

friendship, but to inform them that I had just returned from Elm Grove, with my young relation, Miss Beresford, a creature of surpassing grace and loveliness, who I knew would create no small sensation in our circle during the present season. You know, my dear, that of course I exaggerated, but if I did not praise you, who would? You cannot picture to yourself what excitement my pleasant intelligence created. Speculating mammas, clever dowagers, are in a state of the greatest agitation, fearing justly that a dangerous rival has appeared on the stage: a rival the more dangerous, as she is produced under my auspices, for you must know that I enjoy great celebrity for match-making talents."

This was uttered with a very satisfied air, as if her Ladyship felt, and prided herself on her laurels. Without noticing Ida's peculiar smile, she rapidly continued:

"I shall have a host here to-morrow, less for the pleasure of seeing myself, than to gratify their laudable curiosity, by ascertaining whether my tale of yesterday was strictly true. Well would your every look and motion be scrutinized and canvassed."

"I care not to encounter the trial," said Ida, haughtily.

"But you will not be put to the test. You must keep your room to-morrow, and the greater part of the succeeding day; fatigue of course the plea. I have two reasons for this. I wish you to be thoroughly, perfectly recovered from the effects of your journey, which has somewhat injured your complexion, and I do not desire to subject you to the kind observation of our friends, till you make your first appearance, which you shall do with all the *éclat* your rank and beauty demand."

"And when will that be?" eagerly asked Ida.

"The night after to-morrow, at her Grace of Hamilton's Ball. You must look your loveliest, Ida, for this is the ordeal which is to decide your reputation. You will be either '*La Reine du Bal*,' or nobody; and now, dearest, farewell! I shall be too much occupied, I fear, to visit you again to-day, or even to-morrow. But you can amuse yourself with reading. There is a well-chosen library in your boudoir," and gracefully pressing Ida's forehead, she left the apartment. Stratton immediately entered and assisted Ida to dress.

The task completed, the latter passed into her boudoir, and flinging herself indolently on one of the luxurious divans, applied herself leisurely to examining the apartment. It was in keeping with the gorgeous splendour of the whole house. The rick silken hangings, of a pale salmon hue,

the soft ottomans and couches, the glowing Turkey carpet, on which the foot-step returned no sound. These, with the invaluable paintings decorating the walls, the alabaster statues, fully occupied the gazer's attention for some few minutes.

"And this splendid chamber, these luxuries, are all destined for my use," she inwardly exclaimed. "I am mistress here!"

Had Lucy seen her at that moment, she might have justly trembled for her return to the humble roof she had left. After a time the handsome book-case attracted her notice, and she arose to examine it. The elegant binding and costly plates of the volumes, were their only claims to the title of well chosen, for beyond the works of Moore, Hemans, Byron, and a few other of the first English poets, the rest of the collection consisted solely of silly novels and insipid poems. Not one historical work was there; not one volume containing the slightest matter, either useful or improving. Such were now to be Ida Beresford's constant, her only studies. What could be expected from such a course? Carelessly taking down one of the newest, she returned to her seat and read till bed-time.

Stratton's first announcement the next day, was, that the mantua-maker was waiting in the ante-room. Ida hastily rose, and submitted, with somewhat more than her usual patience, to the tedious operation of fitting on and cutting out. The rest of the morning was pleasantly spent in examining the innumerable articles purchased by Lady Stanhope, the preceding day. French flowers, gloves, blondes, feathers, were all in turn rigidly examined and pronounced faultless. But this could not last for ever, and Ida had again to have recourse to the novel. She passed this day as she had done the previous one, and having concluded her book, retired to rest in a very ill temper, having first angrily chided her maid for her awkwardness in undoing her hair. The latter received the reproof with admirable composure, contenting herself with raising her eyes in silent deprecation of her unreasonable impatience, for being a tolerable physiognomist, the first glance at her young mistress's countenance had told her, to use her own expressive words, "That she was a perfect Tartar."

(To be continued)