

joined, "that she was not aware Dr. Vernon had placed her under such strict *surveillance*, as to preclude her addressing a word to an object of charity, without being obliged to render an account of what she had said."

Dr. Vernon made no reply, but turning to his wife, exclaimed with a half sigh:

"There is good there, but alas! 'tis mixed with a large portion of evil. Still, the girl at least, is not irreclaimable."

Ida avoided any allusion to the ring, or the manner in which she had parted with it, and her companions humoured her by never pretending to miss it.

The two months, which had appeared really interminable to Ida, were now drawing swiftly to a close, and her impatience and eagerness were proportionably increasing. The tasks, irksome before, were now doubly so; and Mrs. Vernon could easily perceive by the carelessness and inaccuracy with which they were repeated, that the heart of the giver was with London and its festivities. Her impatience was at length terminated by the arrival of the long-looked for Lady Stanhope. Her Ladyship's manner was more ingratiating than before, and Mrs. Vernon could not but acknowledge that if she did take rather much upon herself, she did it with the best possible grace. After saluting Ida, she fell back a few steps, and deliberately examined her from head to foot. The result of her scrutiny proved satisfactory, for she exclaimed with a pleased look:

"Yes! you are decidedly improved. Grown taller and more graceful. I see also, you have attended to my injunctions respecting your complexion. It is as pure, as faultless as I could desire. And now, my dear, hasten and complete whatever preparations you may have to make, for my time is very limited. Two hours is the farthest I can assign you."

Ida bounded from the room and hurried to her own apartment; where with an alacrity she rarely displayed, she made all the necessary preparations within half the time allotted her. 'Tis true these said preparations were distinguished by anything but neatness or symmetrical order. Collars, dresses, brushes, books, were mingled together in the most hopeless confusion; but it troubled her little, and she seemed to think by the air of satisfaction with which she surveyed them, that she had acquitted herself to perfection of the task. Glancing round the apartment to see that nothing had been forgotten, she perceived her portfolio of drawings lying on the table. Knowing that they would serve to wile away many of those hours of *ennui*, with which the great and wealthy are so often visited, she opened

her valise and threw it in; first selecting the handsomest and best finished it contained, on the back of which she inscribed in pencil:

"To dear Lucy," and laid it on the stand.

"Poor Lucy!" she somewhat bitterly said. "Perhaps she, at least, may bestow one thought of regret upon me."

In arranging her portfolio, a book which she recognized as Claude's, and which she had by accident thrown in with her own, met her eye. She caught it up, looked at it for a moment, and then flung it to the other end of the apartment, with an ill temper which would have done anything but exalt her in the owner's opinion. And now that all was completed, she cast a last glance around, and yielding to an emotion she could neither explain nor control, bowed her head on the table, and burst into tears. Were they tears of sorrow? No! for she departed willingly, aye, gladly! and the very thought of the future, now opening before her, caused her heart to throb with tumultuous delight. And yet they were not tears of joy, for they were accompanied by a feeling of sadness, of depression, which partook of any nature but that of happiness. For some time further, whatever were the thoughts that agitated her, she continued to weep bitterly, but suddenly throwing back her head, she murmured:

"What folly! I should blush for my childishness, but I must have no more of this," and the proud glance that flashed through her tears, told that Ida Beresford was herself again.

Having bathed her eyes so as to obliterate every trace of weeping, she prepared to descend to the drawing room, when she encountered Lucy on the landing place. She inwardly wondered why the latter, who was ever so self-sacrificing and thoughtful, had never even offered her services to help her to prepare for her journey. The truth is, poor Lucy had sought the solitude of her brother's room, to give vent to the grief she was unwilling to display before one who she knew well could not sympathise with her, and who would offer no further consolation than a satirical smile or careless pleasantry.

"So you are really going, Ida!" she exclaimed, in tones which, though low, were yet calm and firm.

"Positively going, *carissima*; about to bid adieu to gardens, fields, rabbits and poultry; in fact to all the felicities and attractions of country life."

"Will you be much changed, Ida, when you return?" asked Lucy.

"I know not," murmured the young girl, changing her former tone of levity to one of deeper feeling. "I know not, Lucy."