

clear for herself. The very thought of Nina Aleyn never entered her head, and she would as soon have dreaded a rival in her own waiting maid. Overwhelming then was her surprise, her indignation, when she saw him on the very first night of his arrival, take his post behind the "oddy's" chair, and tax whole hours for her amusement, the powers of conversation he so rarely troubled himself to exercise for others. She endeavored to re-assure herself by repeating:

"He, but wishes to draw her out—to render himself singular—to shew the world how little he values its opinion; but when the next day and the next passed on, and Clinton was still as attentive as ever, her former contempt for Nina changed, under the influence of her new fears, to the bitterest hatred. Her heart still would not permit her to believe that he was really serious in his views, though at times the subdued devotion of his manner, his manifest indifference to all others, filled her with doubts she would have given worlds to solve. But even could she have looked into his heart, she would still have remained in uncertainty, for he himself knew it not. The thought of marriage or betrothment with Nina Aleyn never once entered his ideas, nor did he even acknowledge to himself that he loved her. Respect, admiration for the noble qualities his penetrating eye had discovered, pity for her dependent lot, and that inexplicable sentiment arising perhaps from his jealous temperament, which impelled him to seek out one whom the world sought not, one whose smiles would shine solely upon himself, such were the feelings which he thought alone influenced him. And Nina was happy, perfectly happy, in having one human being who relieved the sad monotony of the hours she passed in the saloon, happy in the kindness and attention of one whom she regarded or fancied she regarded as a brother. Towards the close of the evening, Clinton left her and approached Florence, who was standing near one of the windows looking over some engravings:

"We have quite a pleasant party here, Miss Fitz-Hardinge, but I scarcely know all our guests; yet who is that tall, animated looking girl, standing beside the piano? I must have met her somewhere. Is she not a Miss Westover?"

"Yes," returned Florence, unconscious that the brother of her friend was standing outside on the lawn, a few steps from the window, a solitary listener to the dialogue. "And the turbaned dowerer reclining with such elegant listlessness on the couch beside her, is her mamma and my chaperone."

"She certainly is an elegant looking person; and what an expressive face!" exclaimed Clinton,

as he watched the young lady who was at that moment bending down to her mother, and speaking in a very animated tone.

"Yes," was the laughing reply, "she has an expressive face, as well as an expressive tongue. Beware, Mr. Clinton, if you have any lisp, look, manner, that may be caricatured, do not approach her. You see I am charitable enough to warn you in time—Miss Westover and I are rivals in wit."

"Oh! is that the case?" he returned, averting his glance contemptuously from the object of his late admiration. "As I cannot attempt to cope with such a spirit, I had better keep out of her way," and he immediately turned the conversation into another channel.

About half an hour after, young Westover entered the saloon with a small bouquet of flowers in his hand:

"I say, Lucinda," he carelessly exclaimed, "come, and examine this pretty blossom; I wish you could tell me its name."

Miss Westover complied, and when she returned to her seat after a few moments, the bright sparkle of her eye, and glowing cheek, betokened the study of the flower had proved very exciting:

"Yes, my kind-hearted Florence!" she muttered, as she arranged with apparent calmness, a myrtle blossom amid her glossy curls. "She is very solicitous about Mr. Clinton's peace of mind, but, let her look nearer home; she may want all her vigilance for herself ere long."

The menace was serious, for Lucinda Westover was not one to threaten in vain.

#### CHAPTER XIII.

OF late, Nina had not visited the picture gallery, for she felt assured she would meet Lord St. Albans there, and an innate conviction told her those meetings might give offence to Florence, though why she could scarcely imagine. It was indeed a deprivation, for as she had told the earl, her happiest moments were past there. Matter of fact, unimaginative as Nina appeared, there was in reality a strong blending of romance in her character. Not that romance which consists in making a public parade of the most ridiculous sentimentalism on every occasion, investing frivolous events with a mysterious, exaggerated importance, thinking it necessary always to wear a sentimental, melancholy look, and be for ever expatiating on the happiness of a kindred communion of souls, the yearning of the heart for sympathy, the difficulty of being understood and appreciated by the cruelly matter of fact race amongst whom they are doomed to dwell. Of