

CHAPTER V.

LUCIA came with flushed cheeks and beating heart into the presence of her mother and Mr. Strafford. She longed to have her question answered at once, yet dreaded to ask it. They were waiting tea for her; and the bright cheerful room, with its peaceful home-look, the table and familiar tea-service, the perfectly settled and calm aspect of everything about, struck upon her disturbed fancy with a jarring sense of unfitness. But in a very little while the calm began to have a more reasonable effect; and by the time tea was over, she was ready to hear what had been done, without such an exaggerated idea of its importance, as she had