

another cloud over that clear moon, a moment less of time, and that vigorous form, so rich in all the gifts of nature, so animate with life, and adorned with youthful beauty, might have been stretched upon the silent bier in a house of mourning and desolation.

"I cannot tell," said Falkland, as if thinking aloud, "how it is that that poor fellow so entirely lost his presence of mind. He had no more power to help himself, than a child would have had under such circumstances. And yet to see the mirth of his merry face not half an hour before, when we rode down to the beach, and the cliffs echoed with our laughter. When I think of this, and the last look of agony I caught as he fell back in the water, his clenched hand still holding that shroud of my dress—oh, mother! it makes me wish to hide myself in the earth, or in some place where this horrible vision never could pursue me."

"He was so unprepared, too," said Mrs. Falkland, "and such a character!"

"There are many persons," said Grace, "who die in their own chambers, and with all the warning of long illness, as unprepared as he was."

"Ah, Grace," said Julia Falkland, "will you never see these things as you ought to see them?"

"When young women like you," observed the mother, "who have been virtuously brought up—when such make excuses for the vices of men, what can we expect?"

"Shall I bring your shawl, dear aunt?" asked Grace. "The evening air grows cold."

"Perhaps we had better all retire," said Mrs. Falkland.

"No, no," said George, detaining both his mother and his sister. "And you too, my poor little Grace. You shall no longer stand shivering there. Come sit down near to Julia; for I want you all to witness this night, that I discharge my conscience of a load, so far as I can be discharged by an act which refers merely to the future. Would to Heaven it could expiate the past!"

"I now want you all to hear me, and to bear witness to my vow, while I look to you all with the same clear moon—the same blue skies above me—I want you all to bear witness to my vow, which I promise that, as God will give me strength, from this time henceforward, I never more will grieve my poor mother's heart as I have done—I never will stain my own character, nor suffer the moral degradation which man must suffer under the mastery of wine, and in the fellowship of those whose only enjoyment is the excitement of the moment, purchased by the sacrifice of domestic peace. Now this is my vow. My mother, my Julia, my poor Grace, you must all help me to keep it."

A solemn silence followed. The mother's hands were for a moment clasped together in the attitude of thanking until her feelings burst all bounds, and she actually sobbed aloud. Julia leaned her head upon her brother's shoulder, while her tears fell thick and fast upon his bosom. Grace alone was silent, and wept not like the rest.

They were a happy little party who sat beside Mrs. Falkland's ch. and felt that evening, for they were happy in that peaceful solemn feeling, which, beyond all others, deserves the name of happiness. They were happy in knowing that evil was renounced, and good, at least, intended—happy in confidence restored, in affection valued, in trust held sacred, and in peace regained. If Grace Dalton looked less cheerful than the rest, it was only that she had a different way of showing her satisfaction; for none were more thankful than she was for the resolution her cousin had made. Nor was he unconscious of her meaning, when she held his hand at parting for the night, and looked up into his face, and bid him such a kind good-night, as spoke the true language of affectionate regard. But there were also other proofs of her sympathy with his state of mind, with which none were acquainted.

It was her custom at all times to visit his chamber, as well as her aunt's and Julia's, before the hour of retiring to rest, to see that all things were ready for the night, and all their comforts separately and regularly provided for; though she never, on any occasion, neglected these of her cousin George, and would have done just as much for him when she knew he was transgressing the rules of propriety and decorum, as she did at other times; yet on this night she had taken a bible—a book she feared he too much neglected—and placed it on his dressing-table, in order that he might, if so disposed, strengthen his recent resolution, by studying its sacred and consolatory pages. George Falkland saw the strange volume, and supposed it had been his mother or his sister who had placed it there.

And now the hour of escape from observation arrived for poor

Grace—the hour she was in the habit of calculating upon many things during the long day—the hour when she could shut the door of her chamber, and feel that she was alone—the hour when, if she could do nothing to serve the secretly beloved, she could at least pray for him. Bewildered with the confusion of images, which through this day had flitted before her; worn to a state of weariness, which left her no power to rest; distracted with the part she had been acting, sometimes false, and sometimes too sorrowfully true—she had a vague feeling, that by flying to her own room, and casting herself upon her knees, she should be able, as on other weary nights, to throw off some of the burden of her soul. What then was the agony of her mind, when, after assuming this attitude, the thought suddenly flashed across her brain, that she had no longer any one to pray for—that his doom was now sealed for ever—that neither tears nor supplications could now be availing for him.

How little do they understand of true loveliness, who have never known this state! Grace arose from the ground appalled with a fresh sense of her situation; and wringing her hands with a burst of uncontrollable agony, would at that moment have freely suffered every torture that human nature is capable of sustaining, to have called him back but for one hour of repentance.

It was not long, however, before this bitter agony gave place to feelings of a softer nature; and recollecting the solemn event which had that evening bound together, as by fresh ties, the family with whom she was so intimately connected, she knelt down again, and prayed for her aunt, who had always been to her as a mother, for her cousins, but most of all for George, that he might be enabled to maintain his purpose; and then she turned to the solitary father in his lonely home; and so, after a long time, she rose up comforted, and, walking to her window, which commanded a view of the village, she looked out, and saw that a dim light was still burning in the old man's window.

"How could I be so wicked?" said she. "There is always some one left to pray for; and, perhaps, this old man has no interest in any other prayers than mine."

The following morning Grace Dalton was able to put in practice a plan she had formed for visiting the father of the deceased, without appearing designedly to obtrude herself upon his notice; and in this she obtained the full approbation of her aunt, who was extremely anxious to adopt some mode of expressing her sympathy with the bereaved parent. He was, however, so little known to any one, so reserved and inaccessible in his own character, that this was an object of no easy attainment; and had not Grace been a more than commonly willing messenger, and so meek besides, as not to shrink from the probability of meeting with a repulse, Mrs. Falkland's intended kindness would never have been carried into effect.

There were many considerations now to be entered into with regard to the funeral, in which female aid was not altogether out of place; and Grace began, by consulting with the servant, and occasionally sending messages to the master, which he answered promptly, and without evincing any thing like displeasure, but rather as if relieved from a burden, by others having taken this affair upon themselves. Grace had imagined it would be so, for she possessed that kind of intuitive insight into character, which a naturally strong power of sympathy affords, and which is, perhaps more serviceable in the common events of life, than talents of a higher and more distinguished order.

Thus before the day of the funeral arrived, Grace Dalton had become a sort of authorized assistant in the melancholy preparations; and retiring and modest as was her general bearing, her aunt and cousins were surprised to find the tact and skill with which she contrived to manage these affairs, without appearing to manage them at all. Mrs. Falkland and her daughter had both made the same experiment, and had both failed. They were too much of fine ladies to suit the taste of such a man as Kennedy; and besides, they were now too happy to sympathize with him in reality, though they spoke fluently and well in the language of condolence. Grace, on the contrary, seldom uttered an expression which could lead the reserved and solitary man to think that he himself was the subject of her observations. He only noticed that she took a part in the preparations for the funeral; and he thought it was quite right for those who had a taste for such things, to take them into their own hands.

And now the morning of that day had come, and all things were in readiness; and Grace Dalton felt that her melancholy task was done; for what right had she to take part in the mour-