

"Thy lover is sleeping, is sleeping,
Beneath the dark billow,
And mermaids are keeping, are keeping,
Their watch by his pillow."

"Ay, maiden," she shrieked after her, "be like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ears to the voice of wisdom, if thou wilt,—but I will ring forth your fate whether you believe it or no," and again she sang.

"Twine the wreath, twine the wreath,
The bridal is near;
The bridesmaid's are waiting,
The bridegroom is here!"

Annabelle quickened her steps, and pressing her hands upon her ears tried to close them against the sound of the sybil's voice,—but every word floated clear and distinct upon the still air of morning, penetrating her sense, and like an unholy spell paralyzing those energies of her mind which would have enabled her to struggle against the fatal influence of the scene. But vainly she essayed to forget it,—her imagination was deeply touched by it, and she could not prevent her thoughts from constantly dwelling on the words of the mysterious chime.

From that time, Mabel incessantly haunted the path of the fated Annabelle—sometimes she would start suddenly up before her, and again, her oracular voice would be heard uttering its predictions from the opposite side of a hedge, or in the deep silence of night it would shriek forth beneath Annabelle's window, telling the fate of Delancey, or pronouncing her own doom in the nuptials that awaited her. A mind of less strength would have sunk beneath this constant persecution, and have yielded its belief to the supernatural power assumed by the sybil; but Annabelle strenuously resisted its influence, and though astonished and perplexed, at many things that were declared to her of the past and the future, and at times terrified and awed, she was not so weakly affected by it, as to make her superstitious feelings urge her on to fulfil the predictions of Mabel.

It certainly made her uncomfortable, however, and struggle against it as she would, strongly tinctured her mind with doubt and forebodings. Hitherto, from a scarcely defined feeling, she had forborne to mention the circumstance to any one; but her anxiety to be rid of such importunities, at length induced her to speak of it to her uncle, who viewed it all as one of the old witch's mad freaks, which he promised to put an end to at once. But as Mabel neither feared nor obeyed any one living, it is doubtful whether he would have succeeded in silencing her, but before he had an opportunity to exert his authority, an event occurred which induced Mowbray to dispense with her as an auxiliary to his wishes.

An evening or two after this, as Annabelle sat reading in the library, Mr. Hope entered, and throw-

ing himself into an arm chair, called her towards him, and drew her tenderly upon his knee.

"We have seldom had an hour together of late, my dear Annabelle," he said, as he fondly caressed her, yet with a look more serious than usual; "but as Mr. Mowbray dines out today, I have taken this opportunity to seek you, for the purpose of a conversation, which I have long wished to hold with you, though I know the subject will pain you, and therefore it is that I have deferred it, till I fear to delay it longer."

Annabelle's cheek grew colourless, as sliding from her uncle's arms to a low stool at his feet, she leaned in silence on his knee, awaiting with a beating heart the words which she dreaded to hear. But first he spoke of some arrangements he had recently made regarding her fortune, then of his own affairs, and of his health, which he said he felt to be so rapidly declining, that he was persuaded he should not be permitted to remain with her much longer; and as he uttered this conviction, Annabelle was again clinging round his neck, and bathing his cheek with her tears.

He was deeply moved by her sorrow, and while he strove to comfort her, he told her, with gentlest words, of the one wish that was still uppermost in his heart—to see her, before he left her, the wife of one who loved her, and who would shield her, even as he had done, from all the dangers and the snares of life.

Annabelle wept passionately, and in silence. She could not think of another, and Delancey's image still living in her heart,—and when urged by her uncle to speak, she implored him to leave her free—that he might yet be spared to her, and if not, God, was ever the orphan's father, and he would guard and protect her. Mr. Hope was disappointed, for he had fancied that of late she had seemed more favourably inclined towards Mowbray, and he felt almost sure, this evening, of winning her consent to his wishes. The conversation was a prolonged one. Mr. Hope exhausted every argument to induce her to yield, and she every entreaty not to be forced into a union with any one—for her heart had been too sorely smitten, to be yet capable of forming new ties and attachments, and her sense of right, were there nothing else to prevent, would not permit her to confer her hand, without those affections, which could alone make it of value.

Mr. Hope was very much disturbed by her continued resistance to his wishes, and as he was endeavouring to reason with her upon her extreme fastidiousness, Mowbray's voice was heard in the hall. Annabelle started up and flew towards her uncle, who, too much excited to remain sitting, had risen, and was rapidly traversing the apartment.

"Say no more tonight, my dear uncle," she softly exclaimed; "kiss me, and let me go; and indeed, indeed, I will try to school my heart into obedience to your wishes."