

not be richly repaid for all my care; but tell me, Blanche, have you not seen Lord De Melfort since the evening you were here together?"

"Oh no, I could not expect it," replied Blanche, sorrowfully; "particularly now that his thoughts are so exclusively engrossed by domestic anxiety—Colonel Lennox kindly called to take leave of me this morning—but let us wave this subject now, my dear aunt." she added, endeavouring to force a smile; "we have too much cause for gratitude this day, to repine that *all* our wishes are not given to us."

"May yours still be fully realized, my Blanche," returned Lady Neville, again embracing her; "and they will, or I am greatly mistaken in the strength of De Melfort's attachment to you, which I have long perceived. United to a sound mind, he possesses all the sensitive tenderness of his mother—this you have wounded, but not destroyed—when the affections are fixed on an object in every way worthy, they seldom change. But we must not linger from my poor Rosetta, who needs our full support this trying day. She is aware that I have written to Captain Forester—I have for the present spared her the pain of seeing his answer, which proclaims him to be a heartless young man, whose politeness to me is too evidently constrained and forced—thank Heaven he leaves E— in a short time. I am told that Colonel Forester is incensed against him, on account of his extravagance; I am sorry for this, and I have requested your excellent father to see him before his departure, as I would gladly serve him, if he permits me."

This being Saturday, the good Rector was anxious to return home early, that he might prepare for the duties of the Sabbath. Soon after tea, therefore, he rose, and laying his hands on the fair head of Rosetta, he impressively blessed her, while she affectionately embraced both him and her cousin, entreating them to come to the Priory soon again, as she would not be suffered to leave the house for some days. Many kind words and promises were uttered, ere Blanche, laden with flowers, which the smiling Grace handed to her as she once more stepped into the carriage with her father, and drove away. On their return home, Mr. Neville retired at once into his study, while Blanche amused herself, with the assistance of Newton, in arranging her flowers for the drawing room. The thought that Lord De Melfort might call to see her on the morrow, rendering her employment still more pleasing—from such reflections she was roused by the loquacious Newton.

"Good heart alive, only to think of Lumley, Miss Blanche," she began, "well I never saw much good in her, I confess, and I am only astonished that Lady Neville should have been so deceived; such airs as she would give herself to me, dressed forsooth in her white gown, her veil, and her parasol,

like any fine lady of a Sunday—she did not get them for nothing, I warrant. I am heartily glad she is gone—Donald Grey is so aspirated against her, that he says he would like to give her the ducking stool."

"My dear Newton, the less we say upon the subject the better," replied Blanche; "they who are without sin themselves, can alone have the right to cast a stone at their neighbour. Tomorrow, remember, is the Sabbath; let us strive to feel at peace with all the world, ere we presume to enter God's temple. Now do not my flowers look beautiful," she continued, on completing her task; "it is impossible to express the happiness I derive even from their perfume. Oh, Newton, I often think that in Paradise itself they would prove a delight to me."

"God bless your sweet face," replied Newton, affectionately; "earth never produced a fairer bud to blossom in Paradise than my own dear Miss Blanche—may the Lord forbear the blight."

Blanche pressed the hand of her faithful old nurse, then joined her father in his study.

On retiring to her own room this night, it was with lighter happier feelings than she had experienced for a considerable time. Her anxiety for the beloved Rosetta, which had been great, was now removed, while the words of her aunt respecting Lord De Melfort, were to her full of encouragement and hope. Blanche did not forget to offer praise for all these blessings, where alone it was due; after which she trimmed her lamp, and remained sitting up until a late hour to read. While thus engaged, she suddenly heard the sound of voices beneath her window—she closed the volume, and turned her face anxiously towards the door to listen—presently a quick light footstep ascended the stairs.

"Which is Miss Neville's room?" demanded a voice, whose tones thrilled on every nerve of her heart.

Her cheek became deadly pale—she started up, clasping her hands, when her door was thrown open, and Lord De Melfort stood before her. Had a spectre risen up from the earth at that moment, she could not have been more struck or astonished, yet she spoke not, moved not, but continued gazing on him with distended eyes. He immediately advanced towards her, and taking both her hands in his, said with considerable agitation of manner:

"Miss Neville, this is no time for forms or apologies; your house is on fire—already have the flames cut off our retreat through the front entrance; you must not linger an instant, but come with me."

Blanche uttered a cry of horror at this fearful announcement.

"My father, oh my father, where is he?" she exclaimed.

"I know not yet; I came to you first—nay, you must indeed be quick," and he gently impelled her