

diously concealed from her. Although he would willingly have spared her the pain of knowing the whole dark history of Evelyn's errors and Cecilia's wrongs, yet she peremptorily bade him tell her *all*; and, accustomed from early boyhood to obey her, Arthur gave her a candid exposition of the course which had occasioned so much misery, and finally led to the violent and premature termination of Evelyn's life.

Shocked and indignant was Mrs. Howard as she listened, and bitterly did she reproach herself for having suffered a fatal prepossession to blind her to the glaring defects of Evelyn's character, which, had she seen them with an unbiassed judgment, would have prevented her bestowing, as she did, the precious trust that had been so unworthily and recklessly abused. She forbore, however, to wound Cecilia's feelings, lacerated as they already were, by casting one word of censure or reproach upon the memory of Evelyn—but with true maternal tenderness she essayed by a thousand quiet acts of love, and voiceless sympathy, to pour balm into her bleeding heart, wearing herself a cheerful smile, while she mourned in secret sorrow over the wreck of her beloved child's happiness. Too well she knew, that a nature, so shrinking and sensitive as was Cecilia's, a soul so fraught with purity and tenderness, would not soon, if ever, recover from the shock, which her husband's neglect, and more than all, his utter dereliction of faith, of truth, of every right and noble principle, had inflicted on her heart.

Desirous as soon as possible to remove her from the home, which almost from the hour when she first entered it, had been to her a scene of disappointment and chagrin,—the grave of buried hope and love, rather than the abode of that sweet domestic peace, which would have made to her fond heart an Eden in the desert—Mrs. Howard lost no time in hastening her return to Hazeldell, hoping much that its quiet beauty and the revival of dear and early associations, would produce a soothing and healthful influence on the mind of Cecilia. Grace Cleveland also went with them—the ardent and affectionate girl clung with more than a sister's fondness to her afflicted friend, and voluntarily gave up a pleasant summer tour, for the privilege of being permitted to share her retirement in the country. Secretly she was conscious of the happy and improving influence, constantly, yet quietly, exercised over her mind and heart by the gentle and lovely character of Cecilia. She lost not the native and artless gaiety which betokened a light and buoyant spirit, but she felt her soul touched and subdued by higher thoughts, by a truer appreciation, and a more intense love of the perfect and the

beautiful, and elevated by purer and nobler aspirations, that opened to it sources of knowledge and enjoyment, fresh and exhaustless as the ever-gushing fountain, that even in the arid desert, girdles itself with a living oasis of verdure and of beauty.

Perhaps also, one sentiment, secret, silent, unacknowledged even to herself, had lent its aid to effect this change in Grace—to transform the gay and playful child, into the tender and the conscious woman—to stir the still, untroubled depths of her soul, and wake it to the perception of a new life of higher and more exquisite emotions and enjoyments, than, wrapped in dreamless quiet, and repose, it had yet known, or in thought conceived. If this were so,—then it may be supposed that Grace felt no regret when Arthur Mayburne declared his intention of accompanying the little party to Hazeldell—where, however, he remained only a few days, when, leaving his friends quietly established in their pleasant and comfortable home, he returned to town, as on him devolved the task of arranging Evelyn's confused affairs.

The tranquil and familiar scenes of her earlier days, exerted a visible and soothing influence upon Cecilia's mind and health. It was about the middle of April, but the season, even for that genial climate, was unusually forward and lovely. It was the resurrection of nature from her long and wintry night of death. Every where she was bursting into life and beauty, and the bright waters of the Schuylkill, as they glided on through the lawns and groves of Hazeldell, murmured with a glad voice the rejoicing song of freedom from their icy bondage. How had Cecilia in other days loved to watch their lucid waves reflecting back the soft azure of the heavens, and imaging with mimic life the delicate tracery of every budding spray that fringed their banks with vernal beauty. How had the notes of the wild bird, as in its glad uprising it poured forth its ecstacy in song, awakened a responsive echo in her young and joyous heart—and with what a sense of overpowering rapture had she been wont to inhale the fragrance of the first spring-flower, to watch from day to day the progress of each unfolding leaf, the deepening verdure of the turf, the gay succession of blossoms that gemmed the gardens and the groves—each race more lovely than the last, and each marking with their silken petals, the brief bright periods, as they came and passed away, in the cloudless spring-time of her life.

Now, how changed seemed all that had once filled her with sweet emotion and delight. As she gazed upon the river in its still, yet rapid flow, it imaged to her mind the stream of human life, hastening onward to be swallowed in the