

down as if to examine the shaft of the carriage, murmured in French, the language in which he almost always addressed her:

"It grieves me to see that your trust in me equals not that which I place in you."

She looked up and saw with surprise a look of displeasure on his handsome features.

"Surely, you are not angry with me, Mr. Clinton; I meant not to undervalue your skill in driving; but the horses are long used to his lordship's management, and you must not blame me if I therefore put more confidence in him."

"Nay, 'tis not entirely that," and he looked steadily for a moment on her open countenance.

"You have not understood my meaning yet, I see," he added, as the cloud passed from his brow.

"Perhaps 'tis better you should not."

Nina, puzzled and embarrassed, she knew not why, turned away her head without reply. The earl, who wished to avoid further conference with Florence, at least for that night, which he could best do by retaining his position, and who besides felt unwilling to endanger his companion's safety by entrusting the fiery animals to other guidance save his own, would not second Clinton's evident wish to drive in his place, whilst the latter seemed as reluctant to resign his hopes. The matter was decided by lord Manvers, calling out:

"Why, Clinton, do you and lord St. Albans intend we should sleep *à la belle étoile* to-night? If you tarry much longer we will have no alternative."

"Oh! pray wait, my lord, till our gallant knights have settled their dispute as to which of them is to have the distinguished honour of driving the Queen of Love and Beauty," said Miss Westover with her sweetest smile.

"A post to which even Miss Westover herself could not do greater honour than Miss Aleyn," was Clinton's ungallant rejoinder. "But, however, my lord," he continued in a louder key, "rather than detain those good people longer, I must cede, unwillingly indeed, my place to you," and respectfully touching his cap to Nina, he sprang on his own steed.

"Heard you that, Florence?" whispered Miss Westover. "Look to yourself, or Nina Aleyn, ordinary, contemptible as she is, will yet work you mischief."

The look of angry jealousy that darkened for the first time the fair smooth brow of the earl's betrothed, proved that the speaker's venomous shaft had but told too well. And yet, how little passed between the earl or Nina that could have afforded matter for jealousy. The latter, naturally reserved, influenced by the example of her companion, who was unusually taciturn, and occupied

besides in pondering over the signification of Percival Clinton's last whispered words, felt in no mood for conversation. St. Albans himself, his heart torn with feelings, whose bitterness no pen could convey, could with difficulty disguise from her his uncontrollable emotion; and had she been less pre-occupied, had she but attentively looked at him, his pale contracted brow, and quivering lip, would have told her his sufferings. Once only were his thoughts diverted from their sad course, as in descending a steep hill one of the steeds betrayed unusual restiveness. Unconsciously influenced by his own irritated feelings, and forgetful of the presence of his companion, the earl reined him in with a harshness to which the animal was unaccustomed, and which but served to increase his impatience. Unable longer to restrain her terror, Nina suddenly grasped St. Albans' arm, and the act recalled him to himself. With a kind smile he turned to her, exclaiming:

"What! mistrusting me so soon, Miss Aleyn? But, you look terribly pale; forgive me, I have frightened you shamefully; believe me, though, it was unintentional."

"That plea would excuse far greater faults, my lord," rejoined Nina, her self-possession returning as the horse's restiveness subsided under his master's sudden soothing gentleness.

"'Tis a plea that is always yours then, Nina, for certain I am you never intentionally wound your enemies, much less those dear to you;" and as he spoke, he looked wistfully on the calm face on which he had as yet never seen one mocking smile or dark ungirlish expression. Loud whispered a secret voice: "She would never have unworthily repaid your love, never tortured your heart as your betrothed wife has done;" but turning from the inward tempter, he cast off with a strong effort the strange feeling of perilous interest in Nina which he had once felt before, and which was again stealing over him. Returning resolutely to his former gloomy reflections, he was soon absorbed in their bitterness, though when the steeds at length dashed up the avenue to the castle, and he kindly assisted her to alight, all traces of them had disappeared. Could Florence have but imagined the extent of suffering she had inflicted on his noble spirit, she would have humbled herself to the dust before him; but, alas! she neither knew nor appreciated the lofty principle, the deep ardent sensitiveness of the lover with whose most sacred feelings she so recklessly trifled. A thousand times more suited to him—a thousand times more worthy of him, was the humble, yet gentle-minded Nina Aleyn, and had he but known her, learned her noble,