

***CAROLINE LEE
HENTZ***



***LOVE AFTER
MARRIAGE;
AND OTHER
STORIES
OF THE HEART***

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Love After Marriage; and Other Stories of the Heart

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A stranger was ushered into the parlour, where two young ladies were seated, one bonneted and shawled, evidently a morning visiter, the other in a fashionable undress, as evidently a daughter or inmate of the mansion. The latter rose with a slight inclination of the head, and requested the gentleman to take a chair. "Was Mr. Temple at home?" "No! but he was expected in directly." The young ladies exchanged mirthful glances, as the stranger drew nearer, and certainly his extraordinary figure might justify a passing sensation of mirth, if politeness and good feeling had restrained its expression. His extreme spareness and the livid hue of his complexion indicated recent illness, and as he was apparently young, the almost total baldness of his head was probably owing to the same cause. His lofty forehead was above the green shade that covered his eyes in unshadowed majesty, unrelieved by a single lock of hair, and the lower part of his face assumed a still more cadaverous hue, from the reflection of the green colour above. There was something inexpressibly forlorn and piteous in his whole appearance, notwithstanding an air of gentlemanly dignity pervaded his melancholy person. He drew forth his pocket-book, and taking out a folded paper, was about to present it to Miss Temple, who, drawing back with a suppressed laugh, said—"A petition, sir, I suppose?"—then added in a low whisper to her companion—"the poor fellow is perhaps getting up a subscription for a wig." The

whisper was very low, but the stranger's shaded though penetrating eyes were fixed upon her face, and the motion of her lips assisted him in a knowledge of their sound; he replaced the paper in his pocket-book—"I am no petitioner for your bounty, madam," said he, in a voice, whose sweetness fell like a reproach on her ear, "nor have I any claims on your compassion, save being a stranger and an invalid. I am the bearer of a letter to your father, from a friend of his youth, who, even on his death-bed, remembered him with gratitude and affection; will you have the goodness to present to him my name and direction?"

Then laying his card upon the table, he made a low bow and retreated, before Miss Temple had time to apologize, if indeed any apology could be offered for her levity and rudeness. She approached the table and took up the card—"Gracious Heavens!" she exclaimed—"it cannot be possible?—Sydney Allison—that bald, yellow, horrid-looking creature—Sydney Allison! they described him as the perfection of manly beauty—I never will believe it—he is an impostor—the wretch!"

The young lady who was with her, beheld with astonishment, the passion that lighted up Miss Temple's face, and her looks besought an explanation. "Have you not heard," said Miss Temple, "since you came to this city, that I was betrothed; that I had been so from a child, to a young gentleman residing in Cuba, whose uncle was the bosom friend of my father? You must have heard it, for my father has always taken pains to circulate the report, so that no one might presume upon my favour. And this is the delectable bridegroom! the one who has been represented

as clothed in every grace calculated to fascinate a female heart—and I, fool that I was, I believed it, and looked forward with rapture to the hour of our first meeting." Here she paused, and throwing herself back in her chair, burst into a passion of tears.

Mary Manning, her more rational companion, endeavoured to soothe the excited feelings of her friend, and suggested to her, that whatever disappointment she might feel with regard to his personal appearance, his character might be such as to awaken a very ardent attachment. "Indeed," added Mary, "I thought there was something quite interesting in his address, and his voice was remarkably persuasive in its tones. He has evidently been very ill, and his bad looks are owing to this circumstance. He will become handsomer by and by. Besides, my dear Augusta, what is mere beauty in a man? It is the prerogative of a woman, and you are so highly gifted in that respect yourself, you should be willing that your husband should excel in those qualities which men generally arrogate to themselves."

"Husband!" repeated Augusta; "I would as soon take a death's-head for my husband. I care nothing about mere beauty, provided there is intelligence and spirit. But with such a bald, livid-looking wretch at my side, such a living memento of mortality, I should sink into my grave in a fortnight. I never will marry him, unless I am dragged to the altar." Here Mr Temple entered the room, and interrupted her rash speech. Miss Manning too retired, feeling that her presence might be an intrusion. He looked astonished at the agitation of his daughter, who handed him the card, and

turning away leaned against the mantel-piece, the image of woe.

"Sydney Allison arrived!" exclaimed Mr. Temple; "where is he? when was he here? and why is he gone?—why—what is the matter with you, Augusta? The first wish of my heart seems accomplished, and I find you weeping. Tell me the meaning of all this?"

"Oh! father," sobbed Augusta, covering her face with her handkerchief, "he is *so* ugly, and you told me he was so *very* handsome."

Mr. Temple could not forbear laughing at the piteous tone in which Augusta uttered this melancholy truth, though he immediately resumed, in an accent of displeasure, "I am ashamed of your folly—I have always given you credit for being a girl of sense, but you talk like a little fool;—ugly! if a man is not ugly enough to frighten his horse, he is handsome enough. Besides, it is nothing but a whim; I saw him when a child, and he was an uncommonly beautiful boy. I hope you did not behave in this manner before him—why did you suffer him to go away?"

"Why, I did not know him," said Augusta, in considerable trepidation, for she feared her father's anger; "and he looked so thin and woe-begone, I thought he was some foreigner asking charity, and when he took out a paper I thought it a petition, and said something about one—so he was angry, I believe, and went away, saying he had letters for you, from a friend, who was dead."

"And is he dead!—the good old man!—the best, the earliest friend I ever had in the world—dead and gone!" Mr. Temple leaned his face over on his hands, and sat in silence

several moments, as if struggling with powerful emotions. After a while, Mr. Temple lifted his hands, and fixed his darkened eyes upon his daughter. He took her hand with affection and solemnity. "Augusta, you are the child of affluence as well as of indulgence; you are my only child, and all the wealth, which now surrounds you with luxury, will be at your disposal after my death."

"Oh! father, do not speak of such a thing."

"Do not interrupt me. Mr. Allison, the uncle of this young man, was my benefactor and friend, when all the world looked dark upon me. He extricated me from difficulties which it is unnecessary to explain—gave me the means of making an ample fortune, and asked no recompense, but a knowledge of my success. It was through his influence I was united to your now angel mother—yes! I owe everything to him—wealth, reputation, and a brief, but rare portion of domestic bliss. This dear, benevolent, romantic old man, had one nephew, the orphan child of his adoption, whom he most tenderly loved. When commercial affairs carried me to Cuba, about ten years ago, Sydney was a charming boy,"—here Augusta groaned—"a charming boy; and when I spoke with a father's pride of my own little girl whom I had left behind, my friend gladdened at the thought, that the union which had bound our hearts together would be perpetuated in our children; we pledged our solemn promise to each other, that this union should take place at a fitting age; you have long been aware of this betrothal, and I have seen with great pleasure, that you seemed to enter into my views, and to look forward with hope and animation to the fulfilment of this contract. The engagement is now doubly binding, since

death has set his awful seal upon it. It must be fulfilled. Do not, by your unprecedented folly, make me unhappy at a moment like this."

"Forgive me, my dear father, but indeed when you see him, you will not wonder at the shock I have received. After all you had said of him, after reading his uncle's letters so full of glowing descriptions, after dwelling so long on the graceful image my fancy drew, to find such a dreadful contrast."

"Dreadful contrast! why surely he cannot be transformed into such a monster."

"You have not seen him yet," said she mournfully.

"No! you remind me of my negligence. After the strange reception you have given him, it is doubly urgent that I should hasten to him. Have a care, Augusta, you have always found me a very indulgent father, but in this instance I shall enforce implicit obedience. I have only one fear, that you have already so disgusted him with your levity, that he may refuse, *himself*, the honour of the alliance."

"*He refuse me!*" murmured Augusta, in a low voice, as she glanced at herself in a mirror that shone above the mantelpiece. As the nature of her reflections may be well imagined, it may be interesting to follow the young man, whose figure had made so unfortunate an impression on his intended bride, and learn something of the feelings that are passing through his mind.

Sydney Allison returned to his lonely apartment at the hotel with a chilled and aching heart. The bright day-dream, whose beauty had cheered and gilded him, even while

mourning over the death-bed of his uncle, while languishing himself on the bed of sickness, and while, a sea-sick mariner, he was tossed upon the boisterous waves—this dream was fled. She, who had always risen upon his imagination as the morning star of his destiny—this being he had met, after years of romantic anticipation—what a meeting! He was well aware of the sad ravages one of the violent fevers of a tropical clime had made upon his beauty, but, never attaching much value to his own personal attractions, he could not believe that the marks of a divine visitation would expose him to ridicule, or unkindness; of an extremely sensitive disposition, he was peculiarly alive to the stings of satire, and the sarcastic whisper of Miss Temple wounded him to the quick.

"What!" said he, to himself, as he folded his arms in melancholy abstraction, in the solitude of his chamber, "what, if the dark luxuriance of waving hair which once shadowed my temples, is now gone, is not thought and intelligence still lingering on my brow? Are there no warm and animated veins of feeling in my heart, because the tide of health no longer colours my wan and faded cheek? These enfeebled eyes, which I must now shelter from the too dazzling light, can they not still emit the rays of tenderness, and the beams of soul? This proud beauty! May she live to know what a heart she has wounded!"

He rose and walked slowly across the floor, pausing before a large looking glass, which fully reflected his person. He could not forbear a smile, in the midst of his melancholy, at the ludicrous contrast to his former self, and acknowledge it was preposterous to expect to charm at first sight, under

the present disastrous eclipse. He almost excused the covert ridicule of which he had been the object, and began to pity the beautiful Augusta for the disappointment she must have endured. It was under the influence of these feelings Mr. Temple found him.

"My dear fellow," said the latter, warmly grasping his hand, and gazing earnestly at him—"My poor boy! how ill you must have been!—your uncle, too"—the warm-hearted man was incapable of uttering another syllable, not more moved at that moment, by the recollection of his friend, than affected by the transformation of the blooming boy, whose waving locks were once so singularly beautiful.

His sympathy was so unaffected, his welcome so warm, and his affection expressed in so heartfelt a manner, that Sydney, who had just been arming himself with proud philosophy against the indifference and neglect of the world, melted into woman's softness. He had been so long among strangers, and those of rougher natures—had experienced so cold a disappointment in his warmest hopes—he had felt so blighted, so alone—the reaction was too powerful, it unmanned him. Mr. Temple was a remarkable instance of a man who retained a youthful enthusiasm and frankness of character, after a long and prosperous intercourse with the world of business. The rapid accumulation of wealth, instead of narrowing, as it too often does, enlarged his benevolent heart. When, in a long and confidential conversation with Sydney, he learned that Mr. Allison had left but a small fortune for his support, instead of the immense one he had been led to expect, he was more than ever anxious to promote his union with his daughter. However mysterious it

seemed that Mr. Allison's property should be so diminished, or have been so much overrated, he rather rejoiced at the circumstance, as it gave him an opportunity of showing his gratitude and disinterestedness. But Sydney was proud. He felt the circumstance of his altered fortunes, and, though not a poor man, was no longer the heir of that wealth which was his in reversion when Mr. Temple had plighted his daughter to him. In his short interview with her he had gained such an insight into her character, that he recoiled from the idea of appearing before her as her betrothed lover.

"Receive me as a friend," said he to Mr. Temple; "let your daughter learn to look upon me as such, and I ask no more; unless I could win her *affections*, nothing would induce me to accept of her hand—under existing circumstances, I believe that impossible. Much as I feel your kindness, and sacred as I hold the wishes of the dead, I hold your daughter's happiness paramount to every other consideration. This must not be sacrificed for me. Promise me, sir, that it shall not. I should be more wretched than words can express, if I thought the slightest force were imposed upon her sentiments."

"Be satisfied on that score; say nothing about it; only let her get fully acquainted with you, and there will be no occasion to employ *force*. You must forget the mistake of the morning. This yellow fever makes sad work of a man when it gets hold of him, but you will soon revive from its effects."

Sydney Allison became a daily visiter at Mr. Temple's. Had he assumed the privileges of a lover, Augusta would

have probably manifested, in a wounding manner, the aversion she felt for him in that character; but it was impossible to treat with disdain one who never presumed to offer any attentions beyond the civilities of friendship. Though rendered vain from adulation, and selfish from indulgence, and though her thoughtless vivacity often made her forgetful of the feelings of others, Augusta Temple was not destitute of redeeming virtues. Nature had gifted her with very ardent affections, and opened but few channels in which those affections could flow. She had the great misfortune to be the only child of a rich, widowed, and doting parent, and from infancy had been accustomed to see every one around her subservient to her will. She had reached the age of womanhood without knowing one real sorrow, or meeting with a being who had excited in any degree the affections of her heart. Her warm and undisciplined imagination had dwelt for years on one image. She had clothed it in the most splendid hues that fancy ever spread upon her palette; and had poor Sydney appeared before her in his original brightness, the reality would probably have been dim, to the visions of ideal beauty by which she had been so long haunted. In the greatness of her disappointment, she became unjust and unreasonable, violent in her prejudices, and extravagant in the manifestations of them. But after the first ebullition of her grief, she grew more guarded, from the dread of her father's anger; and as Sydney continued the same reserved and dignified deportment, she began to think her father's prediction was fulfilled, and that their aversion was mutual. She did not derive as much comfort from this supposition as

might be anticipated. She had dreaded his importunity, but she could not endure his indifference. It was in vain Mr. Temple urged his young friend to a different course of conduct; he always answered, "Let her cease to dread me as a lover, then she may learn to prize me as a friend."

One evening, there was a concert at Mr. Temple's. Sydney, who was passionately fond of music, forgot every cause of inquietude, while abandoned to its heavenly influence. He stood near the fair songstress of the hour, keeping time to the harmony, while in a pier-glass opposite, he had a full view of the groups behind. Augusta was a little in the rear, leaning on the arm of Miss Manning. He could gaze on her image thus reflected, without her being conscious of the act, and he sighed as he paid involuntary homage to her brilliant beauty. Her figure was of superb proportions, her features formed on the model of oriental symmetry, while her eyes glittered through their dark sweeping lashes, like sunbeams through the forest foliage. She stood with her head a little averted, and her profile presented the softened outline of the lineaments ascribed to the beautiful daughters of Judah. He forgot himself entirely, in the contemplation of her loveliness, when he saw her turn, with an arch smile, and hold up her hands in a whimsical attitude in the direction of his head, as if in the act of warming them; for the full blaze of the chandeliers seemed concentrated in that point, and all eyes, lured by Augusta's gesture, were turned upon his illuminated skull. For one moment Sydney lost his self-possession, and the angry spot was seen distinctly burning on his sallow cheek. The next, he smiled superior to such weakness, and

retreating a few steps, bowed for her to pass forward. She had relied on the shade that covered his eyes, for security from detection, unconscious of the piercing glances that were darting beneath. Her conscience now upbraided her for her folly, and she felt with bitterness how low she must be in the opinion of the man whose admiration she secretly coveted, notwithstanding the ridicule she dared to throw upon his person. After the company dispersed, she remained alone in the drawing-room, dissatisfied with herself and sickening at the pleasure that surrounded her. The door softly opened. It was Sydney, who had returned for his gloves, which he had left on the mantel-piece. It was the first time she had found herself alone with him, and she felt excessively embarrassed. In that tone, which even *she* acknowledged to be irresistibly sweet, he apologized for his intrusion, and taking his gloves, was retiring, when she, ever impulsive, arrested his motions.

"Stay one moment, Mr. Allison—you have great reason to despise me—I have treated you with unpardonable levity and rudeness. Though I can hardly hope your forgiveness, I cannot withhold this acknowledgment of my errors; your calm forbearance has done more for my reformation, than a thousand reproofs."

Surprised and softened by this unexpected avowal from the cold sarcastic Augusta, whose fluctuating complexion and agitated voice bore witness to her sincerity, Allison was at first incapable of replying.

"Your present candour," at length he said, "would indemnify me for much greater suffering than you have ever inflicted on me. Allow me, Miss Temple, to take advantage of

this first moment of confidence, to disarm you of all fear on my account. The relative situation in which we have been placed by others, has given us both much embarrassment; but be assured my only wish is to be looked upon as your friend. Consider yourself as entirely unshackled. In brighter hours I might have aspired to the distinction our parents designed for me; but, worn down by sickness, the shadow of my former self, I feel but too sensibly, that the only sentiment I can now inspire in the female heart, is that of compassion."

Augusta was so much impressed by his delicacy and generosity, she began to hate herself for not having more justly appreciated his worth. She raised her eyes to his face and sighed—"Ah!" said she to herself, "I must respect and esteem, but I can never love him." Mr. Temple, who had been absent the whole evening, returned at this moment, and his countenance expressed his pleasure in finding them thus alone, in apparently confidential conversation with each other.

"Do not go, Allison," said he; "I have been oppressed with business to-night, and I want a little social enjoyment before I sleep. Besides, I do not feel quite well."

They now observed that he looked unusually pale, and pressed his hand upon his head, as if in pain.

"Father," said Augusta, "you do indeed look ill; you have fatigued yourself too much. A glass of wine will revive you."

She brought him the glass, but just as he took it from her hand with a smile, a sudden spasm came over him, and he fell back in his chair, speechless and convulsed. Augusta's piercing shriek alarmed the servants, who, rushing in,

beheld their master supported in the arms of Allison, gasping for breath, while Augusta was trying to loosen his cravat with hands nerveless from terror. A physician was directly summoned, who bled him profusely, and after a few hours consciousness was restored. He was removed to his chamber, and Allison remained with him during the remainder of the night. Augusta sat by her father's bedside holding his hand, almost stunned by the suddenness of the calamity. Never, since her recollection, had her father known an hour's sickness; and now to be prostrated at once, in the midst of florid health, it was awful. She dared not ask the physician if there was danger, lest he should confirm her worst fears. She looked at Allison, and, in his pale and anxious countenance, she saw a reflection of her own anxiety and sorrow. Towards morning Mr. Temple opened his eyes, and looked earnestly round him.

"My children," said he, "come near me—both—both."

"Father," cried Augusta, "we *are* near thee—oh! my father, say that you are better—only say that you will *live*."

As she uttered the last word she bowed her head upon the bed cover, and sobbed as if her heart were breaking.

"My child," said Mr. Temple, faintly, "you must call upon God to sustain you, for there is need. I feel that the hand of death is on me. Sudden and awful is the summons—but it must be obeyed. Doctor, I would see my minister. Not to give peace to my parting soul—for all is peace *here*," said he, laying his hand feebly on his heart, "peace with God and man—but there is one thing I would witness before I die."

Sydney, who stood at the bed's head, trembled at the import of these words; Augusta in her agony comprehended

them not.

"Sydney, my son, give me your hand; Augusta, is this your hand I hold? My children, if you would bless my last hour, you must let my dying eyes behold your union. It will gladden my friend, when I meet him in another world, to tell him his last wishes are consummated. Do you consent, my children?"

He looked up to Sydney, with that earnest expression which is never seen except in the eye of the dying, and pressed their hands together in his, already cold and dewy with the damps of death. Sydney sunk upon his knees, unutterably affected. All the happiness of his future life was at stake, but it seemed as nothing at that moment.

"Your daughter, sir?" was all he could utter.

"Augusta," repeated Mr. Temple, in a voice fearfully hollow, "will you not speak?"

"Oh! my father," she murmured, "do with me as you will, only take me with you."

The reverend figure of the minister was now added to the group that surrounded that bed of death. Strange and awful was the bridal ceremony, performed at such a moment, and attended by such solemnities. Sydney felt that he was mysteriously and irresistibly impelled on to the fulfilment of his destiny, without any volition of his own; and he supported, with a firm arm, the sinking form of her he was now to call his own. It was with bloodless lips and deadened perceptions Augusta repeated her vows; but low as they were, they fell like music on the ear that was so shortly to close to all earthly sound.

"There is a blessing above, mingling with mine," faintly articulated the dying man. "I bless you, my dear children, and ye will be blessed."

These were the last words he ever uttered. Augusta fell almost lifeless on her father's bosom, but what was a moment before the temple of an immortal spirit, was now but dust and ashes. At the same moment an orphan and a bride, she was incapable of comprehending the startling realities of her situation. The images that flitted through her mind, were like the phantasmagoria of a dream—a vague impression of something awful and indescribable having occurred, a wild fear of something more awful still impending, filled her imagination and paralyzed her frame. But Allison had a full and aching sense of the responsibilities so unexpectedly imposed upon him. He mourned for the venerated and generous friend so suddenly snatched away; but he grieved most of all, that his last act had placed in his keeping that to which he felt he had no legitimate right. No selfish repinings filled his heart—but to find himself *married*, joined irrevocably to a woman who had given him so many proofs of personal aversion; who never, till that evening, had evinced towards him the slightest sensibility—a woman whom he did not love, and whose superior fortune burdened him with a painful sense of obligation—there was something inexpressibly galling and humbling in these circumstances, to the sensitive and high-minded Allison. Tenderness, however, mingled with the bitterness of his reflections; and even then, he could have taken her to his heart, and wept over her tears of sympathy and sorrow, had he not dreaded that she would recoil from his embraces. He did not intrude

on the sacredness of her grief, and for days she buried herself in the solitude of her chamber. She admitted no one but her chosen friend, Miss Manning, who represented her as inconsolable, either sunk in a torpor, from which nothing could arouse her, or in a state of nervous excitement still more distressing. He waited, hoping that time would restore her to comparative composure, and that she would be willing to receive from him the consolations of friendship. Finding, at length, that she persevered in her system of solitary grief, and that time, while it must, according to its immutable laws, soften her anguish for her father's death, probably increased her dread of the shackles that bound her, his resolution was taken. In a short time everything was arranged for his departure to a foreign land. The ship, in which he was bound a passenger, was ready to sail, when he requested a parting interview with Augusta. A parting interview!—Augusta was roused at that sound, from the selfishness of her grief. He was going into banishment, and she was the cause. For the first time since the bridal ceremony, the thought forced itself into her mind, that *he* too might have cause for sorrow, and that *his* happiness might be sacrificed as well as her own. Allison was greatly shocked, to see the change wrought in her radiant face. He was so much agitated, he forgot everything he purposed to say, and remembered only the strangeness of their situation. He endeavoured to repress his own emotion, that he might not increase hers; while she, unused to self-control, abandoned herself to a passion of tears. He approached her with tenderness and solemnity, and entreated her to listen to him, as a *friend*, as one willing to

promote her happiness by any sacrifice she might require. "I go," said he, "Augusta, to another clime, whose genial influence may restore me again some portion of my former vigour. I go, too, in the hope, that in my absence you will learn submission to a destiny which my presence renders insupportable. If you knew the anguish that fills my heart, when I think of myself as the involuntary cause of your wretchedness, you would pity me, even as much as you abhor. Hear me, Augusta, while I repeat with all the solemnity of the vows that bound us to each other, that I will never claim the name of husband, till your own free affections hallow the sacred title. In the mean time I leave you with one who will be to you as a loving sister, in whose father you will find a faithful and affectionate guardian—will you not part from me, at least in kindness?"

Augusta sat, with her arms thrown around Miss Manning, weeping, yet subdued. All the best impulses of her nature were wakened and active. She would have given worlds to say something expressive of her remorse and regret for her selfishness and waywardness. Claspng her hands together she exclaimed, "Oh! forgive me, Sydney, that I cannot love you;" then, conscious that she was only wounding more deeply when she wished to heal, she only uttered, "what an unfortunate wretch I am!"

"We are both unfortunate," said he, moved beyond his power of control—"but we may not be always miserable. Something whispers me, that we shall meet again with chastened feelings, capable of appreciating all that is excellent in each other, and both earnest in the endeavour to merit the blessing that hallowed our nuptial tie. I leave

you that you may be restored to tranquillity—I may never return—I pray to God, that he may find me a grave in that ocean to whose bosom I am about to commit myself, if I am only to live for the misery of others."

"No, no," cried Augusta, "this must not be, you must not become an exile for me."

"Listen to her," said Miss Manning, earnestly, her whole soul wrought up into the most painful excitement, at the sight of their mutual distress—"indeed, sir, you are doing what is rash and uncalled for—oh! why, with so much to bind you together, with qualities capable of inspiring the strongest attachment in each other, will ye close up your hearts in this manner, and resolve to be miserable?"

"I cannot now remain if I would, as I have taken steps which cannot well be recalled—your father, Miss Manning, knows and approves my intention. He is the delegated guardian and protector of Augusta. I will not, I cannot prolong the pain of these moments. Farewell, Augusta! think of me, if possible, with kindness—should I live to return, I will be to you friend, brother, or husband, as your own heart shall dictate."

He pressed her cold and passive hand in his—turned, and was gone. Augusta would have spoken, but she seemed as if under the influence of a nightmare. Her faculties were spell-bound; she would have returned the parting pressure of his hand, but her fingers seemed icicles. She shuddered with superstitious dread. Her father's upbraiding spirit appeared to her imagination, armed with the terrors of the grave, and threatening her with the retribution of heaven. Poor Augusta! her mind required the stern, but salutary discipline

of adversity, and that discipline was preparing. How she profited by the teachings of this monitress, whose lessons, however hard, have such high and celestial bearings, the events of after years may show.

Augusta and her friend are once more presented to the view of the reader, but the destiny of the former is changed. They are seated in a parlour side by side, but it is not the same, rich in all the adornments of wealth and fashion, that Augusta once occupied. It is in a neat rural cottage, in the very heart of the country, embosomed in trees and flowers. A few words will explain the past. Mr. Temple's open, generous, uncalculating disposition had exposed him to the designs of the mercenary and treacherous. He never could refuse to endorse a note for a friend, or to loan money when it was asked with a look of distress. He believed his resources as exhaustless as his benevolence; but by the failure of several houses with which he was largely connected, his estate was involved in ruin, and his daughter left destitute of fortune. Mr. Manning suffered so much himself in the general loss, he was obliged to sell all that he still possessed in the city and retire into the country, with limited means of subsistence. But, though limited, he had sufficient for all the comforts of life, and what he deemed its luxuries—books, music, the socialities of friendship, and the exercise of the kindly charities. A cherished member of this charming family, Augusta no longer the spoiled child of fortune, but the chastened disciple of sorrow, learned to estimate the purposes of her being, and to mourn over her former perversity. With such ennobled views of life and its

enjoyments, she began to think she might be happy with a husband, with such irreproachable worth and exalted attributes as Sydney Allison, even though he had the misfortune to be bald and sallow. But him she had banished, and when would he return? He had written to her once or twice, in the most affectionate manner, as a brother would write; he had spoken of amended health and reviving spirits, but he spoke of his return as of something indefinite and even remote. She too had written, and her letters were transcripts of the progressive elevation of her character, and expressed with candour and warmth the just appreciation she now had of his own. She was uncertain whether they had ever reached him. It was long since she had received any tidings, and she felt at times that sickness of the heart, which suspense unfed by hope creates.

"I bring you a messenger, who I trust is the bearer of glad tidings," said Mr. Manning, entering, with a benevolent smile, and ushering in a young gentleman, whom he introduced by the name of Clarence. "Augusta, you will greet him with joy, for he comes with letters from Mr. Allison, your husband."

Augusta sprang forward, scarcely waiting to go through the customary form of introduction, and took the letter with a trembling hand. "Tell me, sir, do you know him, and is he well?" The stranger bent his dark and lustrous eyes upon her face, with a look of undisguised admiration.

"I know him intimately, madam; when I last saw him, he was in perfect health, and animated by the prospect of a speedy return."

Augusta waited to hear no more, but retired to her own chamber, to peruse the epistle she had so anxiously anticipated. It was in answer to her last, and breathed the language of hope and confidence. There was a warmth, a fervour of sentiment, far different from his former cold, but kind communications. He rejoiced in the knowledge of her altered fortune, for he could prove his disinterestedness, and show her that he loved her for herself alone, by returning and devoting himself to the task of winning her affections. "Say not, my Augusta," said he in conclusion, "that I cannot win the prize. All the energies of my heart and soul are enlisted for the contest. I could look on your beauty, all dazzling as it is, without much emotion; but the humility, the trust, the gentleness and feeling expressed in your letter has melted me into tenderness. Dare I indulge in the blissful dream, that even now gilds this page with the hues of heaven? Augusta, the sad, reluctant bride, transformed into the fond and faithful wife, cherished in my yearning bosom, and diffusing there the life, the warmth, the fragrance of love!"

Augusta's tears rained over the paper. "Oh! Allison," she cried, "the task shall not be in vain; I *will* love thee for thy virtues, and the blessing my dying father called down, may yet rest upon us." She was about to fold the letter, when a postscript on the envelope met her eye. "Receive Clarence," it said, "as my friend—he knows all my history, and the peculiarity of our situation—he is interested in you, for my sake—as a stranger and my especial friend, may I ask for him the hospitable attentions of Mr. Manning's family?"

When she descended into the room, where Clarence was seated, she could not repress a painful blush, from the consciousness that he was familiar with her singular history. "He must despise me," thought she; but the deference, and respect of his manner forbade such an impression. Gradually recovering from her embarrassment, and finding him directing his conversation principally to Mr. Manning, she had leisure to observe one who possessed strong interest in her eyes, as the friend of Allison. And seldom does the eye of woman rest upon a more graceful or interesting figure, or a more expressive and glowing countenance. There was a lambent brightness in his eyes, a mantling bloom upon his cheek, that indicated indwelling light and conscious youth. His hair clustered in soft waves round his temples, relieving by its darkness the unsunned whiteness of his forehead. Yet the prevailing charm was manner, that indescribable charm, that, like sunshine in the summer landscape, gilded and vivified the whole. The acquisition of such a guest gave life and animation to the domestic circle. Mr. Manning was a man of varied information, and the society of this accomplished traveller recalled the classic enthusiasm of his earlier days. Mary, though usually reserved to strangers, seemed fascinated into a forgetfulness of herself, and found herself a partaker of a conversation to which at first she was only a timid listener. Augusta, while she acknowledged the stranger's uncommon power to please, was preoccupied by the contents of her husband's letter, and longed to be alone with Mary, whose sympathy was always as spontaneous as it was sincere. She was not disappointed in the readiness of

Mary's sympathy; but after having listened again and again, and expressed her hope and joy that all would yet be for the happiest and the best, she returned to the subject next in interest, the bearer of this precious document. "Ah! my dear Augusta," said she, "if Allison's noble spirit had been enshrined in such a temple, you had not been parted now." Augusta felt the comparison *odious*. It brought before her the person of Allison in too melancholy a contrast with the engaging stranger. "I thought it was Mary Manning," answered she in a grave tone, "who once reproved me for attaching too much importance to manly beauty—I never thought you foolish or unkind till this moment."

"Forgive me," cried Mary, with irresistible frankness; "foolish I may be, indeed I know I am; but intentionally unkind to you—never—never." It did not require the recollection of all Mary's tried friendship and sincerity, for Augusta to accord her forgiveness. Mary was more guarded afterwards in the expression of her admiration, but Augusta, in her imagination, had drawn the horoscope of Mary's destiny, and Clarence shone there, as the star that was to give it radiance. A constant guest of her father's, she thought it impossible for him to witness Mary's mild, yet energetic virtues, without feeling their influence. She was interesting without being beautiful, and Clarence evidently delighted in her conversation. To her, he was always more reserved, yet there was a deference, an interest, a constant reference to her wishes and opinions, that was as delicate as it was flattering. He was the companion of their walks, and nature, never more lovely than in this delightful season, acquired new charms from the enthusiasm with which he

sought out and expatiated on its beauties. Mr. Manning was passionately fond of music, and every evening Mary and Augusta were called upon for his favourite songs. Now the music was finer than ever, for Clarence accompanied them with his flute, and sometimes with his voice, which was uncommonly sweet and melodious. One evening Augusta was seated at the piano; she was not an excelling performer, but she played with taste and feeling, and she had endeavoured to cultivate her talent, for she remembered that Allison was a lover of music. She had played all Mr. Manning's songs, and turned over the leaves, without thinking of any particular tune, when Clarence arrested her at one, which he said was Allison's favourite air. "Let us play and sing that," said he, repeating the words, "your husband loves it, we were together when he first heard it; it was sung by an Italian songstress, whom you have often struck me as resembling. The manner in which your hair is now parted in front, with those falling curls behind, increases the resemblance; it is very striking at this moment."

Augusta felt a strange pang penetrate her heart, when he asked her for her husband's favourite. There was something, too, in his allusion to her personal appearance that embarrassed her. He had paid her no compliment, yet she blushed as if guilty of receiving one. "I cannot play it," answered she, looking up, "but I will try to learn it for his sake." She could not prevent her voice from faltering; there was an expression in his eyes, when they met hers, that bowed them down, in shame and apprehension. It was so

intense and thrilling—she had never met such a glance before, and she feared to interpret it.

"Shall I sing it for you?" asked he; and leaning over the instrument, he sang in a low, mellow voice, one of those impassioned strains, which the fervid genius of Italy alone can produce. The words were eloquent of love and passion, and Augusta, charmed, melted by their influence, could not divest herself of a feeling of guilt as she listened. A new and powerful light was breaking upon her; truth held up its blazing torch, flashing its rays into the darkest corners of her heart; and conscience, discovering passions, of whose very existence she had been previously unconscious. She saw revealed in prophetic vision, the misery of her future existence, the misery she was entailing on herself, on others, and a cold shudder ran through her frame. Mary, alarmed at her excessive paleness, brought her a glass of water, and asked her if she were ill. Grateful for an excuse to retire, she rose and took Mary's arm to leave the room; but as she passed through the door, which Clarence opened and held, she could not avoid encountering again a glance so tender and impassioned, she could not veil to herself the language it conveyed. Augusta had thought herself miserable before, but never had she shed such bitter tears as bathed her pillow that night. Just as she had schooled herself to submission; just as she was cherishing the most tender and grateful feelings towards her husband, resolving to make her future life one long task of expiation, a being crossed her path, who realized all her early visions of romance, and who gently and insidiously had entwined himself into the very chords of her existence; and now,

when she felt the fold, and struggled to free herself from the enthrallment, she found herself bound as with fetters of iron and clasps of steel. That Clarence loved her, she could not doubt. Enlightened as to the state of her own heart, she now recollected a thousand covert marks of tenderness and regard. He had been admitted to the most unreserved intercourse with her, as the friend of her husband. Like herself, he had been cherishing sentiments of whose strength he was unaware, and which, when revealed in their full force, would make him tremble. She now constantly avoided his society. Her manners were cold and constrained, and her conscious eyes sought the ground. But Clarence, though he saw the change, and could not be ignorant of the cause, was not rebuked or chilled by her coldness. He seemed to call forth, with more animation, the rich resources of his mind, his enthusiasm was more glowing, his voice had more music, and his smile more brightness. It was evident she alone was unhappy; whatever were his feelings, they inspired no remorse. She began to believe her own vanity had misled her, and that he only looked upon her as the wife of his friend. She had mistaken the luminousness of his eyes for the fire of passion. Her credulity abased her in her own estimation.

One afternoon Clarence found her alone. She had declined accompanying Mary and her father in a walk, because she thought Clarence was to be with them. "I did not expect to find you alone," said he, taking a seat by her side—"but since I have gained such a privilege, may I ask, without increasing your displeasure, in what I have offended? You shun my society—your averted looks, your