

reputation she had acquired. Her head ached almost to bursting—her hands trembled, and a deadly sickness oppressed her. The visions of an upbraiding husband, a scoffing world, rose before her—and dim, but awful, in the dark perspective, she seemed to behold the shadow of a sin-avenging Deity. Another ring—the guests were thronging. Unhappy woman! What was to be done? She would have pleaded sudden indisposition—the accident of her child—but the fear that the servants would reveal the truth—the hope of being able to rally her spirits—determined her to descend into the drawing-room. As she cast a last hurried glance into the mirror, and saw the wild, haggard countenance it reflected, she recoiled at her own image. The jewels with which she had profusely adorned herself, served but to mock the ravages the destroying scourge had made upon her beauty. No cosmetic art could restore the purity of her complexion; nor the costliest perfumes conceal the odour of the fiery liquor. She called for a glass of cordial—kindled up a smile of welcome, and descended to perform the honors of her household. She made a thousand apologies for her delay; related, in glowing colours, the accident that happened to her child, and flew from one subject to another, as if she feared to trust herself with a pause. There was something so unnatural in her countenance, so overstrained in her manner, and so extravagant in her conversation, it was impossible for the company not to be aware of her situation. Silent glances were exchanged, low whispers passed round; but they had no inclination to lose the entertainment they anticipated. They remembered the luxuries of her table, and hoped, at least, if not a “feast of reason,” a feast of the good things of earth.

It was at this crisis Emily Spencer arrived. Her travelling dress, and the fatigue of a journey, were sufficient excuses for her declining to appear in the drawing-room; but the moment she saw Mrs. Manly, her eye, too well experienced, perceived the backsliding of Anne, and hope died within her bosom. Sick at heart, wounded and indignant, she sat down in the chamber where the children slept—those innocent beings, doomed to an orphanage more sad than death even makes. Anne's conscious spirit quailed before the deep reproach of Emily's silent glances. She stammered out an explanation of the bloody bandage that was bound around the infant's head, assured her there was no cause of alarm, and hurried down to the friends who had passed the period of her absence in covert sarcasm, and open animadversion on her conduct.

Emily sat down on the side of the bed, and leaned over the sleeping infant. Though Mrs. Manly had assured her there was no cause of alarm, she felt there was no reliance on her judgment; and the excessive paleness and languor of its countenance, excited an anxiety its peaceful slumbers could not entirely relieve. “It is all over,” thought she, “a relapse in sin is always a thousand times more dangerous than the first yielding. She is at this moment blazoning her disgrace, and there will be no restraining influence left. O! unfortunate Manly! was it for this you sacrificed home, friends, and splendid prospects, and came a stranger to a strange land.” Absorbed in the contemplation of Manly's unhappy destiny, she remained till the company dispersed, and Mrs. Manly dragged her weary footsteps to her chamber. Completely exhausted by her efforts to command her bewildered faculties, she threw herself on the bed, and sunk into a lethargy; the natural consequence of inebriation. The infant disturbed by the sudden motion, awakened with a languid cry, expressive of feebleness and pain. Emily raised it in her arms, endeavoured to soothe its complaining; but it continued restless and wailing, till the blood gushed afresh through the bandage. Greatly alarmed, she shook Mrs. Manly's arm, and called upon her to awake. It was in vain—she could not rouse her from her torpor. Instantly ringing the bell, she summoned the nurse, who was revelling, with the other servants over the relics of the feast, and told her to send immediately for a physician. Fortunately there was one in the neighbourhood, and he came speedily. He shook his head mournfully when he examined the condition of the child, and pronounced its case beyond the reach of human skill. The injury produced by the fall had reached the brain. The very depth of its slumbers was a fatal symptom of approaching dissolution. The tears of Emily fell fast and thick on the pallid face of the innocent victim. She looked upon its mother—thought upon its father, and pressed the child in agony to her bosom. The kind physician was summoned to another chamber of sickness. He had done all he could to mitigate, where he could not heal. Emily felt that this dispensation was sent in mercy. She could not pray for the child's life, but she prayed that it might die in the arms of its father; and it seemed that her prayer was heard. It was a singular providence that brought him that very night—a week sooner than he anticipated—urged on by a restless presentiment of evil; a dread that all was not well. Imagination, however, had not pictured the scene that awaited him. His wife, clothed in her richest raiments, and glittering with jewels, lying in the torpor of inebriation. Emily, seated by the side of the bed, bathed in tears, holding in her lap the dying infant, her dress stained with the blood with which the fair locks of the child were matted. What a spectacle! He stood for a moment on the threshold of the apartment, as if a bolt had transfixed him. Emily was not roused from her grief by the sound of his footsteps, but she saw the shadow that darkened the wall; and at once recognised his lineaments. The startling cry she uttered brought him to her side, where, kneeling down over his expiring infant, he gazed on its altering features and quivering frame with a countenance so pale and stern, Emily's blood ran cold. Silently and fixedly he knelt, while the deepening shades of dissolution gathered over the beautiful waxen features, and the dark film grew over the eyes, so lately bright with that heavenly blue, which is alone seen in the eyes of infancy. He inhaled its last, cold, struggling breath; saw it stretched in the awful immobility of death, then, slowly rising, he turned towards the gaudy figure that lay as if in mockery of the desolation it had created. Then Manly's imprisoned spirit burst its bonds. He grasped his wife's arm, with a strength that might have been felt, even were her limbs of steel, and calling forth her name in a voice deep and thrilling as the trumpet's blast, he commanded her to rise. With a faint foretaste of the feeling with which the guilty soul shall meet the awakening summons of the archangel, the wretched woman raised herself on her elbow, and gazed around her with a wild and glassy stare. “Woman,” cried he, still retaining his desperate grasp, and pointing to the dead child, extended on the lap of the weeping Emily, “woman! is this your work? Is this the welcome you have prepared for my return? Oh! most

perjured wife and most abandoned mother! You have filled, to overflowing, the vials of indignation; on your own head shall they be poured, blasting and destroying. You have broken the last tie that bound me—it withers like flax in the flame. Was it not enough to bring down the grey hairs of your father to the grave? to steep your own soul in perjury and shame, but that fair innocent must be a sacrifice to your drunken revels? One other victim remains. Your husband—who lives to curse the hour he ever yielded to a syren, who lured him to the brink of hell!”

He paused suddenly—relaxed his iron hold, and fell back perfectly insensible. It is an awful thing to see man fall down in his strength, struck, too, by the lightning of passion. Anne sprang upon her feet. The benumbing spell was broken. His last words had reached her naked soul. She believed him dead, and that he had indeed died her victim. Every other thought and feeling was swallowed up in this belief, she threw herself by his side, uttering the most piercing shrieks, and rending her sable tresses, in the impotence of despair. “Poor Emily! it was for her a night of horror; but her fortitude and presence of mind seemed to increase with the strength of the occasion. She turned her cares from the dead to the living.—She bathed with restorative waters the pale brow of Manly; she chafed his cold hands, till their icy chill began to melt in the warmth of returning animation. All the while his wretched wife continued her useless and appalling ravings.

The morning dawned upon a scene of desolation. In one darkened room lay the snowy corpse, drest in the white garments of the grave; in another, the almost unconscious Manly, in the first stages of a burning fever; Anne, crouched in a dark corner, her face buried in her hands; and Emily, pale and wan, but energetic and untiring, still the ministering and healing spirit of this house of grief. Yes! darkness and mourning was in that house; but the visitation of God had not come upon it: Pestilence had not walked in the darkness, nor Destruction, at the noon-day hour. Had Anne resisted the voice of the tempter, her child might have smiled in his cherub beauty; her husband might have still presided at his board, and she, herself, at his side; if not in the sunshine of love, in the light of increasing confidence. Her frame was worn by the long, silent struggles of contending passions, hopes and fears. This last blow prostrated her in the dust. Had Anne resisted the voice of the tempter all might yet have been well; but having once again steeped her lips in the pollution, the very consciousness of her degradation plunged her deeper in sin. She fled from the writhing of remorse to the oblivious draught. She gave herself up, body and soul, irredeemably. She was hurrying on, with fearful strides, to that brink from which so many immortal beings have plunged into the fathomless gulf of perdition.

Manly rose from the couch of sickness an altered man: his proud spirit was humbled—chastened—purified. Brought to the confines of the unseen world, he was made to feel the vanity—the nothingness of this—and while his soul seemed floating on the shoreless ocean of eternity, the billows of human passion sunk before the immensity, the awfulness of the scene. The holy resolutions, formed on what he believed his death-bed, did not vanish with returning health. He saw the bitter cup prepared for him to drink, and though he prayed that it might be permitted to pass from him, he could say, in the resignation of his heart, “not my will, oh father! but thine be done.” He looked upon his degraded wife rather with pity, than indignation. He no longer reproached her, or used the language of denunciation. But sometimes, in her lucid intervals, when she witnessed the subdued expression of his once haughty countenance—his deep paleness—the mildness of his deportment to all around him; the watchful guard he held over his own spirit; and all this accompanied by an energy in action—a devotedness in duty—such as she had never seen before—Anne trembled, and felt that he had been near unto his Maker, while she was holding closer and closer companionship with the powers of darkness. The wall of separation she had been building up between them, was it to become high as the heavens—deep as the regions of irremediable love?

Emily was no longer their guest. While Manly lingered between life and death, she watched over him with all a sister's tenderness. Insensible to fatigue—forgetful of sleep—and regardless of food, she was sustained by the intensity of her anxiety; but as soon as his renovated glance could answer her attentions with speechless gratitude, and he became conscious of the cares, that had done more than the physician's skill, in bringing him back to life, she gradually yielded to others, the place she had occupied as nurse—that place, which she who should have claimed it as her right, was incapacitated to fill. When Manly was restored to health, Emily felt that she could no longer remain. There was no more fellowship with Anne; and the sympathy that bound her to her husband she could not, with propriety, indulge. Manly, himself, did not oppose her departure; he felt it was best she should go. She took with her the little Anne, with the grateful consent of her father. The opposition of the mother was not allowed to triumph over what Manly knew was for the blessing of his child. “Let her go,” said he, mildly, but determinately; “she will not feel the want of a mother's care.”

It was a dark and tempestuous night.—The winds of autumn, swept against the windows, with the mournful rustle of the withered leaves, fluttering in the blast: the sky was moonless and starless. Every thing abroad presented an aspect of gloom and desolation. Even those who were gathered in the halls of pleasure, felt saddened by the melancholy sighing of the gust; and a cold, whispered mortality breathed into the hearts of the thoughtless and gay. It was on this night that Manly sat by the dying couch of Anne. Every one is familiar with the rapid progress of disease, when it attacks the votary of intemperance. The burning blood soon withers up the veins; the fountain, itself, becomes dry. Fearfully rapid, in this instance, had been the steps of the destroyer. Here she lay, her frame tortured with the agonies of approaching dissolution, and her spirit strong and clear from the mists that had so long, and so fatally obscured it. She saw herself in that mirror which the hand of truth holds up to the eye of the dying. Memory, which acquires, at that awful moment, such supernatural power, brought before her all the past—the wasted past—the irretrievable past. Her innocent childhood—her bright and glowing youth; her blasted womanhood, seemed embodied to her eyes. Her father rose from his grave, and standing by her bedside, waving his mournful locks,

warned her of her broken oath. Her little infant, with his fair hair dabbled with blood came gliding in its shroud, and accused her of being its murderer. Her husband! As her frenzied spirit called up this last image, she turned her dim eye to him, who was hanging over her couch with a countenance of such grief and compassion, the dry agony of her despair softened into a gush of remorseful tenderness: “Oh! no—no!” cried she, in difficult accents, “you do not curse me; you live to pardon the wretch who has undone herself and you. Oh! could I live over the past; could I carry back to our bridal the experience of this awful hour, what long years of happiness might be ours?”

The recollection of what she had been—of what she might have been—contrasted with what she still might be, was too terrible. Her agonies became wordless. Manly knelt by her side: he sought to soothe her departing spirit by assurances of his own pardon; and to lead her, by penitence and prayer, to the feet of Him, “in whose sight the heavens are not clean.” He poured into her soul the experience of his, when he had travelled to the boundaries of the dark valley: his despair—his penitence, and his hopes. He spoke of the mercy that is boundless—the grace that is infinite—till the phantoms, accusing conscience called up, seemed to change their maledictions into prayers for her behalf. Her ravings gradually died away, and she sunk into a troubled sleep.

As Manly gazed upon her features, on which death was already fixing its dim, mysterious impress,—those features whose original beauty was so fearfully marred by the ravages of intemperance,—the waters of time rolled back, and revealed that green, enchanted spot in life's waste, where he was first gilded by her presence. Was that the form whose graceful movements then fascinated his senses; or those the eyes, whose kindling glances had flashed like a glory over his soul? The love, then so idolatrous and impassioned—so long crushed and buried—rose up from the ruins to hallow the vigils of that solemn night.

The morning dawned, but the slumbers of Anne were never to be broken, till the resurrection morn. In the bloom of life—the midst of affluence—with talents created to exalt society, and graces to adorn it; a heart full of warm and generous impulses; a husband as much the object of her pride as of her affections; children lovely in their innocence, she fell a sacrifice to one brutalising passion. Seldom, indeed, is it that woman, in the higher walks of life, presents such a melancholy example; but were there but one, and that one Anne Weston, let her name be revealed, as a beacon, whose warning light should be seen by the daughters of the land.

Another year glided by. The approach of another autumn, found Manly girded for enterprise. He had marked out a new path, and was about to become a dweller of a young and powerful city, borne on one of the mighty rivers of the West. His child could there grow up, unwithered by the associations of her mother's disgrace. Amidst the hopes and anticipations gathering around a new home, in a new land, his own spirit might shake off the memories that oppressed its energies. He was still young. The future might offer something of brightness, to indemnify for the darkness of the past.

He once more sought the native place of his unhappy wife; for his child was there, under the cherishing care of Emily Spencer. He passed that ball-room, in whose illuminated walls his destiny was sealed. The chamber selected for the traveller's resting-place was the one where the prophetic dream had haunted his pillow. His brow was saddened by the gloom of remembrance, when he entered the dwelling-place of his child; but when he saw the bright, beautiful little creature, who sprang into his arms, with spontaneous rapture, and witnessed the emotion that Emily strove vainly to conquer, he felt he was not alone in the world; and the future triumphed over the past. He unfolded all his views, and described the new scenes in which he was soon to become an actor, with reviving eloquence.

“Are you going to carry me there, too, father,” said the little girl, whose earnest blue eyes were riveted on his face.

“Are you not willing to go with me, my child? or must I leave you behind?”

“I should like to go, if you will take Emily, but I cannot leave her behind,” cried the affectionate child, clinging to that beloved friend, who had devoted herself to her with all a mother's tenderness.

“We will not leave her,” exclaimed Manly, a warm glow spreading over his melancholy features, “if she will go with us, and bless our western home.”

Emily turned pale, but she did not speak—she could not, if her existence had depended upon it. She was no sickly sentimentalist, but she had ardent affections, though always under the government of upright principles. Her mind was well balanced, and though passion might enter, it was never suffered to gain the ascendancy. From her earliest acquaintance with Manly, she had admired his talents, and respected his character; but the idea of loving the husband of her friend, never entered her pure imagination. It was not till she saw him borne down by domestic sorrow, on the bed of sickness, thrown by the neglect of his wife on her tenderness and care, that she felt the danger and depth of her sympathy. The moment she became aware of her involuntary departure from integrity of feeling she fled, and in the tranquillity of her own home, devoted to his child the love she shuddered to think began to flow in an illegitimate channel. That Manly ever cherished any sentiments towards her, warmer than those of esteem and gratitude, she did not believe, but now he came before her, freed by heaven from the shackles that bound him, and duty no longer opposed its barrier to her affections, her heart told her she would follow him to the ends of the earth, and deem its coldest, darkest region, a Paradise, if warmed and illumined by his love. The simplicity of childhood had unveiled the hearts of each to the other. It was not with the romance of his earlier passion, that Manly now wooed Emily Spencer to be his wife. It was love, approved by reason, and sanctified by religion. It was the Christian, seeking a fellow labourer in the work of duty; the father, yearning for a mother to watch over an orphan child—the man awakened to the loftiest, holiest purposes of his being.

In a beautiful mansion, looking down on one of the most magnificent landscapes unfolded in the rich valley of the West, Manly and Emily now reside. All the happiness capable of being enjoyed around the household shrine is theirs, and the only shade that ever dims their brows, is caused by the remembrance of the highly gifted—but ill-fated Anne.