

on a couch, she lay back and revolved with closed eyes the future that now lay so bright before her. Fitz-Clarence, leaning over the very couch on which she then reclined, had won from her, the previous night, for the first time the confession that he was most dear to her, and had given in return his assurance that he loved her more than all the world beside. What a blissful recollection for one who loved as she did! She was disturbed in her roseate dreams by the entrance of Miss Woodville, and after a few words of mirthful raillery on the contemplative mood in which she found her, the conversation became general.

"Where is Fitz-Clarence?" asked Charlotte, after a momentary pause.

"In his room. He told me he had several letters to write, and could not join us for an hour or two yet."

"Well, we will amuse ourselves together, till then, and when your admirer is at our service, take a long walk. The day is truly delightful."

"Yes, and I feel in the very mood for active enjoyment."

"I believe you, Blanche, for I never saw you look so well or handsome before. Why, you are as different to the quiet, spiritless invalid that accompanied me to Brighton in search of life and health, some short time since, as day is to night. I might point out the sovereign elixir; or rather physician, that has effected all this, but I am really tired teasing you. Here, please hold this skein of silk for me. I dare not trust one whose thoughts are so seriously engrossed, to wind it."

The time passed swiftly enough, and the girls were still engaged in lively dialogue, when a light, quick step resounded in the corridor.

"There, that is Fitz-Clarence," ejaculated Blanche, with a joyful start, and suspending her employment whilst her soft cheek gained a crimson glow.

"Blanche, my good friend," returned Charlotte, gravely, "I fear you love this fascinating Fitz-Clarence, too much for your own happiness, and not for all the treasures of this earth, would I allow any one to become as dear to me, as he is to you. One thing is certain, that, however well-disposed or perfect he may be now, you will effectually spoil him, once he is your husband. But, that is just your character; just what I always prophesied for you."

As she spoke, Fitz-Clarence entered. He looked unusually handsome and lively, but there was something about his appearance that struck the girls unfavorably, the moment of his entrance. A second glance explained the mystery. He had resumed his rings and studs: in short, all the

vanities and superfluities of the elaborate toilette in which he had first made his appearance before them.

"Why, Clarence, you are masquerading this morning," exclaimed Blanche, in her gentle tone.

"Not masquerading, Miss Castleton, but resuming my former character which I had laid aside for awhile"

Blanche started and looked enquiringly at him, for he spoke with the identical lisp and languid drawl which had grated so unpleasantly on her ear when she had first heard his voice; but smiling at her own timid nervousness, she rejoined:

"You are so perfect in your part, you almost frighten me; but, what do you propose to do in your resumed character?"

"To bid you both farewell, ladies, ere I start for London, and to express a wish that our protracted flirtation has rendered Brighton as agreeable to you both, as it has done to myself."

Blanche colored painfully and then paled again, not that she suspected even for a moment that Fitz-Clarence spoke seriously but there was a rudeness, an indelicacy about the jest, which coming from one so refined, so polished as he was, both surprised and pained her.

"What, my fair friends, will neither of you say farewell, or give me a hand in friendly parting."

"Have done with this nonsense, Mr. Fitz-Clarence," interrupted Charlotte angrily, as she saw Blanche's breath come gaspingly and her color vary with unwonted rapidity; "Tis both ill-judged and ill-timed."

"Say you so, fair counsellor? Well in return for it, and the useful advice you imparted me, some time since, concerning the discarding of all superfluous elegancies from my toilette and speech, I will counsel you to send for Mr. Adrian, whom Miss Castleton despatched rather precipitately across the ocean, to console her in my absence."

"Clarence!" ejaculated Blanche, springing to her feet with clasped hands, and a countenance that seemed almost spirit-like in its thrilling earnestness, its fearful unearthly anguish, "Clarence, tell me for God's sake is this truth or mockery?"

"Truth, young lady, perfect truth, and as a parting token of friendship, I will advise you and your sensitive-hearted companion, for the future, when you boast of your heart-freedom and insensibility, to take care that the adjoining apartment has not an occupant, and above all an occupant in the shape of a young and single gentleman; or as you, Miss Castleton, obligingly styled him, a silly exquisite." As he spoke, he coolly turned from the room. Without a word, a single cry, Blanche fell, as if stricken, to the earth; and when her terrified