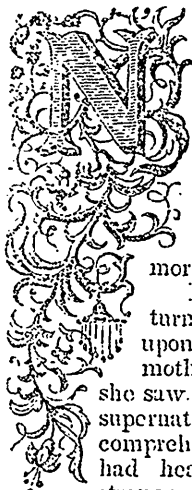


keeper made eager haste to take possession of his ill-gotten property, apparently satisfied that he had worked the card to admiration.

THE ELDER SISTER.

BY ADA GREY.

"Nor look, nor tone revealeth aught,
Save woman's quietness of thought,
And yet around her is a light
Of inward majesty and might."



NOT to-day, mother, for you are faint and weary. but to-morrow, or another time, for now you need rest."

"Look at me, Edith; — there will be no to-morrow for me."

Edith Williston turned her eyes full upon the face of her mother, and now, as she saw its sudden almost supernatural beauty, she comprehended all. She had heard often of the strange illumination of countenance, which is so frequently the sure precursor of death; and now the truth flashed across her half-bewildered mind, and tears came fast through her quivering eye-lashes, as she fixed one long, mournful gaze upon that beloved face.

"Be calm, my child; send Anna away, that we may be alone."

Edith obeyed, by a slight motion of her hand, and when the attendant had left the room, threw herself upon her knees by the bedside, and pillowing her head on her mother's bosom, sobbed in agony.

"Can you hear me talk of dying, Edith—of my own death?"

The trembling girl answered only by a convulsive sob, and by nestling her head still closer by her mother's wildly-beating heart.

For a moment the slender, white hand of the dying mother pressed upon the head of her weeping child; then, linking in her own damp, chilly fingers the warm hand of Edith, she said, "It is wrong to shrink from this, my darling; you will not think, when a green turf lies on my bosom, that our hearts are separated forever. No, Edith, your mother's spirit shall watch over her child, and Heaven will seem nearer to your heart if your faith is strong that she awaits you there."

Again gently and caressingly her soft hand lay upon the head of the pale, weeping girl, and her lips moved in silent prayer.

"Listen to me now, my Edith, while I tell you of those little ones. I cannot confide them to the care of a stranger—none can watch over them with the love and forbearance of a sister. Their earthly wants will be cared for, but they need more. Oh, Edith, how can I ask it of you?"

Edith arose from her mother's clasp, and laying her hand upon her clear, white brow, said, with unnatural calmness.

"Tell me all, mother; have I ever shrunk from obeying every wish of yours?"

"God has given you a woman's feelings in your girlish years, and he will give you strength to bear all. May His blessing rest upon your head forever, and may you be true to others as you have been to me! I must leave my little, beloved ones to your care. Watch over them as no other can, with such deep love as yours. But another word, my Edith: do not think unkindly of *him*, their father. He is not your parent, but whenever