

and learn if my father be yet returned, and say I would speak with him when he can find time to come to me."

Bertha, striving to compose her merry face into becoming gravity, left the apartment in obedience to the command of her young mistress, and, to the alarm of Sir Enguerrard, passed into the corridor,—for, whatever might have been his emotions of pleasure during the scene just described, he wished not to betray that he had overheard it, though circumstances not of his own seeking, but which he could scarcely find it in his heart to deprecate, had placed him in the position of a listener. Yet had any important secret been divulged, any sacred sorrow poured into the ear of sympathy, he would at any risk have endeavoured to make good his retreat. But the playful badinage which alone met his ear was too flattering to his hopes, and told a tale too dear to his heart, for him willingly to turn away from it.

When, therefore, he saw Bertha enter the corridor, he drew up close in the deep shadow of the wall, hoping she might pass without observing him, and was not a little relieved, to see her, after advancing a few steps towards him, open a door on the right, and glide quickly through it, leaving it slightly ajar behind her. Here then was a good opportunity to escape from his present awkward position, and by following at a distance the steps of the damsel, find his way to the part of the dwelling he had been accustomed to frequent. Yet by so doing, what a golden moment for addressing the lovely Gabrielle, he was suffering to escape him, never perhaps to return. Another instant and he might stand in her presence, meet the soft glance of her eye, and hear the tones of her sweet voice in gentle reply to his. But only for one brief moment he listened to the voice of the tempter. Should he thus abuse the friendship and the love of one, who welcomed him with confiding kindness to his house, and manifested towards him the tender regard of a father? and the ready answer of a heart, which never swerved from honour or from duty, uttered, no.

Obedient to its mandate, he stole softly towards the half open door through which the damsel had departed, trusting to escape unseen, and resolving to wrap within his own breast the strange adventure of the night. But it was not so to be, for, unperceived by him, the maiden had arisen from her seat, and approached a vase of flowers that stood upon a pedestal, in view of the door which it was his purpose to gain. By a sudden gesture, she turned around and caught a glimpse of his moving figure. She thought it Bertha, and, advancing, met him face to face—knew him—so the bright blush that mantled on her cheek declared!—and then, without word or shriek, drew

gently back, pale and trembling with deep, yet silent emotion.

It was now too late to retreat without an explanation, and the next moment saw him at her feet. In a few hurried words he told of the mistake which had led him to enter that part of the dwelling, of his groping through dark passages and apartments to find his way from it, till guided by a friendly light he perceived the open door, through which he was in the act of issuing, when arrested by her presence. He left her no grounds to suppose he had overheard aught her maiden delicacy might wish to conceal; but he prayed her to pardon his inadvertence. And then, forcibly repressing the impassioned thoughts that burned within his breast, he told, as calmly as he could, how fervently he had longed to behold her, since the first hour of their meeting, and how earnestly he hoped to win so strong a hold upon her father's friendship, as to gain his sanction, if she forbade it not, to their free and frequent intercourse.

If the knight's words were calm and measured, when he gave expression to those hopes and wishes, there was a somewhat in his tone and manner that kindled burning blushes on the maiden's cheek, and made her bashful eye droop beneath the ardent beams of his. A slight sound in the distance suddenly broke the stillness that reigned around them. She started, and quick as thought snatching up a lamp:

"Go, go," she said, entreatingly; "thou must not be found here—go—but thou knowest not whither—follow me, and I will guide thee to the door by which thou entered."

She glided through the corridor, and, motioning him to follow, sped swiftly on, and in a few moments reached the outer door, by a much shorter and less intricate way, than that which he had threaded in the dark.

"Now thou art safe," she said, as, seeing him lay his hand upon the lock, she turned to retrace her steps; "this door leads thee hence; but as thou valuest my father's love, beware how thou dost again repeat the error which hath brought thee here tonight."

"But if thy father, gentle lady, sanction my return, thou wilt not forbid it? Tell me only this, and I shall bear away with me a dear and precious hope," and his voice, full of entreaty, trembled with tender earnestness as he addressed her.

She raised her lovely eyes, for an instant, to his face, and there was a language in their silent beams that made his heart throb with new-born ecstasy.

"Bless thee!" he said, and with resistless ardour he caught her hand and pressed it to his