

LITERARY DEPARTMENT.

STORY OF A STUDENT.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

CHAP. III.

Awed by the venerable presence of misery, I had not yet dared to speak of love, but the respectful favour of my manner, and the sympathy I manifested for her misfortunes, had, I saw, impressed her in my favour, and disposed her to regard me with confidence. I could not commence my suit in a place where we would be every moment liable to interruption. I wished rather to breathe my vows "full in the smile of the blue firmament," and telling Charlotte that I wished to converse with her on a subject important to my happiness, I with much difficulty obtained her consent to walk with me that afternoon. At the appointed hour I returned for her, and found her equipped, with her usual attention to disguise. The evening was a glorious one, and we rapidly and in silence traversed the streets that lay between us and the quiet of the country. As we passed along one of the squares Charlotte grasped my arm convulsively, and bent down her head as if in terror. I saw that the object on which her eye had rested, before it was so suddenly withdrawn, was a phaeton which was slowly approaching us. In it were seated a handsome, but bold and showy looking woman, who seemed to be about forty or forty-five years of age, and a man some ten or fifteen years younger. While they were slowly passing, I felt Charlotte shudder, as if in an agony of affright; she then gasped out, "Did they see me? Do they look back towards us?" Turning to observe them, I saw that they had not noticed us, and told Charlotte so.—She then drew a long relieving breath, but murmured passionately, "Oh, that the grave would hide me from them—from wretchedness!"

As soon as we had left behind the stir and tumult of the city, I began to describe my love with all the eloquence of fervid passion. Charlotte heard me in silence; but not, alas! the silence of a loving and beloved maiden. Low moans stole through her pale, closed lips, and heavy sobs shook her slender frame. Dis-

ed alike remote from affection and from indifference, I could only articulate, "Charlotte, Charlotte! do you not, can you not love me?"

At this question she suddenly looked up into my eyes with a rapt and devotional expression. "O what a heart would mine be if it did not love you! Yes, my guardian angel, my protector, my friend—my only friend, I do indeed love you!"

A thrill of rapture ran through my pulses at this impassioned avowal, and I exclaimed triumphantly, "Then are we one, henceforth and for ever; another sun shall not set before our hands shall ratify the union of our hearts! Say, dearest, shall this not be so?"

"O no, no, no, I may not, must not, be your wife! Fate has stored no such happiness for me."

I tenderly remonstrated with her on the inconsistency of her words, and pictured lovingly the efforts that I would make to better my lot, when she should be the sharer of it. A strange, sad conflicting of love and fear was visible on her countenance while I spoke; but she made no direct reply, only ejaculating, as if in prayer, "Almighty arbiter! can it be thy will that I should cast away this blessing—that I should myself dash down the cup of happiness?"

From her broken exclamations I learned a fear that there was some hidden impediment to our union, and I implored her to tell me if this was the case—but tears and sobs were her only reply. At length, when we drew near the city on our return, she became suddenly calm, like one who has formed a resolution which the future must depend. "John," she said, "I can no longer endure this miserable strife. I fear that I have therefore resolved to confide to you the whole of my short, sad history—but to-night I am unequal to the task. To-morrow I will write to you, and when you have read my letter, you still dear our union, I shall have nothing left to offer."

Next day I received the promised letter. It began abruptly. "My true name is Charlotte Ormond. My earliest recollections are of a school in the south of Ireland, in which, about two months ago, I passed my life. When quite an infant, I was placed there, and continued regularly to