

marrying, and that Rosamond believed that impediment to be hereditary insanity—learned that he was often fitful and gloomy, treating his ward sometimes with coldness, and again with the utmost tenderness. Of the interview in the library Rosamond did not tell, but she told of every thing else—of his refusing to let her come to the Springs and then compelling her, against her will, to go; and Marie Porter, holding the little hands in hers, and listening to the story, read it all, and read it aright, gloating over the anguish she knew it cost Ralph Browning to see that beautiful girl each day and know he must not win her.

'But I pity her,' she said, 'there is coming to her a terrible awakening.'

Then, for no other reason than a thirst for excitement, she longed to see that awakening, and one day when they sat together alone, she took Rosamond's hand in hers, and examining its scarcely legible lines, said, half playfully, half seriously, 'Rosamond, people have called me a fortune-teller. I inherited the gift from my grandmother, and though I do not pretend to much skill, I can surely read your destiny. You love Mr. Browning. I have known that all along. You think of him by day—you dream of him by night, and no thought is half so sweet as the thought of going home to him. But, Rosamond, you will not marry him. There is an impediment, as you say, but not insanity. I cannot tell you what it is, but I can see,' and she bent nearer to the hand which trembled in her own. 'I can see that for you to marry him, or—mark me, Rosamond—for you even to love him, is a most wicked thing—a dreadful sin in the sight of Heaven, and you must forget him—will you?'

Rosamond had laid her face upon the bed and was sobbing hysterically, for Miss Porter's manner frightened her even more than her words. In reply to the question, 'Will you?' she at last answered passionately, 'No, I won't!' It is not wicked to love him as I do. I am his sister, nothing more.'

Miss Porter's lips curled scornfully a moment, and then she said, 'Let me tell you the story of my life, shall I?'

No answer from Rosamond, and the lady continued: 'When I was about your age I fancied I loved a man who, I think, must have been much like Mr. Browning—'

'No, no,' interrupted Rosamond. 'Nobody was ever like Mr. Browning. I don't want to hear the story. I don't want anything but to go home.'

'I will not tell her until it's more necessary,' thought Miss Porter, 'but if I mistake not she will go home much sooner than she an-

ticipates.' And she was right, for on that very night Mr. Browning sat reading a letter which ran as follows:

'I find myself so happy with your little Rosamond, who chances to be my room-mate, that I have postponed my visit to Riverside until some future time, which, if you continue natural, may never come—but the moment you trespass on forbidden ground, or breathe a word of love into her ear—beware! She loves you. I have found that out, and I tell it because I know it will not make your life more happy, or your punishment easier to bear!'

He did not shrink—he did not faint—he did not move, but from between his teeth two words came like a burning hiss, 'Curse her!' Then, seizing his pen, he dashed off a few lines, bidding Rosamond 'not to delay a single moment, but to come home at once.'

'She knows it all,' he said, 'and now, if she comes here, it will be so much worse. I can but die, let what will happen.'

This letter took Rosamond and the Lawries by surprise but not so Miss Porter. She expected it, and when she saw how eager Rosamond was to go, she smiled a hard bitter smile, and said, 'I've a half a mind to go with you.'

'What! where? To Riverside?' asked Rosamond, suspending her preparations for a moment, and hardly knowing whether she were pleased or not.

'Yes, to Riverside,' returned Miss Porter, 'though on the whole, I think I'd better not. Mr. Browning may not care to see me. If he does, you can write and let me know. Give him my love, and say that if you had not described him so incorrigibly an old bach, I might be coming there to try my powers upon him. I am irresistible in my diamonds. Be sure and tell that; and stay, Rosamond, I must give you some little token of my affection. What shall it be?' and she feigned to be thinking.

Most cruel must her thoughts have been, and even she hesitated a moment ere she could bring herself to such an act. Then with a contemptuous 'Pshaw!' she arose and opened her jewel box took from a private drawer a plain gold ring, bearing date nine years back, and having inscribed upon it simply her name 'Marie.' This she brought to Rosamond, saying, 'I can't wear it now;—my hands are too thin and bony, but it just fits you,—see—' and she placed it upon the third finger of Rosamond's left hand!

Rosamond thanked her—admired the chaste beauty of the ring and then went on with her packing, while the wicked woman seated herself by the window and leaning her head upon her hands tried to quiet the voice of