

wrote to her father, expressing a strong desire to see him and receive his blessing ere she died. In thanking him for the kindness he had shown her, she entreated he would extend it towards her orphan child, and take her under his protection. Sir Henry Woodford was much affected when she handed him the letter to read; for many moments he was silent, shading his face with his hand.

"And is it really so, my Katherine?" he said, mournfully; "are the hopes I had fondly viewed in the far distance, to fade away for ever? Oh, say not so!"

"They will shine again in a better world, dear and excellent friend," returned Katherine, who, clasped to his bosom, rested her fair head on his shoulder. "Here all is imperfect, unreal, unstable; there all is light and peace everlasting."

From this day Sir Henry never addressed her in the accents of a lover; those who knew him beheld the struggle within his breast to combat his feelings, but from the world he sedulously concealed them. As week after week stole away, Katherine faded like a beautiful flower; all now felt the nearness of that dreaded hour which was to separate them from her forever in this life—all, save Clara, who would not believe it possible, that the friend so dear to her was stricken by the hand of death.

"Oh, no! she looked better—she seemed happier—she smiled more frequently," she would say when her mother strove to prepare her for the event; "when the spring returned they would see how she would revive."

Old Cicely, who dearly loved the marvellous, affirmed that she had lately seen lights gleaming from the casements of the ruin, and figures moving within its crumbling walls at midnight, when she watched beside the couch of Mrs. Warburton; this, she said, clearly foretold her speedy departure. In the days of old Sir Henry Woodford the same appearances had been visible. Lady Woodford smiled at the superstition of her simple, yet faithful nurse; she knew that occasionally the ruin had proved a shelter to the poor wandering outcast from the winter's blast—that the embers of a fire had been discovered, with other signs of human beings having been there, which at once explained the mystery. This Christian lady looked to far higher causes; she felt that the impending sorrow came from a hand unerring in its wisdom, unchangeable in its love and mercy, save to those, who, hardened and impenitent, dare its severest judgments—from that God who had hitherto led his child over many a thorny path, and who was now guiding her safely and surely through the dark valley.

Katherine was perfectly prepared for, and resigned to, the approaching solemn event; her only yearning anxiety seemed to be to behold her father once more. This preyed on her at times painfully; at others she would say:

"I must not think so much about it, lest my thoughts become wandering and distracted; I have done with earth—its hopes—its cares; my joys are *there*," pointing upward.

She was now quite unable to leave her couch, so rapidly had the fatal consumption gained upon the delicate fabric; even the caresses of her child, blooming in health and spirits, were too much for her. She would lie for hours meditating, while her moving lips and clasped hands disclosed that she was engaged in secret prayer. She delighted in listening to the soft voice of Clara, as she would read to her the most comforting portions from Scripture, or talk to her of the glories of another world.

"Ah! dear Katherine!" said this interesting girl to her one day, "were it not for my beloved mother's sake, how earnestly I would desire that the angel sent for you might convey me also to those bright and happy realms! When all our fond hopes decay, and disappointment meet us at every step, why linger, a weary thing, below! Yet ungrateful that I am, possessing so many blessings and means to show kindness to the distressed—why, because my heavenly father denies me *one* wish, should I repine and weep? Let your beautiful and meek example under the heaviest calamities, rebuke me for my sin!"

As if to gratify the only remaining wish of Katherine, a few days before her death, a letter addressed to herself came from her father, styling her his beloved child. In this he told her that he had been seriously ill, or he should have sooner replied to her affecting letter; he expressed his deep regret at her failing health, but trusted it was not materially shattered. He intended starting for England immediately, and proposed taking her to Madeira or to some more genial climate, soon after his arrival; touchingly he gave her his blessing and forgiveness, promising to prove a better father to her child than he had ever been to her.

As Clara concluded reading the letter, Katherine raised her eyes in thankfulness, murmuring in the lowest tone:

"Oh, wonderful change in that cold heart—to God be all the glory! I have my father's blessing and forgiveness, and now I may depart in peace!"

Not for one instant was she now left alone—her affectionate friends hovered round her pillow by day and by night, while Mr. Atherly prayed for her and with her. Very affecting were her