

asked her to advance with the rest and listen to the Signor. In perfect indifference she acquiesced. The Improvisatore was a little dark man, whose foreign aspect and peculiarly melodious voice bespoke the Italian, while, with vehement gesticulations, which would occasionally soften into a melting tenderness, he recited the German tale of "the Enchantress," who once had dwelt (he said) amidst the Erzgeberg mountains; and such was her dazzling beauty that the flowers hung their heads and withered away at her approach. On her head she wore a talismanic diadem, that rivalled the stars in its lustre, and clasped round her waist a girdle wrought in strange and magic characters; her power was unlimited; the desires of her heart under her own control, and yet Zerlina was not happy. A void, an aching void, she experienced, which she knew not how to fill. The streams murmured past her—the winds lent their soothing sounds—the birds their melody—but the voice she sighed for was not amongst them—at length it came. One evening as she sat listless and sad on the banks of the Elbe, her lovely head resting in her hand, music the most ravishing fell on her ear. She started—she gazed, and beheld a small boat in which appeared a youth, on whose cheek the sun had rarely shone, so fair, so beautiful it appeared. Zerlina uttered an exclamation when his soft eyes met hers—in another instant he had leaped on shore. Upon this mortal the enchantress bestowed an affection so devoted that all her supernatural gifts became as nothing, in comparison. She carried him to her palace, and displayed to him her treasures and her power—the youth was ambitious—he cast himself at her feet, vowing eternal fidelity—how did he fulfil the bond. One by one, at his earnest solicitation, she parted with them all; first her wand, then her magic girdle—her talismanic diadem—last of all her immortality—then, then it was that he laughed her to scorn, and told her he loved another; she wept, she raved, but it was all too late, he deserted her. She watched his departure with straining eyes until the boat became a speck upon the waters. The winds howled—the torrent rushed in maddening violence down the rock on which she stood—one wild look of unutterable woe she cast around her—one cry of agony and then she cast herself into the abyss beneath. "Lost, lost forever," she exclaimed, as the waters closed over her; "lost, lost forever," was repeated from afar; alas, it was the voice of echo, and all became hushed.

The Improvisatore ceased and retired from the crowd amidst their deafening applause. Beatrice, whose interest had been gradually excited by his wild tale, remained for an instant in an attitude of intense and evidently painful thought, as the circle dispersed. Nearly opposite to her, and leaning against a pillar, appeared Sir Claude; a slight smile curling his lip while replying to some remark made by Lady Stormont, who stood near him. The ima-

gination of Beatrice sketched a picture in which she beheld herself as the forsaken one; while she gazed upon them her feelings were wrought up to the highest pitch of suffering, and could not be suppressed. She rushed forward, and clasping her arms round his neck, she burst into a flood of tears. A titter ran through the room, when Sir Claude, astonished and much annoyed at this public display, hurried her into one of the ante-rooms, followed by the sister of their noble hostess, the Lady Harriet Lauriston.

"Why expose yourself in this absurd manner, Beatrice," said Sir Claude, rather angrily, as he placed her on a sofa. "Will you never cease to be a child?"

Beatrice sobbed, but she could not answer him.

"Leave her in my care, Sir Claude," requested Lady Harriet, in a kind tone of voice, and sitting down by her. "I can sympathise in woman's weakness far better than you can: you are but young in the ways of this fashionable world of ours, dear Lady Brereton," she continued, when Sir Claude had withdrawn; "else would you be aware that the emotions of the heart must be kept in complete subjection; any evidence that you possess one will only meet with ridicule. You have been much petted at home, I should imagine."

Beatrice smiled through her tears.

"I fear too much so for my happiness," she replied. "Reared by one of the most indulgent, the most tender of mothers, I am indeed unprepared to resist the indulgence of those sensibilities, which I am quite aware must appear very foolish; yet it was not the story related by the Improvisatore that affected me so powerfully, but other thoughts which the catastrophe called forth."

"Ah! my sweet young friend, waste not your sensibilities upon imaginary misfortunes," returned Lady Harriet, mildly, yet impressively; "but reserve them for real woes. I could introduce you into a scene where you would witness penury, sickness and sorrow, which would teach you thankfulness to God for your numberless blessings: would you fear to enter it with me?"

"With you I would enter any spot however desolate, because you remind me of my sister Mary," replied Beatrice, looking eagerly in her face.

Lady Harriet smiled, and pressing her hand, said: "Tomorrow, then, I will call for you; remember."

Sir Claude now reentered to announce their carriage, which he did in a hasty impatient manner, but when he perceived the affectionate earnestness with which Lady Harriet was regarding the beautiful and ingenuous countenance of Beatrice, he advanced towards them, saying:

"You perceive, Lady Harriet, that she is quite a spoiled child."

"Indulged, but not spoiled," returned her ladyship, with great kindness. "You must deal gently with her, Sir Claude, for you will not find many