

THE LITERARY GARLAND.

VOL. I.

JULY, 1843.

NO. 7.

THE NEGLECTED WIFE.

BY R. L. C.

When the last dread scene of Evelyn's mortal existence was closed, Cecilia retired from the chamber of death, to indulge in solitude the deep emotions which she had so long repressed, and which were far too sacred, and too full of anguish, to be exposed to any human eye. And in that hour of bitter sorrow, of bereavement, of agonising regret, and fearful retrospection, she acknowledged in the inmost recesses of her soul, the power and might of the pure religion she professed, to yield support and comfort, such as earth neither gives nor takes away. As humbly she cast herself, with her burden of griefs and cares, at the footstool of the all-merciful Father, she knew by the peace, the trust, the holy and gentle resignation, which, like the silent dew, fell even as balm from heaven upon her crushed and aching heart, that her prayer of faith and love was heard and answered.

Desolate and stricken as she was—wounded in spirit by the broken reed of earthly promise, on which she had leaned, as on a staff of adamant—she felt that nought save the support thus granted could have given her strength, and hope, and consolation, and taught her to endure with the subdued and chastened temper of a smitten child, the deep and sore affliction, which now, in the trust and meekness of her Christian faith, she received but as the discipline of love, severe, indeed, but healthful for her soul, which only through sufferings could be made perfect.

Deeply sad, yet calm and serene as an angel, Cecilia re-appeared in the domestic circle, giving most lovely and touching manifestations during this season of trial, of the enduring tenderness of woman's nature, and of the power, the vitality, the holy joy of the Christian's faith and love. She received also additional support and comfort at this time from the presence and sympathy of her grandmother, who was no sooner informed of Evelyn's death, than, forgetting her own personal infirmities, she repaired immediately to the city. Shocked she was by the change, that since she

last saw her, had taken place in her darling child. She expected, it is true, that the effects of illness and of sorrow would be fearfully apparent in her; but she was not prepared for the ravages which secret and corroding grief had wrought upon her health and spirit, and she reproached herself, that in spite of weakness and of age, she had not earlier left her home to watch over her happiness and comfort.

In her retirement, no rumour had reached Mrs. Howard of Evelyn's reckless and unworthy conduct—Cecilia's letters had been cheerful, even when her heart was breaking with its weight of grief,—for it was to her a source of anxious thought, how she might spare her kind grandmother the pain of knowing that a fatal blight had fallen on her promised joys. Yet in her solicitude to infuse into them the tone of a light and happy heart, there had sometimes been an apparent and over-strained effort, which did not escape the keen perceptions of the anxious grandmother. But if a momentary fear or suspicion arose that all Cecilia's soul dreams had not been realized, it soon passed away again, and she satisfied herself with believing that her dear child was in the possession of happiness, as unclouded, as was consistent with the imperfections of this changeable and uncertain life.

But Mrs. Howard had not been long in town, before she saw that some hidden cause of sorrow, sorer even than that proceeding from her loss, preyed upon the mind of Cecilia—nor was she slow in tracing it to its true source. Gifted with a strong intellect, possessing great knowledge of the world, and familiar with the details of business, she could not be made acquainted with the embarrassed state in which Evelyn had left his affairs, without strongly suspecting something radically wrong in his conduct. This led to enquiry on her part. She had been made to believe that the injury which occasioned his death was accidental. She now demanded of Arthur an unreserved explanation of all that had been so stu-

* Continued from page 287.