

fishness and apathy, knew not, and never can know, the agony that those cruel words awoke in my young heart. I all but cursed the being who uttered them, who until that moment, in spite of all our bickerings, was dearer to me than anything in the world. My outraged feelings were rendered more bitter by the contemptuous laugh of Mrs. Dunstanville, as she replied.

"What stability can be expected from a butterfly?"

"The persons who uttered these useless invectives doubtless soon forgot them, and thought they had done no wrong; while the heart they had insulted and wronged treasured them with a memory too keenly alive to the never-dying agony they inflicted.

"During the following year Armyrn was born; and Mrs. Dunstanville, from a fancied resemblance which she imagined the child bore to herself, though in reality he more nearly resembled me, than his brother, adopted him as her son in opposition to the elder child, (for she was now a widow,) and the heir of her large possessions. Oh, unfortunate predilection! choice fraught with confusion and misery to all! From the first moment that the child could step or utter a sound, a rivalry was established between him and his brother.

"Is he not handsomer than Mrs. Sternfield's darling? Is he not a beautiful, intellectual-looking creature, as superior to that stupid, red and white, spoilt Edward, as light is to darkness? Yes, you are your Aunt Rosamond's own boy—your father's image,—and shall be her heir."

"Words like these were constantly addressed to my younger son, in my hearing; until, shame to say, the mother died out of my heart, and a stern hatred succeeded the first deep emotions of maternal love. The child was constantly associated in my mind with his aunt, who, good and kind as she really was to others, had been a bitter enemy to me; and I loathed him for her sake. Idolizing my eldest son, who was the only thing left in the world for me to love, I regarded his rival as a serpent in my path, and I verily believe, that had he died, I should scarcely have felt a pang of regret for his loss, or shed one tear over his remains. So far did this vindictive feeling carry me, that I almost wished that he might turn out ill, in order to disappoint the extravagant expectations of his adopted mother.

"Your grandfather's affections had long been alienated from me, through the misrepresentations of his sister, and though we took our meals at the same board, and went out in public together, it was only to save appearances; we had

been separated privately from the time that Armyrn first awoke my jealousy with respect to his brother, and the spirit of discord had kindled her hottest brand in our unhappy home.

This painful state of things was terminated by the death of my husband; and I became my own mistress, as the large fortune I brought him had been settled upon myself. Since the day of his funeral, Mrs. Dunstanville and I never met, until yesterday, although some correspondence relative to her adopted son, during the time he was at College, passed between us. My eldest son was a gay, dissipated youth, and possessed a better capacity than his much-vaunted brother, but his temper, like my own, was proud and irritable, and could not bear anything in the shape of ridicule. Armyrn possessed the ready wit, and sarcastic spirit of his father; which was fostered and admired by his aunt, with whom he generally spent the holidays. I did not love him, and I doubt not, that my manner towards him was cold and forbidding. He often taunted me with my preference for his brother; and the day before poor Edward's death, he told me, that, 'God would severely punish me for my injustice. That he would yet be avenged for my unnatural conduct to him.'

"Alas! instead of conciliating his bitter spirit, I replied that I feared him not. That his birth had occasioned all the misery of my life, and I looked upon him as my worst enemy. I never had remarked any particular hostility in the boys to each other. If they fell out, they were so nearly matched in strength, that the exchange of a few blows generally settled the difference between them, and Armyrn's hatred to me was more the effect of his Aunt's training than any natural aversion on his part.

"The morning of that fearful catastrophe, that saw me worse than childless, they went out shooting together, apparently good friends; but neither ever returned to the home of their infancy as they went forth. Uneasy at their long delay, I sent the servants in all directions in search of them, and towards night-fall, I met in the park a mournful procession, bearing the dead body of my murdered son."

"Oh! say not murdered!" exclaimed Rose, catching Mrs. Sternfield's hand and bending upon her, her large tearful eyes. "It was purely accidental. My poor father to the last maintained that such was the case."

"Why did he fly then?"

"Ah! that was such a natural result. The threats he had foolishly and sinfully used towards you—the frantic grief that he could not bear to witness—the reproaches which he had