

He stooped towards her and kissed her cheek ; but not content with that, she threw her arms eagerly around his neck :

"Not so coldly, do not kiss me so coldly," she passionately exclaimed. "Ah, my dear uncle, your love is all I have in the world—do not take it from me—I cannot bear the thought of that."

"God bless you, my Annabelle," he said, as he strained her to his breast, and fondly kissed her lips. "It would be hard, indeed, not to love you, my child, and it is because I love you so much, that I am thus anxious for your happiness."

She looked up at him with a radiant smile, though her face was bathed in tears, and then withdrawing from his arms, glided rapidly from the apartment. But till a late hour she heard his restless step in the library, and she felt a pang of self-reproach, at the thought that her selfishness was disturbing, and giving pain to the heart that so fondly loved her, and which, from early childhood, had been devoted to her happiness and comfort. She could not sleep till she heard him seek his chamber, and hoped he had gone quietly to rest, and then on her weary eyelids fell that balm, which steepens even guilt and misery in sweet oblivion of their woes.

She knew not how far the night had waned, when she was suddenly and fearfully awakened by the violent and repeated ringing of her uncle's bell. A bustle on the stairs heightened her alarm, and springing from the bed, she threw on her dressing gown and was just going out, when some one rapped quickly at her door. With a beating heart, she opened it, and Mowbray, pale and agitated, stood before her.

"For God's sake, my dear Annabelle, come with me to your uncle!" he said, breathlessly; "he is—I fear he is dying."

The terrified girl uttered a piercing shriek, and bounding past him, paused not till she stood within her uncle's apartment. There he lay, apparently in the agonies of death—her guardian, her guide—almost her only friend. Oh, how painfully did the scene of the preceding evening recur to her, and could he now be restored to her, how cheerfully would she yield herself to the fulfilment of his every wish! Mrs. Seldon was supporting him in her arms, and Scipio, his favourite attendant, chafing his hands, while several of the female servants stood in tears around the bed.

Annabelle rushed forward and cast herself on her knees beside him. She thought her heart would break; no tears came to her relief, not a word escaped her lips, but deep and heavy sighs burst continually from her bosom, as seizing her uncle's cold hand, she clasped it in both hers, and sealed her lips convulsively upon it. A few minutes passed in this manner, and not a sound broke the death-like silence, when Annabelle felt her fingers slightly pressed by those of her dying uncle. She looked up and met

his glazing eyes turned tenderly towards her. In an instant she arose—Mowbray stood beside her—and placing her hand in his,

"Dearest uncle, bless us," she said. "I obey you, and give myself to him, whom you have chosen for me."

Mr. Hope laid his hands upon their united ones, and said, with difficulty :

"God bless you, my children; I die happy."

He smiled brightly, and fell back upon the pillow. Annabelle leaned over him, but the spirit had fled to him who gave it, and casting herself beside the pallid clay, which she had so long and dearly loved, she wreathed her arms around the neck, and burst into a passion of tears. The physician just then entered, but his cares were not needed for the dead. Annabelle, however, was shortly in a state to require them.

When, with difficulty, she was forced from the remains of her uncle, and conveyed to her own apartment, she abandoned herself to the most excessive grief, and so completely had the idea taken possession of her mind, that the spasms which were the immediate cause of her uncle's death, had been occasioned by her resolute opposition to his wishes, that she constantly exclaimed she had killed him, and before the morning dawned, she was raving with delirium. A brain fever was the consequence, and though its dangerous crisis was safely passed, its debilitating effects, kept her several weeks hovering on the borders of the grave. During the period of her illness, Mowbray's devoted tenderness, and his intense anxiety for her recovery, won him golden opinions from all who were interested in the lovely Annabelle, and rendered the whispered rumours of his approaching marriage with her a subject of general rejoicing.

But with returning health, the buoyant spirit of joy and happiness returned not to her saddened mind. She seemed indifferent to all about her, and though she permitted Mowbray to consider her as his affianced bride, she again told him with unreserved frankness, that she could not bestow on him her heart. Mowbray's self-love would have been more gratified could he have succeeded in awakening in her a warmer sentiment than friendship; but as he wooed her not for herself alone, though he certainly loved her as well as a gambler may be supposed to love any thing, except the dice box, he was rejoiced to obtain her upon any terms, and anxious immediately to secure her, lest some untoward event should even yet deprive him of her. He accordingly named an early day for their union, and she quietly acquiesced in his wishes, passively resigned to her inevitable fate, and indifferent as to the period of its fulfilment.

And little, indeed, was there of bridal joy in her aspect, when on the morning appointed for their nuptials, she made her appearance, dressed in the habiliments of mourning, and attended by one bride-