

"I am satisfied that she loves me," delightedly thought Charles, and seating himself beside her, he informed her of his design of proceeding to a distant university, and that he would be absent during the whole of the following winter.

"But, dear Constance," he continued, "I will spend the summer, months with you always at Ardmore, and though distant from each other, we can yet hold converse. You will tell me of all that passes in this happy, secluded spot, and I, in return, will describe all that interests me in the career upon which I am about to enter."

"But are you not perfectly happy here?" inquired Constance. "Remain with us, Charles, and be a comfort to my father who loves you dearly. When you are gone I will myself feel so dull and sad, that far from trying to make him forget your absence, I will only increase his depression. Besides this, I do not possess your joyous, happy disposition, whose influence my father cannot resist. If we spend the long winter together, and alone, I fear that by the time spring arrives, we will both become as dull and stupid as the owls which used to live in the old barn, and frighten us when we were children."

"Nay, Constance," replied Charles, "you undervalue your powers of entertainment greatly. He must be morose, indeed, who could resist that silvery laugh of thine, or whose misanthropy would not be dispelled by your gentle smile. I leave you for a time, Constance, but only to return, and months will glide away swiftly until then. You know how time flies, Constance. It seems but yesterday since we, in childish sport, planted two rose-bushes which we named after ourselves. It appears but a day since we did this; but now the bushes have overrun almost your whole flower-garden, and we ourselves are no longer children as we then were. Yes! a few years will quickly speed away, and then, dearest Constance! may I hope——?"

"What are you moping in that corner all the evening for, children!" interrupted Fitzgerald, whose attention had been completely engrossed by a number of papers which lay before him, and who thus interrupted the confession which Charles, notwithstanding his previous resolution, was about to make. "Come hither, Constance," he continued, "and you, Charles, till I show you a plan for a new building I am about to erect." The plan was examined and approved of, and Fitzgerald continued to converse till they separated for the night,—Charles to indulge in dreams of gratified ambition and future happiness—Constance to weep over their approaching separation.

## CHAPTER VII.

"A youth rode forth from his childhood's home,  
Through the crowded paths of the world to roam,  
And the green leaves whispered as he passed,  
'Wherefore, thou dreamer! away so fast?'"

HEMANS.

AUTUMN was beginning to don her sober livery, and with her silent, yet more than human eloquence, to instil the doctrine of the vanity and decay of all that is earthly. The wind whistled loud and shrill around the angles of the house of Ardmore, and frolicked in unchecked glee among the venerable trees, at every blast stripping from their ancient limbs the withered leaves, and scattering them over the lawn. The lake was no longer smooth as a mirror, but over its surface there danced and rippled innumerable little waves, chasing each other to the pebbly shore.

At length the day arrived upon which Charles was to take his departure—a day of sadness and depression to all at Ardmore. Constance, ever mindful, was busily occupied, arranging with a sister's care, everything that Charles might require when distant from his home. Captain Fitzgerald had been closeted with his lawyer all morning upon business. As for Charles he was like a restless spirit, not to be seen for two moments in the same place; sometimes in the garden, sometimes in the library trying to compose his mind to read. Hardly was he seated, when the light footsteps of Constance met his ear, and in an instant the book was carelessly thrown down, and he was at her side.

Thus passed the morning till the hour of dinner arrived; but the board around which happy faces were wont to meet, was silent. Constance tried to assume a cheerful look, but it would not do. The smile which she had tried to force gradually faded away into tears. Though buoyant with hope, and confident in the future, Charles could not but share the grief which his coming departure occasioned, and his face also partook of the general gloom.

The meal was dismissed almost untasted, and Constance, fearful of betraying her emotion, rose hastily, and passed out of the apartment. She entered the drawing-room, which for the first time she thought appeared cold and dismal. She approached the window, and looking forth saw the travelling carriage at the hall-door. She even felt angry with the horses for their impatience to depart. With a heavy sigh she leaned her forehead against the window, glad that in silence and darkness she could indulge her feelings. She knew not how long she remained thus,