

THE ORPHAN; OR, FORTUNE'S CHANGES.

BY E. L. E.

"JULIA, my child, come and sit down by me—I have something to say to you, and, perhaps, I may not have another opportunity."

"Yes, mamma, in a moment; but what is the matter? Do you feel worse? how pale you are!"

"I do not feel as well as I have done. I feel my strength failing me daily, and it is of this I wish to speak. You know I have been ill a long time, and I can no longer flatter you with hopes of my recovery. I fear you will, ere long, be a lonely orphan."

"Oh, mamma! do not talk so," said Julia, bursting into tears; "you have been worse than you are now, and perhaps when this cold winter is over you will get stronger."

"No, my child; I shall never see another Spring. Do not weep. Remember there is One above who careth for the orphan, and will never leave you desolate. I have for some time felt we should, ere long, be separated, and were it not for the thought of leaving you, I should rejoice that the time is so near. Yet, for your sake, I could still wish to live, were it the will of Providence; but it may not be so—my life is nearly spent, and I would that I could in some measure prepare you for the separation, and help you to devise some plan for your future support. Come, dry up your tears, my love, my forebodings may not be realized so soon as I fear, but still it would be well to talk about these things while we have an opportunity. Our little stock of money is nearly exhausted, and what will become of us then, God only knows; but if I should die suddenly, as I sometimes fear I shall, go to Mrs. Willis—she has given me her promise to befriend you."

"Oh, mamma, I cannot bear to hear you talk so. Perhaps we can sell some of these paintings, and then we will get some nice things which will, perhaps, strengthen you. Come, dear mamma, do lie down and try to get a little rest, and I will make you a nice cup of tea."

Julia assisted her mother to the bed, and then busied herself in preparing refreshment for her. Their means were very limited, and though Julia was but in her thirteenth year, yet her mother had been so long out of health that she had be-

come quite a proficient in domestic affairs. She soon had a cup of tea and a bit of toast, prepared with great neatness, spread on their plain pine table, which, though uncovered, was almost as white as the driven snow.

"Come, mamma, won't you try and eat something? Now do!" she continued beseechingly.

"My dear child, would that I could to please you, but I cannot—I feel a strange oppression here," laying her hand on her breast.

"Do let me run for Dr. Hammond, you do look so very sick—perhaps he will help you."

"I do not think he can help me, but if you like you may go—and step in, and say to Mrs. Willis I wish to speak with her a moment."

She spoke with much difficulty, and Julia, with a bursting heart, set out on her sad errand. She had but a few steps to go, and as she ascended the broad step that led to the noble looking house of Mr. Willis, she could not but think how little the rich know of the trials and privations of those less favored with the gifts of fortune. Her errand was soon stated, and Mrs. Willis, who was really a kind hearted person, hastened to the bedside of Mrs. Prescott, whom she found very low, much worse than she had expected.

"My dear Mrs. Willis, I feel that my time has come, and I would speak to you of Julia."

"Do not have any anxiety about her; I have promised, and now repeat it, that she shall be to me as one of my own children, and I will try and be a mother to her."

"May the God of the fatherless bless you for those words! You have, indeed, taken a great weight off my mind. I can die happy now—Julia is provided for; but I have still another request to make. I have endeavored to instil into her youthful mind those religious principles which have been my support for nine long years of trial,—had it not been for that hope, which I trust will be soon realized, I should have sunk years ago. Oh! help her to remember that the dark day will come when she will be even as I am now, and were it not for the Saviour's supporting arm how dreary would be the prospect to me!"