

"Strikingly so."

"Does he always reside at home?" continued her Ladyship, with an uneasiness she vainly strove to dissemble."

"No! thank Heaven! he does not."

"Why! wherefore?" was the astonished reply.

"Are you not on good terms with each other?"

"Anything but that. From our first introduction till our separation, we never could agree a moment."

"Ah! indeed!" said her Ladyship, quite relieved; "and whose fault was that?"

"Partly my own temper, partly his arrogance and obstinacy, which are at times unbearable."

Lady Stanhope glanced sharply at Ida, to see if such vehement indignation was really felt or only assumed, but the dark frown that marred the beautiful brow of the speaker, dispelled all doubt, and in a cheerful tone, she continued:

"Well! with this one exception, they are a good family; but to return to my former subject. As I was saying, they are far from affluent, and with their limited means,—how could they afford to \*\*\*. *Pour trancher le mot*, who or what is to remunerate them for your support?"

The blood mounted to Ida's very temples at the indelicate remark, but repressing her burning indignation, she coldly replied:

"The Vernons, madam, sought, asked no other recompense for an act of disinterested generosity, than the approbation of their own hearts."

"Nonsense! child. Such talk is rather sentimental and overwrought for the present century. Who ever dreams of one's heart repaying them for calls on their purse."

"Perhaps not in our circle; but your Ladyship forgets, the Vernons are not of our set. No! truly they are far above it."

There was such bitter reproach and indignation concentrated in her tone, that Lady Stanhope felt she had gone too far, and an awkward pause succeeded, during which Ida was bitterly contrasting the delicacy and consideration which Mrs. Vernon had ever evinced towards her, with the unfeeling carelessness Lady Stanhope had already displayed, even in the short time she had known her. At length the latter broke silence:

"I must inform you of one thing, Ida, which I have perceived even during our short acquaintance. It may be very interesting, very edifying, to so eloquently to defend your friends; but you are too emphatic in your terms, too *prononcée* in your manners. Though passable in a Dowager of forty, or a Lady Patroness of Almacks, it is excessively unbecoming at your age."

"Does your Ladyship forget I am a Stanhope?"

retorted Ida, a provoking smile, or rather sneer, curving her mouth.

"Tis impossible to forget it, even for a moment," rejoined her companion, now thoroughly out of patience; "but let me advise you, young lady, to endeavour to conceal it a little more than you do, or it may mar your future fortunes more than you dream of."

"Your Ladyship has lost no time in giving me my first lesson. 'Tis to be hoped I shall profit by it," said Ida, with an air of easy *nonchalance*.

Lady Stanhope felt her temper giving way, and unwilling to descend to a *scene*, turned to the coachman and bade him drive faster. A half hour's reflection soon shewed her that her best policy was to conciliate Ida for the present, and gain her confidence; for any other course would only call forth the powerful opposition that lay in her character, and thus render all her plans and projects abortive. Prompted by this feeling, she exclaimed:

"You look fatigued, Ida; he will drive slower if you wish;" and she ordered the man to slacken his pace.

This instantly restored the former tone of cordiality, and to speak truly, Ida was very glad, for it was at least a most uncomfortable thing to be on bad terms with one who was at the moment conferring favours on her, and under whose roof she was to be a resident for months. She therefore thanked her for her attention, and sunshine was restored. After some further conversation, Lady Stanhope drew forth a book, and apologized, saying she would now leave her to her own thoughts. And a luxury it was indeed, to Ida, who soon fell into a delicious sort of revery, in which a dreamy perception of the present, blended with indistinct visions of future grandeur, *fêtes* and admiration. Gradually the visions became more and more indistinct, and at length she was wrapped in deep slumber.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

IDA continued to sleep till the carriage stopped before the splendid mansion of Lady Stanhope, when the latter gently touched her on the shoulder, exclaiming:

"Ida, awake! We are at home."

Ida sprang up and gazed around. Night had set in and all was darkness. Perfectly bewildered, her eye wandered from the long vista of glimmering lamps, to the stately, indistinct building before her. After a moment, her companion again reiterated:

"Ida, my love! we are at home."