

strained to *drink it to the dregs*. "Bravo, Adelaide," he added laughing, as he replaced the goblet; "now you will have new strength to preach reformation to bad boys."

Adelaide rose and walked towards the window. Tears were in her eyes—he followed her saying, "you are not angry with me."

"Oh, no, no, my heart makes a thousand excuses for you, dear Albert," she replied, tenderly; "you are as yet too young to be in earnest, or to reflect seriously."

"Are we not the same age, even to an hour, dearest?"

"True; but we have been educated in different schools—nor am I placed amidst the same temptations which surround you. If I am more inclined to religion, I owe it not to any goodness of my own; but to the grace of God, which would be equally given to you if you desired it, and would seek the appointed means to obtain it in fervent prayer." She now ceased, and continued to stand in silence at the window, while Albert remained by her side; his too volatile spirits becoming gradually chastened and softened by her gentle words and manner. While they remained gazing on the calm scene without, a small boat, containing two persons, was perceived nearing the bank of the river, as close under the rock as it could come. The strangers jumped from it, and proceeded to moor it by a chain. Both were muffled in long dark cloaks, and advanced towards the castle, until they were lost amidst the low brushwood growing underneath its walls.

"Who can they be?" said Albert, while watching their movements. "By the saints, they have the appearance of robbers—they must be looked to, for in a night like this, when all will be carousing, they may gain entrance unnoticed. Why, you are not frightened, Adelaide, dear. Your cheek, which but this moment was rich in its colour, has blanched to the hue of death."

"No, dearest Albert," she replied; "but I wish you had not given me that wine—it has already made me feel drowsy, and strangely dull."

"Has it so, love—what if it puts you to sleep? I will stay and keep watch by you."

"I require no such sentinel—you must away even now, for the evening wears on apace, and you will be missed from amongst the guests."

"I care not."

"For my sake you must care, my brother. You would not wish to increase the displeasure of the Baroness against me; leave me now, dearest Albert, I beseech you." As she spoke a slight convulsion passed over her beautiful face.

"Good God, Adelaide, you are not ill—not in pain, I trust," exclaimed Albert, anxiously gazing upon her.

"It was nothing," replied Adelaide, with a look so scaphic that it smote him to the heart.

"Lead me into the next room, for I am sleepy; oh! how sleepy," and she sank almost powerless into his arms, while her eyes became glazed and heavy in their expression. He carried her to her apartment, and laid her gently on the couch.

"Marguerite, look at your young lady," he said, in a tone of alarm. "Does she not appear ill?"

"She does indeed look deadly pale," replied Marguerite, bending over her. "You are not suffering, my child—tell me what ails my lady-bird?"

"Indeed, I know not," murmured Adelaide; "but do beg of Albert to go—I dread his remaining so long."

"Adelaide, I cannot leave you thus," said the young man. "What can have caused so sudden an indisposition?"

"I shall be quite well soon—I feel better even now," returned Adelaide, attempting to raise her head; "pray go my brother, and may God bless you."

"God bless you, if it must be so," replied Albert, pressing his lips to hers. "Marguerite, you must remain—I will not have her left alone."

"And what if my lady inquires for me, sir?" said Marguerite, fearful of opposing him, yet unwilling to risk the displeasure of the Baroness.

"Obey my orders, that is sufficient for you," he replied with authority; and again bidding good night to Adelaide, whose eyes followed him with an expression of the deepest affection, he retreated through the panel, and proceeding down several passages, entered the chapel, and hastened from thence to the grand saloon. The blaze of light which suddenly burst upon him, on his entrance, almost dazzled his sight, after the darkened chamber he had just quitted, while the rich dresses and various fancy costumes of the assembled guests, lent to the scene an air of perfect enchantment. Most of the characters were masked. Albert looked around him for the Baron; but he could no where see him, for he had retired from the banquet hall, as early as courtesy permitted, to the quiet of his study, leaving the Baroness to preside over the ball. On perceiving Albert, leaning with folded arms against one of the pillars, a dark scowl disfiguring his fine face, she approached him, and in bland tones said—"You have been a truant from us, my son—I had begun to fear that you had deserted us for the night. You are going to dance, I hope—many of our fairest belles are dying to be introduced to the handsome bandit."

"Let them die, and be——" he paused ere he completed the indecorous sentence, while the Baroness shrank from the fierce encounter of his eye, and retreated from him, fearful of saying more in his present mood.

Beautiful music was being played—bright forms were flitting past, casting on him looks of admiration, mingled with fear, whenever they met his gaze;