

"And what will you do with them?"

"Establish my right, my *conscientious* right," pronouncing the word conscientious with an ironical accent, "to be acknowledged by the present lord as his brother. They say," he added in the same sarcastic tone, "that he is an honorable man, and he may do me justice."

His listener sighed. "And if he refuse?"

"I know how to be revenged."

"And how?" she asked, catching her breath convulsively.

"Why, I suppose you know that he is engaged to one of Mr. Blachford's daughters, but you may not know that I have it in my power to render his intended father in law a beggar at any moment I choose. And I will do it—so sure as ever night succeeded day, as sure as ever revenge tasted sweet to the soul that has been scorned and trampled on, I will do it, if Embsdenburg will not own my claim."

"And then,"—said his listener as if she did not comprehend him.

"Then his uncle will not let him marry Helen Blachford, or disinherit him if he does; and in any event I will be revenged. Not on him only," he added, with the slow emphasis of concentrated hate and envy, "but on one who has thwarted me where I could least have borne it—on her father who encouraged him—on her who treated such love as man never bore to woman with scorn. And I would be revenged on all at once," he continued, more as if his mind, always brooding in silence and secrecy over its dark schemes, found relief in pouring out its thoughts, than as if expecting sympathy or communion of feeling from his hearer, "were it not that the cursed old miser, Rolleston, has made my being acknowledged by my noble brother the condition on which he will give me his poor silly daughter."

"Joanna,—and yet you love Alice Blachford."

"Aye! better than earth or heaven, but she loves not me. And Joanna will have wealth—wealth which I must have. Fond fool! she would follow me to the ends of the earth, if I chose."

The invalid looked at the speaker with a peculiar expression of countenance as he uttered this triumphant declaration, and her lips parted but she suppressed the words that seemed rising to her lips. But the young man went on, apparently not perceiving her emotion:

"However, if Embsdenburg acts the generous part, so much the better—then I shall have Joanna with her father's consent, and with her money to support my new rank as one of the

privileged ones of the earth—if not let them all beware!"

"And have you not learned from the fate of your miserable mother, that sin always brings its own punishment in its train, that you talk so fearlessly of plunging into crime?"

"Spare me your preaching," he exclaimed almost fiercely, "I am neither child nor idiot. Success or failure alone makes virtue with me or with the world. You shall be an example to teach me how to avoid the latter. Give me the papers."

"I warn you," she said, "that Mr. Blachford shall know of your treacherous designs against him."

"As you please," he answered indifferently, "my measures have been too securely taken for you or any one else to thwart them now. But I have staid here too long. Give me the papers. Give them," he added vehemently, "or I will take them, for I know you have them in that desk," and he pointed to a writing desk resting on a book shelf behind her chair, the elaborate and expensive workmanship of which, contrasted strangely with the rest of the furniture in that humble abode. As he spoke he passed round the table, and the next minute he had the desk in his hands.

The woman watched him in apparent alarm. "Spare it, oh spare it!" she exclaimed, "it is the only thing I have now of all he ever gave me."

"More fool you!" he muttered, "but there,"—and he placed it before her; "now give me the papers."

Silently and with trembling fingers she opened a secret compartment, and drawing forth a number of papers handed them to him. Then taking out a small silk bag attached to a riband she gave it also into his eager hand, saying, "this was placed on your neck by the Prioress of the Franciscan convent at Paris. I myself removed it when you were sent by Mrs. Rolleston to school. It has never been opened."

"I remember it well," he said, and placing it carefully in his bosom, he bent down to read the letters which were beautifully carved on the lid of the desk. U. L. E. "Una, Lady Embsdenburg," he said. "And so you might have been, had you but known how to play your part. Ambition is indeed a curse to those whose capacity falls short of their will."

He turned to leave the cottage when the sick woman exclaimed in firmer and more energetic tones than she had before spoken: "One word before you go you must hear. Joanna Rolleston