

sed a voice of rare pathetic power. Men and women, cold and polished as marble, softened at the sound of those marvellous strains, it was in the quivering lip, the tearful eye, that Berenice Ormerod, read the assurance of her triumph, a satisfied sense of power swelled her heart, and her only thought was of the dazzling prosperity which, at last, lay within her grasp. She received the homage offered to her, gravely and sedately, like a young queen. If her brain reeled with the glory of success, if the subtle aroma of flattery was sweet as the breath of life, if the wine of existence tingled warmly through her veins, she at least gave no sign of the intoxication. Her mother was frantic with excitement; at one moment she pushed herself boldly into the most prominent position, only to retire shortly in a panic at the sound of her own shrill voice, and to hide herself in the dimmest corner of the room, in a state of abject humility. Lady Mary's nephew was much impressed, not only by Miss Ormerod's voice, but also by her statuesque beauty, and entire self-possession. Mr. Varleigh was rich and idle, he was known as the author of some rather feeble *vers de société*; like his aunt, he delighted in patronizing talent, and boasted of the acquaintance of every dramatic and artistic celebrity in London. He was very susceptible, very enthusiastic, and not at all accustomed to conceal his sentiments. If Mrs. Ormerod immediately began to erect castles in the air upon the foundation of his ardent manner, it must, at least, be admitted that he had given her some cause. It was a foggy night, with a raw, chilly mist falling as the two ladies drove home through the darkness to their lodgings. Berenice very silent, though her cheeks were flushed like crimson roses, and her eyes shone brilliantly while Mrs. Ormerod after settling the dress in which her daughter should marry Mr. Varleigh, suddenly remembered that Berenice must look higher than any mere

commoner, however wealthy and distinguished, and fell at once into her usual condition of vacillating doubt.

After this Berenice Ormerod lived through her brief period of brilliant triumph. She sang at several select concerts where critical and appreciative audiences hung enthralled upon her notes. The admiration which rewarded her efforts was so hearty and spontaneous, that the sound of criticism scarcely made itself heard. She was the fashion of the hour, and had every prospect of reaping a golden harvest. The newspapers chronicled her movements, great personages noticed her with approbation, invitations poured in upon her; Ralph Varleigh and others of his class, still higher in position, haunted her footsteps. Mrs. Ormerod was tormented by the wildest jealousy of any one who had pretensions to divide public favour with her daughter, but for the time Berenice was blissfully content.

About this time, Robert Howe, impelled by a fascination which he was powerless to resist, followed the Ormerods to England. He had been somewhat doubtful of his reception, but in her delight Mrs. Ormerod appeared to have forgotten their last meeting, and was pleased to find a patient listener to the recital of her daughter's triumphs, while Berenice, softened strangely by prosperity, seemed more simple, girlish, and friendly than she had ever been. The dreams had become realities, and now she lived in the present. With unintentional selfishness, Mrs. Ormerod made use of Robert as she had been accustomed to do in the old days, depended upon his counsel, entrusted him with endless commissions, and even went so far as to confide to him her aspirations regarding her daughter's destiny. The young man was constantly rent by love, jealousy and hopeless yearning. He had no power to tear himself away, though sometimes he rebelled against his fate, deploring the consequences of the affection which had stolen the heart out of his breast,