

figure as it disappeared among the trees, and followed it after it had emerged from the wood, as with head dejectedly bent, and slow, lingering steps, he entered the avenue leading to the house. Shortly after, I too left the wood, but with plans and purposes now fully matured. With cautious, stealthy steps, I entered the gate, which had been purposely left open in expectation of my return. No light streamed from my brother's window; as I rightly conjectured, worn out with fatigue and anxiety, he had retired to rest. There was one, however, who still kept her lonely vigil, and a few moments after I had flung myself on a couch, my wearied eyelids almost immediately closing in dreamy unconsciousness, a gentle kiss was pressed on my hot and throbbing brow. It was my mother; and the tears of deep, overpowering joy, that glistened in her soft eyes, as she raised them to heaven in heartfelt gratitude for my safety, revealed, at least in part, the extent of the harassing fears that had tortured her during my absence. Involuntarily I pressed her thin white hand to my lips, and a feeling of remorse, of shame for all the anxiety that I had caused her, flashed upon me.

"Edgar! my darling, my precious boy!" she murmured. "Oh! what I have suffered on your account. Thank God! you are safe; but how ill, how haggard you look, and what bruise is this—!" She abruptly paused, as if struck by some sudden recollection, whilst her cheek became very pale. That broken sentence roused the evil spirit that her affection had charmed for a moment to rest, and with a look so fierce, so appalling, that she involuntarily shrank from it, I rejoined in a hoarse whisper:

"Yes; look at it, examine it well. The trace of it may soon pass away, but the accursed brand it has left on my honor can never be effaced. And who, you will ask, inflicted that double-fold blow—inflicted it in the presence of our companions and on the slightest provocation. It was my brother. He, whose hand has been clasped in mine from infancy—whose hand should have been raised the first to shield me from harm or shame!"

"I know it all, my own Edgar,—and it was wrong, it was cruel; but then, his repentance has equalled his fault. For hours to-night he has sought you every where. He has been to me, told me all, accusing himself in terms even bitterer than those you have employed; and imploring me to intercede for him, to send for him when you should return, that he might again solicit your forgiveness."

"All is useless," was my stern reply. "The past can neither be retrieved nor forgiven. As to

confronting him with me, beware of that! You know not the fearful struggle I have already undergone, nor how nearly the devil had succeeded in rendering you the mother of a fratricide. You know not how madly my blood is now hurrying through my veins, as I think of revenge, and remember that I must forego it—forego it at least in deed; for I have vowed to my own heart, that my hand shall never clasp that of Florestan Arlingford again in friendship or affection." Eva, no words could describe the look of intense, unutterable anguish, that convulsed her features at that cruel declaration. One moment her eyes rested wildly, doubtfully, on my rigid countenance, and then, slowly raising them to heaven, she murmured: "Would to God that I had never lived to see this day!"

"Nay, wherefore, mother, take it so much to heart?" I rejoined. "I tell you, that for your sake, I will forego all outward acts of revenge; as, for your sake, I refrained from attacking him in the dark wood, where he had blindly, madly, followed me; and now, for the same reason, do I prepare to leave, perhaps for ever, the happy home of my youth."

"Leave us, Edgar!" her pale lips gasped. "You, my darling, my favorite! Oh! you do not, you cannot mean it!"

"Deeply touched by the distress of the mother I so fondly loved, I threw my arms around her, and kneeling at her side, gently, but firmly whispered:

"Yes, leave you, my mother. With the feelings of anger, of aversion, that fill my heart, I dare not remain under the same roof with Florestan. They are fierce and ungovernable, and should they again obtain the mastery, heaven might not dash the dagger from my grasp, or stay my hand as it did in the forest. Free from guilt towards him, let me go forth at once. I tremble for myself, for you, for all, should we again meet, at least till the deadly hostility of my feelings is in some degree abated. Mother, are you not satisfied? Why will you weep so bitterly? Is it because I would part from one whom I can never again regard with trust or affection—one, whose rashness may some day lash beyond command the fierce spirit he has so often trampled on? Ah! you should raise your voice in thanksgiving that it is so. I have not returned his insult—upbraided him by one single word—injured him in aught."

"Edgar, Edgar," she at length articulated. "Perchance, in the erring judgment of men you are innocent, but not in the all-penetrating eyes of your God. He clearly sees your heart at this moment, filled, as it is, with undying, with mortal