

before I can forget this. In speaking of your responsibilities, I meant only, that you were still capable of contributing to the happiness of others."

"And how should that be possible, when no one loves me well enough to care what I say or do?"

"Not, as I said before, to contribute to their happiness through the channel of your affections, or of theirs, but by making them familiar with the truths of the gospel, and increasing their acquaintance with the only true wisdom.

"Look at your situation, Flora, and at the situation of those around you; and you will surely cease to ask, where are your responsibilities? You have time, which few of them enjoy; talents which none of them possess; and attainments, far beyond their reach. Every one who is inferior to yourself, has some claim upon you; for why have you been so highly gifted, but to render your gifts conducive to the general good?"

"Ah! Emile, it is easy for you, who have always been so devoted, to practise what you preach."

"Is it easy for me, Flora? Is it easy for me to go through the same routine of duty, as I did, before the decree went forth against me? 'Behold, I will take away the desire of thine eyes.' Yet I will not complain: for I have lived through what I should once have thought myself incapable of enduring, and never could have sustained by my own unassisted power."

Emile then changed the conversation, for this was a subject on which he never allowed himself to dwell in words, whatever he might do in thought.

"I am anxious to know," he said, "whether the clergyman who now takes charge of this parish, will pay any attention to the schools. Whether he does or not, however, they are in excellent order; and with your superintendence, I have no fear that they will fall away. I have made out a list of the poor people whom I should like to commend especially to your care. I am sure you will visit them often, both for their sakes and mine."

He then described to me the circumstances of each—young and old—feeble and strong; and I appeared to listen; but I was in reality counting the strokes of the village clock, which seemed that night to strike the hours almost as rapidly as minutes.

"You surely do not hear the chaise," said he, taking out his watch, and seeing it was only nine, "we have one hour yet," he added, "let us spend it in commending each other to our heavenly Father. Let us part, as those ought to part, who have lately shared such solemn scenes as we have witnessed together."

We knelt together as we had often done before, beneath my father's roof, and with him it seemed as if his whole heart was poured into his prayer—as if he cast himself, wholly and without reserve, upon the mercy he implored; and consequently feared nothing, and felt nothing, but submission, and trust, and holy grace.

The burden of his spirit, however, that night was for me; and if the prayer of another could have saved me, I should have been snatched from the precipice on which I stood.

For myself, I joined not with that prayer, even in the secret of my heart. It seemed to me as if the heavens were as brass. And this solemn act of worship was ended, and I was spiritually unmoved. A sudden thought then came over me, that I would tell him all—all my sinfulness, and my estrangement from God; and perhaps he could help me. My heart began to beat violently and the words were already on my lips, when the approaching sound of a carriage warned me that the season of visitation had again passed over, and that I was to be left to myself.

Emile took leave of me with a degree of brotherly affection which surpassed my expectations. I received it, I believe, without any suitable return, for I neither saw, nor heard, nor felt distinctly, until the door closed, and the carriage had rolled away—and then came the tide of feeling like a flood.

The light of morning gleaming through my lattice found me in the same position I had assumed, when, after straining every nerve to listen if I could hear no longer any sound like carriage-wheels, I had sunk into my solitary chair before the fire. The light of morning found me with my feet upon the fender, and the white ashes lying cold upon the hearth.

CHAPTER V.

That portion of human existence, which appears the most lengthened in endurance, usually occupies in description the shortest space.

It would be impossible for me to say, how days, weeks, and months passed over me, after I was, in every sense of the words,

left to myself. I remember nothing distinctly but the evenings—and they were all alike. I might say, in the words of the poet,

"Endless, and all alike."

for when a day of intolerable length was drawing to its close, and my servant and her happy neighbours thought it all too short, I know that I had to summon fresh resolution for the lapse of time which still remained, before I could forget myself in sleep.

You will wonder what had become of my benevolence, and my active usefulness, when I tell you that I had no pursuits. Originating as they had done in an entire misunderstanding of my own motives and principles, it was impossible, after attaining a true knowledge of these, to carry them on as I had done before; and having once withdrawn myself from the sphere of action in which I took so conspicuous a part, I felt ashamed to enter upon it again in a manner less creditable or influential.

Thus I had no occupation; with books I had lost my companionship, for they awakened thought. I was too anxious to forget; and as for music, it was a perfect torture to me; for there was no tone, even of my own voice, nor melody, nor chord, that did not bring back to me the sweet and pleasant past, the old parsonage, my father, and my sister Lillah, and Emile, but, more than all, my own innocence and peace. Then followed the picture of what I had become—my loneliness—my separation from all things pure and holy—my wretchedness on earth, and my unfitness for heaven.

These were the thoughts that used to flow into my heart like a flood, evening after evening, as I sat alone, after the last sounds of the village had ceased, when the lights had vanished from the cottage windows, and the watch-dog had bayed himself to rest. It was then that I used to long for a distant storm to come booming over the billows, and roaring through the old trees which skirted the church-yard—that I longed for any thing, in short, to break the leaden stillness that closed around me like a tomb. And yet hour after hour passed away, and there was neither wave, nor throb, in that great world of space, of which I seemed to be the only occupant—the centre and the soul.

Need I say, that the habit I had contracted of drowning myself in forgetfulness, grew upon me daily, and was confirmed by the lengthened weariness of every night? In vain did I resolve, when morning came, that I would break through the bondage it was imposing upon me. Midnight again found me sleepless, unnerved, and miserable; while, secure that no eye beheld me, I poured out again the fatal draught, and again sank into a feverish and unrefreshing sleep.

During this melancholy season of my life, the only occupation which afforded me any interest, was corresponding with Emile. His letters were brotherly and kind; and, although they related chiefly to the poor people of the village, over whom he thought I still exercised a charitable care, they certainly stirred me up to a little improvement in my way of life, by affording me a motive for visiting my suffering neighbours, in order that I might give some account of them in return.

The time of the year was now approaching when I had lost my sister Lillah; and as the season came again, all things awakened in my mind a deeper sense of the sad changes I had experienced since then. Emile had found a living in a distant county, and though he sometimes spoke of visiting our village again, it was evident he thought with as much pleasure of seeing any of the paupers of the parish, as of seeing me. However, it was something to look forward to; and even had the event been trifling in itself, it was all my future had in store for me to hope, or dream of.

At last he fixed a time, though not a day. He was to come during one particular week, but he did not say exactly when; and the week passed over, and he came not, and my nerves were then in such a state, that I could ill bear suspense. I had waited until tidings came that the mail had arrived at a neighbouring town without passengers, when a fit of desperation seized me, and I swallowed more than my accustomed draught.

What followed I can but indistinctly recollect—a well-known step along my garden—a knock that could not be mistaken, at my door—a fluttering thrill of joy and fear, with an utter inability to maintain the balance between both. It was Emile, who had come to visit me in my loneliness—to speak to me again in the kind sweet tones of former days—to sit beside my evening fire, and to make me feel, had I been capable of such a feeling, that I was not quite an outcast.

I have said that I could not recollect what followed; but I can recollect too well, strange fits of laughter seizing me, while Emile was as strangely grave; mistakes which I had the sense to per-