

I beheld you, my whole soul became yours, and it has never wandered since from your worship. I saw you again wearing a brighter, more enchanting, yet not less heavenly beauty; I learned to know that the idol I had secretly adored was all my imagination had pictured it—you filled my whole being—Oh! Helen, life, hope, inspiration—all earth can yield, thou art to me!"

Helen listened with anguished feelings to the impassioned words of her lover. At that moment had she given way to the impulse of her heart, how different would her answer have been from the cold words with which she replied: "Never could I have deserved such a love from one like you, but *now far less*; all the affections of my heart have been given to one who cast them from him."

Max spoke not for some moments, but his silence seemed to Helen more eloquent of the deep wound she had inflicted than any words. At last he said; "And you love him still?"

"No," she answered with some haughtiness, "I waste not one thought of regret on one whom I now know to have been unworthy of any true heart; but love has become to me a dim phantom with which are associated images of pain and humiliation, and which can never more lure me into its toils. Love and I can have henceforth nothing to do with each other."

"Oh! Helen, there is a love which can never deceive, never forsake, never die! let me prove to you that there *is*—"

"I believe it, Max, and you, above all on earth, are capable of feeling it, but it must not be for me. God forbid that I should prevent you from obtaining elsewhere what I have not to give, the undivided, undoubting love of a fresh, pure, and unstained heart,—the best blessing earth has to bestow."

She rose hastily, and would have entered the house, but Max caught her dress to detain her.

"Mock me not!" he passionately cried; "if you cannot love me, let me for ever live alone and unloved, for no other love is aught to me!"

At this moment, the steps and voices of Alice and Rhoda were heard close at hand, and Helen hastily drew her dress from his clasp, and darted into the house, leaving Max still resting against the pillar, his brain one wild whirl of confused and agonizing sensations. As Rhoda came closer the words of a beautiful old song she was singing impressed themselves with torturing distinctness on his mind.

"Though the storms meet us and tempests should strike,

We two are plighted to bear them alike;  
Sickness, hard usage, poortith and pain,  
Only the closer our love knot shall strain.

Annie of Tharau, my joy, my sunshine!  
All my heart's being is clasp'd around thine!"

When Alice and Rhoda entered the stoup, he was gone,  
And now the breath of winter blew chillingly at morn  
and eve,

—"and played a roundelay  
Of death among the bushes and the leaves,  
Till all were gone;"

The frost came at night, crisping the ground, and the withered leaves, and the wind sighed mournfully among the leafless branches. At times, the dark rain or the arrowy sleet poured from the clouded heavens, while on other days a thick mist covered the ground, through which the stumps, bereft of all the green drapery which in summer had concealed their number and deformity, appeared dimly, like the army of dry bones seen by the prophet before their skeleton forms had been clothed with the vesture of humanity. Then came the few soft bright days of the Indian summer, during which one might almost fancy that the golden Apollo was dissolving into the vapory shroud which his beams fill with Aurorian brightness; that some new revolution among the Olympian deities similar to that which drove old Saturn from his ancient throne, and moved

"by th' eternal law,

That first in beauty should be first in might,"

had sent forth some being of greater perfection to reign in the stead of the god of the Lyre and the Bow, as he had before dispossessed the primeval giant of the Sun, the fallen Hyperion, and to wrap his fading glory in a shroud which yet partakes of his beauty.

Rain succeeded, followed by heavy and drifting snow which speedily enveloped the whole earth in its pure and dazzling mantle; hanging its glistening wreathes on hill and roof-top, forest and plain. The ice-king threw his magic fetters over the broad lakes, and sparkling streams; not a breath of air was abroad; the sky became of a brilliant cloudless blue, and the sun shone forth in undimmed splendour.

Winter had uplifted that sceptre which for many months he sways with despotic rule over the Canadian land, and during which the softness and luxuriance of the summer might well seem but a poetic fiction to those who dwell there.

#### CHAPTER XVII.

The ice was here, the ice was there,  
The ice was all around,  
It cracked and growled and roared and howled  
Like noises in a swound.

THE ANCIENT MARINER.

THE pleasures of winter in a northern clime  
have often been said and sung, and doubtless