

the lovely Emmeline, from whom he had been torn, would still haunt him day and night in spite of every effort he made to weaken her hold on his affection, for he knew that to indulge in such feelings, now, was sinful, and though he had erred, he feared to be guilty. One consolation was his amidst all his trials; by his marriage with Lady Barbara he had realized the only anxious hope of his father, had poured a few sweet drops into the bitter cup that father was doomed to drink. This was a pleasing reflection, yet not sufficient to repay him for the sacrifice he had made of his own. Earnestly he strove to discover qualities in his lady that might eventually attach him to her, but in vain he looked for these; her love for him was her only redeeming one, and even this she marred by her jealous, suspicious disposition; proud, passionate, and supremely selfish, she could not brook the slightest disappointment, while her thirst for admiration was only in proportion to her vanity.

Lord Avon disliked a London life extremely; he considered it a total waste of time, nor was he ever well while there; but to please Lady Barbara, who cared for no other place, he accompanied her to town on the approach of the gay season. He could not follow her into every scene of dissipation, though he forced himself to do so more frequently than he liked, as his presence served as a protection and a check; often when beholding her as the great star of attraction, in the brilliant throng, would his thoughts wander to the dear and pious Emmeline in painful contrast. The one he might admire, but the other could alone be loved. He made every allowance for the very different educations they had received, but he could make none for the many acts of selfishness he observed in Lady Barbara, her total disregard to the feelings or the comfort of others, so long as she herself was gratified. This particularly struck him on the first day she was to attend the Queen's drawing room, when he was so unwell that his medical adviser desired him on no account to leave the house. She came to him, and perceiving him lying pale and languid on the sofa, said:

"I hope, Avon, you are well enough to accompany me; I have set my heart upon being presented today."

"If you wish it, certainly, but I am in great pain Barbara, I assure you," was his reply.

"Oh! it is half fancy, love; the exertion will do you good, depend upon it."

Lord Avon said no more, but on her entering the room two hours after, attired in her magnificent court dress, she found him waiting to attend her.

"Now there is a dear kind creature," she exclaimed, throwing her arm round his neck. "I knew it would do you good, else I would not have pressed you, you are already looking much better; quite a colour in your cheek."

Lord Avon gently withdrew the caressing arm and taking her hand led her down stairs, his flushed and varying cheek betraying how much the effort cost him; but he acted his part in the pageant, and that was all she required, and she returned home enchanted with the homage she had received, and the envy she had excited in the breast of many a fair lady.

Amongst the numerous admirers who fluttered round Lady Barbara, was Sir Arthur Clifton, who, it may be remembered, was one of the gay and early associates of Lord Avon. Years, and a lengthened absence abroad, had not improved his principles, indeed had rather injured them, for he was now a confirmed libertine, and a gambler. Lord Avon had long since relinquished his society in disgust, and he beheld the advances he made to his lady, with vexation and annoyance forbidding her to give him the slightest encouragement, this she immediately attributed to jealousy, and the idea pleased her so much that she proposed to try his affection by appearing to take an interest in Sir Arthur; consequently, wherever she met him she allowed him to engross her whole attention, eagerly watching the effect her unwise conduct produced on Lord Avon, and delighted at every frown or look of uneasiness he would cast upon her, and her dangerous companion.

The disposition of Lord Avon was naturally gentle, amiable, and most affectionate, though there had been moments when, suffering under great and trying provocations, he had exhibited violent passions. Lady Barbara was aware of this, and seldom ventured to try him too far, fearing to weaken the influence she was trying so eagerly, but so unadvisedly, to obtain. By no word—or look—or single act of his since their marriage had he given her reason to think that his heart still lingered with Emmeline; his attentions to herself were constant, and if not tender, still were kind and indulgent. Lady Barbara therefore felt easy about him, looking confidently forward to the time when she would gain such an ascendancy over him as to mould him to her own wayward and capricious will.

Lady Clifton, (the grand-aunt of Sir Arthur,) was at this time in town, and continued to give her Saturday evening concerts and her *Sunday card parties*. To these, of course, Lord Avon would not go, and much did it distress him that he was unable to prevail on Lady Barbara to relinquish them also. But she could not understand his scruples; all days were alike to her: many others did the same,—why should she be singular, and offend Lady Clifton? These were her arguments.

"You do not then fear to offend God?" asked Lord Avon, very gravely.

"Really, Avon, you are becoming too strict for me," replied Lady Barbara; "it is impossible to