

prospects, and said to himself that he would not forget her. And this meant a good deal from a busy man like Sir Philip Ashley.

Meanwhile there had been another conversation going on in the drawing-room between the three ladies. Margaret put her arm affectionately round Janetta's waist as they stood by the hearthrug, and looked at her mother with a smile. Lady Caroline sank into an easy-chair on the other side of the fireplace, and contemplated the two girls.

"This is better than Claremont House, is it not, Janet?" said Margaret. "Indeed it is," Janetta answered, gratefully.

"You found the way to papa's heart by your talk about music—did she not, mamma? And does not this dress suit her beautifully?"

"It wants a little alteration in the sleeve," said Lady Caroline, with the placidity which Janetta had always attributed to Margaret as a special virtue, but which she now found was merely characteristic of the house and family in general, "but Markham can do that to-morrow. There are some people coming in the evening, and the sleeve will look better shortened."

The remark sounded a little inconsequent in Janetta's ear, but Margaret understood and assented, It meant that Lady Caroline was on the whole pleased with Janetta, and did not object to introducing her to her friends. Margaret gave her mother a little smile over Janetta's head, while that young person was gathering up her courage in two hands, so to speak, before addressing Lady Caroline.

"I am very much obliged to you," she said at last, with a thrill of gratitude in her sweet voice which was very pleasant to the ear. "But—I was thinking— what time would be the most convenient for me to go home to-morrow?"

"Home? To Beaminster?" said Margaret. "But you need not go, dear; you can write a note and tell them that you are staying here."

"Yes, my dear; I am sure Margaret cannot part with you yet" said Lady Caroline, amiably.

"Thank you; it is most kind of you," Janetta answered, her voice shaking. "But I must ask my father whether I can stay—and hear what he says: Miss Polehampton will have written to him, and——"

"And he will be very glad that we have rescued you from her clutches," said Margaret, with a soft triumphant little laugh. "My poor Janetta! What we suffered at her hands!"

Lady Caroline lying back in her easy chair, with the candle light gleaming upon her silvery grey and white brocade with its touches of soft pink, and the diamonds flashing