

How deeply touching is the grief of childhood! We long to clasp the innocent to our bosom—to kiss away the glistening drops that tremble upon the silken eye-lashes, to look words of peace and love into the pure soul that flashes out from the blue depths that sparkle liquidly beneath the quivering lids. Sweet childhood! In its inexperience of the philosophy of life, it submits not to the fiat of destiny without many ingenious defensive alternations—many feints to parry the fatal shaft. The dignity of womanhood meets her destiny coldly and calmly, though it may be in the majesty of sorrow and the grandeur of tears; but childhood puts aside the point of the poisoned arrow and pushes forward to pass it; it will not submit without an effort to avoid its keenest wound. Thus was it with Eda, as she exclaimed amid her tears, "Mother there is yet hope; the letter does not say that he is dead. Now listen and I will read every word of the letter over again;" and she read:

"FRONT OF THE LINE, ARMY OF THE POTOMAC, June 20th, 186—.

"MRS. C. ARTHUR,—*Dear Madam:* It becomes my painful duty to inform you, that on the — day of June, in an engagement with the forces of the enemy, under Stonewall Jackson, your husband, Captain George Arthur, was severely wounded and taken prisoner by the enemy. If living, he is a prisoner; but his wounds were of such a nature, (as I have learned,) as to preclude much hope of his recovery. Yours with respect, and sympathy with your affliction, A——— S———,

Maj. Commanding 7th Regt. — Inf. Vol."

"Ah! my child, we are without hope!" Even if he should still be living he is wounded, and a prisoner in the hands of inhuman soldiers, from whom there is no hope of obtaining his release. He cannot survive long in a hospital without medical aid and the kindest attention; then, what hope can there be for him in the hands of enemies?"

"No, no, mother, say not so; was not father a Freemason?" rejoined Eda.

"Yes, child," replied the mother, "but what of that? Freemasonry avails but little in a war of brother against brother. My child, think of that dread Libby prison and Andersonville," and again Mrs. Arthur burst into tears, and threw herself upon the sofa in deep agony.

Eda gazed a minute upon her mother, thoughtfully; her eye gradually assumed a new light; she softly folded the letter, and placing it in her bosom, with a gentle but firm step stole from the room.

About three o'clock that afternoon, in the village of S———, sat Judge B——— in his office. He was past the meridian of life; he was neither corpulent nor lean, but of that full habit which is necessary to perfect a fine, large physical form. His large head, graced with a full suit of steel-mixed hair, was well balanced upon his broad shoulders, while good nature smiled playfully upon every lineament of his handsome features. A deep, intellectual eye, a thoughtful composure of countenance, and a high broad forehead bespoke the man of profound thought and mental labor. Judge B——— was now practicing attorney in the village of S———, although he had long presided in one of the judicial tribunals of his State, and had with credit represented his constituency in the national legislature. He was surrounded by clients when Eda Arthur entered his office. She slowly and softly approached Judge B———; she stood awhile reading his features, and looking into his eyes inquiringly.

"What do you want, my child?" inquired Judge B———, returning her penetrating glance. Eda, as if assured by the tone of voice and gentle play of features that accompanied it, without removing her eyes from his, slowly withdrew the letter from her bosom, and placed it in his hand.

The Judge ran his eye hastily over the contents of the paper, and, turning to his clients, said:

"Gentlemen, you must come some other time; here is more important business than yours which demands my immediate attention."

"But," said one of the persons, "we have come a great distance to see you, Judge our business is also of great importance."

"True," returned the Judge, "but it matters not; this note, brought by this little girl, puts me in possession of facts and circumstances which require my immediate attention, to the exclusion of every other matter; so you understand me."

"But, Judge," returned the client, "if you will consider, we cannot conveniently come again; if you cannot do our business, we must go to some other lawyer."

"Very well," returned the Judge, "that will do better; there are several competent lawyers in town; go to one of these, gentlemen; I must be master of my time the rest of this day; perhaps longer." So the clients left.

"Are you Mrs. Arthur's child?" inquired the Judge of Eda, who replied in the affirmative. He took the child upon his knee, and kissing her, asked, "Why did you come to me with this letter?"