

the warmest feelings of full-blown womanhood, tempered by a spirit, gentle as could adorn her sex.

Richard Somers loved, and his whispered vows fell not on an unwilling ear. They had grown together, and Agnes had long regarded him in her secret heart as the ideal of earth's perfection, and he had ever watched over her with more than a brother's care.

Richard Somers was an orphan, who had early lost his parents. He had been liberally educated by an affectionate uncle, who, when he arrived at a proper age, placed him under the care of Dr. Weldon, a most talented medical gentleman, who had risen from comparative obscurity to affluence and fame, by his attention to, and skill in his professional duties.

He had married young, and the only offspring of his union was Agnes Weldon, whose prospects of fortune were consequently of an inviting character, inasmuch that suitors for her hand were already offering. All were, however, received with coldness, save her father's handsome student, and it was long ere he ventured to speak of love to one so courted by the wealthiest of the neighbouring gentry.

It was New Year's Eve, and Dr. Weldon was surrounded by a circle of friends—the song and the laugh went merrily round, and a happier group never watched the coming of the “guid New Year.”

“The good old custom of dancing in the New Year is becoming obsolete, I believe,” said Uncle Somers, interrupting the Doctor, who was speaking of the advancement of mankind in general civilization.

“And I am heartily glad to see it,” replied the Doctor, “regretting, as I have ever done, to see a season so fitted for reflection, perverted to such base uses.”

“Nay Doctor, I cannot agree with you there,” replied our esteemed uncle; “I do not consider that being glesome and happy is any proof of irrationality.”

“You may be as old as I am, numbering by years,” replied Dr. Weldon, “but you have not had my opportunities of seeing how little worth are all the glee and happiness of which you speak. I have seen many a tragedy begun and ended—many a life embittered by the recollection of early joys—youth, with its fond hopes and gay anticipations, blasted—old men mourning over the graves of their sons, stricken down in the hour of manhood's pride. I have seen the fountains of happiness in the bosoms of the beautiful and pure, changed into bitter springs of hopeless anguish, and the mortal form bending under the weight of the tortured spirit. Had you seen all these, as I have done, you would confess how tawdry and frivolous are the childish joys for which so many barter hours which might be devoted to grave and useful study or conversation.”

“Nevertheless,” replied Mr. Somers, “I am not of those, who, worshippers of a mistaken philo-

sophy, would take from youth its joys, and make it miserable by anticipation. While the young blood does course warmly, I would not check the exuberance of its bliss, and like a picture of death placed beside one of life and love, scare away the joy, by showing the ultimate fate of the happiest, the fairest, and the best.”

“Uncle Somers is right,” said a venerable maiden lady, who, all attention to the conversation, had not before spoken; “and as a fitting commentary, I would suggest that he be here enthroned, to preside at the violin he so ably masters, while the youngers practically illustrate the truths of his doctrine.”

A movement among the younger part of the assembly, proved how ready they were to avail themselves of the hint, and chairs were moved, and the carpet lifted before the Doctor had well begun the reproof, which, half contradicted by his benevolent smile, was altogether closed by the hand of the old lady we have alluded to, playfully covering his lips with her hand.

Sets were readily formed, and the year was “danced in,” as joyously as in the happiest days of the olden time. We would not aver that the Doctor himself, warmed by the happiness of his young friends, did not join in the dance, emulating in lightness of heart, if not of heel, the junketings of his guests.

As the night waned, however, even this became fatiguing, and the company broke up into groups, each following the promptings of feeling in the conversation with which they enlivened the fleeting hours.

It was here that the passion of Richard Somers first found utterance, and heard his vows returned by answering words of faith.

“Agnes,” he said, “forgive me, if I offend: but sitting thus beside you, my heart would break if I did not pour forth its gushing feelings. I have loved you long—but I have loved with fear. Courtied by so many more worthy than I, it is perhaps madness to ask you to think of me; but I would hear my doom from your lips alone. Speak! tell me that I may hope—tell me that I may live to endeavour to become worthy of your love!”

The countenance of Agnes Weldon was turned away, but Richard saw her neck crimson with the blush his words called to her averted face.

Concealed by the rich drapery that hung over a deep window recess, her hand was held in his, and its tremor had a sympathetic influence on his whole frame.

“Speak,” he said, “let me hear your sweet voice tell me that I have not loved in vain—tell me that I have not poured out the treasure of my love, only to be cast aside as a worthless thing—that my heart's best feelings have not been wasted—but, no! not wasted, though unrequited, for the rapture to