

'And your father?' she said beseechingly. 'Will you not wish him good-by, and kiss him too, Derwent?'

'No,' said the boy suddenly stiffened, putting her away; 'I have no father. Mine died when he took a false oath to deceive me.'

He once more kissed Muriel, but he did not look at his mother again; then sprang into the carriage; and soon Owlett, Grantley Bourne, Hilda Macbell, his former life, his family, and his very name—all were left behind, as he flung himself into the train that carried him like a swift current from the safe shores of the old familiar home into the vastness and vagueness of the unknown future.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

LOST AND WON.

Sitting close together in a miserable triad, love and happiness failing them, save such as they could supply to each other, it seemed to Muriel as if she and her parents had touched the last boundaries of despair. Surely there was no beyond! She could not bear a greater load of misery than that which she was bearing now! Her lover lost, her brother gone away for ever, her father disgraced, and her mother broken-hearted—what was left? Her very gifts of youth and health were but additional circumstances of sorrow. She would be so glad to die now and have it all over; but she had instead such a long, long life of desolation to look forward to! It seemed as if it would never end.

She had done her duty to her father and mother—true; and she had behaved with honour to Arthur; and duty and honour are great things in their way and sound well in the ears of conscience. But, frankly—what kind of real comfort can they give to a young girl in the first wreck of her happiness? As well expect a mother to take comfort in the nice stitching of her darling's shroud as that loving hearts should reconcile themselves to the loss of all that makes life dear, because that loss has been honourably accomplished and dutifully pursued.

But she would not sit down and gloom, she thought to herself. She would be the comfort of those with whom she had elected to remain, and they should never see what it had cost her. Poor papa! she would help to make him happy; and how sweet, and kind, and good he was—how worthy to be made happy, he and that dear, self-sacrificing noble mother! She would be so good and