

shoreless ocean of eternity. The songs of the wild birds, the perfume and the beauty of the flowers, were like the brief enchantments of earth, passing away in the very moment of enjoyment, leaving their places void and silent to the eye, and to the heart. Mutation, briefness, decay, seemed to her written upon all that the world held of lovely and endearing. Yet even with these sombre shades coloring her thoughts, their hue was far from gloomy. Still, as ever, the beautiful forms of nature spoke to her of their beneficent author, and brought peace and healing to her wounded spirit. She saw in them, it is true, types of human vanity and evanescence,—but to her spiritualized eye, they were also dim, though lovely shadows, of the changeless and the beautiful, which, when the soul feels the weight of its earthly fetters, it longs and pants to behold and to enjoy—looking onward and upward with earnest aspirations that its disenchantment may be nigh.

And her's indeed seemed so—though day by day the rose deepened on her cheek, and her dark eyes grew luminous with intense and restless lustre, giving to her beauty a radiance dazzling and unearthly; yet too well, in this specious brilliancy, her experienced relative read the heralds of that "dread disease," which, as one has eloquently said, "death and life are so strangely blended, that death takes the glow and hue of life, and life the gaunt and grizzly form of death—a disease which medicine never cured, wealth ward-off, nor poverty could boast exemption from—which sometimes moves in giant strides, and sometimes at a tardy, sluggish pace; but, slow or quick, is ever sure and certain!"

Mrs. Howard was heart-stricken at the thought of losing the cherished darling of her affections, and medical men of the first eminence, were summoned from all quarters, to lend their united skill and aid in saving her. But the very nature of their prescriptions declared the hopelessness with which they viewed her case; and yet, strange as it may seem, failed wholly to convince those who had anchored on her their happiness, that there was no longer room for hope. She was so free from pain, so beautiful in her nearly imperceptible decay, so cheerful even when they were sad, that it was hard to believe she must soon pass away like a lovely vision from the earth, and leave void in the dear circle, the place which she now gladdened with her gentle presence.

She only, laboured under no delusion with regard to herself. She knew that her days were numbered,—but this conviction brought no pang to her heart. Death had never been to her a circumstance of dread—she had learned from the teachings of Scripture, the suggestions of reason,

the beautiful analogies of nature, to regard it but as an onward step in the soul's progress—its advance to a higher stage of being—its awakening from darkness, pain and ignorance, to the unclouded glory of its heavenly home. Yet she never spoke directly of this event, as connected with herself. She shrank so sensitively from giving pain to those she loved, that only by incidental remarks she led the way to themes which had a bearing on life's great purposes and ends, and death's important changes on the destiny; and thus sought to render their thoughts familiar with a subject, which, as it possessed no gloom for her, she invested with the hues of her own glad hopes, and which she knew must ere long become an all-engrossing subject of thought and feeling to them.

Arthur's fears regarding Cecilia's danger were perhaps less aroused than those of any who observed her. As the summer opened he became a frequent guest at Hazeldell; sometimes even, when business permitted his absence from town, remaining there for several days in succession. Unaccustomed to note any form of disease, he knew nothing of the fatal symptoms which marked that under which she was laboring; and, deceived by its flattering appearances, particularly by the returning cheerfulness which made her somewhat like her former self, but which owed its origin to thoughts and hopes that belonged not to earth, he cherished the fond belief that health was once more to be hers, and that happiness had not flown from her forever; and these thoughts lent gladness to his heart, and served to nurse, but as yet in secret and in silence, a fond anticipation, that gave to the future light and joy unspeakable.

Cecilia knew she was beloved—she had known it long, and the knowledge gave her inexpressible pain. Yet she had learned it less from any outward manifestation, than by that tact, with which a woman seldom fails to read the pages of a heart, on which her name and image are impressed; and she mourned with many tears, that one so noble as her cousin Arthur, should be forced to feel the bitter pang of unreturned affection. Had she known him better, before the deep and slumbering emotions of her soul were awakened by another, she felt, even now, that he might have stirred them mightily into means of blessing and of joy, to others and herself—even as the angel moved the still waters of Bethesda, so that they shed health and healing on all who sought their influence.

But now it was too late—she was parting slowly from earth; nightly the sweet whispers of heavenly voices came to her in dreams, singing the seraphic strain, "Sister Spirit, come away!" and