

"I have been talking to Miss Adair about you," said the schoolmistress, coldly. "I have been telling her, as I now tell you, that the difference in your positions makes your present intimacy very undesirable. I wish you to understand, henceforward, that Miss Adair is not to walk with you in the garden, not to sit beside you in class, not to associate with you, as she has hitherto done, on equal terms."

"Why should we not associate on equal terms?" said Janetta. She was a black-browed girl, with a clear olive skin, and her eyes flashed and her cheeks glowed with indignation as she spoke.

"You are not equals," said Miss Polehampton, with icy displeasure in her tone— she had spoken very differently to Margaret. "You have to work for your bread: there is no disgrace in that, but it puts you on a different level from that of Miss Margaret Adair, an earl's grand-daughter, and the only child of one of the richest commoners in England. I have never before reminded you of the difference in position between yourself and the young ladies with whom you have hitherto been allowed to associate; and I really think I shall have to adopt another method--unless you conduct yourself, Miss Colwyn, with a little more modesty and propriety."

"May I ask what your other method would be?" asked Miss Colwyn, with perfect self-possession.

Miss Polehampton looked at her for a moment in silence.

"To begin with," she said, "I could order the meals differently, and request you to take yours with the younger children, and in other ways cut you off from the society of the young ladies. And if this failed, I could signify to your father that our arrangement was not satisfactory, and that it had better end at the close of this term."

Janetta's eyes fell and her color faded as she heard this threat. It meant a good deal to her. She answered quickly, but with some nervousness of tone.

"Of course, that must be as you please, Miss Polehampton. If I do not satisfy you, I must go."

"You satisfy me very well except in that one respect. However, I do not ask for any promise from you now. I shall observe your conduct during the next few days, and be guided by what I see. I have already spoken to Miss Adair."

Janetta bit her lips. After a pause, she said —

"Is that all? May I go now?"

"You may go," said Miss Polehampton, with majesty; and Janetta softly and slowly retired.