

had discovered. This last argument proved more successful than the other, he well knew that I never suffered the idlest threat to remain unfulfilled; and the fear of being laughed at, besides betraying that which he most wished to conceal, conquered, and he yielded, though reluctantly, his consent. I even exulted over my triumph, though I have often since wished my lips had been struck dumb before I had uttered those words that sealed the after fate of two pure beings. But in my thoughtlessness I rushed heedlessly on in whatever I undertook, regardless of the consequences. My wild, reckless spirit had never been tamed.

Finding that there was but one alternative, and that, to submit cheerfully to my whim, he suffered himself to be arrayed as my fancy suggested, with good grace, and even laughed quite heartily as I added garment after garment, in order to make him look as frightful as possible; yet, after all, I could see that his mind was ill at ease, and half-condemned myself for being the cause of his unhappiness.

When at length all was arranged to my satisfaction, I placed the horrid mask over his face and led him to the mirror. He started back and involuntarily placed his hand to his head, as if to take it away, but my interference prevented. — He even pleaded that the penalty I had threatened to inflict in case he refused to go might be spared him. But I was inexorable; I was anxious to see the result, and the delay caused by his unwillingness vexed me.

A renewal of my threats of exposure succeeded in removing all obstacles, and we immediately set about our adventure. Cautiously as thieves we crept through the yard, and each took his station, Robert at the door, and I at the window nearest him.

The curtain was partly drawn aside, so that I could easily distinguish every object in the room. As I had anticipated she was alone. The domestic had retired, and I knew her old father too well to believe that he was anywhere but in the arms of Somnus; for he was one of those sensible persons whose maxim is, "Early to bed and early to rise."

Julia—and I shall never forget how lovely she was—sat beside a small table in the centre of the room, apparently deeply absorbed in a book, arose and approached the

door. As she opened it, the mask stepped boldly in, according to my directions. How shall I describe the scene that followed?—Even now I shudder to think of it. Instantly all earthly hue had fled from her face, and with a piercing shriek she staggered back a few paces and fell heavily to the floor. Quicker than lightning, I sprang through the doorway and knelt at her side. I grasped her wrist; its pulsation had ceased! I placed my hand upon the heart; that was also still! She was dead!

I can recall but little else that took place that night. The domestics who slept in an adjoining room, had been awakened by that terrible shriek, and came rushing in to learn the cause of the uproar. I could only point to the lifeless form of poor Julia, and at the mask which Robert had torn from his face and dashed at the door. He stood gazing at me with a cold, vacant stare, that I but too well understood. More I cannot remember.

Ten days passed, and I woke from a raving delirium. My first inquiry was for Robert. They led him to my bedside; but oh, what a change! I stretched out my clasped hands, in an agony of grief and remorse, to implore his forgiveness. He neither moved nor spoke; but the same unmeaning stare drove home to my heart the fearful conviction. Alas! he was a hopeless idiot.

Fifteen years have elapsed since that never-to-be forgotten era in my life. I never have, I never can, forgive myself for having been the cause of so much misery, though I have sought and hoped for forgiveness from on high. I never can look upon a mask without a shudder, or hear its use denounced without alluding to my experience. And you, my young friends, when you are tempted to play tricks upon others, I am sure you will stop to consider that what seems so innocent and harmless, may, perhaps, in the end prove a "fatal joke."

When a gentleman once remarked in company how very liberally those persons talk of what their neighbors should give away, who are least apt to give any thing themselves, Sydney Smith replied: "Yes! no sooner does A. fall into difficulties than B. begins to consider what C. ought to do for him."