

though it was dreadfully selfish to steal him from dear, dear Caroline, still, if he would ride along-side of her horse, she would feel secure. If they walked, she was sure to feel fatigued almost immediately, and compelled to take the arm Charles was so polite as to offer. In the house it was the same thing: if she sung, Charles must take second: she was foolishly timid and never could sing alone: if she played, he must turn the pages; in short, he was for ever by her side; and so well did she play her part, that, at first, he fancied that, without a great breach of politeness, he could not act otherwise. By degrees, however, his politeness assumed a much warmer character; he neglected Caroline almost entirely, and at last, much to his own surprise, found himself desperately in love with Miss Vivian. It is human nature to feel neglect, and to resent it; and Caroline did sometimes feel mortified to see all the attention, once so exclusively her own, bestowed upon another, but she did not resent it: perhaps, at times unconsciously, her manner towards him was colder than it used to be, but that was but a passing feeling of wounded vanity; she was too strong in the strength of her own attachment, to allow anything of a serious suspicion of his to enter her mind. Things, however, could not long continue in this state, and at last her eyes were destined to be opened.

Charles had promised to accompany her to a village a few miles off, to assist her in fixing on a site for a cottage Sir John was anxious to have built for an old servant. She walked into the drawing room one beautiful forenoon, and asked him if he was ready to accompany her, adding, she feared the distance was too great for Nora to walk.

To this, Nora instantly assented, but Charles made no reply, and upon Caroline turning towards him, she was surprised to see him standing irresolute in the middle of the room. She smiled confidently on him, and again asked him if he was ready to accompany her.

"If to-morrow would do as well, Caroline," he replied, with some confusion—"I should be delighted to escort you—but I have just promised Miss Vivian to stay at home and practise the duet we were trying over last night."

"Strange," thought Caroline, "to prefer practising a duet with Nora to walking with me!" but adding aloud, "Very well, Charles, though it is too far for me to walk alone, I can easily ride there."

She left the room; before she had proceeded many steps, she remembered she had forgotten to order her horses, and returned to the drawing room to do so: she gently re-opened the door,

and found Charles leaning over Nora at the piano, his arm, unforbidden, thrown resting round her waist. They started at her approach, a cold shudder came over Caroline, and, scarcely believing she saw aright, she fixed her eyes on those of Charles—they sank beneath her searching glance, and in conscious flush of guilt which burned on his brow, she read the truth. Caroline was a creature of impulse, as we have seen; she was sensitive too, to a painful degree, but she was also proud; as the truth first flashed upon her, she thought she must have died on the spot; there was a sickness of heart—an annihilation of all she cared about, of all that made life dear to her, which nearly struck her to the ground; but pride came to her aid, and raising her eyes from the carpet, and fixing upon Charles a smile "more terrible in its reproachlessness than Gorgon hideousness," she said, with a quietness almost unnatural,

"I had forgotton to order my horses—will you ring, and do it for me?"

And then, without giving him time to answer, she walked composedly out of the room, and before Charles had time to collect his tempestuous feelings, he saw her dash past the window on her beautiful pet, Selim.

Poor Caroline's ride was a sad one; there was the agonizing feeling of misplaced affection, of outraged confidence; and that still small voice, which in her happier hours had only *whispered* blame for preferring her own happiness to that of her father and mother, had now increased into an accusation too loud for any sophism to silence. Her brain was on fire, and giving the reins to her horse, she sought, by bodily exertion, to calm the fever which raged within; but it would not do—and checking Selim to a walk, she bent her head on his mane and wept bitterly. "And has it come to this?" she at last passionately exclaimed, as she slowly raised her head, and threw back the long dark ringlets which clustered down her burning cheeks—"has it come to this—to tears? and does Caroline St. Clair weep because she could not make her passion yield to principle, and because a just and retributive God has now made the object of her idolatry the instrument of his vengeance? I know—" she continued, as she raised her tearful eyes to the clear smiling sky; "I know if I have inclined my heart to any evil way, thou wilt not hear me—but now, now in this hour of agony, when I pray to thee for strength to tear that evil from my soul, thou wilt not refuse thine aid to thine offending, but suffering child—Oh, give me strength patiently to endure what I have but too well deserved. Enable me to veil from every eye, especially from *his*, the desolation