

"And he *will* take it," I said, as I complied with her wishes.

She clasped her arms around me, and said in a whisper :

"O, yes ! I know He will. I know in whom I have believed, he has promised to save me, and I know he will keep his word."

"Certainly, my dear," I replied, "He is faithful, who hath promised."

A long and silent pause ensued, during which she slowly and almost unconsciously released me from her embrace, and then clasped her hands together, as if engaged in deep thought, while her soul seemed resting in full and entire confidence in the strength of her Saviour. At length, her bright eyes filled with tears of joy, and she began to extol the praises of redeeming love.

On again pressing her to be still and go to sleep, and to induce her to do so, I told her that we would have a long talk about all those things to-morrow.

"To-morrow !" she said, repeating my last word like a faint echo ; "To-morrow may be *eternity* !"

I was much struck with her remark at the moment it was made, but had cause, as the sequel will show, to think a great deal more of it afterwards. I made no reply to it, and she herself remained so long, so still and silent, that I thought and hoped she had gone to sleep.

By this time, the night was far spent, and daylight was approaching, it had already, indeed, arrived. So far, at least, as to have awakened the matin song of the linnet and the thrush, and one or two of the earliest risers among the Laverock's\* that had soared aloft on musical wings, to have a peep at the sun over the Fells, while yet the low undulating shore on which the cottage stood, and the level sands, and the dark sea beyond them could hardly be distinguished from each other.

An hour or so had passed away, in unbroken silence, during which, my poor Fanny slept like an infant, while the noise of the rippling tide, like the voice of many waters, came up from the inlet on the balmy breath of the new born day, and fell upon the ear as soft and soothingly as a mother's lullaby.

All of a sudden, I believe I was dozing myself at the time, she called out, in a loud clear voice, as if speaking to some one at a distance :

"O ! yes, I'm ready," and then added, as if addressing me, or some one in the room beside her ; "There's my little sister Alice,"—she had died some years before—"with a troop of angels just come up for me with the tide, and it's now turning,

and we all go back with it together, so God bless you, till we meet again."

"God bless you my child," I replied, without further heeding what I then believed to be nothing more than the ebullition of a wandering dream, and again all was as still as before, and so continued for nearly the same space of time, when the anxious mother and sister noiselessly entered the room to see how the sufferer was, and to know how she had spent the night. Her sister stole softly to the bedside and kissed her cheek, and then fell with a heart-rending shriek upon the form before her.

The truth flashed upon me at once, her gentle spirit had departed with the ebbing tide\* and had gone to him who gave it : and I, instead of watching over the living as I supposed, had been unwittingly sitting there, for more than an hour, alone with the dead.

#### CHAPTER IX.

##### THE WEDDING.

And now as fitting is, and right,  
We in the church our faith will plight.  
A husband and a wife.  
Even so they did ; and I may say  
That to sweet Ruth that happy day  
Was more than human life.

WORDSWORTH.

Five long years elapsed ere I again returned to the scene of my story ;

I had several relatives living at Millam not far from the Millways' Cottage, and had been invited over from the other side of the Fells, where I generally resided, to be present, and to assist at the nuptials of one of my nieces. Yet they were not my nieces either ; they were only—there were three of them—my first cousins, my mother's sister's children, but then I was so much older than any of them, that they always called me Aunt. This niece of mine, I must persist in the misnomer, to call her anything else indeed would seem unnatural—this niece of mine then was to be married to the master or captain, as they called him, of the new Brig, Elizabeth, of which he was also the principal owner ; his name was Maurice Power. He was in the North American trade, and had just returned from a success-

\* Among the fishermen on the coast of Cumberland a superstitious belief prevails that a spirit never takes its departure from its mortal tenement until the turn of the tide, hence the expression not very uncommon, "Life is ebbing fast away." A similar superstition according to Charles Dickens prevails on the coast of Norfolk and may be common to the same class all round the island.

\* The provincial term in this locality for larks.