

fold; no expense was spared, nothing thought too good, or too great for a motherless child. Our relatives were few, and our meetings like 'angel's visits, few and far between,' consequently I felt for them no affection, and the only love I knew was for my fond, my doating father. As I increased in years, masters of every kind were procured to render me well versed in all accomplishments; fulsome adulation was heaped upon me with an unsparing hand, and I was taught to believe that Nature had been as lavish upon my person as upon my mind. My father positively idolized me, and as I verged on womanhood, he formed golden visions for my future happiness, as he, poor misguided man, fondly imagined. At the age of seventeen I was, as it is technically called, brought out, and became that season the 'star of attraction,'—the admired of all admirers. My father's almost unbounded wealth, and great respectability of character, paved the way for my admission amongst the titled of the land; whilst he, dazzled by the attention lavished upon me, in fancy's eye already beheld me the bride of some titled scion of nobility, whose decaying fortunes needed a prop which would countenance an alliance with the only child of a wealthy cit."

"But you deceived his expectations."

"Do not anticipate my tale. That same year there came to reside with us, as confidential clerk, a young man of polished exterior, and of fascinating manners; to see him was to admire. He took his meals with us, excepting when we had company. As for myself, how empty, how insipid was the conversation I heard in our crowded rooms. The few months Mr. Wilton had been with us, he had given me far different ideas, far more interesting, lofty topics to ruminate upon, than I had been used to listen to. He was well read, having devoted all his spare time to the higher branches of literature: he was an excellent French scholar, and a most able mathematician. As I expressed a desire to become more versed in the French language—to express was but to have my wish fulfilled—my ever indulgent father requested Wilton to devote some time each day to my instruction, little dreaming, good easy soul, of the net he was spreading for us. My father was generally with us, but at times we were alone. Oh! what blissful hours they were to me—company alone lost all its charms—the intoxicating waltz, the gallopade and quadrille, the opera or theatre grew tasteless and vapid—I would forego the most brilliant assembly for an evening's sober, rational conversation with Eustace. Our tell-tale eyes had long told each other that we loved, and one evening my father being called away upon some business, we were left for nearly an hour together ere he returned. I had learned the pleasing truth that I was dear to Eustace, and unused to deception of any kind, unskilled in the arts of coquetry, with no mother to counsel me, I openly avowed my preference for him. Had you seen him in his youthful days, Mrs. Goodwin, you would not have wondered at my infatuation, for his person was as faultless as his mind."

"He was a very handsome man when I first had the pleasure of his acquaintance; I should think he was not then more than five or six and thirty."

"About that age. Months glided by like weeks; we lived in an elysium of love, with no anticipations for the future. The first alloy we experienced was the accidental discovery of my father's views for himself, though as yet I had been allowed to reject indiscriminately all who had offered for my hand. Alarmed at the discovery of my parent's intentions, Wilton suggested a private marriage, which imprudent step I listened to with avidity, rather than become another's bride. We calculated upon my father's dotage for me, and his partiality for Eustace, to forgive us, after the storm of disappointment had somewhat evaporated; alas! 'we reckoned without our host,' as the issue will show."

"Then he did not yield you his forgiveness?"

"You shall hear. After a union of about three months, my dear father received an offer of marriage for me, from the eldest son of the poor but proud Earl of Singleton, Lord Fitzharris, a young man of no intellectual powers, having a mind still plainer than his person. But no matter—he was a member of the aristocracy, and that was sufficient for my poor misguided parent; to see me a lady by title was all his aim—all his ambition. Entreaties were of no use—all the excuses I could allege to account for my rejection of Lord Fitzharris, were of no avail; his empty title my parent thought quite an equivalent for his empty purse, and still more empty head. Urged almost to frenzy, I fell upon my knees, and avowed my clandestine marriage. Never shall I forget that moment, should I live to the longest span allotted to humankind. My father's countenance assumed an almost deathlike appearance at the total annihilation of his air-drawn visions of my future greatness."

"My poor friend."

"As soon as his almost ungovernable rage allowed him to give utterance to his passion, he raised his hands to curse me—me, his only, his idolized child, and desired us to quit his house and his presence for ever. Eustace he upbraided as a fortune-hunter, and as the scorpion who had given him his death-sting. In vain my husband pleaded and urged that my fortune was the last object of his consideration—that it was myself alone he sought. Alas! my father was inexorable, and he raised his hands to curse me a second time, when I fell senseless at his feet. Wilton bore me to his own apartment, and with frantic grief he summoned an old and faithful domestic to me; fit succeeded fit, till my life was despaired of. Eustace never quitted me by day nor night—he administered my medicine, smoothed my pillow, and with fondest endearments strove to make me forget the past. But oh! that curse—a father's curse rang like a knell in my ears."

"But where was your father?"

"I should have said, the instant my husband bore me from the room, he ordered his carriage, penned a few lines, requested that as I had made my own choice, so I would take the consequence, and insisted that we should leave the house as soon as we could collect our things together, adding, that he should absent himself until we had left, and desiring us never to trouble him more, as he should endeavor to forget there were such beings in existence. After remaining a week in a precarious state, youth and a good constitution enabled me to bear the fatigue of being removed to a private lodging Eustace had caused to be taken for us at Hampstead, where for weeks I remained in a weak and low condition, attended with the most delicate attention and care by my beloved husband, who seldom quitted me for an hour, and then but to make enquiries after a situation amongst his friends. I observed that every Monday evening after I got better he was absent for an hour or two; but I did not feel lonely, as he always solicited our landlord's daughter, an amiable girl of about my own age, to bear me company until his return."

"Did you hear nothing from your father?"

"No; I made several efforts towards a reconciliation, but all my letters after the first one were returned unopened. It has been truly said, 'hope deferred maketh the heart sick,' for as I began to recover my health, I observed my dear partner's spirits flagged—his piercing eyes lacked their lustre, and his beautiful face became colourless; still he fondly strove to hide it from me, and whispered hope when his own heart was sickening at the name. One morning, (I shall never forget it) he essayed to rise and fell back fainting—from that bed he rose no more for twelve weeks. Oh! Mrs. Goodwin, the anguish of that time—to see that manly form enfeebled like an infant, and myself too