

ner accountable, and you will oblige me by waiving the subject for ever."

Even had she possessed strength and voice, what could Alice say? In total silence they arrived at her humble home: in total silence, the footman let down the steps, pulled the bell, and then, Mrs. Graham frigidly exclaiming: "Good night," the carriage drove off. It was Mrs. Sydenham who answered the summons, her one domestic having hours before retired to rest, and an exclamation of horror escaped her, as the pale, suffering face of her daughter, met her view.

"Alice! Alice! You look dreadfully pale. What is the matter?"

"Oh! mamma, I am so wretched," sobbed the young girl, as she threw herself in a paroxysm of tears into the fond arms, so eagerly opened to receive her. "I have been tried beyond my strength."

Mrs. Sydenham, seeing the inutility of attempting to restrain her emotion, permitted her daughter to indulge freely in it, her only token of sympathy, a gentle pressure of her hand; but after a time, the violence of her sorrow began to subside, and the mother softly whispered.

"Then, my own Alice, your bright expectations have not been fulfilled."

"Alas! no!" she rejoined, raising her streaming eyes. "Would that I had never gone! Would that, by the sacrifice of half my existence, I could blot out from my happy life, this last night of bitterness, of suffering, of agony."

"Hush! my child! this wild sorrow is sinful in the eyes of your Creator. He has not afflicted you so heavily as to call forth such vehement grief. Be patient, and bear as a Christian should, this your first trial. Alas! my darling! you will through life, be that life ever so fortunate, have many such. Retire to rest now, and to-morrow you will tell me all."

"Oh! no, mother! let me tell you now. It will relieve my heart, which seems almost breaking."

"Well, as you will, my child! but throw off that foolish dress, and set yourself near the fire, whilst I get you some hot coffee, which you sadly need."

When Mrs. Sydenham returned, she found poor Alice seated in an easy chair, in her dressing gown, gazing on the bright coals in the grate, whilst she silently wiped away the burning tears which, notwithstanding her late outburst of emotion, continued to fall like rain. But loving tones and cheerful words are efficient aids in dispelling sorrow, and the young girl was soon able to relate, with tolerable calmness, the many bitter events of the night. Nothing did she omit, nothing did she equivocate, even to the episode

of Henry St. John, and the vain fancies she had wasted on him. We will pass over the gentle, yet forcible, counsels imparted by Mrs. Sydenham to her daughter—the moral she drew from the bitter lessons she had received; suffice it to say, they sank into her heart, and in after life, bore noble fruit.

The following day, after a sleepless, tearful night, Alice was seated in the sitting-room, despoiling her festal robe, which she inwardly vowed never to wear again, of the ribands adorning it, which she intended converting to some more useful purpose; but though the white fingers moved with strange rapidity, they often desisted to dash aside the glittering drops that fell upon them. The door unclosed, but she heard it not; a step approached, and the next moment Alice was clasped in the arms of the old gentleman, her friend of the preceding night.

Ere she could disengage herself from his warm, heartfelt embrace, the voice of Mrs. Sydenham, who had entered at the moment, exclaimed, in tones of startled surprise:

"Good Heavens! Uncle Weston! Is it possible!"

It was indeed the wealthy but eccentric James Weston, her indifferent, cold hearted relative.

"Well! my own little Alice!" said the old man, drawing tenderly towards him the young girl, whose changing colour betokened her astonishment. "Tell me, are you willing to acknowledge the relationship?"

"But—but,"—she at length stammered; "how can you be my uncle? You are not like the miniature. You have neither raven hair nor dark eyes?"

"Not now, but I had twenty years ago," he returned, bursting into a merry laugh. "You do not imagine I was to have remained always in the same state of preservation I happened to be in, when I sat for the portrait in your mother's possession."

"And you told me your name was—was"—Alice paused, for though she felt assured it was not Weston, yet she could not recall the appellation he had given.

"Yes, I told you my name was Hammersly, and that was no great departure from truth, for I was christened James Hammersly Weston."

Her doubts all dispelled, with a confused though happy smile, she threw herself in his arms, murmuring:

"My dear, good uncle! How different are you to the stern, unkind being, my traitorous imagination had painted."

"And whose cause you nevertheless, so warmly, so nobly defended. Oh! how grateful should I