

tween us would have caused the most terrific struggle in my heart, for you fascinated me as you have many others; but even then I was betrothed, and now—"

"Yes; you were insulted by my reply," interrupted she. "But remember that I fully believed what I said; and I said the truth so far, that if you were not Lord Stanmore, you were the son of a peasant—of a common soldier."

"But even had it been so, the secret would have been kept. I had received the education of a nobleman; I had the tastes, the feelings, the habits of one; and all this my friends of the nobility recognized and appreciated! they promised me fidelity, and would have kept it."

"But for all that you would have been base-born."

"No, Miss Woolton; no one born in lawful wedlock is base-born. Besides, I cannot feel that honest lowly station is base, or that I need have blushed for the brave young soldier who fell for his country on the sands of Africa."

"Who you are," said Hortense, "is not yet decided. You are risking more than you are aware of by stifling the feeling you have for me under this foolish resentment. Let us return to the arbor, where our two natural guardians sit, and declare ourselves pledged to each other. All will then go smoothly for the future Earl and Countess of Charleton. If not, you will bitterly repent this sullen anger for a few rash words. My father never will look upon you but as a peasant changeling."

He is welcome to his thoughts," returned Lord Stanmore; "but now listen to me—you, his daughter, whom I do love and admire with the pride of a relative. I have no sullen anger, or anger of any sort against you. On the contrary, I feel most grateful for the benevolent and cousinly wish to sacrifice yourself to the general peace and welfare of the family. I am not so blind as to suppose that you would be otherwise than a victim, were I to act as you propose: and other ties bind me. The Lady Violet Chamberlayne, daughter of the Marquis of Seabam, whose young heart had, with her father's approbation, been given me some months before this late discussion, has remained constant to a betrothal that did not rigorously bind her. It has been in vain to represent to her, in detail, that the accidents of my life were changed. I was the same, she pleaded. She has remained heroically firm to me. I am hers forever!"

A short pause followed. Hortense Woolton then said, in a solemn manner: "Remember, I have warned you."

"You do not seriously mean," said Lord Stanmore, "that your father, in the first rage of disappointed ambition, would attempt my life!"

"Not, perhaps, your life," she returned, in the same solemn tone; "but in youth and health and prosperity there are things still more precious than life. However, I have warned you. Let us go down nearer the river; my father talked of boating from these grounds. We can all return together."

As Miss Woolton arose from where she had been seated, she placed, as a signal, her delicate handkerchief on the end of her parasol, and waved it high above her head. One of the hired attendants immediately informed her, respectfully, that servants in livery were not permitted to enter the gardens; but that he would immediately go to one entrance, and send to the other to secure her carriage. Miss Woolton took the man a little aside to explain to him the return by the river; and immediately, as if awaited an opportunity to speak in confidence, the voice of his own valet, Mr. Temple, in very bad French, commenced, thus translated: "My lord, I beg of you not to turn round to me, or seem to hear or know me in the least. No one knows my

person in these gardens, therefore I can warn you. There is a plot, my lord, to get you down the river to the docks, and put you on board one of the Jamaica merchant vessels, with some false story against you, as a runaway. That young lady meant no good by the signal of her handkerchief on the parasol. Oh, pray do not turn towards me, my lord! If you wish to give any orders, call my little dog, and talk seemingly to him, if you please, my lord."

"Or rather as you please, my good friend," replied Lord Stanmore. "Here Cherry! Cherry!" and the little dog ran chirping to the summons: "where is my grandfather, pretty Cherry?"

"My lord is gone home," said Temple, "having had a false message from his grandson, that he had suddenly felt ill, and had borrowed Mrs. Colville's carriage to return to Carlton Gardens."

Lord Stanmore continued to play with the dog, while he ruminated thus:

"So, the kidnapping to Jamaica, and the imprisonment in that island, was the worse than death, of which that extraordinary girl has warned me. But how inconsistent in her, to first warn, and then betray me? Is it revenge against me for my fidelity to Violet, or ambition that can endure no longer the one obstacle to her personal elevation? Who can tell! Does she herself know her own heart? Has she one?"

In the midst of these unanswerable question, a note was placed in his hand:

"We are all waiting for you. I was obliged to leave you to take the man for orders to papa. We are all going in the boat as far as Whitehall Stairs, and to sup in Carlton Gardens. Follow the bearer of this. HORTENSE."

"Ha! syren," thought Lord Stanmore, "I will not let you know that I have unmasked you. Present my compliments to Mr. and Miss Woolton, and that I regret I must renounce the pleasure of the water-party, having to pay my respects to Mrs. Colville before I leave her hospitable grounds."

"Mrs. Colville is gone down to the water, sir, to see the party off. I'll show you the way—the nearest way, sir. Oh, here is Mrs. Colville, and here are all the water-party. It's to be the original time, I suppose, and then all her own guests being gone, Mrs. Colville will go in the pleasure-boat, and sup at the Earl of Charleton's in Carlton Gardens."

"Oh, that is the original plan, is it? Made while Lord Charleton was here this morning?"

"Yes, sir, precisely."
(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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