

upon the future with distrust, and will try and be more patient, and to spare the feelings of my dear Margaret,—for, alas! without her what would be the condition of my poor children. Charles, too, is a blessing to us all, and will be able soon to take care of the comfort of the family; but, at the best, what can I expect, or how can I bear to look forward to the end, which I feel to be approaching. Nay, do not interrupt me—do not speak of hope, for I feel a sense of feebleness even when I seem strongest, that warns me all human aid will be of little avail.”

“I do not wish to excite hopes that may not be realized,” repeated I; “but rather would entreat you to keep as much as possible all dread and anxiety from your mind,—for I can perceive there will be need of fortitude and resolution before many days; but there is yet hope. I trust you do not feel much pain at present?”

“So far from it, that I am unconscious of any pain; and, indeed, it is not pain that I dread, or anything which may occur to myself. There is nothing fearful in the thought of death, but as it affects those who are far dearer than life—my poor children, whom a merciful Father will, I trust, protect and succour. I pray that I may be strengthened to resign them into His hands with confidence, even when all is dark and nothing presents itself to enliven or light up the gloomy prospect.”

“Amen,” added I, mentally, unwilling to prolong the conversation, which had already been protracted too far for her feeble health, and busied myself in preparing some medicine, to be taken in case of unusual restlessness during the night.

I had gathered from her altered appearance, as well as from her conversation, that there was but little hope of her ultimate recovery. Hers was a case which medicine cannot reach, and in which it can scarcely for a moment retard the fatal issue,—a general sinking of a constitution originally delicate, under the fatigue occasioned by straitened circumstances and the exposure consequent on a residence in a new country and so rigorous a climate. The mind too had done its share in the sad process of physical decay: trials long continued had imperceptibly worn upon her spirits, and the bitter consciousness which experience had of late furnished to force upon her, to an extent of which I was not then aware, that there was but little hope of her husband’s temper or circumstances improving; but, on the contrary, the sickening, harrowing dread that he would sink into irreclaimable dissipation. I know not whether she was aware if the circumstances of my first meeting with her husband, when his ungovernable temper had been so nearly fatal as well to himself as to her, were real or only a horrid dream; for never, by word or implication, had she alluded to the circumstances of that sad evening. What was much more singular, I had

not since that time spoken to Captain Lindsay, although I had reason, on more than one occasion, to think he was in the house when I called after his recovery. Her ardent and yet deeply rooted affection, which neither dissipation nor harshness of temper, on his part, nor all the sad and melancholy evidences of approaching ruin, and the still more lamented signs of alienation and almost of reckless indifference, could for a moment quench, had borne all with an almost sinful patience. She could not upbraid him, nay she could not even remonstrate,—she could but attempt with all her winning and guileless art to allure him from his wanderings and bring him back to happiness. How would she rejoice if but for a week he was at home, without seeing any of the persons who enticed him to excess; what fear would oppress her, as he ordered his horse to depart, and what keener anguish, if, on his return home, the signs of excess were too apparent to be unobserved. For a year or two she had alternately been striving with hope and fear. It was in her gentle, confiding disposition rather to look at the bright side of the picture than the dark one,—and that *he*, her own, fond, devoted husband, surrounded by such a family, and himself so high spirited and generous, should ever become the low degraded victim of a worse than beastly appetite, she could not believe it; nor would she, had she lived to have seen the dreadful consequences which time was destined to develope. Her love had so much of confidence in it, that whilst every thing was so dark around her, it was only at intervals such as that which I have just alluded to, that she despaired of his return to the path of sobriety and happiness. Faith and love, confidence and sweet affection united, made her a model so nearly perfect, that I have often since wondered whether, in a woman of her yielding temperament a more consistently devoted and beautiful exemplification of feminine excellence could be imagined, than the sad realities of every day’s experience brought to light in the present instance. However, gentlemen, not to dwell upon this part of my story any longer, I will merely say that she continued for about two months to linger on in the same feeble condition, during which time I found opportunity to obtain better medical advice than I myself could furnish; but it served no purpose. Medicine can cure those only who are not appointed to death, and it had early become apparent that the foreboding she had expressed was not the mere offspring of a diseased fancy, but the fore-shadowing of the coming crisis. I had continued to visit her during this time, doing all that I could think of to ease her and make her comfortable, and daily finding occasion more and more to admire the exquisite loveliness of her disposition, and the ardour of that piety which, in the very view of death, rendered her cheerful and even happy. She had laboured carefully to prepare her family for the