

rested on the anxious face of her lover, she burst into a passionate flood of tears, nor could all his endeavours soothe or tranquillize her.

"Rosetta," he said, pressing her fondly; "is this my only welcome—why exhibit such intense grief on finding me here, instead of her you sought? If you knew all I have suffered since last we met, you would pardon the deception used to bring you hither."

"Oh, no, no—it was very wrong, very cruel—it only makes me still more unhappy," replied the agitated girl, sobbing violently; "I should fear to tell mamma that I had seen you, and yet the idea of deceiving her, so good and kind as she is, would be even more terrible to me than her anger."

"Come, come, be composed, dearest, and dry these foolish tears," returned Forester, rather petulantly; "they make me think you have ceased to care for me—what is it you fear?"

"I fear to remain here an instant—I fear that you should be discovered—I fear to do what I know is wrong, in listening to you—do let me return to mamma."

"Rosetta, this is folly, absolute childish folly," said Forester, in a tone of increased impatience; "why did you show the ring?—if you had not done so, we might still have been permitted to meet openly."

"My cousin advised me to it, and she was right, Forester."

"Your methodical cousin was it; I have much to thank her for, truly."

"Oh, do not blame her—would that I were more like her—for she is good and happy, while I am miserable;" and again the tears of Rosetta burst forth.

"Say not so, my beloved girl," said Forester, his voice and manner softening as he perceived his influence decreasing by his petulance; "have you no pity for me—think how dear you are to me, and what I must feel at the thoughts of losing you forever. Rosetta, you must not let them divide us—say you will not consent to it—that you will see me here again. Nay do not turn away; I must have your promise ere we part."

"I dare not promise—detain me not, I beseech you—every instant I expect some form to start up," and the trembling girl looked around her with dismay.

"If you will only pledge me your word to come hither once again, you shall go directly," said Forester, holding her firmly by the wrist. "Rosetta I fully expect to leave E—shortly; you must not deny me another interview—say when shall it be?"

"Oh, I surely hear the sound of voices—Forester this is cruel," and she struggled to free herself.

"You promise then on Thursday—say Thursday, you will meet me here at the same hour."

The footsteps were drawing nearer.

"Yes, yes, Thursday—I promise."

"That is a dear girl—fare you well."

The moment she was released, she sprang like a frightened fawn away; while Forester, with a smile of triumph on his lip, withdrew over the bridge, through a small gate, and mounting his horse, which awaited him, dashed off with the speed of an arrow. The intruder proved to be one of the under gardeners, who had come to sweep away the leaves.

Had Rosetta followed the dictates of her conscience, she would have instantly sought her mother, and confessed to her the manner in which she had been deceived into meeting Captain Forester—but on gaining her own room, panting and agitated, she found Lumley, who replied to her approaches with so much contrition, beseeching her not to betray her to Lady Neville, that the weak girl was won to silence.

"I must have been made of stone, had I withstood the entreaties of so beautiful a gentleman, whose heart seems breaking for you, Miss Rosetta," she said. "Well, I do think it is a cruel thing to part such true lovers."

Lumley forgot to mention the influence which gold had possessed over her tenderness and her rectitude.

It was the custom of Rosetta, previous to her retiring for the night, to enter her mother's room and receive her blessing, but on this she dared not do so. She pleaded a headache and went to bed at an early hour, the words of her cousin ringing in her ears: "Beware of the first step in deceiving those who we are bound by every holy tie to love and reverence." This had been passed, and the bitter reflections which followed saturated her pillow with tears of heartfelt agony. Lady Neville had perceived her increased depression and agitation throughout the day—and the sight of her young and lovely face, which had hitherto been all smiles and happiness, wearing so sad an aspect, filled her with anxiety:

"Yet, the chastening is for her good," said the fond mother; "my decision may cause her temporary pain—but she will thank me in after years—were I to gratify her inexperienced wishes, and give her to that young and thoughtless man, misery would be the portion of her whole future life."

A few evenings subsequent to this, Mr. Neville and his daughter set out with the intention of walking over to the Priory, as they had not seen Lady Neville or Rosetta for several days, a most unusual break in their constant and familiar intercourse. Mr. Neville proposed their taking the path through the wood, but Blanche expressed a preference to go by the common.

"Why, my child, that is more distant and less beautiful," said Mr. Neville; "but be it as you like, so long as our pilgrimage is performed together and leads us at last to the same haven, no matter whether our pathway be strewed with briars or roses."