

them! Her heart felt sad, and she could have wept to look upon that young creature whose period upon earth must be so brief, who was fading away as a lovely flower blighted in its bloom. The form looked too fragile, the eyes too large and liquid, and the hand too purely transparent, long to belong to earth. Yet, like the close of a bright summer day, Constance looked more lovely in her decline. Everything around her accorded with the poetry of youth. The vases of flowers which were scattered through the apartment, and loaded the air with their rich perfume, betokened the presiding hand which would soon be there no more.

Ellen Douglas feared that her emotion might become perceptible, and striving to hide it, she made some remark concerning the beauty of the scenery of Ardmore.

"Yes!" replied Constance, "'tis a lovely spot, and endeared to me the more when I think how soon I shall leave it. My health has been long declining, and O'Donnel, my husband, wishes me to try the air of Italy, whether it will restore me. Ellen here started, notwithstanding all her attempts to repress her emotion. Constance, however, did not observe her, but continued, "I fear all his care and solicitude upon my account will be in vain. I know that I am dying, and it is useless to try to prolong that life which soon must cease. It is true that the air of Italy carries health upon its breath, but to me it cannot bring renewed life. But, forgive me," she added; "you are a stranger, and I only weary you with what I say. You desired to see Mr. O'Donnel; I will send a servant to inform him that you are here."

"I beg you will not disturb him, madam," replied Ellen, "I prefer remaining till he is disengaged. I merely wish to see him upon business for a few moments." And then, trying to resume the conversation, she said, "I trust that the air of Italy may prove beneficial to you, as it has been to so many."

Constance mournfully shook her head. "It is to no purpose," she said in melancholy tones. "They wish to take me from my home, but it will only be to find a grave. I will go, for it is the wish of O'Donnel, and it is all in my power that I can do to return his unwearied affection and solicitude upon my account; but I would rather breathe my last sigh in the home of my childhood. I would rather bend my last look upon the same streams and valleys as my eyes have rested upon since infancy. It is true that my mother sleeps in that fair land to which they are taking me, but I would rather repose among those familiar scenes, and beside my father. She

rests beside her family, but my father is here alone. I would rather be placed near him."

"Is Captain Fitzgerald dead?—is your father no more?" enquired Ellen Douglas, who knew nothing of the events which had occurred at Ardmore after O'Donnel's departure from her mother's house.

"Yes," replied Constance; "he was taken suddenly ill, while O'Donnel, whom he loved nearly as a son, was absent, studying at a distant University. I immediately recalled him, and, obedient to the hasty summons, he arrived here in time to receive my father's last breath and his dying blessing. It was then that O'Donnel and I were united, by the death-bed of my father. 'Twas a sad bridal," added Constance with a sigh.

For a moment the eyes of Ellen Douglas became dim, her senses reeled, and she felt as if she would have fallen to the ground, but with a strong effort she recalled her wandering thoughts. Constance continued speaking, but Ellen heard not a word. Every thought, every feeling, was engrossed by what Constance had said. Could this be the O'Donnel who had appeared to her youthful and inexperienced eyes all that was virtuous and noble,—in whose hands she had placed her happiness, and on whose faith she had implicitly relied? And was it thus that he had repaid her confidence, and returned the rich treasures of her love? Hardly had the solemn, the irrevocable words died upon his lips, which had bound him to her for life, when he had breathed them to another. Horror-stricken and indignant at what the words of Constance had revealed, the first impulse of Ellen's nature was to see O'Donnel—to reproach him for his guilt, and then to leave him to all the bitterness of awakened remorse. But as this resolution aroused her, and she was about to call upon him and expose his guilt, his violated words, the eye of Ellen Douglas fell upon Constance, and the sterner feelings of her nature melted at the sight of her whose happiness would be blighted by her revelation—the slender thread of whose existence would be broken if the awful truth were revealed to her. No! in mercy to the gentle, confiding wife, she would spare him who had destroyed her own happiness, who had withered the joy of her young heart. She would depart without beholding him, and return to her mother, to whom she would now unbosom all her griefs, and to whom she would devote the remainder of her life; and though it would be impossible ever to forget the sorrow which had darkened her early life, she might yet find a solace in performing those duties towards her parent which her declining years demanded.