

of her whose smiles would have changed the desert into a garden of choicest sweets. The glorious river rolled almost beneath him, and the sun set amid golden clouds, bright as a poet's dream, and the mild air of autumn played over his temples, which so lately had throbbled with the sickened pulse of fevered pain.

"Such was the hour, my Agnes, and such the scene, when our parting words were spoken. How much of life have I lived since then ! How many scenes as widely different as the thoughts of youth and age, have I since looked upon—yet unto thee has my heart for ever turned. The turmoil of the battle—the festal song—the bed of sickness and of death—vanished all before my thoughts of thee. Oh ! when may my lonely heart again feel thy angel form reposing there ?"

"Speak not your thoughts so freely," said a venerable man beside him, laying his hand on Richard's shoulder, "else wilt your evesdropping friends learn all your treasured secrets ; and yet, so sweet an hour and scene may well recall the dreamy hours of love and youth. I could almost myself forget that half a century has passed since I too knelt at a maiden's feet, pouring out what I then deemed feelings only mine. Years—long years—have passed since she I loved left me the heritage of a widowed heart, and now I can sit here for hours and look upon her placid grave, with the pale moon resting on its mocking flowers, and think only of the quickly coming time when we shall meet again."

It seemed to Somers something akin to sacrilege to break upon the holy silence, which followed the melancholy remembrances of his aged friend, and each remained for a brief period, mute, holding communion with the sacred feelings of his heart. At length Richard spoke.

"I knew not that there was any ear so near ; but since there was, believe me that there is none from whom I less care to hide my 'treasured secrets.' It is true I love ! you have felt and understand its power—and will not therefore deem that ingratitude mingles with my feelings, when I ask, if you have yet learned when I shall be free. Methinks this sickness has made me doubly anxious to see again my early friends, lest it should have been pictured to them worse than it really has been ; for I much fear that few of my letters have ever reached their destination."

"Now you remind me of my errand, and I much fear that we shall immediately lose you. Our general has today received a tender for an exchange of prisoners, and I believe he intends offering you for Colonel ——. If so, your commander will be a winner, for to speak sooth, the Colonel is not as valuable as his rank would lead one to imagine. In the meantime, you may feed upon the hope that your bonds will soon be broken, and gather strength for your journey to your native home."

"Most generous friend—for how much more than life I have to thank you. Believe me that I shall not lack in gratitude."

"No more," answered the kind old man, "I, too, have a son, resembling you. He may sometime want a foeman's aid—my attention may be therefore selfish. I am becoming childish again. Your hand—good night !"

CHAPTER VII.

"The constant drop wears e'en the rock away."

We have said that Agnes Weldon was laid on a bed of fever. Long did the destroying angel struggle for the mastery over her fair spirit, and death beside her pillow, watched but a rude breath to snatch her to the grave.

Anthony Addlehead seemed as if he too would become insane. Night after night, he sat beside her couch, watching the expression of her slightest wish, grudging the task of waiting on her to the gentle nurse procured by her fond and trembling father, and when at length she was pronounced in safety, he became young again with very gladness. Agnes was grateful for his unwearied kindness ; and hearing nothing of Richard, her despair settled into a melancholy calm.

When her health was restored, he again began to woo, and Agnes often feigned an aching head, to be excused from listening to his vows, which were offered with no less fervency that she had told how much her heart was bound up in the absent one. He believed that Somers filled a soldier's grave ; and never hoping for enthusiastic love, he would have been content with Agnes as the mistress of his household, and to watch the flowers in his newly planted garden, for since his retirement from mercantile speculation, he had become a florist, and boasted the most splendid dahlias and the richest pinks and roses in the vicinity of the city.

The Doctor, too, was daily becoming less able to attend professional duties ; and his income, narrowed by his losses, he feared that he would soon leave his child unfriended to a heartless world, to avert which, he often urged her to accept the proffered suit. She wept and begged for peace ; and she was left for a time to her gloomy thoughts, but again her father renewed the theme, until at last she became passive in his hands, and he exulted in the thought that she was willing to become a bride.

Uncle Somers, being now alone in the world, became a melancholy and moody man, seldom mixing in the society of the neighbourhood, and since it became generally hinted that Anthony Addlehead was likely to succeed with the Doctor's daughter, he had never crossed the threshold of his old friends.