

ecilia. Once, have hopes which had their birth almost with the dawn of reason, which grew with my mind's growth, and were strengthened and matured with ripening manhood, been cruelly cut down, when the bright promise of beauty and perfection was upon them—and now the voice of happiness is dying away among the echoes of the past—and henceforth the stern dictates of duty must be my only stimulus—their faithful performance my consolation and reward. Say, therefore, Cecilia, if it were fair and generous in me, to link the warm and fresh affections of another to my cold and blighted heart, which no second spring will ever more gladden with its verdure?"

"Yes, Arthur—even thus, let that gentle girl come to you with her ministry of love, and new life and beauty will clothe the barren soil of your heart, and streams of healing freshness gush forth from its indurated surface. Seared indeed must it be, to resist the balmy influence, which, like dew upon the parched and arid earth, descends from the exhaustless fountain of a woman's loving soul, upon the dear and cherished object of its choice. Such a mind as yours, my cousin, cannot always feed upon a morbid sorrow,—it must have action, progress, self-discipline; and these cannot fail to restore it to the healthful tone which for a time it may have lost, through momentary forgetfulness of its high destination, and neglect of the exhaustless resources, and boundless energies and capacities, which the God of all goodness has bestowed upon it. Do you remember, Arthur, the beautiful passage which occurred in the course of our yesterday's reading, from the pen of him whose words of pathos and consolation, we have already quoted?"

"Yes, perfectly, Cecilia—it was this, for it impressed itself deeply on my memory: 'To the mind, the present is comparatively nothing. Its great sources of happiness are memory and hope. It has power over the past, not only the power of recalling it, but of turning to good all its experience, its errors and sufferings, as well as its successes. It has power over the future, not only the power of anticipating it, but of bringing the present to bear upon it, and of sowing for it the seed of a golden harvest.'"

"Such as you, I trust, are destined to reap, dear Arthur, when from the sorrows and trials of the past shall spring the blessed fruits of peace and joy unspeakable."

"So may it be, Cecilia—so my heart tells me it would be, though bowed down by the sorest evils of humanity, were I still to journey onward by your side—still to be strengthened by the gentle wisdom of your counsel, to be raised above pain and suffering by the bright example of your

cheerful and confiding faith. And yet to feel that we must part,—what anguish in the thought! Forgive me, dearest, most beloved Cecilia; forgive me that I thus disturb your tranquil heart, by words of passion and of sorrow that breathe but of the earth. I will not pain you by speaking again of hopes destroyed, of joyous dreams that gladdened the future with their radiance, quenched now in utter darkness. You are passing on from glory to glory, but while you yet abide with us, suffer me to live alone for you. Speak to me no more of another, for none, while blessed with your sweet and serene presence, can share with you, the thoughts and deep emotions of my soul."

Never before had Arthur spoken with such earnest and impassioned utterance, or with such explicitness, upon the subject of his love—and though Cecilia knew that he had long cherished for her the most tender and absorbing sentiments, she could not listen to the outpouring of his affection, without excessive agitation. On that very spot, scarcely a twelvemonth before, Evelyn had first spoken to her of his hopes, in language so graceful and eloquent, and with a fervor so earnest and so captivating, that she felt his accents sink "like the bee's liquid honey" into the inmost recesses of her soul, and she yielded to his sweet persuasiveness the willing tribute of her faith and her affections. Un-omened indeed had been the compact of that hour,—and now again, words of the same import recalled with painful acuteness, not only the rapture, but the sufferings of the past, and forced her secretly to acknowledge, how different might have been her present situation, and her recent experience, had he who now addressed her, been the first to awaken to consciousness the tenderest and sweetest emotions of her nature. Subdued by this thought, and by the thronging recollections, which, aided by the associations of the scene, it summoned to her mind, Cecilia was for a few moments unable to reply, or even to withdraw from Arthur's impassioned clasp, the thin and trembling hand, which he pressed with fervour to his lips. Soon, however, by a strong effort, she conquered her emotion, and, in low and faltering accents, said:

"Arthur, let us love as they love in that world where no light falls upon the heart's pure hopes—where the flowers of our affection, when you too shall have passed the dark river on whose brink I stand, shall expand, in an atmosphere of light and purity, into perfect and perennial beauty. But, oh! if indeed happiness is dear to you, my cousin, seek not to link my soul again to earth, by ties too strong, perhaps, for its weak purpose to dissolve." And, as she spoke, she raised her dewy and imploring eyes to his, with a look of sweet and holy serenity that should