

but with a hard struggle of the heart. She feared to accept him—she saw that though he was aware of the enchantment which had lured him, he was too enervated to draw from his own mind the power which should free him. She feared to bind him by a promise, which, amidst the allurements to which he was subject, he never might fulfil. Perhaps too, there was another motive, her own falling health, which prevented her from complying. She would fain have said something to have warned him against the fascination, and have brought him back to former simplicity; but while she felt that it would be useless, she was fearful lest it should seem to proceed from a selfish or an envious motive. For Tracey, when he returned home on that day, he gave up all resistance, and surrendered himself entirely to the influence of the wiles which beset him; and as he sat that evening at the feet of Lady Florence, and gazed upon her haughty beauty, who shall wonder that he rejoiced that his sick Cousin had refused him? And thus in the successful employment of every art which might lure, he winter bore away,—and ere it had passed, Tracey was the affianced husband of Lady Florence Elthorpe.

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The spring had now returned, waking into life the blossom and the flower, and bearing on its wing the thousand odours of the South. But it brought not back its bloom to the cheek of Lucy Howard. At first, it is true, she somewhat revived beneath the warmth and cheerfulness of the opening year. A smile of pleasure dwelt upon her face as she gazed again upon the beauties which to her had been a delight. Once more came the melody of nature to her ear, once more did her eye dwell upon the rich prospect, which many a time before had called up the buried emotions of her breast. She walked along the green lanes of the wood with a mournful yet a deeper joy than when health had called its roses to her cheek. But he was not there upon whose arm she should have leaned, and whose care should have sought occasion for the tender offices of love. This momentary renovation soon ceased as her spirits became more depressed, her melancholy more deep. The Physicians spoke of a removal to Italy as likely to afford a restoration to health. To this however, she showed a determined opposition, nor could the entreaties of the fond friends with whom she resided, induce her to consent. Tracey had seen her but a few times since the interview we last related. On

those occasions his manner had been constrained and cold; at first because he was offended at her refusal of him, and afterwards because feeling that he had injured her, pride prevented him from seeming as if desirous to retain her favour. A thousand times a day he reproached himself for his conduct, and even the gaiety of a London season, and the smiles of Lady Florence had in vain endeavoured to chase it from his thoughts. As his marriage was to take place in June, he had now returned to D—, and thither the Earl and his Daughter had accompanied him. The sight of every well remembered scene seemed now distasteful to him. He called to mind the last time he had wandered over them, when there had not been the mere enjoyment of the senses, but when intellect and instruction had added to his pleasure. He grew morose and testy. Lady Florence, now that she was less intent upon her wiles and less anxious to display her charms both of body and mind, lost much of her bewitching power over him. Her society became by degrees less pleasant to him. Her failings and imperfections were now less disguised, and he was more capable of discerning them. And this gave greater poignancy to his remorse, as his thoughts continually reverted to Lucy. The regret when we find that the object of which we have been in pursuit is but a shadow, is heightened by the reflection, that for it we have deserted the substance. And so our remorse for not having sought that which is really estimable, is increased, if we discover that that which we have obtained is not merely undeserving our consideration, but has a thousand deficiencies which we were not only prevented from seeing by the veil that our perverted fancy had drawn before our eyes, but which a cunning art had conceded, beyond the reach of the most rigid observation. And that object must be indeed worthless, which, after a lengthened chase does not equal our expectations. If there be in it *any* redeeming qualities we call to mind the anxiety and the trepidation it has cost us, and thus create a fancy which enhances every thing that is really of value. But if there be in the object no merit, nothing noble or good, we can create no such ideal, and remembrance does but preach to us bitterly of our folly, and tauntingly of our loss. And thus it was with Tracey. As his delusion melted away many defects which it had concealed became visible in Florence Elthorpe, and many other defects he saw which her artfulness (discarded when no longer of use) had rigorously studied to hide. Awake to his folly, his feelings became morbid. His was a spirit