

per, which till now, he had held tightly clenched in his hand, was falling from his relaxed grasp. and in removing it out of the way, her eye caught a word or two, whose import strongly arrested her attention. She unfolded and read it—and her lips grew pale, and her hand trembled, as she found therein, her secret fears confirmed, and yielded to the conviction that hopeless poverty must henceforth be her bitter doom.

For it was indeed the veritable document duly signed and witnessed, in which, on certain conditions therein named as having been fulfilled, her grandfather bequeathed all the property of which he should die possessed, to William Beaufort, or in case of his demise before that of the legator, to his son Edward, from whom it was to descend to the eldest of the name in succession. And so poor Madelaine's prospects of future ease and independence were suddenly blighted,—but the sharpest pang of disappointment that shot through her heart, was for her mother, who had ever looked forward to the decease of her morose father-in-law, as the period of her emancipation from the long train of ills that had marked with dark lines, the melancholy years of her residence beneath his roof.

Mrs. Dorival's watchful eye saw her daughter's momentary emotion, and her fears, pointing to the one only cause from which she supposed it could arise, she hastened towards her, and before Madelaine was at all aware of her purpose, had possessed herself of the paper.

"Oh, mamma, do not read it now, pray do not!" gasped the poor girl, terrified at the serious effect which she feared its purport might produce on the mind of her enfeebled parent. "Tomorrow will be soon enough," she said entreatingly; "a soul is going to its dread account, and in presence of such a spectacle, we may not, cannot yield up our thoughts to the frivolous anxieties of life."

"He is past our aid, Madelaine; and if he were not, I could benefit neither him nor myself, by enduring till another day this torturing suspense," said Mrs. Dorival, resolutely. "I will read it now, for I know not why you should wish to withhold from me, what, if I mistake not, is a subject of equal interest to us both."

Madelaine said no more, but stood in passive silence, while her self-willed mother read, with eager eye, those fatal words, which crushed the hope that had been her food for years. As soon as she had finished their perusal, she raised her eyes with an agitated, yet doubting glance towards Madelaine, who, interpreting the look, as one of silent inquiry, took confidence from her mother's seeming calmness, and quietly said:

"Yes, it has proved even as I predicted, dear mother; when the last breath leaves that wasted body, we have no longer even a home—for this document bequeathes all that should have been ours, to one, who

is an utter stranger to us. But it is God's will, and we will not murmur. He saw, perhaps, that prosperity could not with safety be ours; yet let us prove that we can bear adversity with patient faith and cheerfulness, and even as we have been, so shall we still be supported from above."

A tear trembled in her eye as she uttered these gentle words, and when she bent forward and pressed her sweet lips to her poor mother's worn and pallid cheek, she left it moist with the holy dews of filial duty and affection. But the unusual calmness of Mrs. Dorival's deportment, which beguiled Madelaine into the belief that she acquiesced in the disappointment of her hopes, proved as brief as it was delusive, for suddenly breaking forth with a frantic vehemence, wholly foreign to her nature, and which therefore the more fearfully shocked and startled her daughter:

"Never," she exclaimed, "never will I remain passive under this injustice. Weak and powerless as I am, I will contest with this Beaufort, his right to strip my child of her inheritance, till he has expended his last shilling in its defence."

"My dearest mother, do not yield to this unnatural excitement," said Madelaine, in tones of passionate entreaty; and she was proceeding with her fervent expostulation, when she was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of Doctor Moreland. He saluted Mrs. Dorival, who overcome by the violence of her emotions, had sank into an old moth-eaten chair, the only one which the miser allowed himself, with his usual kindness, and then passed on towards the dying patient, beside whose bed Madelaine still stood, holding in her trembling hand the paper which had so strongly excited the supine nature of her mother. Greeting her with the affection which ever marked his manner towards her, he glanced at the old man, who lay like one already dead.

"Ah! I see I have come too late to save life," he said, shaking his head. "Yet even had I got your message earlier, my dear Miss Madelaine, all my pharmacopoeia would have been vain, in this case. Old age and starvation defy our utmost skill, and I can only hope that he, who is fast going to his last account, may meet with more mercy in another world, than he has shown to his fellow mortals in this."

"Ah! Doctor," said Madelaine tremulously, "it is very sad to look upon such a death-bed as this."

"It is, my dear girl, though few, who had endured what you have from his avarice and injustice, would feel any other emotion than that of rejoicing, at the departure of so stern a relation. But you have done your duty towards him, and faithfully too, and will not go without your reward."

"I have done nothing to deserve praise, Doctor," said Madelaine, shrinking, as she ever did, from commendation for having followed the simple rule of