

'Excuse the quotation from a profane author,' he added, 'upon such a solemn occasion; but he expresses exactly my feelings at this moment; for, oh, could you feel what I feel here?' and he laid his hand upon his breast. 'Whatever be my faults, whatever my weakness, I am strong in gratitude.'

You will despise me for having played the part of a mean listener. Be it so, Lewis—I despise, I hate myself. I heard it proposed that the wedding day should take place within a month; but the consent of Catherine was not yet obtained. I perceived her enter the apartment; I witnessed her agony when her father communicated to her the proposal of his friend, and his wish that it should be agreed to. Shall I tell it you, my friend, that the agony I perceived on her countenance kindled a glow of joy upon mine.—Yes, I rejoiced in it, for it filled my soul with hope, it raised my heart as from the grave.

Two days after this, and I wandered forth among the woods to nourish hope in solitude. Every trace of the recent storm had passed away, the young buds were wooing the sunbeams, and the viewless cuckoo lifted up his voice from afar. All that fell upon the ear, and all that met the eye, contributed to melt the soul to tenderness. My thoughts were of Catherine, and I now thought how I should unbosom before her my whole heart; or I fancied her by my side, her fair face beaming smiles on mine, her lips whispering music. My spirit became entranced—it was filled with her image. With my arms folded upon my bosom, I was wandering thus unconsciously along a footpath in the wood, when I was aroused by the exclamation—

'Edward!'

It was my Catherine. I started as though a disembodied spirit had met me on my path. Her agitation was not less than mine. I stepped forward—I would have clasped her to my bosom—but resolution forsook me—her presence awed me—I hesitated and faltered—

'Miss Forrester!'

I had never called her by any other name; but as she afterwards told me, the word then went to her heart, and she thought, 'He cares not for me, and I am lost!' Would to Heaven that such had ever remained her thoughts, and your friend would have been

less guilty and less wretched than he this day is.

I offered her my arm, and we walked onward together; but we spoke not to each other—we could not speak. Each had a thousand things to say, but they were all unutterable. A stifled sigh escaped from her bosom, and mine responded to it. We had approached within a quarter of a mile of her father's house. Still we were both silent.—I trembled—I stood suddenly still.

'Catherine!' I exclaimed, and my eyes remained fixed upon the ground—my bosom laboured in agony; I struggled for words, and, at length, added, 'I cannot return to your father's—Catherine, I cannot!'

'Edward!' she cried, 'whither—whither would you go?—you would not leave me thus? What means this?'

'Means! Catherine!' returned I, 'are ye not to be another's? Would that I had died before I had looked upon thy face, and my soul was lighted with a fleeting joy, only that the midnight of misery might sit down on it forever.'

'Oh, speak not thus!' she cried, and her gentle form shook as a blighted leaf in an autumnal breeze; 'speak not language unfit for you to utter or me to hear. Come, dear Edward!'

'Dear Edward!' I exclaimed, and my arms fell upon her neck, 'that word has recalled me to myself! Dear Edward!--repeat those words again!--let the night-breeze whisper them, and bear them on its wings for ever! Tell me, Catherine, am I indeed dear to you?'

She burst into tears, and hid her face upon my bosom.

'Edward!' she sobbed, 'let us leave this place—I have said too much—let us return home.'

'No, loved one!' resumed I, 'if you have said too much, we part now, and eternity may not unite us! Farewell, Catherine! be happy! Bear my thanks to your father, and say, but, no! no!--say nothing--let not the wretch he has honoured with his friendship blast his declining years! Farewell, love!' I pressed my lips upon her snowy brow, and again I cried—'Farewell!'

'You must not—shall not leave me,' she said, and trembled, while her fair hands grasped my arm.