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FLORENCE; OR, WIT AND WISDOM.

BY R. E. M.

CHAPTER I.

Her brow was fair as sweet spring's flowers,
Her eyes were dark as night;
But oh! there lurked a frowning sad
Beneath that beauty bright.
Therosey lips, so soft and fair,
So witching, when at rest,
Gave utterance oft to bitter taunt,
To heartless word and jest.

AUTHOR.

"WELL! perhaps I am too satirical; perhaps, as Aunt Mary has so often told me, there is more mirth than charity, more wit than wisdom, in my remarks; but still, I cannot help it. 'Tis a source of constant amusement to myself and all others, save the one who happens to be the victim of the moment. No, I cannot resolve to amend; I cannot resolve to abandon my charming folly."

This soliloquy was uttered by a young and very pretty girl, who, reclining in an easy chair, in one of the most elegant saloons in Belgrave Square, was indulging in the luxury of an hour's solitary reflection. After a few moment's silence she resumed, whilst her brow slightly contracted:

"What a very simpleton old Lady Dunstan must be, to take offence for such a trifle! She is the cause of all this ridiculous work, and for her sake, I must submit to be daily lectured for a week to come, by my dear old tiresome aunt. Bah! How I detest such morbidly sensitive fools!"

The door suddenly opened, and a tall, middle-aged lady, dressed with scrupulous neatness, entered. With a measured step she approached the spot where her niece, for in that relation the young girl stood to her, reclined, and, drawing a chair near, seated herself. For a moment, she fixed her eyes steadfastly on the countenance of

her companion, who, with an assumed air of unconscionness, continued to play with the small bracelet attached to her wrist.

"Well, Florence!" at length said the elder lady, solemnly; "I hope you are at last ashamed of yourself. I hope this new lesson will not, like so many others, be totally thrown away."

"How! what lesson, dear aunt?" and she raised her eyes with a look of innocence, which the peculiar smile lurking in the corner of her rosy lips fully contradicted.

"No nonsense, Florence!" was the somewhat angry reply. "You cannot but know to what I allude. You cannot but know that through your thoughtlessness, your heartless sarcasms, you have grossly offended the Countess of Dunstan—offended her to that degree that I am sure she will never enter our doors again."

"And if I have," was the careless rejoinder, "surely it is not a matter of such vast importance; such a ridiculous old woman, with her eternal twaddle about what young people were in her days, and how lamentably the world has degenerated since then. I really cannot help repeating that a cessation of civilities is not to be regretted."

"Of course, 'tis nothing to you. No, Florence! I have not now to learn your profound indifference for everything in which you are not personally interested. However, 'tis of some consequence to me, to know that my best, my earliest friend, is alienated—the only one whose society affords me any pleasure. How many lonesome, sad evenings, would I have passed, whilst you were enjoying yourself at some gay party, were it not for the kind company of her you have been pleased to style a ridiculous old woman."

"Forgive the thoughtless expression, dear