

THE NEGLECTED WIFE.

BY E. L. C.

Without stopping, as was often her custom on returning home from a gay party, to discuss in the drawing-room the events of the evening, Cecilia passed directly on to her chamber, her weary frame, and wounded spirit, longing for repose and solitude. Dismissing her maid, whom she found fast asleep, she cast aside, without one glance at her mirror, the rich dress and adornments of her person, and, like a drooping child, crept gladly to her couch—though not, like that, so happy as to lose, in the sweet forgetfulness of sleep, the poignant remembrance of waking care and pain; for on this night she found not her pillow strewn with roses—thorns had usurped the place of love's own flower, and they pierced her cruelly with their sharp and unsheathed points.

Already had her confidence in her husband's principles been more than once shaken; yet, with woman's own fond and trusting faith, she thought still to win him, by gentle words, and loving acts, to tread with her that path of rectitude, which she had ever found so full of pleasantness—which, though leading, as it sometimes may, through darkened valleys, and over treacherous sands, is still a path of safety—showing to the eye of the steadfast pilgrim, many a way-side flower, fraught with celestial beauty, and revealing, through its narrow vistas, the glorious light of that spirit land, where the weary foot shall find a haven of undying rest, and the faithful heart be crowned with the full fruition of its hopes.

But the observation of this night had made Cecilia fear that her fond and pure desire was cherished in vain—it had revealed to her some traits of her husband's mind and character, which circumstances had not before unveiled to her partial love—it had shaken her trust in the constancy and depth of his affection for herself, and convinced her, that neither the sentiment she inspired, nor the sterner restraints of virtue and of honour, would secure him from the temptations of pleasure, or enable him to resist the spells which a brilliant and fascinating woman might choose to cast around him.

Oppressed by such fears and fancies, it is no marvel that Cecilia should have passed a restless and wakeful night; and the day was just dawning when, exhausted by unbroken agitation, she fell into a deep sleep, which lasted till the morn-

ing was far advanced. Then she arose, but with a violent head-ache, which quite unfitted her for any effort; and, repairing to her dressing-room, she threw herself upon the sofa, and lay there, each moment expecting Evelyn's appearance, who, as she learned, had not yet gone out. Eagerly she listened for his step upon the stairs—he came not; and her breakfast, for she could not taste it, still remained untouched on the little table beside her, when the door softly opened, and a bright young face peeped smilingly upon her.

"May I come in?" asked a gay, sweet voice.

Cecilia quelled the pang of disappointment that smote her heart, and, holding out her hand:

"Oh yes, Grace; you are always welcome," she said; "though you will find me shockingly stupid this morning, I assure you."

"That does not alarm me—in all moods I find you delightful," said Grace Cleveland, a fair girl of fifteen, as, with the wild gaiety of a child, she bounded into the apartment, and, fondly kissing Cecilia's pale cheek, seated herself upon a low ottoman beside her.

"You are abroad early, Grace," said Cecilia, languidly.

"You are up late, you mean to say, fair lady; for indeed I thought myself very self-denying to wait till this hour before I came to talk over with you last night's enchanting *fête*. How can you look so ill after it, dear Cecilia?"

"I do not look half so ill as I feel, Grace; for in truth these gaieties are quite wearing me out. I have no taste to enjoy them—and I, for one, long to have the spring return, that we may go back to dear and quiet Hinzdell again."

"Oh, it is always charming there, Cecilia; and if mamma would only permit me to launch forth at once into gay society, I dare say I might soon feel as weary of it as you do. But Mrs. Sinclair's *fête* was the only large and brilliant party I ever attended. I confess, to me it was an evening of unmingled delight."

Poor Cecilia sighed. "I scarcely saw you," she said, with a faint smile. "You were, so engrossed and surrounded by the gay and the gallant, that I found it quite impossible to gain access to you. But indeed, Grace, I am not a little surprised that your mother permitted you to visit at a house, which she herself never enters."

"Why, as you know, Cecilia, I have been