

Although Mrs. Bellairs told her sister of the intended journey of Mrs. Costello and Lucia, the preparations for that journey were being made with as little stir as possible, and except herself, her husband, and Mr. Leigh, few persons dreamed of such an improbable event. Bella even received a hint to speak of it to no one but her husband, for Mrs. Costello was anxious to avoid gossip, and had taken much thought how to attain the *juste milieu* between secrecy and publicity. In the meantime there was much to be done in prospect of a long, an indefinitely long, absence, and the needful exertion both of mind and body was good for Lucia. Under no circumstances, perhaps, could she have sat quietly down to bewail her misfortunes, or have allowed herself to sink under them, but, as it was, there was no temptation to indolent indulgence of any kind. Bitter hours came still—came especially with the silence and darkness of night, when her thoughts would go back to the sweet days of the past summer and linger over them, till some word, or look, or trifling incident coming to her memory more distinctly, would bring with it the sudden recollection of the barren, dreary present,—of the irreparable loss.