

already seated. Warmly pressing her hand, he assisted her in, and then turning to her *chaperone*, exclaimed:

"I resign your charge, madam, but before doing so, allow me to congratulate you on the tender solicitude, the scrupulous fidelity, with which you have discharged your trust."

Ere the lady addressed had time to recover from the breathless astonishment in which his audacity had thrown her, he had disappeared.

"Upon my word!" she exclaimed, "this is something novel," and she again relapsed into silence; but suddenly she resumed, in a much louder key: "Will you have the goodness, Miss Sydenham, to inform me, who this new and singular acquaintance of yours, is?"

"I—I really forget," stammered poor Alice, who had but little heeded the information which the stranger had imparted to her concerning himself.

"Forget his name!" was the indignant rejoinder. "Really, Miss Sydenham, you surprise me. Forget his name! and, yet, you took his arm, conversed with him, treated him with all the familiarity of an old acquaintance."

"Because he was the only being who seemed to possess one spark of kindness, or feeling for me," vehemently replied Alice, to whom the remembrance of her wrongs imparted a sudden and unusual courage.

"That has no connexion with the subject, whatever, Miss Sydenham. I allude to the strange and unaccountable error you have committed, in thus receiving, and encouraging the attentions of a nameless individual; I am certain, were Mrs. Sydenham to know it, she would feel deeply pained. How do you know, but your acquaintance may be some old tradesman? or—or," she continued, evidently seeking for some term of suitable degradation—"a pickpocket!"

"In that case, he would scarcely be admitted into Mrs. Belmont's saloons," said her companion, gently.

"I am not so sure of that," rejoined Mrs. Graham, with increased asperity. "Mrs. Belmont is not so remarkably select. We meet many persons in her circle, whom we would not dream of finding there."

Oh! how deeply Alice felt the ungenerous, the unkind insinuation, but she made no retort. She was reflecting that this was but her first essay in the bitter path of dependence, and she vowed, in her inmost heart, that as far as lay in her power, it should be her last. At the moment, her handkerchief fell, and as she bent forward to raise it, the light of the lamps shone full upon her figure. Whiter than marble instantly became her cheek,

and clasping her hands, she murmured in accents of horror: "Good God!"

"How! what is the matter?" quickly exclaimed Mrs. Graham, springing from her seat. But she heard her not. Gazing with an air of total stupefaction, upon her small white arms, she ejaculated in the same thrilling tone, "*the bracelet!*" Yes! the opal bracelet, the rare, costly jewel, which had called forth the admiration of even the supercilious children of wealth, was gone. Her companion understood at once the meaning conveyed in Alice's one exclamation, and she rapidly repeated, sinking back on the cushions.

"What! my bracelet? You do not mean to say, Miss Sydenham, that you have lost it?"

"Yes! I have been indeed so utterly unfortunate," murmured poor Alice, who, overwhelmed with agonized shame and regret, would have gladly welcomed death at the moment, to deliver her from this last climax of misery.

"Did you lose it in Mrs. Belmont's rooms?" was the sudden and eager query.

"Alas! no. I must have lost it in getting into the carriage. 'Tis by this time broken to atoms, or appropriated by some foot passenger."

"Unless your new acquaintance anticipated them, and performed that duty himself," exclaimed Mrs. Graham, who, even in the midst of her trouble, could not resist the temptation of launching a sarcasm at the head of the audacious meddler, who had presumed to question so insolently her conduct. But her satire fell unmarked. Alice was too wretched to heed it, and the lady might, with equal impunity, have styled the old gentleman a robber, or a murderer. An ominous pause followed, broken by the young girl's saying in a low tone:

"And it was so very valuable, too?"

"It only cost three hundred guineas," rejoined Mrs. Graham, sarcastically.

"But you value it for its own sake, only," said Alice eagerly, a ray of joy lighting up her haggard face, which already bore the marks of care, the first that had ever rested there. "'Tis no *souvenir*, no cherished remembrance! Oh! there is yet hope!" And already in fancy, she had rapidly pictured to herself the sacrifices she would make, the unwearying diligence with which she would toil night and day, denying herself every comfort, even necessary, till she had discharged her fearful obligation. Her companion, who instantly comprehended the meaning conveyed in her hurried words, exclaimed in a cold, stiff tone:

"I hope, Miss Sydenham, you do not intend insulting me by ever talking about restitution. It was entirely an accident. You are in no man-