

self," she returned, agitated and confused as she rose, and at the same time quitted the room in tears.

"Claude, you spoke too harshly to that sweet young woman," observed Lady Brereton; "you perceive she has not been to blame."

"I cannot determine that until I question Beatrice," returned Colonel Brereton; "in my own opinion she stands condemned, and I am only surprised that one possessing your discernment, should suffer yourself to be deceived in a character, as you certainly are in Lady Julia's."

"My son, you are unjust to a being the most amiable and gentle—you are prejudiced against her on account of the crime of her mother; surely that is wrong?"

"I confess I can feel no confidence in one who has received her earliest impressions from a faithless wife, and I would not make her mine had she for her dowry the treasures of Golconda."

"I trust you may never find cause to repent your stern judgment, Claude, or your preference for a self-willed, passionate girl," said Lady Brereton, with some heat.

"That is my affair," rejoined Colonel Brereton, piqued at the remark; then instantly changing the subject he enquired at what hour his mother wished to drive, and withdrew.

In the meantime Beatrice had awakened, and starting up looked for her book, to proceed in the story, when on opening it her eyes rested on these words:

"Child of delusion, why turn ye aside from the happy paths where the Angel of the Lord tarry round about to guard thee from all dangers. Why follow after pleasures which tarry sin and misery in their train, and will lead thee unto death eternal behold the mariner steering for the desired haven; will he pause on his way and purposely wander from the right track, to seek the uncertain and glittering objects which may dazzle him on the moonlight-sea. Oh, no! Will he not use every appointed means to keep in the safe course—be grateful for the beacon light which warns him from the rocks, and cease not day nor night, his watchings and his labours until he reaches the port in safety. Why not imitate His wisdom, young Christian—take the Bible as thy guide, Christ crucified as thy light, and prayer as thy strength—depart not from these as thou hopest to attain those joys which eye hath not seen or heart conceived, but which are reserved for all who trust in Him alone for salvation, and exemplify that trust in their good works."

Beatrice was powerfully struck by this simple admonition, and still more astonished on finding the name of Mary Annesley written in the title page. She gazed on it for a few moments in silence, wondering how it could have come there, then burst into a flood of tears, as she remembered the precepts of that dear and valued sister, and how little she had

attended to them since her sojourn at Norwood—how she had suffered the slightest excuse to keep her from the house of God—how she had pursued a course of light and frivolous reading at those hours, which at home had been consecrated to the study of the sacred volume—indeed, how completely pleasure had usurped the place of duty. Even the last kind and affectionate letter of Mary, she had suffered to lie unanswered in her desk, and bitterly did she reproach herself, for, when once we are awakened to our faults, no censor so severely condemns us as our conscience, whose whisperings are as scorpions lacerating our bosoms. Her reflections were interrupted by Lady Julia, who came to accuse her of a breach of promise, in allowing her books to be seen.

"You know I did not give you the one Colonel Brereton saw you reading; I merely left it with others on my table—I beg, therefore, when you are asked the question you will say so?"

"Colonel Brereton—has he been here?" returned Beatrice, surprised; "then it must have been he who exchanged the books; I have been sleeping, I believe, for I did not see him—yet of what consequence can it be—is there any harm in the story, for I had only just commenced it."

"I am not aware that there is, but you know he is extremely particular and fastidious, and I assure you expressed himself so severely that I quite tremble; but he is a horrid tyrant, that every one knows."

"Oh, surely you are mistaken; to me he appears all kindness."

"Yes, none know better how to assume the appearance of amiable qualities; but I believe, those who have been under his command would give him a very different character."

"Your opinion astonishes me, Lady Julia," returned Beatrice. "I assure you when I first came to Norwood, I fancied he was an especial favourite of yours."

"Of mine," repeated Lady Julia, laughing affectedly and colouring. "Oh dear, no, his attentions at one time, were, I confess, sedulous; but as they me no encouragement he has happily ceased them to confer them upon you, for he has always been famed for having a reigning favourite. Poor little Beatrice, I pity you, since he is as fickle as the shadows which one moment darken all things around us, then suddenly withdraw and permit the glad sun to shine forth again—preserve me all ye good angels from one like unto him, I fervently beseech."

With these words she retired, smiling at the effect they had visibly made on the artless Beatrice, who stood transfixed to the spot for several minutes, after her departure, musing on them; then starting, while an angry frown clouded her brow she dashed down the small spade she held in her hand, and fled from the spot like lightning.

During the remainder of the day she purposely avoided Colonel Brereton. It was usual for her to