

whispered, "Father!" Roused from his melancholy, Fitzgerald shook off his dejection and turned with a smile towards his daughter. As he looked upon her happy young face, and listened to her gentle words, he felt that he still possessed something which made existence dear. That while there lived and moved around him the living image of the departed one, happiness had not altogether fled. If Heaven had dissolved one tie it had mercifully left another to cheer his declining years.

"Dear father! will you accompany me to the village this morning?" said Constance; "such a time has passed since we last were there! I long again to visit the school-house and my old pensioners. They will think I have grown careless of their welfare and forgetful of their wants; and this is such a lovely morning. Father, you will not refuse my request."

"Indeed, my child, I could not say thee nay," replied Fitzgerald, as he rose from his chair and prepared to accompany his daughter.

"But what has become of Charles to-day, that he is not with us?" enquired Fitzgerald, as his daughter, happy at having won him from his thoughts, conducted him through her favorite by-paths to the village.

"He is taking his usual solitary walk," replied Constance.

After a long pause she continued, while she vainly tried to suppress the rising tears:

"I know not what of late has occurred to disturb the happiness of Charles; but father, he has become greatly altered, and I cannot discover the cause of such a change. In vain I attempt to win him from his abstraction. Even at midnight, when all have retired to rest and every light is extinguished, from his chamber window his lamp still shines bright, and I can see him pacing hurriedly to and fro. I fear his health may suffer if he continues in this frame of mind?"

"And how does my Constance know all this?" replied her father, smiling. "Methinks she must also deprive herself of rest through anxiety for the welfare of another. However, I must endeavour to ascertain the cause of this strange behaviour in Charles. He is a noble fellow, and shall not be unhappy if I can help it."

When Fitzgerald and Constance returned from the village, they were met by Charles at a short distance from the house, who, after attending Constance to the door, returned to Captain Fitzgerald, and taking his arm, requested a few minutes conversation.

"Well, my boy! I am ready to listen to you," said Fitzgerald, hoping that he was about to be

informed of the cause of the depression which had for some time characterized Charles.

"Dear father," began Charles, hesitating and confused, but as he proceeded he became more confident, and his open ingenuous face, showed how important the subject was to him. "I am about to request you to sanction a step in life, a very important one, which I have long contemplated." Captain Fitzgerald here surveyed Charles with a look of surprise and anxiety, while he continued, "Father, you need not, I trust, be assured of the boundless gratitude, the love, the filial respect which I entertain for you—for you who took me, a homeless orphan, to your heart, and sheltered me from the coldness and neglect which would otherwise have been my portion. I knew not the extent of the debt of gratitude I owed you until lately, at my request, you related to me the particulars of my father's death, and his dying injunctions, which you have so nobly fulfilled. Do not think me ungrateful, do not imagine, I entreat you, that I am wearied of the society of the only beings upon earth who possess my affections, when I say that I desire to leave the home which has so long sheltered me, and that I wish to enter the busy world, which to my disposition possesses so many charms. It is not that I am tired of the quiet, yet happy life which we lead at Ardmore, but it is that I have at length found the element congenial to my taste. I am no longer the thoughtless boy I so lately was, and I desire to attain that independence which the education your generosity has bestowed upon me, and the talents I feel conscious of possessing, entitle me to expect. I feel a desire for an active life; I long to tread the path to independence, and ambition whispers, perhaps distinction. Father, I only await your sanction."

For some time Fitzgerald did not reply to the words of Charles, but stood silent, immersed in deep thought. It was evident that what he heard had pained him, but still he could not blame O'Donnell for his desire to engage in a more active life than that in which he had hitherto existed, or to obtain that independence which is so dear to every young and ardent mind. In these sentiments Fitzgerald could sympathize with Charles. He felt, however, that it would be a great trial to part with him, and he had already, to his own satisfaction, decided so differently regarding the future prospects of his adopted son. Upon his own death the extensive domain of Ardmore would descend to Constance, his only child. He already experienced the infirmities of age creeping over him, which were accelerated by the grief in which he still indulged,