

THE COQUETTE.

BY THE HONOURABLE MRS. NORTON.

THE hall was truly splendid : so was the supper. Three new beauties "came out" that night ; fourteen gentlemen, distinguished in the fashionable world, for various causes, fell in love with these "blossoms of the London Spring," as the newspapers call them ; and Bessie Ashton's marriage with Lord Glenallan was formally declared by her aunt, Lady Ashton, as fixed for the ensuing evening. One by one the lingering guests departed ; the chandeliers gave a fainter light as the gradual day-dawn overpowered them ; and the tired servants, seemed only waiting finally to extinguish the lamps, till the departure of two figures should leave the rooms silent and deserted. They waited however in vain. Mute and motionless as a statue, Bessie Ashton remained gazing, from the open window, on the empty park, and over and anon the cool breeze of the morning lifted her glossy black hair from a cheek whose haggard weariness and unsmiling expression, ill assorted with the situation of Glenallan's envied bride. Opposite, leaning against a marble table which supported one of the magnificent mirrors in the apartment, and gazing stedfastly on her averted face, stood a young man of about six and twenty. His mouth was coarse—his eye harsh—yet his countenance was handsome. Miss Ashton turned from the window with a slight shudder, as if the wind had chilled her ; "Well, George ?" said she listlessly. "Well, Bessie. "And so you have sold yourself for a coronet !" "Ah ! George do not begin in that harsh way ; you know I cannot bear it.—It is so long since I spoke familiarly with any one, and I was so glad to see you back again."

As she spoke the last words she clasped his hand in one of hers, and laying the other lightly and tremblingly on his shoulder, looked up in his face with a nervous and painful smile. Her companion did not shake her off, but he shrunk from that caressing hand, and ceased to lean against the marble slab. "I do