

and to shed the light of a loving nature amid the gathering shadows of life's coming night, were now the not unpleasing tasks of the lonely wife. She had passed the genial spring in the sweet dream of happy love, and she knew that not until the summer had blossomed, and given place to autumn's fruits,—not until the hoar frost of winter had melted beneath the soft gales of the "soote season," and the buds were again unfolding on the stripped and naked trees, could she hope to welcome back her sailor to his home. But she had too much elasticity of spirits to yield herself long to grief. After her first wild emotions had been calmed, she resolved to watch over her own weak heart, and check those vain repinings which could only give pain to those who loved her, without alleviating her own. Her cheerfulness and hopefulness returned at her summons, and though yearning in heart for the sight of him who had become as light to her eyes, and life to her heart, she left no duty unfulfilled. She had none of that sickly sensibility which finds cause for self-satisfaction in the indulgence of morbid grief, and makes a merit of suffering.—She felt that her love for her husband was best shown by the close observance of all his wishes; and when she checked the tears which flowed at the remembrance of his past tenderness, she knew she was but acting as he would desire.

The fruits of autumn were reaped and garnered, the pleasant fireside had given out its comforts during a tedious winter;—and now the snow had melted from the hill-tops, and the buds of spring began to peep out from their dusky coverts. All the hope and trustfulness of Amy's nature now revived. For more than a month before the time when she could possibly expect Captain Thornton's return, she began to make every thing ready for his reception, and once more her bird-like voice was heard carolling cheerful songs, as she went about her household cares. The bloom returned to her cheek, her sunny locks were released from the simple cap which had confined their luxuriance, and once more allowed to flow in rich curls, as he best loved to see them. Amy was almost a child again in her gleeful happiness. But as the day of his coming drew nigh, a restless and impatient yearning took possession of her heart. She had been content to wait during many a weary month of absence, but now,—when an hour might bring him to her embrace, she was full of unquiet and troubled expectation. How often did she traverse the road which led to the entrance of the

village! how often did she arrange and re-arrange all the minute appointments of her neat household, to be in readiness for her toil-worn mariner! how often did she fancy that the very beatings of her heart would prevent her from catching the first echo of his footsteps.

But day after day passed on, but still Captain Thornton came not. Weeks elapsed without any tidings to relieve this terrible suspense, and then application was made to the owners of the ship, but they could afford no information: and only added their own apprehensions to the fears of those who already dreaded evil news. Yet Amy's hopes seemed to grow stronger, as those of all others died away.—Even when months had gone by,—when Captain Thornton's employer wrote to the bereaved wife to inform her that all probability of his return was so entirely lost, that the insurance on the missing ship had been promptly paid,—when the aged mother wept and "refused to be comforted," because her son "was not,"—still Amy held fast her faith in his future return. That hopefulness which had been so prominent a trait in her character from childhood, became, as it seemed, a part of her heart's creed; and it was utterly impossible to bring home to her mind the futility of her expectations.

But in other things, how sadly was she changed! her delicate form lost its symmetry, and her face its radiant beauty; the bright tresses which had ever been the pride of her youth, were pushed carelessly away from her hollow temples; and her dress, once so exquisitely tasteful, was now neglected and disordered.—She sought no longer to beguile the lagging hours with the pretty feminine tasks that once occupied her time. Silent, sad and drooping, she would sit for hours in the porch, or at the casement which commanded a view of the village road. At the sight of any approaching traveller, she would spring eagerly forward, watch him earnestly as he wound down the hill, and then, as she beheld him nearer, would sink back, and weep in bitter disappointment. Perhaps no form of grief could have so utterly worn out her elastic and hopeful spirit. From the heavy pressure of some positive and present sorrow, her innate cheerfulness might at length have rebounded: and in the course of time, she might have found comparative peace. But for a weary wasting grief like this, there was no relief. Her very hopes only prolonged her pangs. Any thing would have been better than this dreadful suspense. Had but one tempest-tossed seaman returned to tell the