

death, as it slowly came down, and obliterated the light of her father's serene countenance, till nought of the bright or beautiful remained to intimate to the distracted watcher that life yet lingered there. She knelt beside his couch; she supported his damp head upon her arm, and wiped the clammy dew from his rigid brow. Her left hand lay upon the open Bible, from which she had been reading, at the dying man's request, the sixteenth chapter of St. John, and had paused at that emphatic verse—"Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." The light was strongly thrown upon the young christian's kneeling figure. Her jet black hair hung back in dark masses from her white and polished brow. Her coral lips were apart in the act of prayer, and though the large tears hung on the long lashes that fringed her deep blue eyes, those eyes were raised to heaven with a look of such calm resignation, such fervent and holy trust, that she appeared to realize in her own person the sublime truth of the text.

As if awakened to recollection by the soothing touch of those pious hands, the curate once more unclosed his eyes, and beckoned to Sophia, who stood at some little distance, to approach. Trembling from head to foot, and without raising her streaming eyes, she obeyed. He took her hand, and placing it in her sister's, faintly murmured, "My dear children, this is your dying father's last command, 'that ye love one another.'" The voice ceased. The hand sank back upon the feeble arm, that now vainly essayed to support him, and the good man was at peace.

A faint scream broke from the pale lips of the terrified Sophia, who had never before looked upon death, and she gave way to a frantic burst of grief. The humane surgeon approached the couch. He saw that the last conflict was over, and endeavoured to lead the orphan girls and their mother from the apartment.

"Not yet, not yet," said Alice, gently putting back the friendly hand that essayed to raise her from the ground, "I part not so soon with my precious father." Then bending over the senseless clay, she kissed with reverential tenderness the cold brow of the departed saint; and bowing her head upon her hands, repeated a short but fervent prayer, and slowly quitted the chamber of mourning.

The funeral was over. The remains of George Linhope had been consigned to the grave, and his afflicted widow and her children were forced to rouse themselves from the indulgence of grief to form some plan for their future maintenance. The income derived from the school ceased with the curate's life, and Mrs. Linhope was forced to sell her furniture to relieve her present wants, and remove to a small lodging in an obscure part of the town. In this distress, she wrote to her brother, informing him of the death of her husband, the embarrassed state of her circumstances, and the impossibility of

maintaining her mother, without sending the girls, at their tender age, to earn a scanty living in the world. While waiting for an answer to her letter, Mrs. Linhope gave herself up to the most gloomy forebodings. Alice did all she could to reassure her hopes, and dissipate her fears, in which she was greatly assisted by Sophia, who, soon regaining her usual gaiety, began to form a thousand schemes of happiness for the future. Alice did not attempt to check her sister's sanguine expectations, though she tried to prepare her for disappointment. Of two evils, she considered that the most extravagant indulgence of hope was less dangerous than despair. One is the result of a lively imagination; the other implies a want of trust in the mercies of God, and a doubt of his power to succour his creatures in distress.

The man to whom the poor widow applied in her misfortunes possessed a heart overflowing with the milk of human kindness, and her appeal to his benevolence was not made in vain. Heaven had crowned the honest industry of Richard Fleming with success. The young Englishman found favor in the eyes of his employer, an opulent merchant, who bestowed upon him the hand of his only daughter, and finally left him sole heir to his immense property. To share his good fortune with his sister was Mr. Fleming's first thought, but upon reflection he abandoned this idea, convinced that such a sudden increase of wealth might be productive of greater evils than the mere pressure of poverty. From Mrs. Linhope's letters he learned that the girls were clever and handsome; they were likewise very young, and at that critical age when the character receives its strongest impressions, and is most likely to be corrupted by the world. "A fortune added to their personal advantages might render them proud and vain, and draw about them a crowd of heartless flatterers," argued the old man. "I will amply supply their present wants, but their future conduct shall determine their ultimate independence." With the interest of his noices warmly at heart, the merchant settled upon his widowed sister a pension of a hundred and fifty pounds per annum, and transmitted a handsome sum to defray her present expenses; nor did his kindness rest here. He employed his English agent to purchase a small neat dwelling near B—, with a pretty garden and meadow adjoining, and to furnish it, in a genteel and comfortable manner, and when all his benevolent arrangements were completed, he settled the small estate upon his nieces, to devolve to them at their mother's death.

When his agent, Mr. Barlow, waited upon Mrs. Linhope with this unlooked for piece of intelligence, his communications were received with tears of gratitude and joy. Alice silently returned thanks to God, for raising them up a friend in their hour of need, while Sophia sprung round her mother, clap-