

him hastily ; " I know well what you would say. But it is better, indeed it is, for my sake and for your own, that you should say no more."

" How ! it is not possible ?"

" Impossible," returned she, " that we should ever be anything to each other but companions, and dear friends. You understand me—you have been so kind to me, dear Underwood, and I hope I have not wounded or offended you ; indeed it would pain me very much,"—and here poor Susan Anstey clasped his arm and burst into tears.

Underwood was moved, but his pride was touched. And besides he had imagined his attentions not altogether discouraged on Miss Anstey's part. More than that, why had she so ostentaciously afforded him an opportunity like the present ? It was pure coquetry, dallying with his affections—in short a trap—nothing else. He was beginning to feel very angry, and gave no token of relenting by gesture or word.

" I am very sorry to have offended you," said she, as soon as she had recovered her voice ; " but thought it better we should understand each other at once ; seeing it impossible I could ever assent to what I know you wished. We have been very much thrown together, and I have been indebted to you for much of kindness. I have been a stranger here, and perhaps felt it more deeply than in any other circumstances. I could neither throw coldness nor reserve into my intercourse with you, without upbraiding myself with an ingratitude, of which the opposite feeling was ever that I most loved to cherish with you : and if you attributed my cordiality to any other sentiment, could I help it ? I could not be insincere to myself, nor ever cold or unkind towards you. Perhaps indeed I was wrong—perhaps I ought to have denied myself the pleasure of that cordial intimacy from which I derived so much satisfaction—rather than to have given another the pain of nourishing an uninterrupted affection under a false impression. It would have been more candid and unselfish perhaps ; but I hope it is not yet too late—and that in affording this opportunity for an explanation, we might know in future how to stand with respect to each other—an opportunity which I sought. You will know how to appreciate my motives, and give me to feel that if I have lost a lover I have not lost a friend."

Perhaps Underwood had scarcely enough of generosity to appreciate these motives, as with a voice slightly tremulous, she ceased and awaited his answer.

" Enough, quite enough for me, Miss Anstey—and too much—to know that I am not loved.

Fool that I was not to have seen it sooner ; yet was my regard not at first altogether discouraged ; nor, had I reason to believe, quite unacceptable to you. At least have I this for my own self-justification. As for you, madam," said Underwood, beginning to talk very unfeelingly and unreasonably, " it is only another rejection in your list, to boast of."

" Under present circumstances," said Susan Anstey, quietly, " I shall let such ideas pass without resentment. Perhaps you will regret having uttered them in cooler moments."

As Underwood turned his eyes on Susan Anstey in the moonlight, perhaps he never felt so much before, the full value of what he was about to lose, till this moment, when he knew it was utterly lost to him. Yet he felt no softening towards her, and only seemed to set his brain on the rack in search of something to wound her feelings.

" And perhaps there is another," said he, " occupying a more fortunate place in your regard, to whom the relation of this interview cannot be otherwise than acceptable. I have no doubt he must feel very proud of your preference."

Susan made no reply to this ; but he saw that her countenance changed.

" And is it so ?" said he almost fiercely ; " and you do love another then ! Who is he that has dared to interfere and aspire to the place I occupied near you ?"

" No one, I assure you—you know all my acquaintances."

" Oh ! I understand—a prior attachment."

" With that," said Miss Anstey, looking haughty and displeased for the first time during their interview, " with that you have nothing to do ; nor will I hear another word on a subject which has produced a greater display of feeling than the annoyance at all warranted."

" And is it so ?" said he anew ; " and have I all this while been cheating myself with a pre-occupied heart ?"

" On that subject I reply to no questions," said she, with a look and a manner not to be mistaken ; " but whether it is as you imagine or not, I hope you are convinced of the uselessness of any further pursuance of a conversation which only produces pain to both of us."

" Enough, enough !" said he, conducting her up the steps which led to Mr. Thorbe's mansion ; and wishing her good night coldly, he left her and went up to his room.

Miss Anstey, on retiring to hers, almost cried with vexation. She saw that she had lost a pleasant companion, and the services, perhaps the good will, of a very attentive friend ; no slight