

Time had been when ambition for herself, her husband, and her children, had filled her mind with wild fantastic dreams; time had been when she could have heard without a pang that Effingham had placed his hope of future joy on the possession of the airy bubble which the world calls fame. But she had stood three times of late on the threshold of the truthful grave, and thence had come a voice that *would* be heard—a voice that cried, “This world is not your rest!”

*He* did not heed it, though he stood beside her at the death-bed and the tomb; but *she* could never more forget its teaching.

Beneath the turf that covered her last child, she buried all her hope of perfect happiness on earth. With her conviction that it should be hers to meet her little one beyond the gates of time, rose up within her a sweet joy and trust in the felicity that is in heaven. And from that hour she was more beautiful, more noble, and more happy; for she walked through the world beneath God’s smile; and where she went, there sunshine calmly dwelt.

But she had sorrows; for her husband was still in darkness; still did he rest his faith on earthly joy. And thus the noontide of that summer-day found her in tears over his proud ambition; and thus upon his entrance, an hour later, the poet saw upon her cheeks the trace of grief.

“Be merry, Kate! Our children are in heaven, and you have often told me that you would not call them back!”

Such were his words, as, with his poem in his hand, he passed his free arm round her, playfully, and bent his deep-set eyes upon her face.

“I do not weep our little ones,” she answered, “I sorrow over *you*!”

He did not withdraw his glance; but it was changed to one of surprise and doubt. “For *me*!” he cried, “when I have almost reached the bourne of my life’s journey; when I may anticipate with confidence a future rich in blessing; when fame more glorious than that of statesman and warrior waits to encircle this poor swarthy brow? My Catherine,”—and as he spoke he touched her pale cheek with his burning lips—“my heart beats high to-day with joyous hope. For *you* it is that I have toiled and striven; your love has been the subject of my song; *you*, by another name, have I set proudly up before the world as the inspiring deity, the lofty heroine of the wild poet-heart that throbs within me; to *you* I look for smiles of sweet approval, without which the ovation of a world were incomplete! Ah, best and dearest friend, my own true wife, I pray you, as you love me, disappoint me not!”

What could she say in answer?—she, who *loved* him,—she who bowed down before his genius until she almost sinned in her devotion;—she who believed him worthy of the homage of a world;—she who would have gladly abandoned life to shield him from the sorrow that was to come? What, but breathe the words of counsel and of caution, and then look up, and smile, and make him happy!

So weeks passed on, and summer melted into autumn, and autumn gave place to winter. Meanwhile the poem passed from one great publisher to another, and found no literary home, no rest for its weary foot. One voice declared it to be too dreamy to be popular; another ventured to suggest that it should be shortened by at least seventy pages; another advised the author to “try his hand at prose;” a fourth was of opinion that he would succeed better as a *comic* poet; but all agreed in this, that they rejected his book!

Poor Effingham recalled the manuscript, and locked it in his desk. That dream of fame—how strangely had it faded! That castle in the unsubstantial air—how gradually had it resolved itself to nothingness! That hope of perfect happiness on earth—how it had passed away!

“Yes Catherine!” he cried, as, in the solitude of his now hateful study, he paced the floor and quarrelled with the world. “Yes; you did well to warn me against hope of fame, or joy, or rest below! There is no happiness on earth—for *me* there is none in heaven!”

As the last words escaped him, Catherine came in. Fresh from a winter walk to Manchester, where, in the miserable homes of poverty, she had found all the joy of doing good; fresh, too, from intercourse with the one source of calm—a God whose being is the central happiness of myriads, whose every act is love.

She laid her hand upon his shoulder and looked into his face. He drew back hastily and told her all.

“The book returned this morning. It has found no publisher. My hopes are blighted, and my toil is lost.”