

"She is quite as good as I am," cried Margaret, indignantly. "Quite as good, far more so, and a great deal cleverer!"

"She has capabilities," said the schoolmistress, with the air of one making a concession; "and I hope that they will be useful to her in her calling. She will probably become a nursery governess, or companion to some lady of superior position. But I cannot believe, my dear that dear Lady Caroline would approve of your singling her out as your especial and particular friend."

"I am sure mamma always likes people who are good and clever," said Margaret. She did not fly into a rage as some girls would have done, but her face flushed, and her breath came more quickly than usual—signs of great excitement on her part, which Miss Polehampton was not slow to observe.

"She likes them in their proper station, my dear. This friendship is not improving for you, nor for Miss Colwyn. Your positions in life are so different that your notice of her can but cause discontent and ill-feeling in her mind. It is exceedingly injudicious, and I cannot think that your dear mamma would approve of it if she knew the circumstances."

"But Janetta's family is not at all badly connected," said Margaret, with some eagerness. "There are cousins of hers living close to us—the next property belongs to them——" "Do you know them, my dear?"

"I know *about* them," answered Margaret, suddenly coloring very deeply, and looking uncomfortable, "but I don't think I have ever seen them, they are so much away from home——"

"I know *about* them, too," said Miss Polehampton, grimly; "and I do not think that you will ever advance Miss Colwyn's interests by mentioning her connection with that family. I have heard Lady Caroline speak of Mrs. Brand and her children. They are not people, my dear Margaret, whom it is desirable for you to know."

"But Janetta's own people live quite near us," said Margaret, reduced to a very pleading tone. "I know them at home; they live at Beaminster—not three miles off."

"And may I ask if Lady Caroline visits them, my dear?" asked Miss Polehampton, with mild sarcasm, which brought the color again to Margaret's fair face. The girl could not answer; she knew well enough that Janetta's stepmother was not at all the sort of person whom Lady Caroline Adair would willingly speak to, and yet she did not like to say that her acquaintance with Janetta had only been made at a Beaminster dancing class.

Probably Miss Polehampton divined the fact, "Under the circumstances," she said, "I think I should be justified in writing to Lady Caroline and asking her to remonstrate a little with you, my dear Margaret. Probably she would be better able to make you understand the impropriety of your behavior than I can do."