

Frank, after a time, gained his friendship and his confidence, and when the fatal disease of his family,—consumption,—threatened, and when recommended to go to the country, alas! he had no home, and Frank wrote to his father, and there came in reply a welcome invitation for the student to make his home of Mr. O'Donnell's house until his recovery; he hesitated, yet Frank pressed him, and said so much about the kindness of his dear mother and his fair sister, that at length he consented. For something said to him, "though death has left you without kith or kin, though you have no fond mother, or gentle sympathizing sister—no one to love you, no one to feel for you, there is no use in feeling dismal and weary; go, there are loving hearts in the world that will love you," and something within him whispered, "go, there are loving hearts in the world that will love you,"—and he did go.

Willy Shea was then about twenty. He was rather tall and gracefully formed. His studious pale-looking face, shaded with dark curls, possessed almost a womanly delicacy. There was a mine of thought in his dark dreamy eye. As I said, he had neither kith nor kin, and he tried to forget the past in deep reflective study. His thoughts and life were pure and unsullied; his aspirations noble and lofty.

At length the poor suffering student accompanied his new friend to his home in the country. Here every comfort surrounded him; the nicest attention was paid him, until his improved health testified that the change was indeed beneficial.

Mrs. O'Donnell thought of her own dear children and sighed, and was a mother to the suffering orphan. He was so exhausted from his delicate state and the fatigue of travelling, that he was confined to bed for several days. Kate was his principal nurse, and her low soft voice, her gentle step, and the cheerfulness of her presence, were a balm to his weary spirit. How he did wait and listen and long for her coming; what sweet emotions danced in his dark eyes, as she quietly glided into his room.

One day in a feverish sleep, as dreams of the past flitted across his mind, he exclaimed, "Oh, mother dear! oh, sister sweet! will you not come to me? but alas! I have neither mother nor sister—no one to love me."

He thought he felt a tear trickle on his brow; he looked up, and Kate was standing over him, her large eyes dim with pity and compassion. "So you have neither mother nor sister, poor youth; I will be to you a sister."

"God bless you, God bless you, Miss O'Donnell, for these kind words, and he pressed his lips to her hand. She blushed and timidly withdrew her hand.

"Forgive me, Miss O'Donnell——"

"Kate, if you please, as we are to be brother and sister."

"Well, Kate—how dear a name—I am grateful for that sympathy which called forth your devotion to a stranger; I had a sister like you; her name was Kate, also."

"And she is dead?" said Kate.

"Yes, Kate, yes! that fatal disease of our family did its work; she was older than I by a few years; she was the playmate of my young days, and the guide of my boyhood. We loved one another dearly. At length, her laugh became less merry—her step less buoyant. She was declining; yes, she was, for that short dry cough, that hectic flush, and the tiny blue veins and wasting frame told us so. Doctors were called in; they watched her heavy breathing, felt her pulse, wisely shook their heads, took their fees, and left. They ordered her whatever she desired; ah we knew what this meant. At length she became too weak to remain up. I constantly watched and attended her sick bed, and often watered it with my tears. I can never forget the day our poor infirm father came to take his parting leave. He had to be helped up stairs; he tottered to the bed; though weak, she raised herself up clasped her tiny hands around his neck; her tears bedewed her face. His long grey hair floated around, mingling with her soft ringlets. There he lay in her embrace, breathing blessings on that good dutiful daughter, that never vexed him; that cheered and consoled him in his declining health. It was a mute scene of heart-felt grief. Memory recalled the love and kindness of past years. All the tenderness of the fond father and dutiful daughter was aroused in that awful moment, when they were about to separate for ever. With swollen eyes and throbbing heart I witnessed this scene. My poor sobbing mother buried her face in the bedcovering. The domestics wept, and at length bore him away from that child he dearly loved, but was never more to see on earth."

"And your father, too?" said Kate, as she rested her head on her hand, and the tears trickled between her fingers.

"Is dead! Oh! I can never forget my feelings, as I knelt beside his death-bed. With a heart bursting with grief I knelt to receive his final blessing."