

breathed the calm untroubled atmosphere, and had resumed the uneventful state of existence, in which his early years had been spent, at Ardmore. But the life which he had formerly thought so happy, the rural pursuits and amusement in which he had once so enthusiastically engaged, had now become tame and distasteful. He felt listless and uninterested in all that was passing around. He had had a glimpse of the gay and busy world and he had become conscious that a life of action, where he would mingle with the human crowd and there struggle for distinction, where the talents which he felt conscious of possessing would be called into service, was better suited to his ardent temperament than the sphere in which he now existed. Dreams of ambition, to which he had hitherto been a stranger, disturbed his mind and wrought a great change in his disposition. Influenced by such feelings, Charles of late had become reflective and even moody, while he had lost that buoyancy of spirits which had formerly distinguished him.

Fitzgerald, engrossed by his own grief, marked no alteration in the demeanour of Charles, but Constance, with quicker perception, saw that some particular idea engrossed his every thought, and rendered him careless and absent. She did not, however, question him concerning the cause of his abstraction, but she endeavoured by every means in her power to beguile him from it, and planned excursions and amusements to divert the channel of his thoughts. In the simplicity of her heart she did not dream that he could ever entertain the idea of leaving Ardmore, even for a time. To her, home was the happiest spot that earth contained, and she knew nothing of that restless ambition which causes man to forsake present felicity for a vain shadow which yields only disappointment. While abroad, Constance had beheld many a lovely, many a magnificent scene, but her heart had always sighed for the well-remembered haunts of Ardmore. By her gentle and amiable disposition, Constance was also peculiarly adapted to the retired but useful sphere in which she moved;—by her affectionate solicitude and watchful kindness, striving to divert her father's grief, speaking words of comfort to the humble cottagers around, and relieving, by the uninterrupted flow of benevolence and sympathy, those sufferings which the fitful generosity of O'Donnel would have but partially mitigated. The more Charles allowed his mind to be occupied by such dreams which are so dear to youth, the more resolved he became to go forth into the world and there win fame and independence. Another powerful motive lent additional strength to his resolution. Towards Constance, the gentle

companion of his boyhood—the being who had exerted such a powerful influence over his wayward disposition, he entertained feelings of deep affection. But not as the dependant upon the bounty of her father would he consent to woo her. No! every feeling of his proud heart revolted from the idea. He would leave the home which had sheltered his unprotected childhood—he would seek the haunts of men—he would exert every energy of his powerful mind to acquire fame and independence, and when successful he would return and win her for his bride. He would then feel conscious of being more worthy of her love.

"I will continue in this state of existence no longer," he exclaimed, as one day he stood looking forth from the window upon one of the loveliest scenes that the eye could rest upon. "I will forth to the busy world, and there win a name. In the many paths to which ambition points I will surely find one congenial to my abilities. Then farewell to thee for a time, Ardmore! the home which sheltered my unprotected boyhood, from which I will soon depart, but to which I will ere long return, my efforts crowned with success. Farewell to thee —!" But here the eye of Charles rested upon the face of Constance, so mild, so undisturbed by human passion, and yet so expressive in its angelic repose, that it appeared to upbraid his unquiet thoughts, and a sharp pang went to his heart as he thought of the separation which he meditated. Constance had never appeared so dear to him as now, when by his own act he was about to banish himself from her presence. Yes," he continued, resuming his soliloquy, "Constance, although in my struggle for fortune I shall be absent from thee, thou wilt still be the star which will direct my course, which shall shed its light through the many hours of darkness which perhaps await me. To thee I will ever turn, and though thou art unconscious of the homage which my heart pays thee, when Fame and Fortune have smiled upon me thou wilt know all."

One morning Captain Fitzgerald sat alone after breakfast in the deserted apartment. Charles was pacing to and fro upon the lawn, evidently sunk in profound meditation. Constance had gone to visit her flower-garden, to which she had added many rare plants from foreign lands, tender nurslings which demanded her peculiar care. Left thus silent and alone, Fitzgerald fell into a melancholy reverie, which might have continued long, had not a gentle arm wound itself around his neck, and a soft hand half playfully, half in earnest, withdrawn his hand from the forehead which leaned upon it so dejectedly, and eyes youthful and winning looked into his face and