

upon it. She cast a hurried glance around the room, to ascertain if she was alone, and then, taking hold of the ribbon which was round her neck, she drew forth a ring which was attached to it. Long she gazed at this symbol, and as she did so, the doubts which had clouded her mind appeared to vanish; and pressing her lips to it, as she heard an approaching footstep, she again hid it in her bosom.

The door slowly opened, and her mother entered the room. That face, so still, so placid in its settled melancholy, was surrounded by the close cap, which corresponded so well in its grave simplicity to the mourning dress she wore. But the figure was a shade thinner, the face had lost even more of its roundness, and the eye looked larger and more languid than when we last saw Mrs. Douglas. Slowly she seated herself upon the sofa; but Ellen, laying aside her work, rose and arranged the cushions, so that her mother might recline upon them, and then, resuming her seat, she continued silently to pursue her occupation.

"Ellen, my child," at length said Mrs. Douglas, while the words sounded low and tremulous, "you should abandon your work this lovely morning, and go forth to ramble in the country. You allow yourself no respite from your toil. Your health already suffers, and your cheek is pale. You must go out and breathe the summer air."

"Mother, do not be the least apprehensive on my account," replied Ellen, cheerfully. "I am young, and perfectly able to perform this light and pleasant labour. See, I rival summer in the bright flowers which I cause to spring forth at my will. Are not these carnations beautiful? and that lily, how purely white!" and rising, she showed her mother the bright garland which she had woven into the rich fabric.

"Yes; they are very beautiful," replied Mrs. Douglas. "Oh! how gladly would I lend you my assistance if my health would only permit me! and then you need not work so incessantly. I am glad to see that you have almost finished that piece of work."

"Yes, mother, to-day it will be done; and I will then begin a pair of fire-screens, which Lady Beaumont wishes me to paint for her, and which I have already designed."

The mother replied to the cheerful words of her daughter only by a melancholy sigh; for to her it appeared hard, that one so young, so beautiful, and so amiable as her child, should be doomed to a life of penury and toil: that one who was formed for a sphere of elegance and refinement, and who was endowed with elevated talents,

should exercise them only to procure a subsistence for them both. For herself she cared not. She had been schooled in adversity; and it mattered little in what manner the short remainder of her days should pass. But her child, so bright, so beautiful, so calculated to diffuse happiness around her, to win the hearts of all——

"A lady desires to see you ma'am," here interrupted the voice of the aged servant, as, with a low courtesy, and with much ceremony, she ushered a lady into the apartment, whose appearance elicited a smile from Ellen, notwithstanding the sadness which lay heavy at her heart.

Swimming, rather than walking, into the room, advanced a lady, whose dress, in the extreme height of the fashion, and with some little additions of her own invention, evidently intended to give a finish to her appearance, was the first object that caught the eye. As she entered the apartment, she made a low obeisance to Mrs. Douglas, who, rising from her seat, returned it; and inwardly marvelling at what had brought such an unwonted visitor to her humble abode, she begged the stranger to be seated.

"Madame De la Rue," said the lady, introducing herself, and looking to see what effect this high-sounding name would have upon her auditor.

Mrs. Douglas bowed acquiescence, and again proffered a seat to her visitor; but as she was about to sink gracefully into the chair, her eye lighted upon Ellen, who, seated at a short distance, had hitherto been but an observer of what was passing.

With one bound towards Ellen, which promised utter demolition to the beautiful piece of work upon which she was engaged, the stranger sprang forwards, and regardless of discomposing her finery, threw her arms round the neck of Ellen, and bestowed a warm salute upon her cheek.

"Beautiful! charming! the employment so appropriate! such refined taste! Lovely girl!"

Ellen, astonished at the singular behaviour even more than amused by the appearance of the stranger, now looked inquiringly at her, as if to ascertain what was to follow. But resuming the dignity of her manner, the lady leisurely took possession of the seat which Mrs. Douglas had offered her, and with a smile of delight, surveyed, first Mrs. Douglas, and then her daughter; and finally herself, in a large mirror which hung opposite to her, with the greatest complacency.

Apparently satisfied with her own appearance, she again turned her eyes upon Mrs. Douglas, and, with a smile, inquired whether that lady had any recollection of her.