, the rose and the May blossoms; fragrance was in the air, and melody from the song of birds, while the distant whistle of the plough boy and the merry sheep bell, all lent interest to the summer scene. A small thatched roof cottage stood at the extremity of the lane. Here Captain Beauchamp and Clara stopped to look at a pretty child who sat on the step of the door eating his bread and

milk, a large shaggy dog by his side wistfully gazing in his face; suddenly the animal turned, and seeing the strangers, rushed forward with a fierce bark, and seized Captain Beauchamp by the arm. The scream of Clara brought the owner of the cottage in haste to his rescue, who striking the dog with a large cudgel, at length made him let go his hold, but not before his teeth had penetrated the flesh.

"Oh! I fear he has hurt you very much," exclaimed Clara, in an agony, Sir Henry and Katherine participating in her alarm.

"It is nothing, I assure you; pray do not distress yourselves," replied Captain Beauchamp, addressing himself particularly to Clara. The cottager, who was a labourer on the estate, expressed great sorrow for the accident, saying he had never known his dog to attack a gentleman before. Sir Henry advised his friend to have his arm examined and bathed with warm water. To satisfy the anxiety expressed for him, he complied, when they all entered the cottage. On withdrawing his coat, blood appeared on the shirt sleeve; this added to the fears of poor Clara, whose pale cheek told more than she dared to express in words. When Sir Henry had bared his arm, the small punctures in the flesh were discovered.

"What a frightful wound," said Captain Beauchamp, laughing; and turning to Clara; but on perceiving tears in her eyes, his countenance changed, and he gazed on her in tender admiration. Nor was Katherine wanting in solicitude for one who had invariably stood her friend; she ran to the woman of the cottage to ask for a little warm milk and water, holding the basin herself, while Sir Henry bathed the wound. Clara, unable to conceal her alarm, now asked the owner of the dog if he had any reason to think him mad.

"La! bless you, Miss Woodford, not the least," he replied. "Don't take on so; the dog is no more mad than you are."

Captain Beauchamp smiled, while Clara, abashed, shrank behind him and spoke no more till Sir Henry had completed his operation by tying the injured arm in a sling, and proposed their returning to the Abbey instead of continuing their walk. Clara then proceeded with her brother, leaving Captain Beauchamp to attend Katherine. After walking on in silence a few minutes, she turned to Sir Henry, saying:

"I hope I did not show too much anxiety about Captain Beauchamp; what did the man mean by my 'taking on so?' now don't laugh or you will make me angry."

"I cannot help it, sweet sister," replied Sir