

to have become a burdensome appendage. Age, with its infirmities, was stealing fast upon her, relaxing the nerve of iron, and palsying the hand which had seldom done an act of Christian love or kindness.

But the decay of her physical powers wrought no change in the callous spirit of Deaf Molly. No hope of Heaven lent brightness to her secret thought, nor dread of the eternity that awaited her, made her ask of her trembling soul, what treasures it had laid up for the future? But one only fear cast its shadow perpetually over her, a strange and haunting fear, that in her declining years, she should be thrown upon the parish for support, and when, at last, death claimed his prey, her effects would be sold to pay the expenses of her burial. This, she resolved, should never be; not only her pride, but a darker feeling, her hatred to her race, rendered such a thought unendurable, and with dogged resolution, she dictated a will which, though it was neither legally witnessed, signed, nor sealed, she believed, in her ignorance, was to render her property safe from the clutch of unprivileged hands, and bestow it on the few whom she really loved.

But alas! poor Molly's day-dream proved a vain one, for the parish officers of B., foreseeing that her slow decay would leave her long a burden on their hands, and encumber them at last with funeral expenses to defray, began to suggest doubts of her having any claim to their assistance. Whereupon they made diligent search in their records, and the result was, they proved satisfactorily that to an adjoining town belonged the honor of having given her birth—upon which conviction, they forthwith consigned her, and her hoarded treasures, to the charge of their neighbors, who straightway, however reluctantly, installed poor Molly in the almshouse of N.

It was a stroke from which she never recovered. In tearing her from the spot where she had so long vegetated, the charm of her existence was dissolved—if it be possible to conceive of any charm connected with an existence so useless and unlovely as was hers. But so it was. The only link which bound her to life was broken—the old tree was uprooted, and its fibres would not entwine themselves with the strange soil to which it was transplanted. Local habits and attachments were rudely severed, the few faces which she had loved, no more beamed on her with kindness, and poor Molly pined and drooped, for a few weary months after her removal, when she closed her eyes forever upon a world, which had yielded her few enjoyments, because her own embittered and perverted feelings had taught her to

hate and defy it, abusing thus those precious gifts which a bountiful Father lavishes in rich profusion upon his children,—gifts which, if used aright, confer present happiness, and educate the soul for that higher home which is eternal in the heavens!

* * * * *

Before concluding this brief sketch I must allude for a moment to the early history of its subject, for it is credibly asserted that the compound of oddity, ill-nature, and suspicion, whom I have attempted to describe, who exhibited features so wrinkled and morose, and moved with a pace, each step of which betrayed distrust and jealousy, was once as fair a maid as ever the sun shone upon.

I cannot describe her with graphic accuracy, because no limner has left us a portrait of her youthful form—but tradition says, that her hair was dark and soft, her eyes radiant with love and joy—that her full lips were wreathed with smiles, and that the rich glow of youth and health mantled with changeful beauty on her cheek. She was beloved, too,—and by one for whom every maiden sighed, but whom she alone with artless witchery, had power to charm.

He was frank and confiding—but that one fault which, fatally indulged, made her the unlovely being we have portrayed; that fault which blighted her life, and has with its Upas shadow poisoned so many streams of happiness,—a jealous and suspicious temper—was hers. Her lover knew it,—for even in the earliest days of their intercourse, the brightness of his happiest hours had often been overcast by its malignant influence, and more than once his companions had warned him of the wreck it would make of his peace.

Yet he could not,—he would not renounce her—he trusted to her tenderness, to his own faithful and devoted love, which though often doubted had never swerved from her, to conquer this one evil and besetting sin,—this only blemish, as he in his fondness thought, on the loveliness to which he surrendered the warm homage of his heart. But, alas! this trust was based on a foundation that failed in the hour of temptation. To the jealously disposed,

—“Trifles light as air,
Are confirmation, strong as proof of holy writ,”
and thus for this unhappy girl there was ever occurring some provocation which roused the bosom serpent within her. Against one especially, her dearest friend and companion, she indulged the most lively and unjust suspicion—a suspicion which was confirmed to her own mind, by a circumstance that finally, and irrevocably sealed her wretched destiny.