

nor may we venture to call in question His allwise decrees, but trust Him alike in the storm as in the sunshine."

Amy owed much to this excellent creature, whose humble piety had frequently been a source of the greatest comfort to her. She strove to feel composed and to look brightly to the future, when she might again enjoy the cheerful society of her amiable engaging little companion; but the hours passed heavily and slowly away. She saw little of the Earl or Mr. Martyn, who appeared in close attendance on the sick chamber, and she felt thankful when the day had closed.

Another, and another thus passed. The answers she received to all the inquiries how Arthur was going on, were vague and unsatisfactory, for Ursula was not allowed to go near the little sufferer, for fear of endangering her young lady, and Amy now scarcely saw any one else. At length, unable longer to struggle with her feelings, she descended to Mr. Martyn's study; it was the fourth day after Arthur had been taken ill. She unclosed the door with a trembling hand. Mr. Martyn was pacing the room, apparently much agitated, while Lord Blondville sat at some little distance, his head bent down, and his face concealed within his hands; a deep sob met her ear as she entered; she clasped her hands convulsively together, while, with a cheek whose ashy hue bespoke her terror, she stood gazing on the objects before her, unable to speak. Mr. Martyn approached her mournfully.

"Our dear little companion is passing away from us, my Amy," said he; "but his Saviour is leading him gently through the dark valley."

Amy heard no more; she cast herself into the extended arms of her adopted father, and wept long and bitterly. There was something so peculiarly engaging in Arthur, and the affection he had shown towards herself, had so completely won her young heart, that to be thus unexpectedly bereaved, was a trial beyond her fortitude. Mr. Martyn pressed her tenderly, and strove to soothe her anguish; but at that moment even his reasonings failed. Nature would not be restrained. He told her that the Countess was expected towards evening.

"But I fear she will arrive too late," he continued; "he is sinking fast from want of sleep; could he only procure that blessing, his physician says we might even now indulge hope."

"And will you still refuse to allow my seeing him," said Amy, in an imploring tone. She approached Lord Blondville as she spoke. "Am I so unfortunate that I can do nothing in this hour for those from whom I have experienced so much kindness."

The Earl, without looking at her, pressed her hand, as he mournfully shook his head, and turned away.

"You can pray for us, my child," said Mr. Mar-

ty; "return to your chamber, and there offer up your petitions, while I strive to instil Christian fortitude and patience into this unhappy son, who feels doubly the present trouble on account of his mother."

"I have prayed, I will ever pray for you all," replied the agonized girl; "and willingly would I lay down my own life to restore peace and happiness to this afflicted house."

Mr. Martyn now led her towards the door, and unclosed it for her. "I will see you in an hour, Amy," he said; "at present my duty lies here—go my child, and may God bless you."

Poor Amy felt utterly wretched, as she retraced her steps to her own apartments. There are few things more painful to a well directed mind, than to feel all the inclination to render assistance or consolation, without the slightest power to do so.

"But I can still pray," she exclaimed, in bitterness, as she paused on reaching the corridor, and looked down wistfully in the direction of the sick chamber; "as Mr. Martyn says, *that privilege is one which can never be denied the most miserable.*"

At this moment she beheld Mrs. Bennet approaching. The good matron was in tears; Amy flew towards her. "Is there indeed no hope?" she tremblingly inquired.

"I fear, none," replied Mrs. Bennet; "for three days and nights the beloved child has never slept; he is constantly calling for his mamma, and asking why you do not go to him."

"Oh! is it possible that he has inquired for me?" Mrs. Bennet, no one shall keep me from him another hour—one no one has a right. *I will go to him.*"

"My dear lady, my lord will never forgive me;" cried Mrs. Bennet, endeavouring to prevent her, "it is typhus fever, and he has given me the strictest order."

But Amy was now resolved. She broke away from her hold, and walked resolutely on until she reached the door of the ante-chamber leading to the one occupied by the little invalid. Most cautiously did she steal across this, and enter the darkened one beyond, which was still as death. She looked fearfully towards the bed, where, through the gloom, she beheld the once blooming boy, supported by pillows, his eye dull and glazed, his cheek sunken, and his fine head shorn of all its beautiful curls. What a change had a few short days wrought! The fortitude of Amy had nearly failed her as she gazed on the wreck; but she breathed a prayer for strength, and it was given her. She knelt down at the bedside, saying, in her own sweet, soft tone, "Arthur, my darling Arthur." The child turned his eyes towards her, and feebly stretching forth his little attenuated arms, in a moment he clasped them around her neck. The gush of tears which now streamed in torrents down her cheeks relieved her bursting heart; she ventured to raise her head, and again look in his face.