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FAUNA; OR, THE RED FLOWER OF LEAFY HOLLOW.

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CHAPTER I.

Do you visit me for this?

THE DUCHESS OF MALPY.



It was late at night and the heaven was full of stars, when a young man paused before the window of a lowly cottage, lying in a nook of one of the green sequestered lanes of England, and gazed through the half drawn blind within.—

The room which met his view was poorly and scantily furnished, and contained but one living inmate, an elderly woman evidently in bad health, seated in an arm chair, and leaning listlessly over a book which lay open on the table before her. One glance seemed to satisfy the intruder, and opening the door he entered the cottage. He was plainly dressed, but his look and air were not those of the lower class, and though his features wore a cold and repulsive expression, they were strongly marked with intellect, firmness, and decision. A mingled look of anger, sorrow

and shame crossed the face of the lonely woman, as she saw him enter. She half rose, but instantly sat down again, and faltered out, "So you have come at last."

"Yes," he replied in a harsh and bitter tone, and throwing himself into a chair as he spoke. "I have come to ask you for the means of forcing those rights which have been so long denied me."

"You need not have been afraid," she said sadly, "I did not suppose it was love brought you to me."

"No, in good truth," said the young man, laughing sardonically, "but little love, do I owe you! You gave me life, it is true, but what life! A life wrapped in a cloud of darkness through which no ray of sunshine has ever yet pierced. I thank you not for the gift."

"You have no reason," was her only answer.

"No," he continued, unconscious or unmindful of the feeble, sad, self-abased tones in which she had spoken; "others may have cause to love the authors of their being, for there is—there is joy on earth for those whom fate suffers to grasp it, but I have none, nor have you much reason to love the sight of one who is a memento of your folly and shame."

"These are harsh words," said his feeble listener, "but I deserve them all."

"Therefore, the less often we see each other the better. But enough of this. Will you give me those documents which I know you possess to prove your *marriage*," he laid a scornful emphasis on the word, "and my birth. In a word, all that is necessary to prove that I am the son of Lord Embsdenburg."