

tual consent we followed Annie to the lawn. On perceiving us, she approached with a beautiful rose, which she presented to Captain Selby, saying:—"Behold my first gift."

"Not the first though dearly prized," he replied, detaining the small hand which held it. "My sweet rose of the village, little did I imagine, when first I heard you so called, that the prize would be mine."

"Yes, yours—both yours—but you must watch over us tenderly, else we would soon droop, wither, and die."

"If the tenderest love that ever man bestowed will avail to preserve my precious flower," said Captain Selby, pressing her affectionately in his arms, as she inclined towards him, "fondly will it be shown."

"And what will you leave for your poor old father," asked Mr. Bertram, drawing near his beloved child.

Annie started—She reflected for a moment, then turning an enquiring look, from Captain Selby to her father, said, in a tone of extreme anxiety, "It is not possible—it CANNOT be possible that I shall be taken away from you."

Mr. Bertram caught her to his heart. "No, my own darling child," he said, "it is *not* possible, for I could have ill borne a sacrifice so costly. We shall not be separated."

"Then I am again happy," said Annie, smiling through her tears. "Come," she continued to Captain Selby, "come to our flower garden, and let us see the ravages the storm has made there." She took his hand as she spoke, and with the simplicity of a child, led him away. While we slowly followed, we all paused on reaching the blighted tree. Mr. Bertram uttered a solemn thanksgiving, while Annie, throwing her arms around it, softly said, "Poor stricken trunk, farewell; no more shall ye bloom and cast forth your tender leaves. You sheltered me in a moment of peril, but when the destroying angel smote thee, thou wast severed in twain, while an angel of mercy stood over thy master's child. In the morning ye were green and grew up—in the evening ye were dried up, cut down, and withered. Let me not forget the solemn lesson."

Dear, sweet Annie, how beautifully her piety shone forth in every action, in every word.

The hour now stole on in which Captain Selby was to take leave of her, for a time at least. He was to depart in the morning very early, having arrangements to make at D—, ere he commenced his journey into Wiltshire.

We all met at prayers, which were said by Mr. Bertram with peculiar earnestness, and when the servants had retired, he placed Annie's hand in that of Captain Selby, saying:

"In giving you this dear child, I yield up my only earthly treasure—if she prove to you what she has been to me, you will be rich indeed. But let us

not make an idol or garner up our affections in any child of mortality—lovely as she is, she must fade. *All* must pass away. God alone is eternal—He demands the first place in our hearts—and can he demand too much? who has for our sakes *given* so much."

We were all affected, and Annie wept as she received the paternal blessing, and was folded to the noble heart of him who was so soon to claim her as his own, again, and again. I then drew her away to her own apartment.

The period I had fixed on for my visit to the little parsonage had already come to a close, and when I announced this a few days after Captain Selby's departure, I was overwhelmed with reproaches and entreaties to remain—it was impossible that I could leave Annie at such a time—my presence was necessary to her in a thousand ways.

"You must witness the sacred ceremony which is to give her to another," said Mr. Bertram, "and perhaps there is a little journey in store for you, even after that, at least if you intend to indulge your god-child—but you must ask me no questions," he continued, while a smile of happiness shone over his benignant features, "for I shall answer none, curious though you may be."

I allowed the dear good man to enjoy his mystery, and altered my plans to remain a few weeks longer.

Our days now did not appear to pass so quickly, at least so thought Annie, although our time was much occupied in preparing the trousseau for the bride. In this we found Mrs. Fludyer a most kind and willing assistant—charmed she was to display each new fashion, as she carried us from house to house in her carriage—and made poor patient Annie try on bonnet, after bonnet to discover which was the most becoming.

Various were the opinions at this time among the village gossips, respecting Captain Selby's engagement to Annie—and few, but only few, as usual, approved. "How could Mr. Bertram sacrifice his daughter to a man more than double her age, and part with her to be taken he knew not whither—it was very strange, though, of course, a girl without fortune, and educated in the country, could not expect, beautiful as she even was, to make a great match." Nods and whisperings accompanied these sage remarks, which amused us as they occasionally reached our ears, not a little.

We had driven into L— one morning in our pony chaise, to see Mrs. Fludyer, and consult with her upon some very important point respecting Annie's attire. On entering the drawing room, we found it full of visitors, amongst whom was Lord Randolph, in full military costume. Poor Annie looked distressed. He came forward immediately, and holding out his hand, said, smiling: