

loved you when a child, a lonely companionless child—a woman's love is a gift more worthy;—but my father—”

“Will not surely control you in this, Agnes?”

“No, Charles, my father would do all to make me happy; but my first duty is to him. Remember, I am all that he has to love, and would you have me leave him?”

“No, not leave him; but he can go with us. A sea voyage will revive him. We will go to Italy—to Greece.”

“I could not ask him, Charles. He is quite feeble now, and when I have sometimes told him of my longing desire to go to Europe, he has said he would gladly take me, but he felt he never should return; and, now, if he knows your wishes and my feelings he will make me go, sacrifice himself, and part with the only thing that brightens his life. I know his generous nature—he must not know anything of this.”

“But, Agnes, you are everything to me, now, and how shall I feel when an ocean separates us?”

“What we shall feel is not the question, but what is right to do.”

“Do you think it would be right, Agnes, to conceal it from him?”

“Under other circumstances, nothing should tempt me to do it. He has always been the repository of my most secret thoughts; but, now, I must judge for myself, and for him too. When you are gone, and there is no possibility of his insisting on my accompanying you, I shall myself tell him all.”

“Dear Agnes, you always think of others, and I feel too happy to dispute even this point with you. A year is a long time to be away from you, but there are happy years beyond, when nothing shall separate us. As some one has said, ‘however large the cloud may be, the blue sky is larger, if we could but see far enough.’”

Charles left us soon after, for the vessel in which he was to go, sailed in a few days, and he hastened to the port. Agnes was true to her word. I saw that she suffered, but it was in silence and unseen by her father. Two days after he left us, Mr. Beaufort was taken violently ill—a fit of coughing occasioned the bursting of a blood-vessel, and he was reduced at once to a dangerous state of weakness.—Agnes was his only nurse; her voice was always soothing, and from her lips he received the strength and consolation which he needed. To me she poured out the bitterness of her grief, but to him she was always bright and

cheering, and, as earth seemed to fade from his view, she would point to the growing brightness of heaven, the glorious promises of life and immortality, which, like stars, shine most brightly above us, when all around is dark, and earthly objects are unseen. I saw his danger, and knowing the sad scenes that would soon follow, was anxious to recall Charles, who had not yet sailed, but Agnes would not suffer it. He was on the path of duty, and she would not call him back.

Mr. Beaufort lingered but a little while, and Agnes finding that her lonely and desolate condition was weighing upon him, revealed to him her engagement, and the reasons which had induced her to conceal it. He felt deeply the generous and delicate feeling that had actuated her, and it lessened the agony of parting, to know that he left her to the guardianship of one whom he had long loved and could fully trust. He confided his darling child to my care, until Charles should return, entreating me to remain there with her as her guardian and friend. For her father's sake, Agnes had summoned all her strength and self-control, but when he was gone, and there was no further call for effort, she sank under the blow. Her warm and clinging affections had lost their object, and this bitter grief seemed to have opened afresh those wounds which the early loss of her mother and brothers had inflicted. At first I tried in vain to rouse her.—The happy future was separated from her by a great gulf of sorrow, which she could not pass over. The first thing that recalled her was a letter from Charles. He had a very rough and stormy passage, and had suffered so much from exposure, that, as he told Agnes, he could not be sufficiently thankful that her high principle had overruled his selfish and impetuous feelings, with regard to her father. He had ascertained that the object of his visit could be accomplished during the winter, and he should then return immediately. I now tried to turn her attention from her own sorrows to those of others, which she could relieve, and she busied herself during the winter, in visiting the few poor cottagers around us whom her father had been in the habit of assisting. She took care of all his favourite greenhouse plants, and when the deep snow confined us to the house, the library was an unfailing resource; here she read the books he had marked out for her, endeavouring in every way to reach that high standard of womanly excellence he had ever set before her.

The long dreary winter at length passed