

was called forth, to help him to endure this stroke; all that was generous in his heart, to comfort and support us both; all that was sterling in his principles, to exemplify the virtue of true Christian resignation; and all that was tender in his feelings to sooth, not only the object of his devoted affection, but even me.

I have watched him sometimes in that sick room, and listened to the tones of his modulated voice, until I could not help wondering how it was with Lillah, that she could be so willing to die, and to leave the enjoyment of so much earthly happiness as she might have possessed with him.

She, poor girl, though day by day becoming weaker, was mercifully supported on her sick-bed by that holy faith which she had for a long time been cherishing in her meek and quiet soul.

For myself, it would be impossible to describe how my mind was tossed. Wave after wave seemed to roll over me. Sometimes I started with a shudder from strange calculations I had been almost unconsciously making, about Lillah's death. At other times, I am certain I would freely have given my life to save her; for what could I ever be to Emile, even when Lillah was in her grave?

It may be easily supposed that all this while I had an increased tendency to apply to those means of supporting my mental and bodily exertions, which the doctors had so strongly recommended; and having almost entirely lost my natural appetite for wholesome food, and being also kept in attendance upon my sister through the greater part of every night, the habit of recurring to such means for stimulus and support, increased rapidly upon me; until I was sometimes scarcely sensible of my actual situation, and certainly far from being so distressed as I otherwise should have been, at the prospect of a final separation from my sister.

There were times, however, when I felt but too keenly, that, by this separation, I should lose the only being upon earth who really loved me. There were times, when I watched the fever burning on her cheek, and wished it could be translated to my own, that she might live a happy peaceful life on earth, and that I might pass away and be forgotten.

Lillah was so beautiful too, in her illness—so filled with sweet thoughts for those around her, it must have been a heart harder than mine that could have withstood her inexpressible tenderness. She had always been lovely and attractive; but the progress of her disease, with the advancement of her religious experience, not only deepened the lines of her former beauty, but added a spiritual character to the expression of her countenance; so that we could not help feeling, as we sat beside her, as if in the presence of some purified being, about to be translated to its native sphere of peace, and joy, and love.

"Oh, take me with thee, sweet sister, to that better land to which thou art hastening!" was the language of my heart, as I bent over her, singing, as I often did, at her request, those favourite hymns which seemed to sooth her feverish moments; and then she used to fold her thin white hands upon her bosom, and fix, as if upon the gates of heaven, her clear blue eyes, now grown so large, that but for the shadow of their long dark lashes, they would have looked almost wild.

I know not how it was, but her glance became so penetrating, that sometimes, when she turned her eyes suddenly upon me, I used to start; and when I searched my heart to discover why, perhaps I had fallen into some strange reverie about her being gone, and Emile and I being left alone; and then I know a guilty blush used to rush into my face, for once or twice Lillah asked me the reason. Yet I will say, in justice to myself, that I was faithful to her both in heart and hand; and if ever these dark dreams came over me, it was only to be dismissed with as much horror, as she herself would have felt, had she known them.

I have said that Lillah was so beautiful, so gentle, and so kind, that it was our happiness to be near her; and hitherto she had suffered so little pain, that we would willingly have kept her on her sick-bed, rather than witness the breaking of the frail cord which bound her still to earth.

We could, however, no longer deceive ourselves with regard to the change that was taking place. Increase of fever was followed by increase of inflammation, and then came restlessness and ceaseless pain, and frequent wanderings of the mind, which still, however, kept in view the heavenly rest to which it was hastening; for all her delirium was only like a blessed dream, in which she beheld more vividly the wonder and the glory about to be revealed.

I never shall forget the anguish of Emile to see her suffer. It was, no doubt, the means of softening to him the stroke that was soon to fall; for he seemed as if he would rather part with her

for ever, than see her suffer for an hour. And yet, with all our tenderness, and all our solicitude, we could do nothing to help her. The hand of death was heavy upon her, it was fearful to see the frail victim quivering in his grasp.

At last there came a calm; a season of sweet peace. She spoke again in her own familiar tones, and asked to have the window opened, that she might feel the breeze, and see the sun shine in once more. Her pain had ceased. She smiled, and said she felt nothing; but it was an awful calm, and Emile and I kept silence, until we could hear the beating of our own hearts. She took our hands in hers, and fixing upon Emile a look of intense and holy love,—“I am passing away,” she said, “beloved friend of my soul. I know that to you the world will be more desolate when I am gone; but is it not a blessed thought, that when your labours here are ended, I shall be the first to welcome you to our Father's mansion in the skies?”

“My poor Flora,” said she, then turning to me, “with all your genius and all your talents, you will be very lonely. But Emile will comfort you. He will be all to you that he would have been to me. Will you not Emile? Promise me this, before I leave you.”

I felt his hand tremble violently as it touched mine. I looked into his face. A slight convulsion passed across his lips, which were as pale as ashes.

“I will be all to your sister,” said he, “that your husband can be.”

She looked at him again, and smiled; as much as to say, he had evaded her question. She tried to speak, but the tide of life was ebbing, and in a few moments she had ceased to breathe.

After a long and solemn pause, Emile knelt down beside the bed, and poured forth his soul in prayer. We were alone in the world—alone in the presence of the dead—alone in the sight of Heaven. How did I long, in that awful moment, to pour forth my spirit also, through the same channel—how did I long to come, like the prodigal, and to make confession that I was no longer worthy to be called my Father's child. How was it that I hardened myself at such a time, and allowed the day of visitation to pass by?

It was easy to discover that I was nothing new, or worse than nothing, to Emile. He was kind, but so distant; as if he thought I should presume upon my sister's dying request. It was a delicate subject to touch upon; for how could I explain to him that I had neither desire nor expectation that he should act upon my sister's wish. Yet I was determined to make the effort; for existence was heavy enough to me, without the burden of this thought.

“Emile” said I, once when we were spending a long dull evening together; “it is absolutely necessary that you and I should perfectly understand each other. Know, then, that I have no more desire than you, that you should act upon the sisterly suggestion of her, whose wish in almost any other case had been my law. I could not have said this to a man of common mind. You, I feel assured, will be able to understand my motives, and the price at which I would purchase your peace and mine. Besides, you are the only friend now left to me in the whole world, and I cannot afford to lose you for a scruple of delicacy. Do not, then, be afraid to be to me all that common kindness would dictate. Do not regard the inferences which may be drawn. As my father's friend, and my sister's husband, you owe me some consideration, and I have a right to claim it. As I said before, I have not another friend in the world. Do not forsake me because others have kindly wished for you and for me what we have never wished for ourselves.”

Emile held out his hand. He even pressed a brother's kiss upon my forehead.

“Thank you, Flora” said he, “I thank you a thousand times. I am neither so vain nor so presumptuous as to suppose that I could ever be to you what I have been to another; but I own I did fear that my attentions might have been misconstrued; and that you might, consequently, have been reduced to the painful necessity of treating me with coldness. I therefore determined that the pain and the coldness should both be mine; but it seems I was mistaken in my calculations, and that I should have been more delicate, had I been more kind.”

The day of my sister's funeral had been one of more than common sadness. Emile and I had walked together to the grave. We were the only mourners. The grass had scarcely grown over the turf where my father was laid when another white tablet was placed within the same enclosure, which seemed already widening with a cold welcome for us.