

ridiculous, and as you have chosen the part of coming, adhere to it. However, had you condescended to take my advice by wearing some ornaments, you would have looked a little better; but, of course, you were above that."

Mr. Morton's brow contracted, and quickly glancing his eye over his daughter's figure, he exclaimed—

"'Tis useless recriminating now; but I trust, Amy, you will not be quite so self-willed another time."

Moved by some sudden burst of generosity, or rather impelled by a motive best known to her own artful heart, Mrs. Morton unfastened the bracelet from her wrist, and clasped it on her step-child's. The latter endeavored to thank her, whilst Mr. Morton drew his wife's arm through his own, inwardly congratulating himself on the kind, self-sacrificing mother he had chosen for his daughter.

It may be imagined how much the preceding dialogue tended to raise poor Amy's spirits, and therefore, really sick at heart, she entered the brilliant and crowded saloon. The glare of the lamps, the quick strains of the orchestra, then playing a rapid waltz, the thousand figures of loveliness that flitted by in the dance, all tended to bewilder her, and it was a relief when her father led her to a sofa, where a few minutes' repose gave her an opportunity to recover herself.

They had not been long seated, when a tall, elegant woman, dressed in the extreme of fashion, advanced towards them. No one could have refused her the title of handsome, but certainly the scornful curve of the arched lip, and the disdainful flash of the dark eye, imparted to her countenance an expression far from pleasing. She warmly greeted Mrs. Morton, who asked her eagerly when she had returned from the Continent.

"Only three days ago; and though I have yielded to the solicitations of my brother, in coming here to-night, I have not even commenced recovering from my fatigue."

"Is Lord Travers here?"

"Oh, no! he is sleeping on the sofa now, at home. You know he has no fancy for the scenes of gaiety of which I am so passionately fond."

Here her eye fell on Amy, who was seated near her stepmother. The latter exclaimed:

"Miss Morton—Lady Travers."

The lady, after a cold, somewhat haughty bow, flung herself on the couch beside her friend, and they were both soon deeply engaged in discussing events and persons utterly unknown to Amy. The latter's unpleasant position may be imagined. A stranger to all, virtually excluded from the con-

versation around her, she could have wept with mortification; but a new current was given to her thoughts, by hearing a voice exclaim, during a sudden pause of the music:

"Who is that pale, lifeless creature, beside Mrs. Morton? What a contrast the two present!"

Raising her eyes, she encountered the intent gaze of two gentlemen, who were leaning against the folding doors opposite her, and evidently amusing themselves by criticising the company. The blood rushed to her temples, and she felt she would have given worlds to have been in her own quiet room at home. She was relieved from her unpleasant predicament by a gentleman, an intimate friend of her father's, approaching to claim her hand for the quadrille then forming. The person who had passed so unfavorable an opinion on her, was her *vis-à-vis*. His manner, however, was now as respectful as his excessive dandyism would allow, and she had scarcely returned to her seat beside Mrs. Morton, when he advanced towards the latter, and begged her to introduce him, which she did as Sir George Markham, Lady Travers' brother. He instantly seated himself beside her, and wearied her with his insipid egotistical nonsense, till the next dance, for which, of course, he engaged her. Out of spirits, naturally reserved, and besides, far from being prepossessed in his favour, she was in no mood for conversation. It was in vain he touched on every topic. She was inaccessible, and his feelings of mingled anger and astonishment may be guessed, on perceiving the indifference with which this young, shy girl, received the attentions of Sir George Markham, the favorite of the coteries of rank and fashion. His most brilliant epigrams, his wittiest satires, in which he spared none, not even his hospitable entertainers, failed in eliciting one approving smile from his fair partner. At length a long silence was broken by a gentleman near, turning and exclaiming:

"Do you know, Markham, if the *Amphitrite* has sailed yet?"

"Yes, a week ago."

"I'm really sorry, for I had a letter to send, which young Delmour promised to take charge of."

Amy's face was instantly suffused with crimson, and her partner, a practised man of the world, soon perceived it. Having thus, as he quickly devised, found the means of revenging himself for her slights, he resolved not to spare her.

"You know young Delmour then?" he said in an undertone, though still loud enough for Amy to hear. "A worthless fellow! 'Tis well for his friends that they are rid of him for a long time at least, if not forever."