

"I think you misjudge him, Markham," was the reply; "I did not know him intimately, but from the little I saw of him, he seemed a frank generous character."

"I may be mistaken," answered Markham carelessly; "but look, do you see that pretty girl in pale blue, near the end of the room! She should certainly regret him, for he was her devoted knight. Attracted either by her handsome face or large fortune, he paid her the most particular attentions."

An indescribable pang shot through Amy's heart. She could not doubt for a moment the truth of what she heard. Had it been her stepmother she might have disbelieved her, but what interest could an utter stranger have in deceiving her? Now the cause of his cold, heartless letter, his sudden renunciation, was plainly apparent. Novice as yet in the worldly knowledge of dissembling her feelings, the sudden quivering of the lip, and changing color, told that the arrow had sped home. Well pleased to see his success, Markham continued—

"But I perceive she has already adopted the wise plan of speedily forgetting one whose attentions were probably more directed to her coffers than to herself."

The indignant flash that shot from his partner's eye at this speech amused him beyond measure, and turning towards her, he said with studied politeness:

"But, perhaps, Miss Morton may know the gentleman?"

"He is my cousin," coldly replied Amy.

"I beg ten thousand pardons," he rejoined. "I am certainly a little disconcerted by an answer he had not expected, but soon recovering his self-possession, he continued:

"I presume though, my error is not very great, for such distant ties of relationship are little attended to in our days, unless indeed, a more than cousinly interest is taken in the person."

A stress was laid on the latter words. Annoyed and confused beyond measure, she quickly replied:

"Even distant as the ties which connect us are, I certainly dislike to hear my cousin spoken of in terms which he does not deserve."

"Oh! now indeed, I throw myself on your mercy," rejoined her companion with a provoking smile; "I almost fear I have sinned beyond forgiveness, but believe me, had I known the friendly interest you take in Mr. Delmour, I should never have mentioned him in the terms I did, or even hinted at the Lady in Blue. From this time, however, his name shall be sacred to me, and I shall

praise him as highly on every occasion as even you could desire."

He bowed low as he concluded, and Amy, overcome with shame and indignation, wished herself or her partner at the antipodes. At length, to her great relief, the dance was finished, and she inwardly vowed, as he led her to her seat, that rather than subject herself again to the impertinence she had endured, by dancing a second time with him, she would not leave it the whole evening. Somewhat to her surprise, Lady Travers, on seeing her approach, made place for her on the couch beside her, with a most gracious smile. Inwardly wondering what could have changed the frigid demeanour of the supercilious lady of fashion to such courteous affability, she seated herself. Her surprise would have diminished a little had she known that the former had just received a minute detail of the large property already in her possession, besides her expectations from her father. She had come to the conclusion that Amy would be in every respect a most desirable *partie* for her brother, and she accordingly resolved to lose no time in commencing operations.

"You seem fatigued, Miss Morton," she remarked in a winning tone. "You are so flushed. George," she added, turning to her brother, "bring Miss Morton an ice," but he had already disappeared.

Amy was secretly congratulating herself on being rid of his hateful presence, when he returned with refreshments. He then deliberately placed himself behind the couch, and leaning over it, commenced an animated conversation, partly addressed to her, partly to his sister. Resigning herself to her fate, she acted the part of silent listener, as admirably as she had heretofore done. The astonishment of Lady Travers was unbounded, on witnessing the evident indifference, not to say distaste, the young girl beside her evinced for the society of her brilliant and courted brother. She knew not that he had already planted a sting in her bosom that was rankling there, and that she shrank with abhorrence from one who had not only wounded her feelings in their most sensitive point, but mortified her beyond expression. At that moment the Lady in Blue, as he had poetically designated her, swept past. He stooped and whispered in his sister's ear, who immediately exclaimed:

"Why, Miss Aylmer, I have not seen you all night. Do come, and sit with me for a few moments."

With a gracious smile, the young lady complied, and Lady Travers introduced her to Amy. After honouring the latter with a condescending