

fore set his house in order, he awaited with the cheerfulness of christian hope, and with imperishable faith in that name which is mighty to save, the change which ere long awaited him.

His only remaining care was for Annabelle—two years must elapse before she would attain her majority, and he felt that she was still too young, and far too beautiful, to be left without a protector. It was therefore with perhaps injudicious zeal, that he urged her acceptance of Mowbray, but she found it impossible to accede to his wishes, to tear from her heart the cherished image of Delancey, and permit another to occupy its place. There was also another cause for her more than usual sadness and emotion on this evening, which was not alluded to, even if remembered by any one around her.

But in the solitude of her chamber, her heart brooded over the thought that this was to have been the evening of her bridal with Delancey, had he returned at the expected time, and it was with tears of bitter anguish that she contrasted her present feelings and situation, with what they would have been, had not her hopes been blighted in the bud. Thus wore away the night, in vain and deep regrets, and from the unquiet sleep which at last fell upon her weary eyes she was awakened by a fearful dream, just as the first ray of dawn stole through the curtained windows of her apartment. She started from her pillow as though it had been strewn with scorpions—an undefined and shadowy sense of evil oppressed her, and throwing wide the casement, she leaned forth to breathe the fresh and balmy air of morning. The landscape seemed sown with diamonds, and the exquisite flowers and fruits of her southern climate were exhaling their delicious incense to the rising god of day. Annabelle felt that there was balm in nature for her wounded spirit, and forbearing to summon her sleeping attendant, she hastily dressed herself and descended to the garden.

Its quiet, and its leafy coolness, soothed and tranquillized her mind, leading her troubled thoughts, "through nature, up to nature's God," and with holier images exorcising the wild and disconnected visions of the night. Thus lost in sober musings, "chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy," she insensibly strayed through the little gate into the woodland, and following one of its many grassy paths, soon paused in the centre of a thick group of beech trees, on a spot, hallowed by the recollection of hours spent there in happier days with Delancey. There was the mossy bank where they had so often sat, and where in the last sad evening preceding his departure, they had exchanged their fond farewells and vows.

She was stooping with tearful eyes to gather some of the violets that gemmed the turf, when the low growl of a dog startled her, and looking quickly around, she saw the figure of the old Fortune-teller, sitting beneath a broad beech, her restless eyes glancing from under the scarlet hood of her cloak, and her

fierce mastiff crouching at her feet. Annabelle grew pale—she had ever shrunk in terror from that witch-like woman—there was something so evil in her countenance, so ominous in her figurative and abrupt language, that she could not shake off a mysterious feeling of dread, that always oppressed her, in her presence.

Mabel had marked the fear and aversion which her person awakened in the breast of the beautiful heiress, and it engendered a degree of hatred in her own, that independently of the promised reward, rendered her a willing instrument to work Mowbray's wicked purpose. As soon, therefore, as she saw herself observed by Annabelle, she began to chant in a low monotonous tone, a sort of doggrel verse, in which she was fond of uttering her mysterious intimations :—

"Gather the violets fair,
But not for the bridal wreath;
The bride-groom sleepeth fast,
The deep green sea beneath:
Wake will he never more;
The sea-weed is his pillow,
And mermaids sing his dirge,
Beneath the briny billow."

Annabelle trembled so violently that she was obliged to lean against a tree for support, and in silent agony she turned her imploring eyes towards the sybil. Her glance was too eloquent to be misunderstood; but instead of winning the silence it asked, it seemed to yield a fierce triumph to the pretended prophetess, for bursting into a wild and withering laugh, she asked in a taunting tone :

"Can you not hear of his fate, maiden, without writhing like a wretched worm in the midst of burning embers ? I tell you he has perished, and for another bride-groom shall that dainty form be decked. Ay, I have read it, and it shall be so. The eagle glance shall win you yet,—spite of your coldness and your pride. Annabelle Hope, before the violets spring again from that sod, you shall cease to mourn for the dead, and rove through the greenwood, with the marriage ring given by another, on your finger—ay, by him whom you now scorn."

"Never ! never !" burst from the pale and trembling lips of Annabelle,—then by a sudden effort springing to her feet, while the crimson blood rushed tumultuously to her cheek and brow :—

"Woman !" she said, "how dare you arrogate to yourself, knowledge that belongs only to the Most High ? You may perhaps impose upon the ignorant and credulous, by your pretended art, but never need you hope that I shall become your dupe."

She turned from her, when she had spoken, and with all the self-possession she could command, walked slowly away, while Mabel, with a laugh of scorn and defiance, again burst forth into a wild prophetic strain :