

Chapter VI - Coriolanus

Mademoiselle Moore had that morning a somewhat absent minded pupil. Caroline forgot, again and again, the explanations which were given to her. However, she still bore with unclouded mood the chidings her inattention brought upon her. Sitting in the sunshine near the window, she seemed to receive with its warmth a kind influence, which made her both happy and good. Thus disposed, she looked her best, and her best was a pleasing vision.

To her had not been denied the gift of beauty. It was not absolutely necessary to know her in order to like her; she was fair enough to please, even at the first view. Her shape suited her age: it was girlish, light, and pliant; every curve was neat, every limb proportionate; her face was expressive and gentle; her eyes were handsome, and gifted at times with a winning beam that stole into the heart, with a language that spoke softly to the affections. Her mouth was very pretty; she had a delicate skin, and a fine flow of brown hair, which she knew how to arrange with taste; curls became her, and she possessed them in picturesque profusion. Her style of dress announced taste in the wearer - very unobtrusive in fashion, far from costly in material, but suitable in colour to the fair complexion with which it contrasted, and in make to the slight form which it draped. Her present winter garb was of merino - the same soft shade of brown as her hair; the little collar round her neck lay over a pink ribbon, and was fastened with a pink knot. She wore no other decoration.

So much for Caroline Helstone's appearance. As to her character or intellect, if she had any, they must speak for themselves in due time.

Her connections are soon explained. She was the child of parents separated soon after her birth, in consequence of disagreement of disposition. Her mother was the half-sister of Mr Moore's father; thus, though there was no mixture of blood, she was, in a distant sense, the cousin of Robert, Louis, and Hortense. Her father was the brother of Mr Helstone - a man of the character friends desire not to recall, after death has once settled all earthly accounts. He had rendered his wife unhappy. The reports which were known to be true concerning him had given an air of probability to those which were falsely circulated respecting his better principled brother. Caroline had never known her mother, as she was taken from her in infancy, and had not since seen her; her father died comparatively young, and her uncle, the rector, had for some years been her sole guardian. He was not, as we are aware, much adapted, either by nature or habits, to have the charge of a young girl. He had taken little trouble about her education; probably he would have taken none if she, finding herself neglected, had not grown anxious on her own account, and asked, every now and then, for a little attention, and for the means of acquiring such

amount of knowledge as could not be dispensed with. Still, she had a depressing feeling that she was inferior, that her attainments were fewer than were usually possessed by girls of her age and station; and very glad was she to avail herself of the kind offer made by her cousin Hortense, soon after the arrival of the latter at Hollow's Mill, to teach her French and fine needlework. Mlle. Moore, for her part, delighted in the task, because it gave her importance; she liked to lord it a little over a docile yet quick pupil. She took Caroline precisely at her own estimate, as an irregularly-taught, even ignorant girl; and when she found that she made rapid and eager progress, it was to no talent, no application, in the scholar she ascribed the improvement, but entirely to her own superior method of teaching. When she found that Caroline, unskilled in routine, had a knowledge of her own, desultory but varied, the discovery caused her no surprise, for she still imagined that from her conversation had the girl unawares gleaned these treasures. She thought it even when forced to feel that her pupil knew much on subjects whereof she knew little; the idea was not logical, but Hortense had perfect faith in it

Mademoiselle, who prided herself on possessing 'un esprit positif,' and on entertaining a decided preference for dry studies, kept her young cousin to the same as closely as she could. She worked her unrelentingly at the grammar of the French language, assigning her, as the most improving exercise she could devise, interminable 'analyses logiques.' These 'analyses' were by no means a source of particular pleasure to Caroline; she thought she could have learned French just as well without them, and grudged excessively the time spent in pondering over 'propositions, principales, et incidents;' in deciding the 'incidente déterminative,' and the 'incidente applicative;' in examining whether the proposition was 'pleine' 'elliptique,' or 'implicite.' Sometimes she lost herself in the maze, and when so lost she would, now and then (while Hortense was rummaging her drawers upstairs - an unaccountable occupation in which she spent a large portion of each day, arranging, disarranging, rearranging, and counter-arranging), carry her book to Robert in the counting-house and get the rough place made smooth by his aid. Mr Moore possessed a clear, tranquil brain of his own. Almost as soon as he looked at Caroline's little difficulties they seemed to dissolve beneath his eye. In two minutes he would explain all, in two words give the key to the puzzle. She thought if Hortense could only teach like him, how much faster she might learn. Repaying him by an admiring and grateful smile, rather shed at his feet than lifted to his face; she would leave the mill reluctantly to go back to the cottage, and then, while she completed the exercise, or worked out the sum (for Mlle. Moore taught her arithmetic too) she would wish nature had made her a boy instead of a girl, that she might ask Robert to let her be his clerk, and sit with him in the counting-house, instead of sitting with Hortense in the parlour.

Occasionally - but this happened very rarely - she spent the evening at Hollow's Cottage. Sometimes during these visits Moore was away attending a market; sometimes he was gone to Mr Yorke's; often he was engaged with a male visitor in another room; but sometimes, too, he was at home; disengaged, free to talk with Caroline. When this was the case, the evening hours passed on wings of light; they were gone before they were counted. There was no room in England so pleasant as that small parlour when the three cousins occupied it. Hortense, when she was not teaching, or scolding, or cooking, was far from ill-humoured; it was her custom to relax towards evening, and to be kind to her young English kinswoman. There was a means, too, of rendering her delightful, by inducing her to take her guitar and sing and play. She then became quite good-natured. And as she played with skill, and had a well-toned voice, it was not disagreeable to listen to her. It would have been absolutely agreeable, except that her formal and self-important character modulated her strains, as it impressed her manners and moulded her countenance.

Mr Moore, released from the business yoke, was, if not lively himself, a willing spectator of Caroline's liveliness, a complacent listener to her talk, a ready respondent to her questions. He was something agreeable to sit near, to hover round, to address and look at. Sometimes he was better than this - almost animated, quite gentle and friendly.

The drawback was that by the next morning he was sure to be frozen up again; and however much he seemed, in his quiet way, to enjoy these social evenings, he rarely contrived their recurrence. This circumstance puzzled the inexperienced head of his cousin. 'If I had a means of happiness at my command,' she thought, 'I would employ that means often. I would keep it bright with use, and not let it lie for weeks aside; till it gets rusty.'

Yet she was careful not to put in practice her own theory. Much as she liked an evening visit to the cottage, she never paid one unasked. Often, indeed, when pressed by Hortense to come, she would refuse, because Robert did not second, or but slightly seconded the request. This morning was the first time he had ever, of his own unprompted will, given her an invitation; and then he had spoken so kindly that in hearing him she had received a sense of happiness sufficient to keep her glad for the whole day.

The morning passed as usual. Mademoiselle, ever breathlessly busy, spent it in bustling from kitchen to parlour, now scolding Sarah, now looking over Caroline's exercise or hearing her repetition-lesson. However faultlessly these tasks were achieved, she never commended: it was a maxim with her that praise is inconsistent with a teacher's dignity, and that blame, in more or less unqualified measure, is

indispensable to it. She thought incessant reprimand, severe or slight, quite necessary to the maintenance of her authority; and if no possible error was to be found in the lesson, it was the pupil's carriage, or air, or dress, or mien, which required correction.

The usual affray took place about the dinner, which meal, when Sarah at last brought it into the room, she almost flung upon the table, with a look that expressed quite plainly, 'I never dished such stuff i' my life afore; it's not fit for dogs.' Notwithstanding Sarah's scorn, it was a savoury repast enough. The soup was a sort of puree of dried peas, which mademoiselle had prepared amidst bitter lamentations that in this desolate country of England no haricot beans were to be had. Then came a dish of meat - nature unknown, but supposed to be miscellaneous - singularly chopped up with crumbs of bread, seasoned uniquely though not unpleasantly, and baked in a mould - a queer but by no means unpalatable dish. Greens, oddly bruised, formed the accompanying vegetable; and a pâté of fruit, conserved after a recipe devised by Madame Gérard Moore's 'grand'mère,' and from the taste of which it appeared probable that 'mélasse' had been substituted for sugar, completed the dinner.

Caroline had no objection to this Belgian cookery - indeed she rather liked it for a change; and it was well she did so, for had she evinced any disrelish thereof, such manifestation would have injured her in mademoiselle's good graces for ever; a positive crime might have been more easily pardoned than a symptom of distaste for the foreign comestibles.

Soon after dinner Caroline coaxed her governess-cousin upstairs to dress. This manoeuvre required management. To have hinted that the jupon, camisole, and curl-papers were odious objects, or indeed other than quite meritorious points, would have been a felony. Any premature attempt to urge their disappearance was therefore unwise, and would be likely to issue in the persevering wear of them during the whole day. Carefully avoiding rocks and quicksands, however, the pupil, on pretence of requiring a change of scene, contrived to get the teacher aloft; and, once in the bedroom, she persuaded her that it was not worth while returning thither, and that she might as well make her toilet now; and while Mademoiselle delivered a solemn homily on her own surpassing merit in disregarding all frivolities of fashion, Caroline denuded her of the camisole, invested her with a decent gown, arranged her collar, hair, etc., and made her quite presentable. But Hortense would put the finishing touches herself, and these finishing touches consisted in a thick handkerchief tied round the throat, and a large, servant-like black apron, which spoiled everything. On no account would mademoiselle have appeared in her own house without the thick handkerchief and the voluminous apron. The first was a positive matter of morality - it was quite improper not

to wear a fichu; the second was the ensign of a good housewife - she appeared to think that by means of it she somehow effected a large saving in her brother's income. She had, with her own hands, made and presented to Caroline similar equipments; and the only serious quarrel they had ever had, and which still left a soreness in the elder cousin's soul, had arisen from the refusal of the younger one to accept of and profit by these elegant presents.

'I wear a high dress and a collar,' said Caroline, 'and I should feel suffocated with a handkerchief in addition; and my short aprons do quite as well as that very long one. I would rather make no change.'

Yet Hortense, by dint of perseverance, would probably have compelled her to make a change, had not Mr Moore chanced to overhear a dispute on the subject, and decided that Caroline's little aprons would suffice, and that, in his opinion, as she was still but a child, she might for the present dispense with the fichu, especially as her curls were long, and almost touched her shoulders.

There was no appeal against Robert's opinion, therefore his sister was compelled to yield; but she disapproved entirely of the piquant neatness of Caroline's costume, and the ladylike grace of her appearance. Something more solid and homely she would have considered 'beaucoup plus convenable.'

The afternoon was devoted to sewing. Mademoiselle, like most Belgian ladies, was specially skilful with her needle. She by no means thought it waste of time to devote unnumbered hours to fine embroidery, sight-destroying lace-work, marvellous netting and knitting, and, above all, to most elaborate stocking- mending. She would give a day to the mending of two holes in a stocking any time, and think her 'mission' nobly fulfilled when she had accomplished it. It was another of Caroline's troubles to be condemned to learn this foreign style of darning, which was done stitch by stitch, so as exactly to imitate the fabric of the stocking itself - a weariful process, but considered by Hortense Gérard, and by her ancestresses before her for long generations back, as one of the first 'duties of woman.' She herself had had a needle, cotton, and a fearfully torn stocking put into her hand while she yet wore a child's coif on her little black head; her 'hauts faits' in the darning line had been exhibited to company ere she was six years old; and when she first discovered that Caroline was profoundly ignorant of this most essential of attainments, she could have wept with pity over her miserably neglected youth.

No time did she lose in seeking up a hopeless pair of hose, of which the heels were entirely gone, and in setting the ignorant English girl to repair the deficiency. This task had been commenced two years ago, and Caroline had the stockings in her work-bag yet. She did a few

rows everyday, by way of penance for the expiation of her sins. They were a grievous burden to her; she would much have liked to put them in the fire; and once Mr Moore, who had observed her sitting and sighing over them, had proposed a private incremation in the counting-house; but to this proposal Caroline knew it would have been impolitic to accede - the result could only be a fresh pair of hose, probably in worse condition. She adhered, therefore, to the ills she knew.

All the afternoon the two ladies sat and sewed, till the eyes and fingers, and even the spirits of one of them, were weary. The sky since dinner had darkened; it had begun to rain again, to pour fast secret fears began to steal on Caroline that Robert would be persuaded by Mr Sykes or Mr Yorke to remain at Whinbury till it cleared, and of that there appeared no present chance. Five o'clock struck, and time stole on; still the clouds streamed. A sighing wind whispered in the roof-trees of the cottage; day seemed already closing; the parlour fire shed on the clear hearth a glow ruddy as at twilight.

'It will not be fair till the moon rises,' pronounced Mademoiselle Moore, 'consequently I feel assured that my brother will not return till then. Indeed I should be sorry if he did. We will have coffee. It would be vain to wait for him.'

'I am tired. May I leave my work now, cousin?'

'You may, since it grows too dark to see to do it well. Fold it up; put it carefully in your bag; then step into the kitchen and desire Sarah to bring in the goûter, or tea, as you call it.'

'But it has not yet struck six. He may still come.'

'He will not, I tell you. I can calculate his movements. I understand my brother.'

Suspense is irksome, disappointment bitter. All the world has, some time or other, felt that Caroline, obedient to orders, passed into the kitchen. Sarah was making a dress for herself at the table.

'You are to bring in coffee,' said the young lady in a spiritless tone; and then she leaned her arm and head against the kitchen mantelpiece, and hung listlessly over the fire.

'How low you seem, miss! But it's all because your cousin keeps you so close to work. It's a shame!'

'Nothing of the kind, Sarah,' was the brief reply.

'Oh! but I know it is. You're fit to cry just this minute, for nothing else but because you've sat still the whole day. It would make a kitten dull to be mewed up so.'

'Sarah, does your master often come home early from market when it is wet?'

'Never, hardly; but just to-day, for some reason, he has made a difference.'

'What do you mean?'

'He is come. I am certain I saw Murgatroyd lead his horse into the yard by the back-way, when I went to get some water at the pump five minutes since. He was in the counting-house with Joe Scott, I believe.'

'You are mistaken.'

'What should I be mistaken for? I know his horse surely?'

'But you did not see himself?'

'I heard him speak, though. He was saying something to Joe Scott about having settled all concerning ways and means, and that there would be a new set of frames in the mill before another week passed, and that this time he would get four soldiers from Stilbro' barracks to guard the wagon.'

'Sarah, are you making a gown?'

'Yes. Is it a handsome one?'

'Beautiful! Get the coffee ready. I'll finish cutting out that sleeve for you, and I'll give you some trimming for it I have some narrow satin ribbon of a colour that will just match it'

'You're very kind, miss.'

'Be quick; there's a good girl. But first put your master's shoes on the hearth: he will take his boots off when he comes in. I hear him; he is coming.'

'Miss, you're cutting the stuff wrong.'

'So I am; but it is only a snip: there is no harm done.'

The kitchen door opened; Mr Moore entered, very wet and cold. Caroline half turned from her dressmaking occupation, but renewed it

for a moment, as if to gain a minute's tune for some purpose. Bent over the dress, her face was hidden; there was an attempt to settle her features and veil their expression, which failed. When she at last met Mr Moore, her countenance beamed.

'We had ceased to expect you. They asserted you would not come,' she said.

'But I promised to return soon: you expected me, I suppose?'

'No, Robert; I dared not when it rained so fast. And you are wet and chilled. Change everything. If you took cold, I should - we should blame ourselves in some measure.'

'I am not wet through: my riding-coat is waterproof. Dry shoes are all I require. There - the fire is pleasant after facing the cold wind and rain for a few miles.'

He stood on the kitchen hearth; Caroline stood beside him. Mr Moore, while enjoying the genial glow, kept his eyes directed towards the glittering brasses on the shelf above. Chancing for an instant to look down, his glance rested on an uplifted face flushed, smiling, happy, shaded with silky curls, lit with fine eyes. Sarah was gone into the parlour with the tray; a lecture from her mistress detained her there. Moore placed his hand a moment on his young cousin's shoulder, stooped, and left a kiss on her forehead.

'Oh!' said she, as if the action had unsealed her lips, 'I was miserable when I thought you would not come. I am almost too happy now. Are you happy, Robert? Do you like to come home?'

'I think I do - to-night, at least'

'Are you certain you are not fretting about your frames, and your business, and the war?'

'Not just now.'

'Are you positive you don't feel Hollow's Cottage too small for you, and narrow, and dismal?'

'At this moment, no.'

'Can you affirm that you are not bitter at heart because rich and great people forget you?'

'No more questions. You are mistaken if you think I am anxious to curry favour with rich and great people. I only want means - a position - a career.'

'Which your own talent and goodness shall win you. You were made to be great; you shall be great.'

'I wonder now, if you spoke honestly out of your heart, what recipe you would give me for acquiring this same greatness; but I know it - better than you know it yourself. Would it be efficacious? Would it work? Yes - poverty, misery, bankruptcy. Oh, life is not what you think it, Lina!'

'But you are what I think you.'

'I am not'

'You are better, then?'

'Far worse.'

'No; far better. I know you are good.'

'How do you know it?'

'You look so, and I feel you are so.'

'Where do you feel it?'

'In my heart'

'Ah! you judge me with your heart, Lina; you should judge me with your head.'

'I do; and then I am quite proud of you. Robert, you cannot tell all my thoughts about you.'

Mr Moore's dark face mustered colour; his lips smiled, and yet were compressed; his eyes laughed, and yet he resolutely knit his brow.

'Think meanly of me, Lina,' said he. 'Men, in general, are a sort of scum, very different to anything of which you have an idea. I make no pretension to be better than my fellows.'

'If you did, I should not esteem you so much. It is because you are modest that I have such confidence merit'

'Are you flattering me?' he demanded, turning sharply upon her, and searching her face with an eye of acute penetration.

'No,' she said softly, laughing at his sudden quickness. She seemed to think it unnecessary to proffer any eager disavowal of the charge.

'You don't care whether I think you flatter me or not?'

'No.'

'You are so secure of your own intentions?'

'I suppose so.'

'What are they, Caroline?'

'Only to ease my mind by expressing for once part of what I think, and then to make you better satisfied with yourself.'

'By assuring me that my kinswoman is my sincere friend?'

'Just so. I am your sincere friend, Robert'

'And I am - what chance and change shall make me, Lina.'

'Not my enemy, however?'

The answer was cut short by Sarah and her mistress entering the kitchen together in some commotion. They had been improving the time which Mr Moore and Miss Helstone had spent in dialogue by a short dispute on the subject of 'café au lait,' which Sarah said was the queerest mess she ever saw, and a waste of God's good gifts, as it was 'the nature of coffee to be boiled in water,' and which mademoiselle affirmed to be 'un breuvage royal,' a thousand times too good for the mean person who objected to it.

The former occupants of the kitchen now withdrew into the parlour. Before Hortense followed them thither, Caroline had only time again to question, 'Not my enemy, Robert?' And Moore, Quaker-like, had replied with another query, 'Could I be?' and then, seating himself at the table, had settled Caroline at his side.

Caroline scarcely heard Mademoiselle's explosion of wrath when she rejoined them; the long declamation about the 'conduite indigne de cette méchante créature' sounded in her ear as confusedly as the agitated rattling of the china. Robert laughed a little at it, in very subdued sort, and then, politely and calmly entreating his sister to be tranquil, assured her that if it would yield her any satisfaction, she

should have her choice of an attendant amongst all the girls in his mill. Only he feared they would scarcely suit her, as they were most of them, he was informed, completely ignorant of household work; and pert and self-willed as Sarah was, she was, perhaps, no worse than the majority of the women of her class.

Mademoiselle admitted the truth of this conjecture: according to her, 'ces paysannes anglaises étaient tout insupportables.' What would she not give for some 'bonne cuisinière anversoise,' with the high cap, short petticoat, and decent sabots proper to her class - something better, indeed, 'thin an insolent coquette in a flounced gown, and absolutely without cap! (For Sarah, it appears, did not partake the opinion of St. Paul that 'it is a shame for a woman to go with her head uncovered;' but, holding rather a contrary doctrine, resolutely refused to imprison in linen or muslin the plentiful tresses of her yellow hair, which it was her wont to fasten up smartly with a comb behind, and on Sundays to wear curled in front.)

'Shall I try and get you an Antwerp girl?' asked Mr Moore, who, stern in public, was on the whole very kind in private.

'Merci du cadeau!' was the answer. 'An Antwerp girl would not stay here ten days, sneered at as she would be by all the young coquines in your factory;' then softening, 'You are very good, dear brother - excuse my petulance - but truly my domestic trials are severe, yet they are probably my destiny; for I recollect that our revered mother experienced similar sufferings, though she had the choice of all the best servants in Antwerp. Domestics are in all countries a spoiled and untruly set.'

Mr Moore had also certain reminiscences about the trials of his revered mother. A good mother she had been to him, and he honoured her memory; but he recollected that she kept a hot kitchen of it in Antwerp, just as his faithful sister did here in England. Thus, therefore, he let the subject drop, and when the coffee-service was removed, proceeded to console Hortense by fetching her music-book and guitar; and having arranged the ribbon of the instrument round her neck with a quiet fraternal kindness he knew to be all-powerful in soothing her most ruffled moods, he asked her to give him some of their mother's favourite songs.

Nothing refines like affection. Family jarring vulgarises; family union elevates. Hortense, pleased with her brother, and grateful to him, looked, as she touched her guitar, almost graceful, almost handsome; her every-day fretful look was gone for a moment, and was replaced by a 'sourire plein de bonté.' She sang the songs he asked for, with feeling; they reminded her of a parent to whom she had been truly attached; they reminded her of her young days. She observed, too,

that Caroline listened with naïve interest; this augmented her good-humour; and the exclamation at the close of the song, 'I wish I could sing and play like Hortense!' achieved the business, and rendered her charming for the evening.

It is true a little lecture to Caroline followed, on the vanity of wishing and the duty of trying. 'As Rome,' it was suggested, 'had not been built in a day, so neither had Mademoiselle Gérard Moore's education been completed in a week, or by merely wishing to be clever. It was effort that had accomplished that great work. She was ever remarkable for her perseverance, for her industry. Her masters had remarked that it was as delightful as it was uncommon to find so much talent united with so much solidity,' and so on. Once on the theme of her own merits, mademoiselle was fluent.

Cradled at last in blissful self-complacency, she took her knitting, and sat down tranquil. Drawn curtains, a clear fire, a softly-shining lamp, gave now to the little parlour its best, its evening charm. It is probable that the three there present felt this charm. They all looked happy.

'What shall we do now, Caroline?' asked Mr Moore, returning to his seat beside his cousin.

'What shall we do, Robert?' repeated she playfully, 'You decide.'

'Not play at chess?'

'No.'

'Nor draughts, nor backgammon?'

'No, no; we both hate silent games that only keep one's hands employed, don't we?'

'I believe we do. Then shall we talk scandal?'

'About whom? Are we sufficiently interested in anybody to take a pleasure in pulling their character to pieces?'

'A question that comes to the point. For my part, unamiably as it sounds, I must say no.'

'And I too. But it is strange, though we want no third - fourth, I mean (she hastily and with contrition glanced at Hortense), living person among us - so selfish we are in our happiness - though we don't want to think of the present existing world, it would be pleasant to go back to the past, to hear people that have slept for generations in graves

that are perhaps no longer graves now, but gardens and fields, speak to us and tell us their thoughts, and impart their ideas.'

'Who shall be the speaker? What language shall he utter? French?'

'Your French forefathers don't speak so sweetly, nor so solemnly nor so impressively as your English ancestors, Robert. To-night you shall be entirely English. You shall read an English book.'

'An old English book?'

'Yes, an old English book - one that you like; and I'll choose a part of it that is toned quite in harmony with something in you. It shall waken your nature, fill your mind with music, it shall pass like a skilful hand over your heart, and make its strings sound. Your heart is a lyre, Robert; but the lot of your life has not been a minstrel to sweep it, and it is often silent. Let glorious William come near and touch it. You will see how he will draw the English power and melody out of its chords.'

'I must read Shakespeare?'

'You must have his spirit before you; you must hear his voice with your mind's ear; you must take some of his soul into yours.'

'With a view to making me better? Is it to operate like a sermon?'

'It is to stir you, to give you new sensations. It is to make you feel your life strongly - not only your virtues, but your vicious, perverse points.'

'Dieu! que dit-elle?' cried Hortense, who hitherto had been counting stitches in her knitting, and had not much attended to what was said, but whose ear these two strong words caught with a tweak.

'Never mind her, sister; let her talk. Now just let her say anything she pleases to-night. She likes to come down hard upon your brother sometimes. It amuses me, so let her alone.'

Caroline, who, mounted on a chair, had been rummaging the bookcase, returned with a book.

'Here's Shakespeare,' she said, 'and there's 'Coriolanus.' Now, read, and discover by the feelings the reading will give you at once how low and how high you are.'

'Come then, sit near me, and correct when I mispronounce.'

'I am to be the teacher then, and you my pupil?'

'Ainsi, soit-il!'

'And Shakespeare is our science, since we are going to study?'

'It appears so.'

'And you are not going to be French, and sceptical, and sneering? You are not going to think it a sign of wisdom to refuse to admire?'

'I don't know.'

'If you do, Robert, I'll take Shakespeare away; and I'll shrivel up within myself, and put on my bonnet and go home.'

'Sit down. Here I begin.'

'One minute if you please, brother,' interrupted Mademoiselle. 'When the gentleman of a family reads, the ladies should always sew. - Caroline, dear child; take your embroidery. You may get three sprigs done to-night.'

Caroline looked dismayed. 'I can't see by lamplight; my eyes are tired, and I can't do two things well at once. If I sew, I cannot listen; if I listen, I cannot sew.'

'Fi, donc! Quel enfantillage!' began Hortense. Mr Moore, as usual, suavely interposed.

'Permit her to neglect the embroidery for this evening. I wish her whole attention to be fixed on my accent, and to ensure this, she must follow the reading with her eyes - she must look at the book.'

He placed it between them, reposed his arm on the back of Caroline's chair, and thus began to read.

The very first scene in 'Coriolanus' came with smart relish to his intellectual palate, and still as he read he warmed. He delivered the haughty speech of Caius Marcius to the starving citizens with unction; he did not say he thought his irrational pride right, but he seemed to feel it so. Caroline looked up at him with a singular smile.

'There's a vicious point hit already,' she said. 'You sympathise with that proud patrician who does not sympathise with his famished fellowmen, and insults them. There, go on.' He proceeded. The warlike portions did not rouse him much; he said all that was out of date, or should be; the spirit displayed was barbarous; yet the encounter single-handed between Marcius and Tullus Aufidius he delighted in. As he advanced, he forgot to criticise; it was evident he appreciated

the power, the truth of each portion; and, stepping out of the narrow line of private prejudices, began to revel in the large picture of human nature, to feel the reality stamped upon the characters who were speaking from that page before him.

He did not read the comic scenes well; and Caroline, taking the book out of his hand, read these parts for him. From her he seemed to enjoy them, and indeed she gave them with a spirit no one could have expected of her, with a pithy expression with which she seemed gifted on the spot, and for that brief moment only. It may be remarked, in passing, that the general character of her conversation that evening, whether serious or sprightly, grave or gay, was as of something untaught, unstudied, intuitive, fitful - when once gone, no more to be reproduced as it had been than the glancing ray of the meteor, than the tints of the dew-gem, than the colour or form of the sunset cloud, than the fleeting and glittering ripple varying the flow of a rivulet.

Coriolanus in glory, Coriolanus in disaster, Coriolanus banished, followed like giant shades one after the other. Before the vision of the banished man Moore's spirit seemed to pause. He stood on the hearth of Aufidius's hall, facing the image of greatness fallen, but greater than ever in that low estate. He saw 'the grim appearance,' the dark face 'bearing command in it,' 'the noble vessel with its tackle torn.' With the revenge of Caius Marcius, Moore perfectly sympathised; he was not scandalised by it; and again Caroline whispered, 'There I see another glimpse of brotherhood in error.'

The march on Rome, the mother's supplication, the long resistance, the final yielding of bad passions to good, which ever must be the case in a nature worthy the epithet of noble, the rage of Aufidius at what he considered his ally's weakness, the death of Coriolanus, the final sorrow of his great enemy - all scenes made of condensed truth and strength - came on in succession and carried with them in their deep, fast flow the heart and mind of reader and listener.

'Now, have you felt Shakespeare?' asked Caroline, some ten minutes after her cousin had closed the book.

'I think so.'

'And have you felt anything in Coriolanus like you?'

'Perhaps I have.'

'Was he not faulty as well as great?'

Moore nodded.

'And what was his fault? What made him hated by the citizens? What caused him to be banished by his countrymen?'

'What do you think it was?'

'I ask again -

'Whether was it pride, Which out of daily fortune ever taints The happy man? whether defect of judgment, To fail in the disposing of those chances Which he was lord of? or whether nature, Not to be other than one thing, not moving From the casque to the cushion, but commanding peace Even with the same austerity and garb As he controlled the war?'

'Well, answer yourself, Sphinx.'

'It was a spice of all; and you must not be proud to your workpeople; you must not neglect chances of soothing them; and you must not be of an inflexible nature, uttering a request as austerely as if it were a command.'

'That is the moral you tack to the play. What puts such notions into your head?'

'A wish for your good, a care for your safety, dear Robert, and a fear, caused by many things which I have heard lately, that you will come to harm.'

'Who tells you these things?'

'I hear my uncle talk about you. He praises your hard spirit, your determined cast of mind, your scorn of low enemies, your resolution not 'to truckle to the mob,' as he says.'

'And would you have me truckle to them?'

'No, not for the world. I never wish you to lower yourself; but somehow I cannot help thinking it unjust to include all poor working-people under the general and insulting name of 'the mob,' and continually to think of them and treat them haughtily.'

'You are a little democrat, Caroline. If your uncle knew, what would he say?'

'I rarely talk to my uncle, as you know, and never about such things. He thinks everything but sewing and cooking above women's comprehension, and out of their line.'

'And do you fancy you comprehend the subjects on which you advise me?'

'As far as they concern you, I comprehend them. I know it would be better for you to be loved by your workpeople than to be hated by them, and I am sure that kindness is more likely to win their regard than pride. If you were proud and cold to me and Hortense, should we love you? When you are cold to me, as you are sometimes, can I venture to be affectionate in return?'

'Now, Lina, I've had my lesson both in languages and ethics, with a touch on politics; it is your turn. Hortense tells me you were much taken by a little piece of poetry you learned the other day, a piece by poor André Chénier - 'La Jeune Captive.' Do you remember it still?'

'I think so.'

'Repeat it, then. Take your time and mind your accent; especially let us have no English u's.'

Caroline, beginning in a low, rather tremulous voice, but gaining courage as she proceeded, repeated the sweet verses of Chénier. The last three stanzas she rehearsed well.

'Mon beau voyage encore est si loin de sa fin!
Je pars, et des ormeaux qui bordent le chemin
J'ai passé les premiers à peine.
Au banquet de la vie é peine commencé
Un instant seulement mes lèvres ont pressé'
La coupe en mes mains encore pleine.

'Je ne suis qu'au printemps - je veux voir la moisson;
Comme le soleil, de saison en saison,
Je veux achever mon année.
Brillante sur ma tige, et l'honneur du jardin
Je n'ai vu luire encore que les feux du matin,
Je veux achever ma journée!'

Moore listened at first with his eyes cast down, but soon he furtively raised them. Leaning back in his chair he could watch Caroline without her perceiving where his gaze was fixed. Her cheek had a colour, her eyes a light, her countenance an expression this evening which would have made even plain features striking; but there was not the grievous defect of plainness to pardon in her case. The sunshine was not shed on rough barrenness; it fell on soft bloom. Each lineament was turned with grace; the whole aspect was pleasing. At the present moment - animated, interested, touched - she might be called beautiful. Such a face was calculated to awaken not only the

calm sentiment of esteem, the distant one of admiration, but some feeling more tender, genial, intimate - friendship, perhaps, affection, interest. When she had finished, she turned to Moore, and met his eye.

'Is that pretty well repeated?' she inquired, smiling like any happy, docile child.

'I really don't know.'

'Why don't you know? Have you not listened?'

'Yes - and looked. You are fond of poetry, Lina?'

'When I meet with real poetry, I cannot rest till I have learned it by heart, and so made partly mine.'

Mr Moore now sat silent for several minutes. It struck nine o'clock. Sarah entered, and said that Mr Helstone's servant was come for Miss Caroline.

'Then the evening is gone already,' she observed, 'and it will be long, I suppose, before I pass another here.'

Hortense had been for some time nodding over her knitting; fallen into a doze now, she made no response to the remark.

'You would have no objection to come here oftener of an evening?' inquired Robert, as he took her folded mantle from the side-table, where it still lay, and carefully wrapped it round her.

'I like to come here, but I have no desire to be intrusive. I am not hinting to be asked; you must understand that.'

'Oh! I understand thee, child. You sometimes lecture me for wishing to be rich, Lina; but if I were rich, you should live here always - at any rate, you should live with me wherever my habitation might be.'

'That would be pleasant; and if you were poor - ever so poor - it would still be pleasant. Good-night, Robert.'

'I promised to walk with you up to the rectory.'

'I know you did, but I thought you had forgotten, and I hardly knew how to remind you, though I wished to do it. But would you like to go? It is a cold night, and as Fanny is come, there is no necessity - '

'Here is your muff; don't wake Hortense - come.'

The half-mile to the rectory was soon traversed. They parted in the garden without kiss, scarcely with a pressure of hands; yet Robert sent his cousin in excited and joyously troubled. He had been singularly kind to her that day - not in phrase, compliment, profession, but in manner, in look, and in soft and friendly tones.

For himself, he came home grave, almost morose. As he stood leaning on his own yard-gate, musing in the watery moonlight all alone, the hushed, dark mill before him, the hill-environed hollow round, he exclaimed, abruptly, -

'This won't do! There's weakness - there's downright ruin in all this. However,' he added, dropping his voice, 'the frenzy is quite temporary. I know it very well; I have had it before. It will be gone to-morrow.'