

ed it, and a softer expression stole over her features. Her eyes were once more raised to his, with an expression of confidence and love, and in a calm, low voice, she said:

"Charles, I love thee!"

"Bless thee, Ellen, for that frank avowal." Charles replied with delight, as he took her hand. "But one proof of thy love thou must give, and Ellen, listen to what I will hastily reveal to thee, for time presses, and thou knowest not that a long journey lies before me this night. A short hour ago, before I craved this meeting of thee, I received a letter desiring my immediate presence at Ardmore, where Fitzgerald, my protector, my guardian, is dying. In an hour I leave you, and now, Ellen, to this proof of the love which I require. If I depart without your becoming mine, if I leave you before our vows are registered in Heaven, I feel that I will behold you no more. Become mine ere I depart, and then nothing on earth will have the power to separate me from my wedded wife. Ellen! you have as strength of mind which you can well exercise when circumstances call it forth. Exert it now, Ellen,—you cannot know the strength of love I bear to you—vainly have I struggled against its power. Now or never, Ellen, become mine. Speak but the word, dearest, for ere another hour is past, I must be on the way to Ardmore."

It were vain to attempt to describe the torrent of conflicting feelings which bewildered the mind of Ellen Douglas, as she listened to the impassioned avowal of his love which O'Donnel poured forth—to the earnest entreaties that she would become his wife.

"Not without the consent of my mother, O'Donnel," she replied. "Obtain her sanction, and I will then become yours."

"Ellen, that is impossible! Time presses, and I must in a few minutes be on my journey. I will return as soon as Fitzgerald is out of danger, then all shall be revealed to your mother. Ellen, if you hesitate, you cannot love me. For THEE I would sacrifice all,—no proof of my devotion could be too great. Only say that you will consent, Ellen,—everything is arranged, a carriage waits at the door, and in a few minutes you will return to your mother's roof, where you will remain, till I come, before many days are past, to claim you as my wife. Ellen! say but the word."

And Ellen did say the word.

Charles hastily enveloped her trembling form in some apparel which he found, and conducted her to the door, at which the carriage was standing.

O'Donnel almost lifted her into it, for even the power of motion appeared to have deserted her;

and then, giving some directions to the driver, he took his seat beside her.

Onwards they flew through storm and tempest with the speed of lightning, till they stopped at the door of a house, and Charles, descending first, assisted Ellen to alight. The servant who opened the door conducted O'Donnel and Ellen into a small apartment which appeared to be a library, but in which Ellen noted no other object except a venerable man, who was seated at a table covered with books, engaged in reading. Charles stepped forward and conversed with him for a few moments, and then retired and stood by her side.

A few words were pronounced by the aged man, the import of which was hardly comprehended by the confused senses of Ellen. With a trembling hand and misty eye she traced her name upon a book which was placed before her; she re-entered the carriage, and before she was fully able to realize to herself all that had so hastily passed, she stood the wife of O'Donnel, upon the threshold of her mother's door.

"Farewell, my own, my beloved, my beautiful bride! we will soon meet again in happier hours," were the words which were breathed in her ear, in earnest, heart touching tones; and she was conscious of the embrace which Charles hastily gave her. Her head, oppressed by confused and painful thoughts, bent forwards for support upon her hand, and when she again raised it, she was alone.

"This is surely a dream,—a wild, incoherent dream!" she exclaimed, with a bewildered look, as she pressed her hand to her throbbing temples and sought to arrange her thoughts. As she raised her hand, her eye fell upon something strange and bright which glittered upon her finger. It was the wedding ring which Charles had placed there that caught her eye, and as she saw it, the full reality of her situation burst upon her mind for the first time.

A footstep approached the door,—could it be O'Donnel? But no! the slow gait and feeble step only betokened the approach of the aged servant.

She immediately assumed a calmness which she did not feel, and enquired whether her mother had sent for her.

"No," replied the servant, "she still sleeps, and I have just left her chamber. Mr. O'Donnel has left this note which I am to give to her when she awakens. He says that it will explain the reason why he left us so suddenly."

Again Ellen was left alone with her thoughts, but exerting all her self-control, and striving to banish the painful feelings with which she reviewed her hasty conduct, she rose to seek the cham-