

"I think, Sir, you might show a little more regard for the young lady's nerves."

"Let the young lady then shew a little more regard for other people's toes," was the uncere-
monious rejoinder.

The young viscount turned fiercely upon him, but there was something so very irascible in his venerable antagonist's face, whose hue had now deepened to a fiery red, that he thought it wiser to forbear. A duel with a man sufficiently old to be his father, would be anything but creditable, and, whispering something to his fair partner, who replied by smilingly elevating her shoulders, they turned away.

"We have disposed of them at last," he said, turning with his former benevolent smile to Alice, who was actually trembling to find herself in such close proximity with so very fiery a neighbour. "What! you are afraid of me," he continued, in a kind tone. "Why, you little simpleton, that scene was half got up to give you supercilious young lady, with her foppish companion, a lesson, and to deliver us from their company. And now, preparatory to returning to our former topic, I must inform you of my name, as freely as you gave me yours. 'Tis Hammersly, a plain name, but one never sullied, I believe, by falsehood or dishonesty. Now, my dear child, tell me, have you no brother or cousin, whose attentions would shield you from the slights you have experienced to-night?"

"No; I had three brothers, but they all died in infancy. The only living relative I possess is an uncle of mamma's, but he lives in a distant part of England."

"What county?"

"Cumberland."

"What name?"

"Weston—James Weston, I think—but to tell you the truth, I know very little about him."

"And care still less," said the old man, interpreting aright, an almost imperceptible smile that curved the rosy lips of his companion. "But, have you ever seen him?"

"Never, in person—but I have seen his miniatures; a stern, grave looking man, with raven hair and black eyes. Mamma says I strongly resemble him."

"That were paying him indeed a compliment; but if I am not mistaken, I know this same Mr. Weston, and without further preamble, a more egotistical, churlish being, never existed."

"Oh! shame! shame!" exclaimed Alice, really indignant at hearing her relative thus uncere-
moniously condemned by a stranger.

"Pardon me! I speak truth; but, however, I can also say, he has a good heart, though its

better qualities are nearly choked up by selfishness. You need not speak, young lady," he continued, raising his hand to silence the warm remonstrance hovering on Alice's lips. "Were he not selfish, he would not have left you and your mother—Pardon me!—in the comparative destitution you are in, whilst he, himself, is surrounded by all earth's luxuries, rolling in wealth."

"That is his own affair," was the somewhat cold reply; "and, notwithstanding we have no real claims upon him, since the death of my father, he has regularly transmitted to us, every year, a considerable sum."

"Well, that is something; however, the generosity of the act depends greatly on the extent of the gift. But, I think, my dear child," he added, glancing at his gold repeater, as the strains of the band suddenly ceased, preparatory to commencing some new dance; "I think you had better prepare for leaving. You look very pale, indeed worn out."

"But not with pleasure," said poor Alice, the cheerful smile which had lately animated her features, fading away, as the recollection arose, that the night to which she had so eagerly looked forward, which was to have witnessed her first essay in the brilliant gaieties of the world, had come and passed away, leaving nought but bitter remembrances behind.

"Wait, I will bring you a glass of wine first," said her kind companion. "Remain here a moment."

He soon returned and in compliance with his entreaties, she tasted the refreshments he offered.

"And now," he exclaimed; "take my arm, and we will go in quest of your very attentive and thoughtful *chaperone*."

With a feeling of comparative ease and confidence, to which she had as yet been a stranger, Alice obeyed, and they proceeded together to the music room. The crowd near the door was so great, they were forced to stand aside for a moment, and during the time, she noticed many polite bows and smiles directed to her companion, whilst as many scrutinizing, impertinently inquisitive glances were bent on herself. To the courtesies showered upon him, Mr. Hammersly replied only by an abrupt nod or careless smile; and when Miss Aberton, in sweeping past, accidentally dropped her handkerchief at his very feet, he never bent himself, and by pressing Alice's arm, restrained her first involuntary impulse to raise it. The haughty girl glanced at him with a look of indignant surprise, which he returned by one of the most provoking unconsciousness; but fortunately for her, a gentleman standing in