

was wholly unconscious of her danger. Bereaved of her rational powers, her thoughts wandered constantly upon the most trifling subjects, while the primary cause of her illness appeared to hold no place in her memory, Alice never left her bedside for a moment, and looked as much wasted and worn as the poor patient herself. At length the fever took a favourable turn, and Sophia, although as weak as an infant, was pronounced out of danger. Mrs. Linhope, alarmed by the pale looks of Alice, insisted on this faithful nurse leaving the sick room for a few hours, to enjoy the fresh air in the garden. On entering the sitting room, she found her good uncle writing at the table. He put down the pen, as she unclosed the door, and rose to meet her.

"How is Sophia?"

"Better. She is out of danger—and enjoying, for the first time, a profound sleep."

"She will live then," said Mr. Fleming. "I had little hope of her last night. But she is young and strong, and God has been very merciful to her. I augur from this illness the most favourable result. God has afflicted the body to save the soul."

"I never thought she would live," said Alice, her eyes filling with tears as she spoke. "How would my dear mother have borne the shock! But if this illness ensures the salvation of her soul, what reason have we not to be thankful?"

"Your mother is with her?"

"She is."

"Sit down by me, Alice! I have somewhat to say to you which nearly concerns your happiness." Alice took a seat, and the old man continued.

"I am writing to my son. Have you any message to send him?"

"My kind remembrances."

"Is that all?"

"Nay, my dear uncle, you may add my sincere wishes for his health and happiness."

"You would send these to a friend?"

"And such I consider my cousin Arthur."

"Then he is an object of indifference to you?"

"Of indifference!—oh, no. How could you imagine me so insensible to his worth? Besides, my dear uncle, are our friends objects of indifference to us?"

"Then he is a dear friend?"

"A *very dear friend*," said Alice, quickly. She blushed and looked down, as if she had inadvertently betrayed the secret of her heart. The old man regarded her for a few moments, with fatherly pride. He drew her to him. "Answer me, little one, with your usual candor. Do you love my boy?"

"Uncle!" said Alice trembling exceedingly, "Is not this going a little too far?"

"Is that the only answer I am to expect to my question?" said Mr. Fleming, with a provoking smile.

"Uncle," said Alice, without venturing to raise her eyes from the ground. "Since you urge me to confess my weakness. I candidly acknowledge that I do love Arthur. But——"

"Enough, my darling," said the old man, kissing her in the joy of his heart. "This confession will make my boy happy. Now you may go for your walk."

Alice lingered at the door. Away with you, gipsy! I shall be too late to save the post. If you linger at my elbow, I shall never finish my letter to Arthur."

Alice obeyed with a light heart—for a few moments she indulged in the most delightful anticipations; and if the tears sprang to her eyes, they were not tears of grief.

Several weeks passed away before Sophia was able to leave her bed. She was now so far convalescent as to be allowed to sit up for a few hours daily, in an easy chair by her own fire side. The gales of autumn had ushered in the snows of winter, but Mr. Fleming still remained a welcome and beloved guest at the cottage. Most of his time was spent in the sick chamber of the invalid, whom he now regarded with the affection of a parent; and he looked upon himself as an instrument in the hands of Providence, in saving her from ruin. One fine morning, Alice removed the easy chair to the window, that Sophy might enjoy a view of the frosty landscape. She was busily occupied in arranging the pillows that supported her sister's head, when a cry from the invalid made her turn her eyes into the road beneath.

"It is Ogilvie, and his bride!" murmured Sophia, sinking back in the chair, and turning as pale as death, as Captain Ogilvie, and his beautiful bride, rode past in an open carriage—she all smiles, and he looking as gay and indifferent as usual. It was the first time that the name of her lover had escaped her lips, since the commencement of her illness; and Alice, fearing the ill effects that the sight of him must produce on her mind, shattered and weakened by her long sickness, was anxious to remove her from the window.

"No, no," she said, feebly putting her sister back with her hand, and resolutely surveying the bridal party, as they swept slowly by. "That agony is over. I can bear to look at them now. Thank God, Alice, that I am not his wife."

"All things, my Sophy! my beloved sister, are for the best," said the gentle Alice, folding the wasted form of the poor invalid tenderly to her bosom. "This illness has restored to me the heart of my sister. Pale, weak, and emaciated as you are, I would rather behold you thus, alive as you are, to your past errors, and daily seeking your Redeemer's love, than the titled bride of yon heartless libertine."

"Alice," said Sophia, pressing her sister's hand