

loud as she could elevate her fashionable voice, to "return." But in vain, he heard her not. Hastily turning to Ida, who was nearest to her, she exclaimed:

"Run, child! call him—quick!"

Instead of obeying her injunction, Ida turned her dark eyes full upon her, and honoured her with a haughty stare. At length, she ejaculated the single word, "Madam!" in a tone so cutting, so disdainful, that something like a faint flush tinged the cheek of even the patroness of Almacks.

"Pardon me," she returned, somewhat embarrassed; and more and more perplexed, she turned to Lucy, whose fair face became crimson beneath her glance, whilst Ida, with queen-like dignity, swept from the room.

"Do not deem me impertinent," she at length exclaimed, turning to Mrs. Vernon; "but surely that young girl cannot be your daughter, the sister of yon gentle child?"

"Not exactly; she is an adopted daughter."

Here Lucy made her escape.

"Ah!" said the lady, with a deep-drawn breath; "I thought not. Again pardon me; but may I ask her name? She must be of high birth and breeding."

"Ida Beresford."

"Beresford!" reiterated Lady Stanhope, with a start. "Surely not the daughter of John Beresford, of London?"

"The same," replied Mrs. Vernon, secretly wondering at the deepening colour and evident perturbation of her proud guest, who, after a moment's pause, exclaimed:

"I am the godmother of the young girl, and further, am connected, though distantly, with her mother's family. Her mother was a Stanhope. I should have known that haughty brow and curved lip," she murmured; "they are family characteristics."

After another pause, she turned her large eye, full on Mrs. Vernon, and said:

"Now tell me frankly, are you not thinking at the present moment how little I have interested myself in the child, notwithstanding the double ties by which I am connected with her? Nay," she added, with a polite smile, as her hostess attempted a faint negative; "I know it is so, nor do I wonder at it. But still, do not condemn me unheard. In compliance with her mother's desire I stood sponsor for her, and bestowed on her a silver rattle, together with my simple but beautiful appellation of Ida, which was all she then wanted, for her parents were surrounded by luxury. After her mother's death, I rarely saw my pretty god-child; but each time I beheld her

I discovered some new beauty, some additional grace, and predicted that she would one day be able to enter the lists with the fairest and most brilliant of the aristocratic circle for which she seemed destined. When she had about attained her sixth year, my husband died, and I went abroad with my only daughter, who, some years after, was united in Italy to a wealthy nobleman. In order to dispel the feeling of loneliness to which I was now a prey, I continued to travel from place to place, and it is but five months since I returned to England. Poor Mr. Beresford and his misfortunes were then forgotten, and it was only by the merest chance that I became acquainted with them. My anxiety respecting his daughter was satisfied by the intelligence that some kind friends of her father had taken her under their protection. My enquiries concerning their place of residence were perfectly unavailing. No one knew where they lived; some believed in Cambridgeshire or Hertfordshire, but all concurred in assuring me that they were buried in the country. Feeling that I had perfectly fulfilled my duty towards her—for as I reasoned, after all, what was she to me?—I quietly dismissed her forever from my thoughts, and had it not been for this unforeseen *rencontre*, I blush to confess, I would never have even remembered that such a being as Ida Beresford existed. I had forgotten her as completely as she had forgotten myself."

Here Lady Stanhope paused, but Mrs. Vernon making no comment, she resumed:

"Now tell me, my dear madam, you who have so kindly befriended her when she had none else to look up to, tell me how I can prove serviceable to her, or share the burden you have so generously imposed on yourself?"

"In none that I can see," gently rejoined her companion. "My husband and I have adopted her for our daughter, and though we are not what the world calls affluent, we have still enough for Ida and ourselves. Our roof shall be her home till she leaves it for another of her own."

"But surely," hastily ejaculated Lady Stanhope, "it is wrong to bury such grace and beauty in the obscurity of a country village. Nay, pardon me!" she added, in a softer tone. "Far from me be the presumption of dictating to those whose active and immediate generosity has given them a prior, an all-powerful claim on her direction; but still, I only wish to present to your notice, that Ida Beresford, with her beauty and elegance, and particularly my patronage," here her ladyship unconsciously elevated her head, "might form a splendid alliance, nay, aspire to the highest in the land."