

in the eye of imagination; but her gloomy reality put an extinguisher on fancy. The spring's opening rose of beauty had matured only to wither, like the commonest weeds around, and to drop beneath the unsparring blasts of age's approaching winter. The vision of long years disenchanted. The romance of life had waned away into the cold and frigid truth; and my heart bled to behold its long idol moulded of the same perishable elements as the perishable elements around. She was plainly dressed. Care and thought and the ravages of time were visible on her countenance, that yet, in eclipse, betrayed of what it had been, as the western sky retains the illumined foot prints of the departed sun. She was looking wistfully into the fire, as she leaned her cheek on her thin pale fingers, one of which was encircled by a mourning ring.

Dinner passed over, but no symptoms of recognition on her part were perceptible. I had contrived to place myself by her side; yet I dared scarcely trust myself to enter into conversation with her. Her cousin—our hostess, Mrs. Smith—I identified with a young lady whom I had seen at her aunt's house in the days of yore, and who was an especial friend of Catharine. General topics were discussed—more especially those of a serious and sedate nature—but I could take no share in either eliciting or keeping up the flow of thought. My heart was full of unutterable things; and often, in spite of every repressing effort an unmanly tear would gather itself in the corner of my eye. Happily all this was unperceived and my absence of manner excited no attention. Here were the long Sundered fortuitously brought together, after seas had rolled between us for more than a quarter of a century!—and yet it seemed as if we had never met before.

Having on our walk home been informed by my reverend friend that our hostess was regular in her forenoon attendance on the labors of love amid which we had formerly found her engrossed, I thought I might sinlessly, and without breach of friendship, make a visit next afternoon. I did so, and found Catharine at home.

She had not the least suspicion of me. I tried her on various topics, and occasionally verged very near the truth. But how could it be? She was a girl when last we parted. Through a long sequence of years in which

she had seen all the world changing, she had heard nothing of me, and the chances were as one to five hundred that I could yet be alive.

"You mentioned, Darlingsport, Miss Wylie," said I; "are you acquainted with any of the families there?"

"Oh yes," she answered—"or rather, I should say I once was. Indeed, it is twenty years since last I laid foot on its streets. Our burying-place, however, is there, and I must pay it yet another visit, when I am unconscious of all."

"May it be long till then, Miss Wylie? It is still a longer period since I took up my abode there; but I lately paid it a visit. Do you know if any of the family of the G——'s are still alive?"

She turned pale.

"I scarcely think so. G——, did you say? I knew them well, long, long ago. The two daughters married and settled with their families in London. James, the youngest son, went to India, when a mere boy. My inquiries have thrown no light on his destiny since. Richard went out to a mercantile house at Demerara. But that is thirty two years ago."

"Indeed," said I, almost trembling, as I took a small gold locket from my waistcoat pocket. "Did you ever see that before?"

"Merciful heavens! is it possible?" she exclaimed. "How came that into your possession, and— and who are you? Does Richard——still live? or, dying, did he transmit that remembrancer through you to be given to her who once owned it?"

"Nay, Catherine," I answered: "look at me. Am I indeed changed so much that you—even you do not recognise me?"

She started back, half in agitation and half in alarm, gazing at me for a second or two in breathless silence, then, sinking into a chair, extended to me her hand, which (I trust pardonably) I pressed to my lips. The hour was a melancholy one—but it was an hour of the heart, and worth many years living for. In it the mystery of life was unriddled, and the paltry nucleus on which its whole machinery evolved fully disclosed to view.

"I remember well," she said, "the evening you allude to; but you blame me without cause, when you say that I dismissed you, without deigning an explanation. I had been urged by the family whom I was visiting to