

reviewed the events of the last half hour. How he must despise, condemn her! The very excess of respect he had displayed, but shewed her, as she reasoned, the extent of her supposed offence, and the noble chivalry of Claude, who, unwilling to let her see its magnitude, had veiled his real sentiments under the garb of respect and reverence. Had her departure from propriety been but slight, he surely would have preserved his usual manner; but the very fear that she should even guess the greatness of the confidence she had placed in him, led him to assume a deference so widely foreign to his real opinions. Whilst torturing herself with reflections like these, she was aroused by the sound of a horse's hoofs in the court yard. Thinking it almost impossible that he could be leaving already, she sprang to the window. It was hours, long hours, yet, before the dawning of day, but by the indistinct light, she could see the figure of Claude, who with all possible caution and silence, left the house. He bounded on his horse, and in another moment was out of sight. She sought not again her restless couch, and when the bright rays of the sun glanced in through her window, they found her seated near a table, buried in thought, her head leaning on her hand, with a pallid countenance and wearied, exhausted air, which would have filled Lady Stanhope with mingled horror and indignation, had she but witnessed them.

CHAPTER XV.

LUCY, who had passed a restless, feverish night, slept long after her usual hour; and Ida, unwilling to break the slumber she so much needed, forbade her being disturbed, and apologised for her non-appearance at the morning meal, saying; "She had not reposed well."

"Nor yourself either, my dearest Ida, I think," exclaimed Mrs. Vernon kindly, "you seem to stand in equal need of nursing, with Lucy." Ida replied that she felt much stronger and better than she had ever done the morning after even the least fatiguing of the London Assemblies.

"Yes, my dear child," added the Doctor, "and your moderate, early rising, and healthful exercise, would tend more to restore you, were you even after the weakening dissipation you speak of, than lying extended on a couch, all day, in a close and darkened room; a system alone sufficient to destroy both health and beauty."

Ida spoke not, but she inwardly remembered that the time was not very far distant, when she would be called on to resume the life thus severely condemned. No member of the family save

herself, and Lucy, had the slightest suspicion of the Marquis's visit, and Mrs. Vernon, on visiting her daughter, and attributing her indisposition entirely to want of rest, enjoined her to keep her room the remainder of the day. It was late in the evening when Claude, flushed and travel-stained, entered the apartment where his parents were seated. To their inquiries, he briefly replied, that he had been at the neighbouring post town to deliver a letter;" and after a quick glance round the chamber, left it. He immediately proceeded to the drawing-room, and as he had expected, found Ida half extended on a couch, her eyes fixed on the ground in deep reverie. On his entrance everything was forgotten in her anxiety for Lucy, and starting up, she eagerly exclaimed:

"You have been successful! Tell me! He has the letter." Claude hesitated, he felt that he was about to inflict pain, and he shrank from the task. At length he returned, in a low, gentle tone.

"Alas! Miss Beresford, much as I grieve for it, I am but the bearer of evil tidings. The Marquis of Pemberton has embarked for France."

Ida sank back, and covered her face with her hands. All the sad consequences of the unfortunate event rushed upon her recollection. The fearful effect it might produce on the delicate, sensitive frame of Lucy, the sorrow it would bring on the heads of her doating parents, the reflection that it was for her Lucy had incurred all, for a time completely overwhelmed her. At length she raised her head. The eyes of Claude were bent upon her, with an expression of compassionate pity, that stung her proud heart more than the most scornful glances could have done; but in that moment even pride yielded to friendship, and she passionately exclaimed. "Are you sure that there is no hope?"

"None," he sadly rejoined. "The Marquis, after writing a letter to his agent, arrived in time to secure a berth in a vessel which sailed yesterday evening. But if I can in any other way serve you—"

"No! no!" she rejoined; "'tis the only point in which you could have done so, and you have failed; but still accept my thanks. All you can do further is to keep profound silence on the subject, and never in public or private again revert to it. Claude bowed, and after a last look which spoke more of compassion for her weakness than sympathy for her sorrows, left the room. That involuntary glance revealed to Ida how deeply she had fallen from even the low standard she had