

Mr. Leslie's strength failed daily; they now knew that he was fatally injured, and that the life which hung on so slender a thread could not continue much longer. As consciousness returned, and he felt the full wretchedness of his family's situation, all looked very dark to the dying man, and the sighs which broke so painfully through the still night, came not so much from his severe bodily suffering as from the mental distress he so continually experienced.

It was now time to look for Henry's return. The vessel he had sailed in was bound to Cuba, and expected to accomplish the voyage there and back by the middle of December. No tidings had been received from him since his departure, and with all her other sorrow, his poor mother's heart dwelt anxiously and painfully on him. Mr. Leslie, too, seemed to have but the one wish—to see his son restored to his family before he died, that he might feel they had some one near to protect and provide for them. But days passed on and Henry came not, and though as yet there seemed no cause for anxiety, still where sorrow has made so many inroads upon us, we always fear another attack.

The hours of the husband and father were at length numbered. It was Christmas week, and his wife and children stood by his bedside watching for the coming of the angel of death. Peacefully and calmly his last moments drew on. He committed those most dear to him to the care of one who watches over the widow and fatherless, and his fainting heart was sustained. Could he but once more have looked upon his beloved son, and entrusted with a father's dying voice, his remaining family to his care, death would have lost half its terrors. Poor little Charlie looked sadly in his father's face as he held his emaciated hand, and marvelled silently in his child's ignorance why it was that he was left, lame and helpless, to be a burden to his friends, while his father, who could have comforted and provided for them, was to be taken away. Simple-hearted, gentle Charlie! unerring wisdom has a thousand mysterious acts which science or philosophy may never understand, but which the humble trusting christian submissively acknowledges to be for the best. Christmas eve had returned again—the anniversary of that happy time, when so joyous a circle had gathered in that cheerful homestead—and what a change had taken place in that brief period. The house which had then echoed to their untroubled laughter, was no more. Henry was far away, who could tell where? Mr. Leslie lay hovering between life and death, the sands of life speeding away with such faint pulsation, and the 'glad rejoicing smiles' which lit up those young sunny faces were quenched with tears. Their very voices seemed changed like echoes of the heart's sorrow, and few were the words that broke upon the chamber of death. They were not alone, however, in their sorrow: the blessings of sympathy and love followed those who had well deserved them in their happier home.