

"but that scar, that horrid scar, can you ever get accustomed to it?"

"Ah, you do, indeed, make me ashamed of myself, by repeating my foolish words," returned the dear girl. "I would not have him without that scar for worlds. Indeed, as I now feel, every misfortune which, in the sight of others, might seem a blemish, would to me only prove an additional cause for deeper, stronger affection."

"And this is woman's love," I said, as I gazed on her beautiful animated countenance, pure, spotless, and devoted, in all its feelings. I mean that love, and that *alone*, which had its basis on religion.

At length, the end of the month drew near, when Captain Selby was expected. The day on which he promised to return had arrived—fresh flowers were gathered and placed in every room; and, for the first time, Annie's mind seemed wholly engrossed. The expectation of happiness, it has been said, is greater than the reality—but I have never thought so; there is too much excitement, too much restlessness, experienced in what we hope for. More particularly, if awaiting the return of some beloved object, when it frequently amounts to even pain. We listen to every sound. The slightest interruption causes a degree of irritation, and should minutes grow into hours, and they come not, expectation becomes then an agony. As I watched dear Annie all this day, I felt more than ever convinced of this—but when, at length, the well known step and voice were heard. Then, indeed, it *was* happiness, perfect and unalloyed, because there was no longer doubt. What a privilege I felt it, to witness and participate in the pure joys arising from the presence of one so deservedly beloved as Captain Selby, to behold his benignant countenance, gazing with delight on the beautiful innocent being, who had confided all her earthly happiness to his keeping.

The following week was fixed on for the marriage; there appeared a mysterious importance in the excellent Mr. Bertram at this time, which denoted some mighty secret ready to explode—he constantly said; "I know you are very curious, but ask me no questions, I can answer none. I have promised. Captain Selby would smile when he overheard him, which implied, that the secret was his, but that he did not consider it in very safe keeping."

The bridal morn arose one of the most lovely the season had yielded—and Annie in her white robe looked almost angelic.

Captain Selby led her to the little drawing-room, attired for the last time in his naval uniform—ornamented by handsome foreign orders.

Mrs. Fludyer had arrived with the bride's-maids,—and Lord Randolph, true to his appointment, as the friend of Captain Selby, was to give the bride away. The little girls, belonging to Annie's school, met us at the Church gates, strewing flowers in her path,

while their parents followed her with prayers and blessings.

Most feelingly and affectingly did Mr. Bertram read the service which was to give his only and beloved child to another, while tears of affection stood in his eyes and his voice faltered from emotion. The blessing was pronounced—the book was closed, and we had all returned to the parsonage, and were collected in the favorite room, where a tasteful breakfast had been laid, under the immediate superintendence of the bride's-maids, when Mr. Bertram, approaching Annie with great ceremony, led her up to her proud happy husband, saying :

"Lady Selby, permit me the honour of presenting Sir Edward Selby, of Blackhurst Castle, in the County of Wiltshire."

"This then was the secret which it had strained the prudence of the father to keep. "Not one hour longer could you have kept that to yourself, my dear sir," said I most provokingly; "I have seen it hovering on your lips for the last month."

"It would have been safe for a year," he replied with a long drawn breath, as if quite relieved from a weighty burden; "Sir Edward, what do you say?"

"My dear sir, you have indeed used every effort, I have only heard you allude to it five times since my return."

There was a general laugh, in which the happy father joined, while Annie calmly enquired—

"What does all this mean, Edward? I scarcely even now understand."

"It means," answered Lord Randolph, smiling as he approached her—"that Selby, being one of the vainest men in the world, was anxious to discover the full power his handsome face would have on a very pretty girl—and having met one who, by some unaccountable miracle, took a fancy to it—he now lays his title and fortune at her feet."

"Nay, nay, Randolph, although your shaft cannot wound me there now—yet you must not so interpret," returned Sir Edward, "Annie, I knew it not myself, until a few days previous to my leaving you, when I entrusted it to your father, whose only objection to my wishes, was the fear of your being taken from him—and to reassure him, I mentioned my new acquisition, and if perhaps, from an extraordinary feeling, difficult to define, I wished you to remain in ignorance, until you had given, with your young affections, your hand to Edward Selby the wanderer—the war-worn sailor—shall I be forgiven?"

He laid his hand gently on the shoulder of his fair young bride as he spoke. She raised it from its position, and pressing it to her heart with both hers, turned away with eyes filled to overflowing.

After breakfast, during which the utmost happiness, chastened by grave feelings, prevailed, Sir