

the votary of excitement. Oxenham became weary of Zillah's childish caresses, her ignorance disgusted him, her hopeless imbecility shocked him, and at length confiding the care of his wife to the old and confidential nurse, who had early learned the painful secret, he determined to return to court. But first he took the precaution of exacting from Zillah a promise never to wander beyond the bounds of his own domain, and relying upon this, together with the watchfulness of old Winifred, he once more sought the scenes of dissipation.—At first, the hapless Zillah pined for the accustomed face and voice of her husband. Like a froward child, she wept and refused to be comforted, until her infantile mind had lost remembrance of her grief in its very excess. Winifred attended her as she would have done a helpless babe; studying every wish, and yielding to every whim, until the image of her husband faded from her vague fancy, and she regained her wonted quiet of manner.

In the meantime the Lord of Oxenham was plunging anew into the excesses of a court, then the most licentious in Europe, and wasting, in riotous living, the gold which had been the dowry of his imbecile bride. Many were the jeers and scurvy jests which he was compelled to endure on account of his marriage, and the seclusion in which he had kept his beautiful wife. Thinking that they had fully divined his motives, his loose companions uttered many a taunt and sneer against the care which he sought to preserve her from contamination of evil. At length, in a moment of excitement, when heated with wine, Oxenham was goaded by the pertinacious teasing of the merry monarch into a measure at once degrading to himself, and unjust to his helpless wife. The King offered to stake his royal George against a signet ring, that if Oxenham would but give him one day's advance of him, he would gain access to the imprisoned beauty, and bring back some infallible token of the favour. Oxenham accepted the wager, and agreed to remain in London one day after the King should have departed, before following him to Oxenham, only stipulating that the King should make no use of his royal prerogative in obtaining entrance into Oxenham Hall. "Fear me not," said the King, "I will take no unfair advantage of thee, good John, yet will I see thy pretty wife, and bring thee a fair token from the caged bird;" then turning to Buckingham, he whispered, "I would not ride into Devonshire for all the gentle dames in England; it is a region of perpetual weeping.

I mind me well of the weary days I spent at Tiverton, in the time when old Nell ruled the state; wheresoever else the sun may shine it *always rains in Devonshire.*"

"Will your majesty then lose your wager for a cloudy sky?" asked Buckingham.

"Not so, my lord, I care less to see the lady than to plague the proud knight of Oxenham; and it will go hard with me, but I will find means to win a jewel without going myself to seek it."

Some few days afterwards, as the Lady Zillah was seated with her faithful old attendant, in a retired part of the grounds, still known by the name of the Lady's Bower, she was accosted by an old gipsy-woman, apparently bending under the weight of years and infirmities, who importuned her to listen to her prediction. Naturally timid, and inclined to superstition, as the weakminded usually are, Zillah's fancies had been nourished by old Winifred, who was a firm believer in supernatural events, and who had found the most efficacious method of persuading Zillah to obey her directions, was by the narration of wild and wonderful tales in which she delighted. The sight of the gipsy, therefore, excited Zillah's childish fancy, and in despite of all Winifred's remonstrances, she listened in a trance of wonder to the jargon of the pretended prophetess. She even offered her hand, small, dark, and lined with the softest rosetint, to the curious gaze of the sybil, who seemed to decypher the future fortune of the lady, while she peered into the eyes much more frequently than into the palm before her. At length Winifred's threats prevailed, and the gipsy retreated, but the childish Zillah, delighted with her bright predictions, was wild with excitement. It was not until Winifred was disrobing her for the night, that she missed a curious bracelet which she always wore, and learned at how dear a price she had purchased the gipsy's skill in palmistry. Terrified lest her master should be angry at her carelessness in allowing one of the proscribed race to approach the Lady Zillah, old Winifred framed a tale for his ear, should he inquire for the bracelet, and taught it to Zillah just as one would teach a lesson to a child.—She was soon called to put in requisition all her skill in dissimulating, for in less than twenty-four hours after the loss of the bracelet, the Lord of Oxenham arrived at the Hall.—Though he had evidently ridden in hot haste, he seemed to have no especial business save to inquire most closely of all the domestics respecting the guests who might have been en-