

ed, wishing to turn to something more pleasant. "She is that, poor thing," he replied; "she takes more thought about me than all the rest put together; and if I am right, you would really think she minds naething else. And it's just surprising to see her, for neither play nor companions can take her away if she thinks I need her; and many a weary hour her merry face lightens. The Lord reward her for it!"

I was delighted with this testimony to Lilly's thoughtfulness, and very thankful that such a solace had been provided for the poor old man amid the many trials of his declining years. And my own observation afterwards proved, that this picture of her devotedness had not been overdrawn.

On all occasions I found her by his side; and even the merry play of others close by, seemed never for a moment to make her weary of her faithful and uninterrupted attendance on him.

As the season advanced, the old man's strength gradually became less; and at length, a violent cold brought on other complaints, which soon terminated his long-protracted earthly career.

Lilly alone seemed to mourn deeply his removal. But a sickly brother soon claimed her care, and in him all her affections seemed to centre,—and this, returning health did not diminish. She could not, indeed, then be his constant companion, because he was of an age to engage in regular labor. But her whole occupation, so far as she could herself command it, had reference to him. She fed his pets, and tended his favorite flowers, and she looked for his evening return as that which constituted her chief joy. The clinging tendrils of this delicate plant seemed again to have bound themselves closely to a supporting stem; and again the stem was to be wrenched away.

An apparently slight illness, which excited no apprehension in any other, drew forth all her tenderest anxieties; and a sudden death overwhelmed her with inconsolable sorrow. She thought that his illness had been neglected; that death might have been averted by better care; and her whole soul was filled with bitter and unavailing regrets. How strange a change had a few short days accomplished on her whole feelings and character! The light-hearted girl, occupied only with very trifles, had become burdened with fearful responsibilities, and solemn in the contemplation of eternal realities; and time was awakening a deep questioning in her inmost soul, as to what her own destiny, as an immortal being, might comprehend. In this, rather than in any outward object, her thoughts seemed now to centre; and for two years she lived a solitary and lonely thing, having no sympathy with any of the laborious, busy family that surrounded her, although she took her part with them in the needful toil which her condition demanded.

About this time, a companion of her brother's, who had, for some years, occupied a lucrative situation in a neighboring city, returned, after a severe illness, to a contiguous cottage, where he had been reared, in hopes that his wasted strength might soon be restored by his native air. His exhausted and sickly appearance at once drew forth all Lilly's sympathy; and as his mind, like her's had been awakened to the importance of eternal things, this feeling strengthened day by day, and soon a deeper and more heart-stirring affection than she had yet known, possessed her whole being.

The fresh breezes and the bright sunshine seemed daily to invigorate the bodily strength of her friend, and the time of separation thus drew near; but before he departed to resume his former occupation, it was fully arranged that he should shortly return to make Lilly the partner of his future lot.

So, bright with hope, they parted; but, alas! returning clouds were to cast a sad shadow of coming sorrow on their next meeting.

It needed but the loaded air of a manufacturing city to prove to Charles how far his recovery was from being complete; and he had no sooner returned to it, than his strength again began to fail. But he was unwilling to confess, even to himself, that it was so; and amid a heavy burden of labor, which he was little able for, he continued to struggle on, till he was once more seized with urgent and alarming symptoms, which again forced him to return home.

Lilly's heart sank within her as she gazed on his wasted form and hectic cheek; but he was full of hope, and what she fondly desired, she was too easily persuaded to believe. For a time, he seemed to rally, and she looked anxiously forward to the restoring influence of the summer's sun, which had before wrought such marvels.

But a trying spring was first to visit them with its piercing east wind, and Charles was destined to lie low amid the clouds of the valley ere the first summer's sun should warm his native hills.

The deep silence of Lilly's grief was most touching. It was too overwhelming to find utterance in words; and days and weeks had passed away ere the returning tide of sorrow gave back any echo from this cistern, which the deep waters of affliction had so entirely filled; and even then it was only slightly alluded to.

"And can this torn and bleeding heart," I said, "yet live and love again?" as I left her one day,—her form wasted, her color gone. Yes; and with all that energy of affection so peculiarly its own, clung, amid many trials, to the object of its choice.

Such a heart must have something to cling to; and Lilly's affections were once more placed where they seemed to find a return. But those who desired her happiness, doubted