

THE LOVERS.

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CHAPTER III.

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"Oh, thou shalt be all else to me,
That heart can feel, or tongue can feign;
I'll praise, admire, and worship thee,
But must not, dare not, love again."

—MOORE.

WHILE the solitary wagon was driving, through wind and rain, along the lonely north road, bearing its three strangely-contrasted inmates—the gruff, avaricious driver, the simple, kind-hearted youth, and the dark, fierce, stern woman—a far different scene was passing in another quarter of the city. At that same hour the town mansion of Hugh Seyton—Earl De Courcy—was all ablaze with lights, music and mirth. Gorgeous drawing-rooms, fretted with gold and carving, dazzling with numberless jets of light from the pendant chandeliers, odorous with the heavy perfume of costly exotics, the very air quivering with softest music, were thrown open, and were filled with the proud, the high-born, the beautiful, of London. Peers and peeresses, gallant nobles and ladies bright, moved through the glittering rooms, and with singing, talking, flirting, dancing, the night was waning apace.

Two young men stood together within the deep shadow of a bay-window, in the music-room, watching a group assembled round a young lady at the piano, and conversing in low tones.

One of these was decidedly the handsomest man present that night. In stature he was tall, somewhat above the common height, and faultless in form and figure, with a certain air of *distingue* about him that stamped him as one of noble birth. His clear, fair complexion, his curling chestnut hair, and large blue eyes, betrayed his Saxon blood. His face might have seemed slightly effeminate; but no one, in looking at the high, kingly brow, the dark, flashing eyes,