

once saw that it was the brother for whom she asked. Anticipating the enquiries he would have made, I hastened to inform him that the lady-rider had escaped with no severer injury than the alarm had caused, and for the present remained in a neighbouring cottage, towards which I instantly supported his tottering footsteps.

While we slowly approached the village, I learned from my companion, that, a short time previously, the Baron of Loricale had suddenly determined upon spending the summer months at the deserted Hall of his ancestors, and prompt in the execution of his designs, had arrived at the castle, accompanied by his son and daughter, without waiting for the completion of even the most necessary repairs.

The young lord, accompanied by his sister, desirous to escape the din of the workmen, as well as to enjoy the pleasure of a ride round their ancestral grounds, had risen early on the morning of the second day after their arrival, and had driven along the road that led towards the hamlet; on entering the forest, the steed ridden by the youth, being suddenly startled, and springing on one side, throw his rider, and finding himself at liberty, started forward, upon the wing of terror,—the other followed. The sequel of the tale is told.

We had now reached within a few paces of the cottage, and the lady stood at the door, anxiously waiting for her brother's approach, and I felt all the loneliness of my own fate, when I saw her eagerly start forward to meet him, and fling herself into his arms.

Joy to meet with him, she had last seen in such danger, had for a moment obscured her vision, and she saw not the blood that stained his garments. When she did, she cried out, in a voice of anguish,

"Thou art hurt, my brother. I have had dreadful fears, but they were forgotten when I looked on thee. Oh, hasten, and this kind woman will dress thy wounds, and tend thee with a mother's care, as she has tended me."

"Nay, Clara," he answered, "I am not hurt, the blood flowing from a few slight scratches, and mingling with the mire, hath given me the seeming of a wounded man. A little pure water, for which I will trouble the goodness of your protectress, will remove all traces of my disaster. But how, my sister didst thou escape unhurt?"

"Indeed I know not, save to the self devotion of this gallant youth I owe my safety. My whole adventure is indistinct and dreamlike, from the moment when I saw thy fall, until revived by the generous care of these kindly cottagers."

The young Baron was courteous in his acknowledgments for his sister's life; but she offered her thanks with a mien so kind, that it seemed to me as if the obligation were transferred, and I rejoiced in the accident that had led to a result so little looked for.

A messenger having been despatched to the castle,

informing the Baron of the accident, a carriage soon after drew up at the cottage door, and after partaking of such refreshments as the village commanded, the young nobles prepared to return to their father's arms.

Again the lady would have thanked me, but the words died unspoken on her lip, when her eye met the uncourteous gaze of mine, and she gave me her hand in silence. The youth requested that I would visit at the castle, and receive his father's acknowledgments. I promised, and we parted.

Such is fate! I, the most wretched of the outcasts of humanity, had been led by the very moodiness of my misanthropy, to save a being so beautiful and so pure. Life, then, was not altogether the useless burthen I had deemed it. It was consecrated by the use to which it was applied by destiny, and I should no longer repine. What to me was the misery of life, if chequered by aught so blissful. I would be sad no more. Such were the thoughts with which my mind was busy, while the carriage slowly rolled from the cottage, and it seemed as if a ray of light had suddenly pierced the dungeon of my soul. Time hath taught me that first impressions were the safest, and that distrust should mingle with every draught of joy, if we would shun the bitter chalice of despair and woe. Of my departure I thought no more. Imagination dwelt with the maiden of Loricale, and it seemed an age, till the next day found me a loiterer in the Baron's hall, awaiting admission to his presence; and I felt awed by the reflections conjured up by the pomp and state which usurped, as if called thither by the magician's wand, the lately ruined scene.

Fancy was busy, and its pencil limned the Baron of Loricale as something above humanity. I was not of those who deemed that man was better because he was rich and powerful, but the father of the glorious girl I had yesterday looked on with so rapt a gaze, must be something beyond his race—that eye and brow could come of no common stock,—and then her form, it was such as sculptors dream of, when their master passion fires their waking or their sleeping thoughts. He—her sire—must bear upon his front, the stamp of nature's own nobility.

Fantastic and visionary dreams!—the powerful Baron—the descendant of a hundred ancestors, whose names were blazoned among the great of former times—was a miserable and decrepid being—palsied with the debauchery of wasted youth—a thing to spurn at, if met on the way-side—but, to be worshipped as the descendant of the "mighty dead," when seen among the trappings of their day of pride.

He rose at my entrance, and offering his hand, which I lightly touched, he tendered his acknowledgments, in a voice whose assumed suavity gave place as he proceeded, to its wonted pride.

"Brave youth," he said, "a father thanks thee