

THE WIDOW'S WEDDING.

BY MRS. E. C. EMBURY.

"This looks not like a bridal."

"TELL us a story, uncle; a true story," exclaimed half a dozen young voices, as a group of girls gathered around the arm-chair of the venerable old clergyman.

"But you complain that my true tales are all grave ones," answered Mr. B—.

"Well dear uncle, you must have married a great many people as well as buried them, during your long experience as a parish clergyman; tell us a story of some romantic wedding," cried a gay and giddy creature, seating herself on his footstool as she spoke.

"I remember but few joyous and merry scenes, my light-hearted Mary," answered the old man, as he parted the hair on her white forehead. "Did you never notice in an old picture that the dark tints are always the most enduring, while the once bright ones are faded and dim. It is much the same with the sketches which memory traces in the chambers of our imagery: when she uses the sombre hues of sorrow the picture remains unchanged, but when we would look upon some vivid scene of joy once brightly depicted on our minds, we often find only a ghastly shadow of by gone beauty. Weddings are not always scenes of happiness, Mary."

"I am sure they ought to be," said the maiden, with a blush and a smile.

"Well, children, you shall have your wish. I will tell you of a bridal at which I officiated in earlier life, and you shall judge whether it is sufficiently romantic to please your excited fancy.

"Among the most influential of my parishioners in the little town of Woodlands, was a family named Danville. The father had made a large fortune in trade, and leaving the business in the hands of two sons, had retired to a newly purchased estate in my neighbourhood, where he lived in a style of splendour, far exceeding that of the surrounding gentry. Proud of his wealth, and vain of its numerous appliances, with which he was surrounded, he was yet hospitable to his friends and charitable to the poor; and if much of his hospitality and charity might be traced to the ostentation which was his besetting sin, yet those who knew him were willing to excuse the weakness for the sake of its frequent good results. His wife resembled him in some points of character. Her past experience of the evils of poverty, had perhaps tended to increase her sense of the

value of money, while it served to keep alive in her a spirit of economy which savored strongly of parsimony, and blended most strangely with the love of display, which formed a prominent trait in her disposition. She was at once luxurious and mean—seeking to outshine her neighbours but always at the least possible expense. The sons were men of business, engrossed in the acquisition of gain and having no thought beyond their day-book and ledger.

"But how shall I describe their only daughter, Margaret? It seemed a strange fate which placed a creature so delicate in all her perceptions, so sensitive in her feelings, so refined in all her tastes, amid a family so coarse in their habits. Her figure was almost too fragile for perfect symmetry, but her face was full of that gentle, spiritualized loveliness which the painters of olden time imaged in the countenance of the Madonna. I think I see her now, with her soft brown hair braided smoothly upon her fair brow, her deep blue eyes full of liquid light, and her cheek wearing the delicate tint seen in the inner fold of the sea-shell. Quiet and placid in manner, every movement was full of grace. She had none of the buoyancy of early youth, but her demeanor was characterized by a timid and gentle reserve, which spoke rather of subdued feelings than of a cold nature. She always seemed to me like some delicate wild flower which had sprung up in native fragrance and beauty amid a bed of gaudy and flaming exotics. She was an only daughter, and of course an heiress, and her parents looked forward to the period when she should contract a brilliant marriage. Visions of French Counts and German Barons, and even vague dreams of the younger son of an English peerage, visited the scheming brain of Mrs. Danville. She determined that Margaret should visit Europe and she scarcely doubted that she would return with a title which might excite the envy of all her acquaintances. She reflected upon the splendours of such an alliance; the sound of 'my daughter, the Countess,' rung in her ears, until she almost believed that her wishes were prophecies.

"In pursuance of these plans, Mrs. Danville steadily discouraged the visits and attentions of all those young men, who, attracted by the charms and fortune of Margaret, would willingly have sued for her favor. She wished to keep her daughter secluded from society, lest some girlish fancy should mar her plans, and Margaret's retiring habits rendered this no difficult task. In fact Margaret felt little enjoyment in society, for she knew that the watchful eye of