

to her lips, and bathing it with her tears. "Your kindness, breaks my heart. If you knew it all?"—

"I do know all. All that you, my dear Sophia, could tell me."

"And——?" exclaimed Sophia, looking anxiously into her meek sister's face.

"I forgive you as earnestly as I hope, hereafter, myself to be forgiven."

"God bless you, Alice!" said Sophy, flinging herself upon the bosom of her kind nurse, and twining her arms about her neck, "and he will bless you, for your kindness to a heart-broken creature like me!"

The sisters wept long in each others arms—at length Sophy whispered: "This day, Alice, I may consider as the first of a new existence; never until to day, did I know the full value of life—the riches of a Saviour's love. If I had died in my sins—I could ever have seen God. Let me learn by your example how to live, that when death comes I may meet him as a friend."

Alice laid her hand upon the Bible. "Here, my dear sister, is the faithful monitor, who will instruct you in the knowledge you require. Adhere to this blessed guide, and you will not greatly err. It will lead you into the paths of righteousness; and believe me, dear Sophia, when I assure you, from my own experience, that her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

The day was passed by the sisters in reading and prayer, and towards night-fall Sophia remarked with some surprise, that her uncle had not been in during the whole day, to see her.

"He went out early this morning," said Alice, "and told me not to expect him home before night."

"Hark! I hear his voice beneath the window," said Sophia. "Do go, and tell him I want to see him." Alice instantly obeyed. In the parlour, she found a gentleman, wrapped up in a richly furred cloak, standing before the fire, with his back towards the door. The room was dimly illuminated by the red fire light. "Uncle!" said Alice laying her hand lightly upon his shoulder, "I am so glad you are home. Our dear invalid is impatient to see you."

The gentleman turned suddenly round, and revealed—not the benevolent face of her uncle, but the high features, and intellectual face of his son.

"My beloved Alice!"

"My dear Arthur! This meeting is indeed an unexpected pleasure," said Alice, as she received with a fluttering heart and crimsoned cheek, the fond salutation of her delighted lover.

"This meeting was unlooked for—unhoped for, on my part, six weeks ago," said Fleming. "The time of probation is past. I trust, my dear Alice, we shall be happy in each other's love."

"I trust we shall!" murmured Alice. "Where is your father?"

"Here," said a well known voice, "and not a little proud of his daughter. Take her, Arthur, and in her the best gift that heaven can bestow on man—a virtuous woman, whose price is above rubies."

"And may she prove a crown of glory to her husband," said a gentleman, stepping forward, whom Alice had not observed before, and whose voice made her start; "And may no regretful tears in after life mar the union which now promises so fair."

"It is Stephen!" said Alice, with a face beaming with innocent joy, "and my happiness is complete."

"Mine was complete a few minutes ago," said Arthur.

"And how are our dear friends in Devonshire, Stephen?" asked Alice.

The young man turned mournfully away. "The voice of grief, Alice, has been heard in my dwelling. Jane is no more. I trust she is a saint in heaven."

This unexpected intelligence gave a mournful revulsion to the joyous feelings which so lately pervaded the breast of Alice Linhope. While listening to all the particulars connected with this melancholy event, she did not observe the absence of her uncle, until the door slowly unclosed, and Sophia was borne in between Mr. Fleming and her mother. Stephen and Arthur wheeled the sofa to the fire, on which Mr. Fleming carefully deposited his precious burden, then turning to his son he said with a lively air: "Permit me, Arthur, to introduce you to a new friend and relation—one who, I am happy to say, is every way worthy of your regard."

"Cousin Arthur," said Sophia, turning to him, her still beautiful countenance bathed in tears, "you see before you a repentant creature. But I trust that her pride has not been humbled to the dust, or her heart been broken in vain."

Arthur was deeply affected by the alteration in Sophia's personal appearance. He could only reply to her pathetic appeal by pressing the emaciated hand extended towards him silently to his lips. Sophia felt the warm tears fall upon it, and she continued—"It has pleased the Lord to afflict me with many sorrows, in order to bring me to a knowledge of Himself; and, severe as the trial has been, I am thankful, for I feel that I have not suffered and wept in vain."

"Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy," said Stephen Norton. "Your mind, sanctified by affliction, shall find that peace in Christ which the world can neither give nor take away."

Restored to the affection and confidence of her friends, Sophia Linhope soon recovered her former health and spirits. Her countenance had lost much of its former vivacity; but its expression was sincere, and the smile that occasionally played around her lips, was no longer practised to deceive. She was an altered creature. The first time she quitted the house was to attend Alice to the bridal altar.