

given,—and * * * * that day I was the companion of her wanderings.

Time sped on, and day after day, I was by the side of the Baron's daughter. We talked together, and her brother was the theme on which she loved to dwell, and I wished that I too had a sister to care for me. Once, indeed, I told the whole tale of my own misery, and she listened till the tears rolled over her fair cheeks—I would have forfeited earth or heaven to have kissed them off. Was it strange that I should love—madly love—a being so beautiful and so kind—one who listened to me, and did not chide—who was sad at my afflictions, and whispered that it was in my own power to make the world—myself—forget that which gnawed at my heart-strings.

Summer was advancing, and the time for her brother's return was near at hand, when her lonely walks would cease. The sun was near his setting, and I walked beside her towards her home, when, crossing a shining brook, in which a few stones had been placed as a rude ford, the step shook, and Clara stumbled. I was beside her, and my arm caught her as she fell.

"My guardian, ever!" she said softly, as she disengaged herself, and a smile chased the blush from her cheek.

"Oh! that I were indeed worthy to be thy guardian," I cried, and passion long pent up, swept in a torrent from my lips. "Maiden, hear me! If there be that which men call love—it is that which burns in my heart for thee!—if there be not, it is adoration! Fear not, lady! nor look on me with such a startled gaze. I ask only that thou wilt listen while I speak that with which my heart is bursting. Thou art beautiful, lady, but not thy beauty hath twined its spell around me. Thou art young, admired, honoured and happy—not for all this does my heart throb—but because, I have learned from thee, that all mankind hate not the unfortunate, *because they are so*. But, lady, though—all worthless as I am—I love thee with a warmth beside which whatever man hath felt for woman, were cold and passionless, I ask of thee no kindred feeling. I ask not that thou shouldst waste the treasure of thy soul upon a thing like me—nay, lady, I could see thee wed, and, rejoice in the happiness I knew was thine. Say, then, I am not scorned—that the boldness which hath given utterance to words like these, hath not won thy hate, and I will cross thy path no more."

"Hate thee, Walter, no!" she answered, trembling with strong emotion; "Hate thee! that were indeed a base return for all I owe thee. Nay, thy generous purpose claims, that I should speak as my heart dictates, though it may seem unmaidently. Walter, thou art loved! But in the same moment that thou hearest this, I claim thy promise that we never meet again. But if it will solace thee in

sorrow, know that I will never wed—so may I think on thee, without guilt and without shame. Walter, farewell."

"Thanks, lady, thanks," I exclaimed. "This is indeed more than I dared to hope—to ask—to wish for. I will go far from thee, and pray that sorrow may never dim the radiance of thine eye. My Clara, mine—once, and once only, let my lip speak thus—Clara, farewell!"

"Go, then, Walter, and remember that Clara of Loricale claims from thee that her love hath not been lightly wasted. Let the world speak of thee, when men who owe nobility to birth, die around thee, unhonoured and unsung—so will the faith of what thou hast said be tested. Walter, once again, farewell."

I knelt, and her hand was extended towards me—my lip touched it, and I rose, inspired with a new life. I would have again spoken; but Clara was gone, and my gaze followed her long after her receding form was lost to view.

Oh! the tumultuous feelings that thronged my heart. Joy to feel that I was loved, but woe to think how barren that affection was. But my breast heaved with a prophetic thought that her hope would not be blasted. I would be worthy of her love; the world would ring with my fame, and the glory of my deeds would obscure, if it could not efface, the shame to which I owed my being."

After a night spent in vain endeavour to trace out for myself a career that might be worthy of the hopes expressed by the beautiful maiden of Loricale, I rose unrefreshed and unhappy. The shuddering feeling with which the Baron had regarded me, seemed but an index to that of the world at large. I feared that all would so regard me, and I shrank from mingling among those who could thus trample upon one whom fate had left so branded. I felt that I could not pander to human pride, or fawn upon those on whom the world smiled, were it even possible that by those means, I could teach them to forget my shame.

But every hour was now big with fate, and long ere noon, a liveried slave of the castle came to request that I should attend his lord; and the question rose to my lips, what could he require of me? Could he dream of the intercourse I had held with his daughter? and if so, how could I best avert his wrath from her? I could not guess what the answers might be—but my mind was fixed, that no sacrifice of mine should be withheld if she might escape a moment's pain. I was not long in doubt; and in a brief space, I was ushered to the Baron's presence. When I entered, he was much agitated, and for some time he did not speak, when he did, his voice was husky, and had lost its haughty tone.

"Walter," said he, "I have sent for thee that I might offer something worthy of thy acceptance. I will speak openly. For my own sake as well as