

you when a little child, you would not have been the wilful one you now are; but I spoiled you, my darling, and I must reap the fruits of my folly."

"Oh, say not so, my beloved mamma!" cried Beatrice, melted at once, and springing into her mother's arms. "I will be all you wish, indeed I will from this hour. I will never vex you again. Do you believe me?"

"My sister, that was said without thought," returned Mary, mildly, and fixing her eyes seriously on the young and lovely girl. "The power to act well is not in yourself; it must come through God's special grace, and can only be obtained by fervent prayer."

"Mary! Mary! I cannot give up the dear delights of roaming over the fields and vallies—going nutting in the woods with Herbert—or sitting in my old oak tree—to mope in my room as you do, with your religious books, for hours together," said Beatrice.

"Nor need you, my sister. I would only wish you to add to these pleasures, by hallowing them with clearer views of God's goodness, that you might behold his image in every leaf, in every spot you trace, and learn to thank him for all your blessings. How lovely is this morning—how fragrant the shrubs, the plants, to our sight—how rich the foliage on the trees; but debar them for ever from the rays of the bright sun and genial showers, how soon would they pine and wither away. Thus it is with a heart which is cold towards religion, and which I can only compare to a world without light—a flower without perfume—a bird without song. Oh! Beatrice! my dearest sister! you know not the happy, happy hours I spend in this room in the early morning, while you are wearying yourself with your pleasures. Is there not a time for all things?"

"Yes, surely, dear Mary. But see! there is Herbert running across the lawn. Where can he be going in such a hurry? Come, my pretty Ida, and let us follow!" and as she said this, she sprang through the window, and down the steps of the balcony, accompanied by her pet, joyously barking, and jumping around her young mistress.

"Oh, lovely, light-hearted being!" said Mary, looking fondly after her, "how sad it is to think that in your journey through life, clouds must gather over that fair head, and the sunshine be darkened by storms, the sportive laugh changed for weeping; yet creature of a wild imagination as you are, I fear they are all too needful to be spared by your Heavenly Father."

"Nay, Mary, cease your prophetic words," replied Mrs. Annesley, half peevishly. "No sorrow shall reach her that I can avert; no wish withheld that she expresses. Flowers shall strew her path, and pleasure, with her sportive train, be the gay companions of her sunny days."

"Then where will be her refuge when the tempest

draws nigh," murmured Mary, as her mother quitted the room on saying this. "Oh let me thank my God for the early trials I received, which proved the means of leading me to higher, holier things; and to place my treasures, not amidst the perishing joys of earth, but where none can despoil me of them, in Heaven, with Heaven's God!"

Mary Annesley was twenty years of age at the period our tale commences; Beatrice only sixteen. No two beings could be more opposite in person, in character, in mind, than these sisters, though fondly attached to each other, for while Mary was plain, but amiable, gentle and pious, Beatrice was lovely as a dream: a fair, bright creature, who to gaze upon, was a delight, so graceful and fairy-like were all her movements, so winning all her ways; yet had she been cruelly spoiled by the false indulgence of her mother, who viewing in her the realization of her fondest hopes, humoured every caprice and desire, till no will was obeyed but her own; no authority owned but what accorded with her wishes. Mary strove to counteract the evil, and took an active part in her education, in which she was assisted by the Reverend Mr. Mortimer, the estimable tutor of her brother Herbert, from whose judicious and varied instructions Beatrice derived many advantages; and possessing, as she did, very superior abilities, she acquired, with ease and avidity, what it would have cost another immense labour and time. Hers was an imagination full of rich and vivid pictures of happiness, which placed her in a paradise of her own creation. When not engaged in the sports of her brother, or in her studies, she would love to wander alone, or sit in her favourite oak tree with some book, else singing wild songs as she gazed through the rustling leaves up to the bright blue heavens. What were the thoughts she indulged in when thus she meditated, were known only to herself and her God; but their innocence might be traced in her quick perception of all that was pure and beautiful, and her shrinking from all that was coarse, unholy or wanting in refinement. Herbert delighted in her as a playmate; but wayward and wilful as she too frequently was, he loved Mary better. Another loved Mary also, but had never dared breathe it to herself, and this was Mr. Mortimer, the gifted and excellent, yet poor, preceptor. Beholding only the beauties and virtues of her mind, which beamed in her mild countenance, how did he admire and pay that homage which devoted affection prompts. If she expressed a wish for a book difficult to obtain, she found it soon after on her table; if she admired a flower, with what delight would it be presented to her; the slightest desire, how instantly was it obeyed. Mary esteemed, respected, and regarded him, for she owed him much, both on her own account and on her young brother's and sister's; but her heart, unfortunately, was pre-occupied, and even had it not, her wealthy and aspiring parents never