

in vain, and which he was at last blessed with the hope of obtaining. He resolved to make her his wife, and accordingly sought an opportunity of declaring his love. He blindly imagined that his birth and wealth would insure success, forgetting that he possessed not a single quality that could win the affection of a pure young heart. Athenais, at first, gently but firmly refused his offers, but when he repeated them again and again, she became displeased with his perseverance, and repelled him with disdain. This seemed rather to increase than diminish his admiration, and he determined to obtain her at any sacrifice. He made known his wishes to the brothers, and besought their aid. Then was Athenais constantly persecuted with entreaties to become the wife of Marulles. Commands followed entreaties, and threats followed commands, until she had scarce a moment's peace. The brothers, seeing a chance of escaping the duty of maintaining her, whom they regarded as an incumbrance, were firm in their resolve to make her accept the offer, that they feigned to consider advantageous and desirable. They embraced every opportunity to throw Athenais into the now hated company of her admirer—they made her home more wretched than ever,—they wounded her heart by the most unkind and unfeeling words; in short, they made use of every means that cruelty could suggest, to force her into a compliance with their wishes. Weary of continual persecution, and overcome by despondency and grief, the unhappy Athenais knew not what course to pursue. Sometimes she was almost tempted to yield to the sad fate that threatened her, and then, the thoughts of sacrificing herself where she felt only dislike, and of being irrevocably united to age and vice, made her pure heart shudder with dread. At length she asked and obtained the boon of three days respite from solicitations, during which time she was not to be persecuted with threats or entreaties, or even spoken to on the subject that gave her so much pain. This favour was granted, on condition that she would spend the time in endeavouring to think more favourably of Marulles, and in learning to look upon a union with him as an event which she could not hope to avoid.

These three days seemed to Athenais, like a short respite granted to a condemned criminal. At one moment a joyous sense of freedom would thrill her heart, and then a dark remembrance immediately usurp its place.—Now a ray of hope would shoot athwart her spirit, and then the shadows of fear instantly

dispeil the light. Oh, how she longed for her father's counsel and advice, to guide her through the gloom that surrounded her path. But his voice was silent in the grave, and there was none to whom she could turn for consolation.

The last day of the three was drawing to a close, and Athenais had vainly striven to fortify her mind to meet the fate she dreaded with something like a spirit of resignation. With a heavy heart she went to the window of her apartment, and looked out upon the setting sun. As its last beams faded in the west, she was forcibly reminded of her father's dying hour, and a thrilling feeling of mingled awe and pleasure crept over her mind, as she fancied his spirit might be hovering near. Sinking on her knees, and lifting her tearful eyes to Heaven, she breathed an audible prayer.

"Oh, thou dear departed, if thou can'st leave the company of the immortal gods, to visit once more the scene of thy former life, look down, I pray thee, on thine unhappy child, and guide her safely through the perils that surround. The lessons of virtue which thou imparted, have failed to insure the promised happiness, and the rich store of wisdom which thou bequeathed, has not even purchased the boon of content. Oh, my father, without thy instructions are nothing. I am like a barque moving unguided over the waters, and speeding to destruction. Life that was sweet while shared with thee, is now a burthen too wearisome to bear, and I pray thee, shade of the departed, beseech the merciful gods to take me from the earth, and give me a home with them and thee."

This invocation, which expressed so truly and touchingly the deep sadness of Athenais, was interrupted by the sound of approaching steps. She looked up; her female attendant Marina, had entered the apartment—fear and anxiety were pictured on her countenance, and Athenais felt that some new trouble awaited her. Rapidly, and in a low tone, Marina imparted her information. She had, a few moments before, overheard a conversation between the brothers and the admirer of her mistress. By that it appeared, Marulles, fearful of losing the prize he so ardently sought, had obtained from the brothers, permission to wait Athenais without further delay. Every thing was prepared, and an early hour of the following morning was the time appointed for the ceremony to take place. Their victim's wishes were to be no longer consulted; she was to be forced to the altar, and, if she there persevered