

"Agnes, one person seems to have vanished from your reminiscences. You have told me nothing of your old friend Charles."

I thought I saw a faint blush on her cheek, and she quickened her horse's pace, as she answered—

"Mr. St. Clair is stationed on the western frontier. I have seen him seldom of late years."

"Does he know you are here now?"

"Yes, father wrote to him, telling him where we should spend the summer, but I doubt whether we shall see him. There was some probability of his being sent to France to investigate some forts there, in which case he will pay us a visit; but unless he receives this appointment he cannot leave his post."

We were now almost home, and as we approached the house, I saw Mr. Beaufort talking earnestly with some one who was sitting beside him on the portico.

"Who can it be?" said Agnes, and as she spoke the young man ran forward to assist her to dismount.

"Mr. St. Clair," said she, extending her hand, "I little thought to see you here so soon,"

"Am I so great a stranger, Miss Beaufort; but I cannot call you so, here, where I feel again like a little boy,—I must call you Agnes."

"As you will. I am too glad to see you to be scrupulous about my rights."

"And Mr. —, too," said he, grasping my hand. "We are all together again. How much has happened since we last met here, and yet all looks unchanged. That bright river and those hills have been so often in my mind's eye, associated as they are with some of the happiest days of my life, that I can scarcely believe so many years have elapsed since I last looked on them. I only hope that in their lovely retreats 'the future may not contradict the past,'" and he glanced at Agnes as he spoke.

"I fear, Charles," said Mr. Beaufort, "you will have but a dull time with us. The wandering life you military men lead, constantly changing scenes and companions, quite unfits you for our quiet, regular habits."

"Oh no, sir, those who are often changing, long most for a settled home. I am but a bird of passage now, however, for in a month I shall sail for France."

"So soon," said Agnes; "how long do you expect to remain abroad?"

"I do not know; it depends somewhat on my own choice, but as yet I have made no definite plans for the future."

The month of Charles' stay passed away rapidly. Agnes found that a military life did not always make men rough and unrefined. He was still,

"A lover of the meadows and the woods
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth;"

and his leisure hours, instead of being wasted in more boisterous pleasures, had been devoted to his favourite intellectual pursuits, so that literary enjoyments he was still her sympathizing companion. I watched them closely and saw that old feelings had been revived, and had gradually yielded to new and stronger ones. Charles had seen much of the real world, and to his animated descriptions of men and manners, Agnes listened with eager attention, and she in return led him into that ideal world, which she had peopled with the great and good, whose minds had guided and elevated her own.

"I cannot tell you," said she once, when they had been discussing their childish pleasures, "how much richer existence seems to me, now, than it did formerly. I was happy here as a child, but it was a happiness dependent on outward things, and which even then I felt was fleeting. I knew nothing of that inward strength which now makes me feel able to bear whatever may be before me, to sacrifice myself and my own enjoyment for that I love—to conquer feeling, and yet be happy in the consciousness of doing right; as you did, Charles, when you gave up all your visions of intellectual greatness, and sacrificed them to a promise, a promise, too, that could never be exacted by the one to whom it was given. I could only wonder at it then, now I can understand it."

"You did not know," said he, "what it cost me, nor have I ever felt it as I do at this moment. Agnes, you said you felt capable of making sacrifices for those you love. I did not ask if you love me—had I led a different life, and made myself the man I hoped to be, might have thought to win your love. Nor can I feel the value of all that I have lost—the worthlessness of the little I have gained."

"Charles, Charles, you little know my heart if you think such a sacrifice lessens you in my eyes;—far, far above any advantages of learning or fame do I value the pure and elevated principle on which you have acted. Believe me, I know it, feel it all."

"Can you love me, Agnes? Can you trade your happiness with me, now,—for ever?"

"I can trust it with you, and I do, Charles."