

"Indeed! well, what think you now?" As she spoke, she tore the note to atoms, and throwing the shower of paper over her brother, added, "Take that Mr. busy-body, as the reward of your impertinence."

A few days after these occurrences Gerald Stanmore and two of his sisters arrived at Thornhill, to spend some weeks with Mrs. Aubrey. I have already spoken of Gerald, as one whom Isabella's mother was anxious she should marry; and in consequence of this she naturally desired that her daughter should produce a favorable impression on the mind of the young stranger. How to accomplish this puzzled her somewhat, but at length she resolved to invite Mary Churchill, who had more influence over her wayward child than any one else, to spend the time with them. The Misses Stanmore, though not so beautiful as Isabella, were highly cultivated, while their manners, though polished, were entirely free from affectation, and in their society our heroine first became painfully sensible of her inferiority, for they treated her as they would a child, although she was only a year younger than Louisa Stanmore. This feeling prevented for a few days any outbreak of her untamed spirit, but her proud temper, elated by the galling consciousness, became afterwards increasingly irritable.

One evening the conversation turned on a historical work which had recently appeared. Clarence was speaking of it to Miss Stanmore, when Gerald, pitying Isabella, who seemed sitting quite unnoticed, asked her what she thought of the work whose merits they were discussing.

"I do not think anything of it," she replied; "I have never read it."

"I suppose your reading of history has been confined to the old standard works," he continued.

"No, I have never read any history but 'the Romance of History,'" she replied, coldly. "I hate blue-stockingism, and think it a proof of very bad taste to parade one's learning before company."

This was said loud enough to be heard by all in the room, and in a tone of evident irritation. Gerald was much amused, and attempted to prolong the conversation.

"You are, doubtless, fond of poetry," he said; "how do you like *Milton*?"

"I have only read *Comus* entirely through; I never had patience to finish 'Paradise Lost,' and 'Regained.'"

"Here, then, I think, is a picture which will please you," he said, taking a drawing from a portfolio on the table; "you told me, I believe, that you were fond of drawing: this is a piece which my sister finished only a day or two

since. It is a fine representation of a scene in *Comus*, which you doubtless remember, when the goddess of the river appears before the lady in the enchanted seat, saying:

"Brightest lady, look on me;
Thus I sprinkle on thy breast,
Drops that, from my fountain pure
I have kept of precious cure,
Thrice upon thy finger's tip,
Thrice upon thy rubied lip;
Next this marble, venom'd seat,
Smeared with gums of glutinous heat,
I touch, with chaste palms moist and cold."

"How beautiful!" exclaimed Miss Churchill, as she looked at the exquisite drawing.

"I do not think so," cried Isabella; "look at the goddess Sabrina, she is positively fat; only think of a fat goddess," and she laughed heartily.

"She is a noble, majestic figure," replied Gerald; "how would you have her look?"

"Take a spirit, of course."

"And how, my fair critic, would you represent a spirit?"

"As a shadowy being just ready to vanish into invisibility. Her figure should be so light and aerial, that one might fancy the moonbeams would pierce it through. Miss Stanmore," she added, "probably thought herself a model of beauty, and drew the goddess in her own image."

"And if you were drawing one, I suppose you would do the same."

"It would be with more reason at any rate," retorted Isabella.

Gerald did not reply, but turning to Miss Churchill, enquired if she drew.

"A little," she quietly replied; "my time has been so much occupied of late that I have not practised as much as I could have wished; but it is an art of which I am very fond, and I never weary of seeing fine pictures."

"A little, indeed!" exclaimed the impetuous Isabella; "you draw beautifully, better than any one else I know of —."

"Hush, my dear child, you know I cannot draw like this," replied Mary, pointing to the picture she had been admiring; "you are not an impartial judge."

"Perhaps not, but I will let Clarence and the rest judge for themselves; nay, you need not frown on me, it will do no good," and she glided from the room.

Soon she returned with a picture, which she laid before her brother; it was a fine spirited sketch of a scene not far from the house, and in the foreground was his wild sister, attired as a shepherdess, and in an attitude of earnest attention,