

"I love you, Max. Never till I knew you did I know what love really was. You must make me more worthy of you than I now am."

"More worthy! Oh! Helen! be only thus to me ever, and I will ask no more happiness on earth!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

The world is empty, the heart will die.
There's nothing to wish for beneath the sky;
Thou Holy One! call Thy child away!
I have lived and loved and that was to-day.
Make ready my grave clothes to-morrow.
THEKLA'S SONG.

On entering the parlor of Leafy Hollow, the lovers were met by Madame Von Werfenstein.

"My dear mother," said Max, leading Helen to her, "embrace her, she is your daughter."

An expression of satisfaction, such as Helen had never before seen on her countenance diffused itself over her pale grave features, as she tenderly clasped the English girl in her arms. Then gazing earnestly in her face she asked,

"But do you love him as he is worthy to be loved?"

"Nay, dear mother," said Max, smiling, as he drew the arm of his betrothed through his own; "if she does not love me better she will not satisfy my extravagant expectations."

"That were impossible," said his mother, emphatically.

"No one can feel that more deeply than I!" exclaimed Helen, softly but earnestly.

"Then, my children, you will be happy, for I believe that you possess that sympathy of souls which a beautiful writer truly declares is the only condition and guarantee of an immortal wedded felicity. This will cause your love to be not the emotion of a moment, violent while it lasts, but suddenly vanishing without leaving a trace behind, but the constant, unchanging conviction of the understanding as well as the warm and devoted sensation of the heart. In the time of coolest and sternest reflection, in anger, in sadness, in vexation and care, in joy and sorrow, hope and disappointment, in a word, in every phase of life's changing existence, this bond of union, if it exists, will be drawn closer and closer,

"As if in both one spirit govern'd there—
As if one soul were in two beings joined."

This love, the true Eros from Heaven, never decays, but grows brighter and stronger to the end, while all the mock divinities sooner or later crumble to dust; and it is the only true and unfading happiness on earth!"

Madame Von Werfenstein then led Max and Helen into the chamber of Fauna, where wrapped in a dressing-gown and supported by pillows she lay on the bed. Beside her stood Rhoda, tears falling like rain down her fair young face. The setting sun poured his golden splendor into the room, and bathed in rich light the form of the sick maiden, her dark olive complexion, black eyes and ebon hair, receiving a bright glow from the sunlight, and contrasting strongly with the white furniture of the bed on which she lay. Yet death seemed hovering over her, and that lustrous sunlight seemed but the radiance of her funeral pyre. Her lambent eyes, though they beamed brighter than ever, were sunken and surrounded by dark blue circles, her features looked worn and wasted, and her lips and cheeks of late so deep and brilliant a hue, were now colorless. Helen, scarcely able to suppress her emotions, turned a questioning glance on Max. The glow which happy love had called to his cheek and eye vanished at once as he marked the change which her sufferings had made in the Indian girl since he had parted with her that morning.

"I am glad you have come," said Fauna, extending to each a hand, whose burning touch shewed the fever that consumed her. "I was afraid I would have died without seeing you, and that would have been hard to bear."

Her words which had been used to gush from her lips in full thrilling accents like the notes of a bird, were now scarcely audible, but as she continued to speak, the power of her emotions gave strength to her voice. Max, to whom her looks were directed, answered with emotion,

"Die, my sweet Fauna! You shall not die, but live long to love us and be beloved by us in return."

She smiled with that wild sweetness which was habitual to her, and then begged to be left alone with Max and Helen. As soon as Madame Von Werfenstein and Rhoda had left the room, she said sadly,

"They will not any of them believe that I am so near death, they think that my mind is still wandering; but it is not, I know that I am dying."

Helen could not any longer restrain her tears, nor could Max speak.

"You must not weep," said Fauna. "I do not wish to live—I have but one wish on earth now, and you, Helen, can gratify it, and make my last moments happy."

"Oh! Fauna, only tell me what it is and it shall be done," sobbed Helen.

"Then, give Max your hand—for ever, Helen,"