

my misery, to cast off life and its intolerable anguish; but one wild, passionate hope, saved me, and that was the hope of arriving in time to see him once more ere he passed from earth, to implore at his feet forgiveness; for oh! Eva, I felt, I knew then, that it was my turn to pray for pardon. Of that journey I can give you no account, save that it was like some hideous dream. Madly rushing on, resting neither by day nor by night, sensible neither to cold nor fatigue; but its end was gained, and when I reined up my foam-covered horse at the porch, the grey-headed servant, whom I tremblingly questioned, told me Florestan yet lived. I could have almost fallen at his feet and worshipped him; but every moment was priceless, and with a choking sensation in my throat, I sprang from my horse and followed him. The frantic speed with which I had dashed up the avenue, or it may have been some inward pre-sentiment, had already told the anxious invalid that the fondest wish of his heart was on the point of being realised, and as the domestic turned away, leaving me standing in the doorway, the tones of a voice that thrilled through every nerve of my frame, feebly exclaimed:

“Oh! William! in mercy, tell me, has Mr. Edgar arrived yet?”

“I could not speak—I was suffocated; but with one sudden spring I was at his feet, covering his hands with my tears, my convulsive kisses. ‘Edgar, my brother!’ was all he could utter, as he pressed me to his heart in a long, passionate embrace. Eva, Eva, that embrace was a foretaste of heaven. Mr. Arlingford paused a moment, evidently much agitated, and then hurriedly continued:

“The scene that followed is too sacred to be recounted; suffice it to say, that the past was all cancelled and forgiven, and Florestan then endeavoured to prepare me for the terrible trial to which God had attached the grace of my conversion—our approaching earthly separation. The very mention of it at first roused me almost to frenzy. I called myself his destroyer—his murderer. In vain he solemnly assured me that the physicians had said the seeds of consumption were already implanted in his frame, and that his imprudent exposure to the force of the elements had only developed them a little earlier. His efforts were useless, they brought no ray of consolation to my gloomy despair. It was only when he spoke of another separation—one more lasting than that of the tomb, a separation not for life, but for eternity, that I listened, trembled, and at length resigned myself. In the very first hour of our meeting, yielding to my brother’s gentle ad-

monitions, I, who had not given for days and days a single thought to God, knelt with him in prayer; but the petitions I poured forth then were not for myself, but for him. I asked not that his life would be spared. Oh, no! I felt that prayer would have been useless, for already the predestined seal of the heaven he was passing to, was stamped on his calm, holy brow; but I prayed that his sojourning might be prolonged yet awhile, that I might learn from his lips the way to attain that glory he had already earned, that I might tell him of all my love, my devotion to himself, implore again and again his forgiveness for the past, never wearying of hearing that blessed assurance from his lips. My other petition was that his spirit might pass quietly away, that the gentle calmness of his countenance might be disturbed by no pang of mortal agony, and if some expiation were necessary, that I might bear it all at my parting hour. Those prayers were in my heart or on my lips, at all times, at all hours; I murmured them in my dreams, and notwithstanding my unworthiness, they were heard. When once I had schooled my heart to the coming trial, I tasted such hours of happiness, in tranquil intercourse with him, as I have never known since—happiness that seemed too refined, too ethereal for earth, a foreshadowing of the joys of heaven. I have not spoken of my mother all this time; not that she was absent from us. Oh! no; constantly, unceasingly, did her sweet pale face hover round us, reflecting in its beautiful serenity that of her child; and I may safely assert, Eva, that never during the whole of that trying time, nay even at that awful moment when our beloved, our precious one was yielding up his last sigh, did the anguish of her countenance ever approach to the terrible expression that had convulsed it when I breathed into her agonized ear my aversion to my brother. Hers was a love whose purity equalled its intensity; and rather would she have seen her children separated by death than by hatred. As he lay there, in the last hour of his mortal existence, calm, happy, the sands of life ebbing rapidly away, he suddenly motioned me nearer, and murmured as I bent over him:

“Edgar, I have a promise to ask of you. It is, that you will never abandon our poor mother while she lives; that you will ever remember she has only you, in this world, to look to for love or tenderness.”

“Fervently pressing his hand I whispered, ‘Yes, Florestan, I swear to you, by all I hold most sacred, that whilst she lives, I will be to her all that the most devoted son can be. No new ties