

THE GYPSY QUEEN'S VOW.

CHAPTER I.

NIGHT AND STORM.

"The night grows wondrous dark ; deep-swelling gusts
 And sultry stillness take the rule by turn,
 While o'er our heads the black and heavy clouds
 Roll slowly on. This surely bodes a storm."

—BAILLIE.

OVERHEAD, the storm-clouds were scudding wildly across the sky, until all above was one dense pall of impenetrable gloom. A chill, penetrating rain was falling, and the wind came sweeping in long, fitful gusts—piercingly cold ; for it was a night in March.

It was the north road to London. A thick, yellow fog, that had been rising all day from the bosom of the Thames, wrapped the great city in a blackness that might almost be felt ; and its innumerable lights were shrouded in the deep gloom. Yet the solitary figure, flitting through the pelting rain and bleak wind, strained her eyes as she fled along, as though, despite the more than Egyptian darkness, she would force, by her fierce, steady glare, the obscure lights of the city to show themselves.

The night lingered and lingered, the gloom deepened and deepened, the rain plashed dismally ; the wind blew in moaning, lamentable gusts, penetrating through the thick mantle she held closely around her. And still the woman