

forth for the vicious, wherever sin is concealed under the mask of beauty, rendering it an object of admiration and love; surely it must be dangerous and improper."

"I am sorry you object to theatrical amusements, for I had hoped to induce you to attend an amateur play, which Mrs. Fortescue has in contemplation," said Marion; "Belinda, are you aware that she intends asking Captain Blanchard to take the part of her hero. Do you think he will consent?"

"Indeed I know not," replied Belinda, while her cheek crimsoned; "but I sincerely hope he may not."

"Ha! my little jealous lady, how immediately she takes the alarm," returned her sister.

"Do not accuse me of so mean a quality," said Belinda, looking down; "surely you would not be pleased to see one you loved, doing that which you disapprove, Marion?"

"Ah, my dear, if you set your affections on so attractive an object, you must prepare yourself for many little crosses—you do not expect to monopolize him?"

"I do not wish it, my sister—to require the constant society of a beloved object for our own gratification, rather than make their happiness our study, would be selfish."

"How prettily spoken," returned Marion; "but am I not to be envied—there is my dear Baron Feldbach in love with himself, and positively he has no rival."

"Oh, Marion, how can you speak thus lightly of one to whom you are so soon to plight your vows," said the dear Belinda, in a tone of reproach.

The gentlemen at this moment entered, when Blanchard drawing near to Belinda, observed:

"Why, my pretty Nun, all gravity again—how is this?"

"Belinda is uneasy at the idea of your performing Romeo with the fascinating Mrs. Fortescue," returned Marion, thoughtlessly.

A slight shade of displeasure crossed his face.

"Is that the case, Belinda?" he asked.

"Answer for me, Marion, I think you misunderstood me," returned Belinda, her tone of voice to me implying fear.

"Marion has answered for you once, and untruly," said I, smiling; "therefore trust her not again, else we will betray her."

Belinda thanked me by a look, while Blanchard laughingly said:

"Marion, you are incorrigible, I have half a mind to punish you, by proposing your Baron for the part of Monsieur Zephyr, in the interlude—how would he become a pair of wings?"

The ponderous figure of the Baron approached as he uttered this. Blanchard looked over his shoulder as he led Belinda away, and the arch expression of his countenance on beholding him place himself by

Marion's side, was irresistible, and returned by one from her equally mischievous.

At an early hour Blanchard took leave.

"You will come to us soon again, will you not?" enquired Belinda.

"Tomorrow, I fear, duty will detain me," he replied; "and Thursday I have an engagement. Friday, fair maiden, will see me at your feet."

"I hope," added Belinda, placing her hand in his, "I love not to speak certainly of happiness—it seems to me presumptuous."

"I hope—then be it dearest—good night."

"Oh, my dear Mrs. Mary," said Belinda, throwing herself into my arms, on our meeting in her own apartment; "it is a fearful thing to love, to give up our heart to any object of earth's mould, to feel as we gaze upon it, by what a frail hold we possess it; yes, to love as I do, so devotedly, must be wrong. Would that I were as Marion, calm and indifferent."

"Wish not that, my child," I replied, embracing her; "else would you be equally so in the performance of your duties—you are fully aware of the danger attending inordinate affection—you well know its sin in the sight of Him who has said, 'give me thine heart,'—and this will make you watchful over yourself, and constant in prayer. Alas, if left without the Divine guidance, who would be blameless—but for God's restraining grace, every thought, every word, every action, would be continually tinctured with sin; but when he sees our earnest desires to please him, he will lend a gracious ear to our petitions—nor will he ever try us beyond our strength, but will with each temptation make a way for our escape."

The day fixed for Mrs. Harrington's ball arrived, the arrangements for which had been the sole occupation for very many preceding ones. Belinda, assisted by Blanchard, had taken an active part in all the decorations, and I confess I could not help feeling an interest in her innocent gaiety, particularly as I perceived how doubly careful she was to omit no more important duty. Blanchard was to have come to St. Margerets early in the morning, to help her and Marion in wreathing evergreens and flowers in the dancing room, but he wrote her a few hurried lines, expressing his regret that he was unable to do so, owing to some unexpected order, which would detain him until a late hour, when he was engaged to dine at Mr. Fortescue's, and would come with their party in the evening. This was her first disappointment, and checked the buoyancy of spirit with which she had left her room at early dawn. I was sitting quietly at my work table, removed from all the bustle and confusion in the house, ruminating on the trouble bestowed, and the time consumed for one night's pleasure, when Belinda suddenly entered in tears. I looked at her in amazement.

"Why Belinda," said I, "I must scold you even