

and plunging violently; Blanche for an instant forgetting her presence of mind, clasped her hands exclaiming:

"Oh, let him go, let him go—he will hurt you."

Lord De Melfort's pleased astonishment as he looked at her, recalled her to herself, and she deeply blushed while he, giving his horse to his servant who rode up to take him, said with a smile:

"The gipsy has earned a broad piece of gold for calling forth your kind solicitude—I gave you credit for more nerve and less sensibility—what say you to the charge?" Blanche stammered some reply as her eyes fell beneath his, when the keen witted gipsy approaching her, addressed her in that tone of voice so peculiar to her tribe, saying:

"Let me tell you your fortune, my pretty lady; great good is coming to you; you are loved by one who has ploughed the seas in a ship laden with gold—you will meet many crosses, for enemies are abroad—the eagle builds high, yet may he fall as soon as the sparrow—the bow is strung—the arrow is pointed—but fear not when the bird gathers the red berry from the ash, and the knarled and knotted oak, is stripped of its leaves, and stern winter is come, then shall your hopes draw near their fulfilment—and by the fall of another will you rise." She uttered this with rapidity; but was checked in proceeding by Mr. Neville, who leading his daughter away, said:

"Silence, woman, your words are presumptuous; the future alone belongs to God, who has thus spoken: 'boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth,' here take this," he continued, producing a small Testament from his pocket; "some of your people can read—in this volume you will learn what may benefit your immortal soul, long after this world, with its pomps and vanities, shall have passed away."

There was a solemnity in the manner of the good minister which gave weight to his simplest words, the gipsy received the sacred volume with a profound curtsy and in silence, while Lord De Melfort slipped a piece of money into her hand as she glided past him, turning away to avoid her thanks; he then drew the arm of Blanche within his, and walked on without speaking until they reached the avenue gate belonging to the Priory.

"We must not part here," said Mr. Neville, as they paused before it; "our visit will be doubly welcome to my sister, if you will accompany us and introduce your friend."

The proposal was too agreeable to Lord De Melfort to be declined, and desiring his servant to take back the horses to Woodland, he turned playfully to Colonel Lennox, saying:

"Now, Lennox, beware—you are treading on enchanted ground—some unseen shaft from the hands of a fairy may wound you ere you have time to defend yourself."

"Let it come, my dear fellow," replied his friend laughing; "the only wound a soldier shuns must be aimed at his back—and here that can never be." His eyes were directed towards Blanche as he spoke.

Lady Neville received her visitors with a smile of pleasure. "This is indeed an unexpected treat," she said; "I was beginning to fear you had all forgotten us. Blanche, dear, your cousin has been longing for you all day; she is confined to the sofa with a severe cold." They entered the drawing room as she spoke, where they found Rosetta reclining on a couch supported by pillows; Blanche flew forward—in an instant, they were clasped in each other's arms. Rosetta laid her burning cheek on that of her cousin's as she whispered in a low husky voice: "This is a gleam of happiness, dearest Blanche, the days have been long and dull without you; what has kept you away?" She rose in some confusion on perceiving Lord De Melfort and a stranger.

"Here are only friends, my child," said Mr. Neville, bending to kiss her; "how have you contrived to become an invalid; your hand feels quite feverish."

"She was so imprudent as to continue walking in the grounds during the rain this morning," replied Lady Neville, "and returned home quite wet—I was not even aware that she had gone out, but supposed she was in her own room reading."

A thrill of agony pervaded the whole frame of Rosetta; at these words she covered her eyes with her hands; and turned away her face; none noticed her emotion, save Blanche, who was struck by it as she sat down by her side. Lord De Melfort also drew near her and began talking in a lively strain, to divert the melancholy which on a closer view he perceived had overcast her usually bright and happy countenance. The manner he had adopted towards Rosetta, almost from the first, was that of a brother to a younger sister—playful and affectionate, while invariably he called her by the familiar appellation of Rose. How different to the more deferential way in which he treated Blanche—to casual observers the former would have been thought the chosen one, but then they marked not the peculiar interest expressed in his fine intellectual face, whenever the voice of Blanche was heard speaking, or how earnestly at times he would fix his eyes upon her, as if he desired to penetrate her inmost thoughts. His conversation he seldom directed to her, unless he could draw her apart from the group, when he would converse in low tones, on the theme he only ventured to dwell upon with a few—his departed mother, who he fancied she resembled; he would also consult her taste in all his projected improvements at Woodland Manor. There was one subject alone on which he was silent, though his manner too often eloquently expressed his feelings—but Blanche had always repelled any advances on his part with so much coldness,