

did not annoy the young lady in the least, who always acted on the excellent principle of never putting herself out for any one. She therefore lay back on her seat, waiting with great complacency for her hosts to entertain her. Mr. Morton who had inwardly blessed her appearance, felt himself bound in gratitude to amuse her, but this was no easy task. After touching on many topics which elicited nothing more than a monosyllable in reply, he suddenly remembered her uncle, and asked if she had received any tidings of him.

"Oh, yes! I had forgotten," she rejoined with some animation. "We heard from him not long since, and it appears that they have had a severe engagement with a pirate vessel, but they came off victorious."

"He escaped unwounded, did he not?" said Mr. Morton, congratulating himself on his skill in at last having selected a subject that seemed to awake her from her indifference.

"Yes! but that was entirely owing to the bravery of a young midshipman, who at the risk of his life sprang forward and warded off the raised cutlass of one of the pirates. He performed actual prodigies of valour."

"What is his name?" was the unsuspecting question.

"Delmour. But is he not a relation of yours?"

The revulsion of Mr. Morton's feelings may be imagined, and in a cold measured tone he laconically replied:

"Yes! a distant one."

"I truly congratulate you on being at all connected with him, for my uncle speaks of him in the most flattering terms. He cannot find words to do justice to his bravery, and manly open character. When he recovers from the wound he received in defending him he will be promoted, and he says that Mr. Delmour will yet rise to the highest dignity in the career he has chosen. You know that once my uncle interests himself in any person, his future success is certain."

Mr. Morton stole a glance at his daughter. Apparently heedless of the foregoing dialogue, she had stooped to pick up an engraving that had fallen at her feet; but either the task must have been very difficult or her sight must have failed her, for a long time elapsed ere she succeeded in finding it. At length she raised her head, but not the slightest trace of emotion was visible on her pale countenance, and her father inwardly exclaimed:

"'Tis as Louisa said, she has forgotten him."

"Miss Morton, have you not heard my glowing description of your cousin's heroism?" said the visitor, turning towards her. "I wonder how you can remain so indifferent."

"I dare say Miss Morton takes all the interest in Mr. Delmour that he deserves," interrupted Mrs. Morton, speaking for the first time since the present subject had been introduced. Amy well understood the covert sarcasm her words conveyed, but what could she reply? Did she not even take more interest in him than he merited.

"I declare," continued Miss Aylmer, pertinaciously clinging to a topic otherwise indifferent to her, expressly because she perceived it annoyed Mrs. Morton.

"I can think of nothing else but this young hero since my uncle's epistle."

"I beg you will not say so in public, Miss Aylmer," answered Mrs. Morton, with as much irony as politeness would permit, "or you will drive Lord Hilton and Sir Frederick Vincent to despair. Your constancy in such matters being proverbial."

"Nay, you are too severe," good humouredly rejoined the heiress. "'Tis not my fault if I have a wretched memory, but my uncle says I would never do for a sailor's wife. I am too giddy and changeable. You know with me, once out of sight, no matter how estimable or beloved the person, he is soon forgotten. But am I not right, Miss Morton? Is it not more sensible to forget those who very probably will soon forget us?"

Amy embarrassed knew not how to reply, knowing that her father or stepmother would certainly put a false construction on whatever she might chance to say. The latter, however, relieved her from her perplexity, by exclaiming in the cold mocking tone in which she ever alluded to Delmour:

"I am certain Miss Morton will utterly disagree with you there. She adheres to the system of remembering the absent, whether worthy or not."

"Then, she is indeed a miracle—a thing to be admired, in this age of inconstancy," replied the lady, secretly wondering at the vivid crimson that suddenly flushed Amy's cheek.

"'Tis an amiable trait, when not carried to excess," said Mr. Morton, annoyed at his wife's unprovoked persecution of his daughter.

"Which no one can accuse Miss Morton of doing," she returned in the same accent.

By this time, Miss Aylmer, tired of the discussion, and wearied even of the novel and exquisite pleasure of tormenting Mrs. Morton, which she could tell by her demeanour she had done to her heart's content, took leave. Mr. Morton left the room at the same time, and Amy soon followed under pretence of practising her music. The stepmother was left therefore, to the