

your regrets on that subject, since they wound me severely, without producing any good result," retorted Colonel Brereton. "I have made my choice, and must abide the consequences. I think you have seldom found me a waverer, when once I have decided on any point."

"No, indeed, Claude; stern inflexibility is one of your greatest faults; yet could I have wished you to pause ere you took a step so perilous to your future happiness. Had you chosen her sister Mary, plain as she is, I should have felt less disappointment; but really to select Beatrice, when there was a Lady Julia, a Miss Gaveston —"

"And ten thousand others," rejoined Colonel Brereton. "It was really very provoking—was it not, my lady mother? yet in so doing I have but followed the example of my father, who laid his laurels at the feet of the most beautiful woman in the world, even as I have done. What more can I say?" and he bowed low as he made this gallant speech, which was received with a gratified smile, and a graceful bend of the knee, and thus ended the discussion.

With spirits elated and joyous as a child's, Beatrice descended to the saloon, where she found Colonel Brereton alone, standing at one of the windows, apparently in a meditative mood, from the gravity of his countenance, that scarcely relaxed on beholding the approach of the lovely girl, who, dancing up to him, placed her hands in his, which were held forth to receive her. For several moments he continued gazing on her blushing face, intently and in silence; he then said:

"And upon this fair and fragile thing have I embarked my hopes, my honour, and my peace. Good God! if they should be wrecked, what a wretch I should become for the finger of scorn to point at! Beatrice! Beatrice! such thoughts are madness!"

"Claude, what do you mean? and why look so fearfully upon me?" inquired the astonished girl, fixing her large blue eyes on his. "You are not angry with me still?"

"No, no; it was nothing. I merely expressed aloud the ideas floating in my mind, as you entered. Now tell me, dear, what you have been doing since we parted this morning?"

"I have written a long letter to Mary, to make amends for my past neglect; I read aloud to Sir George, and then he went with me to visit your poor sick horse, Dalby; thinks him better, and that he will be able to go out again next week."

Colonel Brereton drew her towards him as she uttered this, while the dark spirit appeared to pass away, for again his manner became all tenderness, as he said, after a pause:

"I wish, Beatrice you would endeavour to propitiate my mother? it would gratify me much."

"And do you think I have never tried?" asked Beatrice, in a slightly reproachful tone, while the

ready tears sprang to her eyes. "Claude she will never love me! and the thought is often painful!"

"Well, well, think not about it now, dearest one," rejoined Colonel Brereton, observing her distressed countenance. "I will love you for her and for myself too; will not that do as well?" and, to divert her attention from dwelling on a theme so trying to one sensitive as herself, he gave her a glowing account of his sport that morning; how, after a long run, they had killed the fox; adding, that a lady had accompanied them, who came in at the death, and that he had presented her with the brush, which she carried home triumphantly in her horse's head.

"Surely you did not admire her for it!" asked Beatrice, her cheek glowing with indignation. "I hate a woman who would take delight in any thing so cruel. It is bad enough in a man to make sport of suffering. You may smile, sir, but you cannot defend yourself. Therefore, listen, I command you, while I plead for the dying fox?" and in accents sweet and full of pathos, Beatrice, half playfully, half seriously, recited the following address to

THE HUNTER.

"Hark away, hunter, the morning has risen,
Fair lay the fields and forests to view;
Safely the fox we have roused from his prison—
Spring from your couch and with ardour pursue.

In vain let the cold and comfortless morning,
Loudly give notice to keep within door;
Lavish of health in contempt of the warning,
Call for your steed though the tempest may roar.

Hardly brave it, all perils defying,
The keenness of hope will soar above fear;
The merry toned horn and the sun when uprising,
The cold and the dark gloomy morning will cheer.

Yet pause, when the fox, near exhausted, is flying,
And reflect that your breath is as fleeting as his;
And while on the ground he is panting and dying,
Ask, "when comes the moment which brings me to this?"

Ah, hear me, gay hunter, if ever reflection
Should steal through your mind when the day is near past;

Then, then, let the force of religion's conviction,
Remind you each morning may rise as your last.

Colonel Brereton watched her animated countenance with deep interest, while she repeated these lines, and as she ceased he caught her to his bosom, and, pressing his lips affectionately to hers, said:

"My own, my beautiful! None shall henceforth strive to weaken the influence which your purity and innocence command. From the world and its snares I will shield you with this powerful arm; and when they tell me you have faults, I shall say they are