

"Pray do nothing of the sort" said Mr. Adair. "I would trust my Pearls instinct anywhere. She would never make an unsuitable friend!"

"Margaret has written to me herself," said Lady Caroline. "She seems unusually excited about the matter. 'Dear mother,' she writes, 'pray interpose to prevent Miss Polehampton from doing an unjust and ungenerous thing. She disapproves of my friendship with dear Janetta Colwyn, simply because Janetta is poor; and she threatens to punish Janetta—not me—by sending her home in disgrace. Janetta is a governess-pupil here, and it would be a great trouble to her if she were sent away. I hope that you would rather take *me* away than let such an injustice be done.'

"My Pearl hits the nail on the head exactly," said Mr. Adair, with complacency. He rose as he spoke, and began to walk about the room. "She is quite old enough to come home, Caroline. It is June now, and the term ends in July. Fetch her home, and invite the little governess too, and you will soon see whether or no she is the right sort of friend for Margaret." He laughed in his mellow, genial way, and leaned against the mantel-piece, stroking his yellow moustache and glancing at his wife.

"I am not sure that that would be advisable," said Lady Caroline, with her pretty smile. "Janetta Colwyn: Colwyn? Did not Margaret know her before she went to school? Are there not some Colwyns at Beaminster? The doctor—yes, I remember him; don't you, Reginald?"

Mr. Adair shook his head, but Sir Philip looked up hastily.

"I know him—a struggling man with a large family. His first wife was rather well-connected, I believe: at any rate she was related to the Brands of Brand Hall. He married a second time after her death."

"Do you call that being well-connected, Philip?" said Lady Caroline, with gentle reproach; while Mr. Adair laughed and whistled, but caught himself up immediately and apologized.

"I beg pardon—I forgot where I was: the less any of us have to do with the Brands of Brand Hall the better, Phil."

"I know nothing of them," said Sir Philip, rather gravely.

"Nor anybody else"—hastily—"they never live at home, you know. So this girl is a connection of theirs?"

"Perhaps not a very suitable friend: Miss Polehampton may be right" said Lady Caroline. "I suppose I must go over to Brighton and see Margaret."

"Bring her back with you," said Mr. Adair, recklessly. "She has had quite enough of school by this time: she is nearly eighteen, isn't she?"

