

said Amy, with some spirit. "Did I not feel some regret for your indisposition, you should not see me here."

"Nay, child, why should it be otherwise?" she bitterly rejoined. "You have little cause to love me; of that I am aware, and 'tis but natural you should rejoice at the mortification of one who has never spared you. 'Tis useless to protest to the contrary," she continued, seeing her companion was about to reply, "I should know the human heart now, if ever I am to know it."

"Perhaps you have only read its darker pages," was Amy's almost involuntary rejoinder.

"Thank you for your epigram; 'tis too pointed to be mistaken. Still, Miss Morton, I think you might have chosen some other spot than my own apartment to commence your lesson. But no doubt you are early profiting by the example your worthy father has set you."

This taunt stung her listener to the quick. The unwearied gentleness her parent had displayed throughout the whole of that trying scene, the conduct of her stepmother, so totally the reverse, vividly recurred to her remembrance, and she replied:

"'Twould indeed be well for me could I imitate him, for I should thereby acquire a more than usual share of patience and forbearance."

"Better and better, Miss Morton," said the lady, in the same unnaturally calm tone; "you are improving in satire; but, of course, stinging as it may be, I must endure it without murmuring, from the heiress who inherits a large estate in Scotland, in right of her mother, and totally independent of any one. 'Tis wonderful you never told me that before; 'twould have been a fine opportunity of triumphing over the wife, who, though her husband possesses two such estates, cannot obtain a paltry ornament. But, perhaps, Miss Morton, you, who have no one to restrict your expenses, may think fit to purchase it. I really advise you to do so."

"It would ill become me," was the gentle reply of Amy, who now repented having retorted as she had done. Suddenly a thought flashed across her mind, and she joyfully availed herself of it, as affording an opportunity of reparation. She therefore added, while her cheek colored and her manner became somewhat embarrassed:

"Do not be offended, Mrs. Morton, if I attempt to offer you a trifling gift. I expend but little, for of course I dress simply, as my age requires; I have, therefore, more than sufficient ready money in my possession to purchase the tiara. Believe me, in accepting it, you will confer a real favor upon me."

"No, no," replied her companion, somewhat softened by the generosity of the offer, and the delicacy with which it was made; "I never could consent to accept from the charity of a daughter, what the generosity of a husband would not bestow."

Fearing to wound Mrs. Morton's delicacy by pressing her offer, and thinking it best to take leave while they were in this tolerably peaceful intercourse, she rose. Her stepmother, with stately politeness, thanked her for her visit, but as Amy turned away, the thought of her father's sad, anxious face, rose up before her, and in a pleading tone she said:

"Will you not come down soon? my poor father will be so uneasy till he sees you."

The same ominous frown that had darkened that youthful countenance on her entrance, gathered on it again, and in a voice as harsh as its silvery accent would allow, she rejoined:

"Miss Morton! that is a subject with which you have no right to interfere. Your own delicacy should have told you that."

The formal bow that accompanied these words was unanswerable, and, sad and dejected, she left the room. No longer could she repress the hot tears that sprang to her eyes, and she had to remain a considerable time in the hall in order to free her countenance from any traces of emotion.

Her father was pacing the room with hasty step, when she entered. Amy felt repaid for her humiliations, her outraged feelings, by the look of happiness that overspread his features on her imparting the welcome tidings that the patient was better.

The next day she took good care not to visit Mrs. Morton personally, but she sent up the servant several times to enquire how she felt. That evening she was alone in the sitting room with her father. He was seated near a table, his head resting on his hand, whilst his eyes were cast down, evidently absorbed in deep and painful thought. His daughter unconsciously allowed the book she was reading to fall from her grasp, and with an intentness she was not aware of, perused every lineament of that beloved countenance. With acute pain she marked the lines of care that now furrowed that so lately smooth brow, and she could scarcely forgive the being that had wrought this change. Suddenly he looked up, and that glance of warm, commiserating affection, those soft speaking eyes, touched a chord that had long slumbered in his bosom, and recalled to his memory days long past. Yes, even the remembrance of her whose whole wedded life had never witnessed one scene of discord, one harsh, unkind word. Almost timidly,