

those around. And it was love for him that, independent of her strong affection for Mrs. Leslie and her daughters, that made her seek their dwelling at all times to sympathise with and comfort them under their many trials, and secretly to mourn with them the absence of Henry.

Tidings came at last. A vessel reported that she had passed the wreck of the 'Mermaid,' the ship in which Henry had sailed. Yet no clue was found to tell of the fate of the crew. A large brig was seen far in advance, which might have borne off the survivors, if any; but beyond this frail hope nothing remained to comfort them. Yet how they clung to the bare idea of rescue by that unknown ship, and how eagerly they waited for intelligence of his safety, feeling sure that it must come at last. But time passed on and the hope grew fainter, and at last died away altogether, save in the faithful hearts of his mother and Helen Murray. When all others forbore to mention his name, lest the sorrow might be aggravated, they sat together and comforted each other, dwelling on every means of escape, improbable and wild though they might be, determined to hope everything, rather than yield to the desolation of reality, and feel that 'he was gone and forever.'

Spring came with its toil and sunshine. Mrs. Leslie's neighbours were kind as before, and her farm was partially attended to by their gratuitous aid. With this assistance and the labour of a serving man, the crop was planted, and might yet be, if successful, sufficient for the wants of their decreasing family.

Little Charlie was growing weaker, his lameness increased, and the gentle blue eye was less radiant than of yore. Patiently did he bear his suffering and confinement, and eagerly welcomed the rest of the grave, to which he knew he was hastening. He was a thoughtful and serious child, with a mind beyond his years, and endeared to them all by his gentleness and affection. They would carry him out to the green bank by the cottage door, and there he loved to lie for hours, his pale sunken cheek resting on the warm glossy head of his pet companion, Carlo, and seeming to enjoy while he could what little remained to him of life and its beauty. When the cold autumn came again, he resumed his old seat by the fireside, with his book on his knee, but he often now had to lie down, for his cough was violent and his weakness increasing daily. It was sad to see him fading like a leaf before the coming destroyer, suffering yet so patient, but happy still to feel that he was going to his Father's home, and the dwelling of Him who said 'suffer the little children to come unto me.'

Everything was now prepared for Ellen's wedding, but she could not bear to leave her dying brother, or go so far from the mother and sister whose sorrow it was something to share with them. Mrs. Leslie urged Richard's claim, as he had been so kind a friend. Little Charlie too, begged that they might be married on Christmas eve, to please him 'for the last time,' as he gently added. Ellen yielded to the sick child's pleading wish, and promised