

"You who possess a mind of no ordinary powers, Miss Morton, are guilty of mental suicide when you broach such sentiments," said Arthur. "The real woman of genius is never a pretender. It is only those who lay claim to knowledge which they do not possess, who deserve the title of blues. How much women have contributed in the present age, by their writings, to the mental and moral improvement of the British female character. Who would dare to stigmatize by the name of a blue, a Mrs. Hemans, a Mary Howitt, or Letitia Elizabeth Landon?"

"I would rather read their works than possess their notoriety," said Marianne. "I hate the very name of an author; it reminds me of a schoolmaster, or schoolmistress, for one always feels uncomfortable in their company. They are spies upon society; people who exalt themselves at the expense of others; who with a thousand faults, follies and eccentricities of their own, build up their reputation by anatomizing the follies of their neighbours. I do not wonder that the most sensible portion of mankind behold them with distrust, and feel ill at ease in their company. There is only one thing in connexion with a celebrated author, that I feel the least inclined to covet."

"And what is that?" said Rosamond, astonished that her cousin should acknowledge any good in such a perverse race.

"Power!" returned Marianne emphatically; "the power they have of tormenting their enemies. But great as this is, the power to be derived from wealth is greater still. This is the power that rules both the weak and strong. The weak worship and fall before it. The strong grasp and toil for it, and when once obtained, can bend the vulgar masses to their will. Keep your beauty, Cousin Rosamond, great as it is, continue to idolize men and women of genius, but give me your wealth, and with it I would reign paramount over a thousand slaves."

"I have no wish to rule," said Rosamond; "I cannot stand alone in my own strength; I feel that I need the support of a stronger, sterner character than my own—that I would feel less difficulty in working for my bread among the poor, than becoming a leader among the rich. Upper seats and conspicuous places are not to my taste; I only covet the quiet domestic enjoyments which spring from a rational and useful employment of one's means and faculties. It strikes me, Cousin Marianne, that you suffer your wishes to take too wide a range, and lose the substance, while endeavouring to grasp the shadow of happiness."

"But the shadow of my substance would

reflect more credit upon the pursuer, Rosamond, than the possession of your realities," said Marianne bitterly. "It is easier to stoop to the earth than to exalt ourselves to heaven; but the higher the aim, the more noble even the failure."

"We should estimate actions by the good they produce," said Arthur gravely. "If we only aim at exalting ourselves in a worldly point of view, beyond our fellows, every step which leads us to a consummation of our wishes, removes us farther from heaven."

"I was not speaking of heaven or heavenly things, Mr. Prescher. I am of the earth, earthy, and to the good which earth hath to bestow, will I hope and cling, as long as I am nourished on her bosom. Fortune has been niggardly to me. Beauty she gave, but left me poor and dependent. I must improve the one solitary talent in the best way I can. If I can obtain with it a young, handsome, wealthy and clever man—well—but if I can only procure age, and ugliness, and imbecility, with wealth to make it palatable, I will forego the advantages of youth, beauty and talent, rather than lose the talisman that has ever bound the world in chains."

Rosamond and Arthur exchanged glances. They could not enter into Marianne's philosophy.

"You do not sympathize with my view of things?" said Marianne, flashing her brilliant dark eyes full upon her companions. "You are both slaves to the opinions of others. I dare think for myself. You revile the world, and all its wicked ways, yet would not for the world incur its censure, by honestly avowing your secret thoughts. I care not for the world, but I like the good things in the world, and will obtain them if I can."

"At the expense, I fear, of every good and holy feeling," said Arthur with a sigh. "Marianne, I pity your low ambition, your servile pride."

"All words, mere words. You seek your happiness in one way—I in another. I might revile your cant and self-delusion—your faith in the infallibility of your own self-righteousness; but no—I like people to please themselves, and grope through the world after their own fashion. You think me vain and wicked, because I know myself to be handsome, and like to be admired. Flattery to woman is like dew to the flower, it freshens her beauty, and calls out all the fine shades in her character. The vainest persons are those who consider themselves above flattery; that with the most self-complaisant smile, declare: 'We are not vain, we should like to see the person who would dare to