

my sister and myself, to remain silent on the subject, though I have constantly hoped that some lucky chance might throw her in my way, and thus afford an opportunity for a less formal *éclaircissement*, than that must be which is purposely sought."

"I do not think you have reason to be very solicitous for it," said Lucia, with a smile so very unamiable, that her lover purposely looked another way. "Prepossessing as is her exterior, it is an 'old truth and endless,' as the poet says, that 'all is not gold that glitters,' and it can hardly be possible, surrounded by such influences, and doomed, probably from childhood, to manual toil, that she should fulfil your seemingly high-wrought expectations, or even reward you for your trouble, if such be your intention, of drawing her from the humble obscurity in which she has always dwelt."

"There must be pure gold in that beautiful cascket, which may be wrought into forms of exquisite loveliness, Lucia," said Beaufort. "At all events, I cannot deem it right to permit her any longer to live on in poverty and neglect. She, who is the rightful heir of uncounted thousands, which should have been appropriated to the use and comfort of herself and widowed mother, whom she supports by the labour of her hands, exhibiting ever, (so Doctor Moreland, who well knows her, told my sister,) a perfect harmony, and purity of character, that is a fulfilment of the promise given by her lovely face."

"Bless me! what a rhapsody," said Lucia, affecting to laugh.

"Quite high-flown!" chimed Mrs. Dunmore, in a spiteful accent, "and very proper and gratifying from the lips of a lover in presence of his mistress! Really, Mr. Beaufort, I think Lucia has a powerful rival in this new-found cousin of yours."

"Pardon me, madam, if I venture to regard your suggestion as a very absurd one," said Beaufort, gravely. "Your sister has had too long experience of the faithfulness of my affection for her to doubt it now,—but I candidly acknowledge its strength might ere this have been weakened, had I supposed she required of me a passion so selfish and engrossing, as to forbid the entrance of any other friendship or affection in my heart. True and pure love is an ennobling principle, which elevates the soul and expands it to the reception of kind and holy feelings, worthy of the immortal nature which the great Creator has bestowed upon his noblest work, and that must be a spurious sentiment, which fails to produce this result."

"Excuse me, Mr. Beaufort," said Mrs. Dunmore, fearing she had gone too far. "I really meant nothing very serious,—only that if I were in Lucia's place, I should not like to see any other woman, especially a young and pretty one, becoming quite so much an object of interest with my lover. But if she is indifferent to it, I am sure, I shall not complain,"—and turning half pettishly towards a table,

she busied herself in re-arranging some brilliant autumn flowers, in a china vase.

"Your sister, I trust, will never give admittance to a feeling of that kind," returned Beaufort; "on the contrary she will, I feel assured, receive this unprotected girl to her bosom, and if only for my sake, cherish and love her as a sister. Do I deceive myself in hoping and believing this, my dear Lucia?" he said, as tenderly bending over her, he took her passive hand, and looked with earnest gaze into her face. She turned it from him, and leaning down upon the pillow of the sofa, her ill-restrained anger and chagrin found vent in a passionate burst of tears.

"What means this strong emotion, Lucia?" asked Edward, as stooping down he gently strove to obtain a sight of her averted face. "In what have I offended?—tell me, and I stand ready to make such reparation as you shall require, for my fault."

"And can you ask?" she said, a bright glow of resentment drying the tears that glistened on her cheek; "or do you suppose I am so short sighted as not to be able to penetrate the thin veil with which you strive to conceal even from yourself, your real sentiments towards this girl? From the day when you first beheld her, I have marked a change come over you, and I have felt too, in moments when you proffered me your warmest homage, that the lip uttered what the heart no longer dictated."

"This from you, Lucia!" exclaimed Beaufort, in an accent which seemed to imply a doubt whether he could have heard her aright; "from you, to whom, despite of all you have done to alienate me, and which might have changed the love of many a heart to bitterness, I have clung as fondly and as faithfully as though my very life depended on your breath! And this is my reward,—to be branded as a hypocrite by her, to whom my every thought has been submitted, and my very soul poured forth like transparent water to her gaze."

His emotion for a minute was quite uncontrollable, and he walked rapidly and in silence through the apartment—Mrs. Dunmore was alarmed at the turn which the thing seemed about to take, and though awed by Beaufort's stern pale face, she felt that on her interference depended the only chance of averting the impending rupture.

"This is a foolish quarrel," she said, turning from the flowers, which instead of tastefully arranging, in the graceful vase, she had, in her confusion left strewn upon the table. "And I pray for both your sakes that it may go no further,—Lucia, you cannot mean what you said—she does not, Mr. Beaufort,—indeed, indeed, she has uttered in a moment of resentment, what, should you receive it as truth, will cost her a life's repentance."

"I have not, Mary," said the perverse beauty, raising from the pillow, a face so distorted and inflamed with tears, and passion, that Beaufort as