

generally known that a lecture was impending when one of the girls was detained after prayers, and it was very unusual for Margaret to be lectured! Miss Adair did not, however, look discomposed. A momentary smile flitted across her face at Janetta's tiny grimace, but it was instantly succeeded by the look of simple gravity becoming to the occasion.

When the last of the pupils and the last also of the teachers had filed out of the room, Miss Polehampton turned and surveyed the waiting girl with some uncertainty. She was really fond of Margaret Adair. Not only did she bring credit to the school, but she was a good, nice, lady-like girl (such were Miss Polehampton's epithets), and very fair to look upon. Margaret was tall, slender, and exceedingly graceful in her movements: she was delicately fair, and had hair of the silkiest texture and palest gold; her eyes, however, were not blue, as one would have expected them to be; they were hazel brown, and veiled by long brown lashes—eyes of melting softness and dreaminess, peculiarly sweet in expression. Her features were a very little too long and thin for perfect beauty: but they gave her a Madonna-like look of peace and calm which many were ready enthusiastically to admire. And there was no want of expression in her face; its faint rose bloom varied almost at a word, and the thin curved lips were as sensitive to feeling as could be desired. What was wanting in the face was what gave it its peculiar maidenly charm—a lack of passion, a little lack, perhaps, of strength. But at seventeen we look less for these characteristics than for the sweetness and docility which Margaret certainly possessed. Her dress of soft, white muslin was quite simple—the ideal dress for a young girl—and yet it was so beautifully made, so perfectly finished in every detail, that Miss Polehampton never looked at it without an uneasy feeling that she was *too* well-dressed for a schoolgirl. Others wore muslin dresses of apparently the same cut and texture; but what the casual eye might fail to observe, the schoolmistress was perfectly well aware of, namely, that the tiny frills at neck and wrists were of the costliest Mechlin lace, that the hem of the dress was bordered with the same material, as if it had been the commonest of things; that the embroidered white ribbons with which it was trimmed had been woven in France especially for Miss Adair, and that the little silver buckles at her waist and on her shoes were so ancient and beautiful as to be of almost historic importance. The effect was that of simplicity; but it was the costly simplicity of absolute perfection. Margaret's mother was never content unless her child was clothed from head to foot in materials of the softest, finest and best. It was a sort of outward symbol of what she desired for the girl in all relations of life.

This it was that disturbed Miss Polehampton's mind as she stood and looked uneasily for a moment at Margaret Adair. Then she took the girl by the hand.

"Sit down, my dear" she said, in a kind voice, "and let me talk to you for a few moments. I hope you are not tired with standing so long."