

ances from scanty funds, illiberal prejudices, and petty jealousies, one duty she continued religiously to perform in her slight intervals of rest, and that was the training of the minds of her children in those principles believed to be most conducive to their moral, earthly, and eternal welfare. All the vast accumulation of exciting business never yet distracted the eye and mind of the mother from her most sacred charge. Those who have had the pleasure of an acquaintance with the family circle remember with delight the admirable conduct of the children, and the pure and warm devotion expressed by thought, action, and word for their honoured parents. The peculiarity of Mrs. Chisholm's teaching of her children consists in reciting to them tales in which faults are exposed and gently chid, and virtues portrayed and commented upon.

In conclusion, we may remark, Mrs. Chisholm has been the great benefactress of the poor and neglected soldiers' orphans in India. She broke through the boundaries of limited urban employment for men and women in Australia, and taught the Government that where there was land, and labour placed upon it, there Providence teemed forth his precious gifts—that wives and children were "God's police," and to have a moral, steady, intelligent people, they must be present. Australia, under her exertions, no longer seemed composed of a few towns and a few distant sheep and cattle-stations, but developed an immense country waiting for the thrifty and laborious to render it a land of "milk and honey," capable of receiving and rendering happy millions who struggled fruitlessly in older countries. The natural ties of humanity that had been snapped asunder she has ceaselessly toiled to re-unite; and no one, be they from a palace or a cottage, who traverses the wide ocean to the new quarter of the globe, can enter a vessel, and, on the voyage, not feel the influence of this noble lady's Christian exertions in comparative freedom from infections, fevers, diseases, and death. She has earned for herself undying fame; and we should not allow her to pass to her tomb, as too many of "Nature's nobles" have, without a testimony to her virtues while living. She seeks not earthly reward—she never expects even wordy gratitude; but still let us hope she is often remembered in the earnest prayers of those to whom she has been a kind and a noble benefactress.

THERE are some connoisseurs that would give a hundred pounds for the painted head of a beggar who would threaten the living mendicant with the stocks.

THE STEPMOTHER.

THE villagers of N—well remember the sad morning when the bell tolled for the death of Emma, the once beautiful, lovely, and beloved wife of Judge Allston. Many a face was shadowed, many a heart was in mourning on that day; for she who had gone so early to her rest had endeared herself to many by her goodness, gentleness, and the beauty of her blameless life. She had been declining for a long time, and yet she seemed to have died suddenly at last, so difficult, so almost impossible it was for those who loved her to prepare their hearts for that fearful bereavement, that immeasurable loss.

Mrs. Allston left four children—Isabel, the eldest, an intellectual, generous-hearted girl of seventeen, not beautiful, but thoroughly noble-looking; Frank, a fine boy of twelve; Emma, "the beauty," a child of seven; and Eddie, the baby, a delicate infant, only about a year old.

Judge Allston was a man of naturally strong and quick feelings, but one who had acquired a remarkable control over expression, a calmness and reserve of manner often mistaken for *hauteur* and insensibility. He was alone with his wife when she died. Isabel, wearied with long watching, had lain down for a little rest, and was sleeping with the children; and the mother, even in that hour, tenderly caring for them, would not that they should be waked. The last struggle was brief but terrible; the spirit seem torn painfully from its human tenement—the immortal rent its way forth from imprisoning mortality. Yet he, the husband and lover, preserved his calmness through all; and when the last painful breath had been panted out on the still air of midnight, he laid the dear head he had been supporting against his breast gently down on the pillow—kissed the cold, damp forehead and still lips of the love of his youth, and then, summoning an attendant, turned away and sought his room, where alone and in darkness he wrestled with the angel of sorrow—wept the swift tears of his anguish, and lacerated his heart with all the vain regrets and wild reproaches of bereaved affection. But with the coming of morning came serenity and resignation; and then he led his children into the silent chamber where lay their mother, already clad in the garments of the grave. Then, too, he was calm—holding the fainting Isabel in his arms, and gently hushing the passionate outcries of Emma and Frank. He was never seen to weep until the first earth fell upon the coffin, and then he covered up his face and sobbed aloud.

Mrs. Allston was not laid in the village churchyard, but was buried, at her own request,

within an arbour, at the end of the garden. She said it would not seem that she was thrust out from her home, if the light from her own window shone out toward her grave; and that she half believed the beloved voice of her husband, and the singing of her daughter, and the laughter of her children would come to her, where she lay, with her favourite flowers about her, and the birds she had fed and protected building their nests above her in the vines.

When the stunning weight of sorrow, its first distraction and desolation, had been taken from the life and spirit of Isabel Allston, one clear and noble purpose took complete possession of her mind. She would fill the dear place of her mother in the household; she would console and care for her poor father; she would love yet more tenderly her young brother and sister, and bind up their bruised hearts, so early crushed by affliction. She would be a mother to the babe, who had almost *felt* the bosom which had been its first resting-place grow cold against its little cheek, and hard and insensible to its "waxen touches," now that the voice which had hushed it to its first slumbers had sunk low, faltered, and grown still for ever, and the kind eyes which first shone over its awaking, the stars of love's heaven, had suddenly darkened and gone out in death.

After this, it was indeed beautiful to see Isabel in her home. There she seemed to live many lives in one. She superintended all domestic affairs and household arrangements with admirable courage and judgment. Her father never missed any of his accustomed comforts, and her brother and sister were as ever neatly dressed, and well taught and controlled. But on the baby she lavished most of her attention and loving care. She took him to her own bed—she dressed, and bathed, and fed him, and carried him with her in all her walks and rides. And she was soon richly rewarded by seeing little Eddie become, from an exceedingly small, fragile infant, a well-sized, blooming boy, not stout or remarkably vigorous indeed, but quite healthful and active. The child was passionately fond of his "mamma," as he was taught to call Isabel. Though rather imperious and rebellious toward others, he yielded to a word from her at any time. At evening she could summon him from the wildest play to prepare him for his bath and bed; and afterward he would twine his little arms about her neck, and cover her cheeks, lips, and forehead with his good-night kisses, then drop his sunny head on her shoulder and fall asleep, often with one of her glossy ringlets twined about his small rosy fingers. At the very break of day, the little fellow would be awake, striding over poor Isabel, as she vainly

strove for another brief, delicious doze—pulling at her long, black eyelashes, and peeping under the drowsy lids, or shouting into her half-dreaming ear his vociferous "Good morning!"

And Frank and Emma found ever in their sister-mother ready sympathy, patient sweetness, and the most affectionate counsel. They were never left to feel the crushing neglect, the loneliness and desolation, of orphanage; and they were happy and affectionate in return for all dear Isabel's goodness and faithfulness. Yet were they never taught to forget their mother, gone from them, neither to speak of her always with sorrow and solemnity. Her name was often on their young lips, and her memory kept green and glowing in their tender hearts. Her grave in the garden arbour—what a dear, familiar place! There sprang the first blue violets of spring—there bloomed the last pale chrysanthemums of autumn—there sweet Sabbath hymns and prayers were repeated by childish voices, which struggled up through tears—there, morning after morning, were reverently laid bright, fragrant wreaths which kept quite fresh till far into the hot summer-day on that shaded mound—and there, innumerable times, was the beloved name kissed in sorrowful emotion by those warm lips, which half shrank as they touched the cold marble, so like *her* lips when they had last kissed them.

Thus passed two years over that bereaved family—over Judge Allston, grown a cheerful man, though one still marked by great reserve of manner—over his noble daughter Isabel, happy in the perfect performance of her whole duty—and over the children, the good and beautiful children, whom an angel-mother might have smiled upon from heaven.

It happened that this third summer of his widowhood Judge Allston spent more time than ever before at the city of S—, the county-seat, and the place where lay most of his professional duties. But it was rumoured that there was an unusual attraction in that town—one apart from, and quite independent of, the claims of business and the pursuits of ambition. It was said that the thoughtful and dignified judge had sometimes been seen walking and riding with a certain tall and slender woman in deep mourning, probably a widow, but still young and beautiful.

At length, an officious family friend came to Isabel and informed her, without much delicacy or circumlocution, of the prevalent rumours; thus giving her the first inkling of a state of affairs which must have a serious bearing on her own welfare and happiness—her first intimation that she might soon be called upon to resign her place to a stranger, a *stepmother!*

This had been her secret fear; to guard against the necessity of this, she had struggled with grief and weariness, and manifold discouragements—had laboured uncomplainingly, and prayed without ceasing for patience and strength.

Pale and still listened Isabel, while her zealous friend went on, warming momentarily with her subject, commenting severely on the heartless machinations of "the widow" who, though only a poor music-teacher, had set herself, with her coquettish arts, to ensnare a man of the wealth, and station, and *years* of Judge Allston. Isabel was silent; but she writhed at the thought of her father, with all his intellect and knowledge of the world, becoming the dupe of a vain, designing woman. When her visitor had left, Isabel flew to her room, flung herself into a chair, and, covering her face with her hands, wept as she had not wept since the first dark days of her sorrow. Isabel had grown up with a deep, peculiar prejudice against stepmothers; probably from knowing that the childhood and girlhood of her own idolised mother had been cruelly darkened and saddened by the harshness and injustice of one; and now there was bitterness and sharp pain in the thought that those dear children, for she cared little for herself, must be subjected to the "iron rule" of an unloving and alien heart.

But she soon resolutely calmed down the tumult of feeling, as she would fain keep her trouble from the children, while there still remained a blessed uncertainty. Yet she slept little that night, but folded Eddie, her babe, closer and closer to her breast, and wept over him till his light curls were heavy with her tears.

The next morning, which was Tuesday, while Isabel sat at breakfast with the children, a letter was brought in, directed to her. It was from her father, at S—. Isabel trembled as she read, and at the last grew very pale, and leaned her head on her hand. As she had feared, that letter contained a brief and dignified announcement of the approaching marriage of her father. There was no natural embarrassment exhibited; there was no apology made for this being the first intimation to his family of an event of so great moment to them—such things were not in his way, not in character. He wrote: "Cecilia Weston, whom I have now known nearly two years, and of whom you may have heard me speak, is a noble woman, the only one I have ever seen whom I considered fully competent to fill your dear mother's place. . . . We are to have a strictly private wedding, on Saturday morning next, and will be with you in the evening. To you, Isabel, my dear child, I trust I need give no

charges to show towards Mrs. Allston from the first, if not the tenderness and affection of a daughter, the respect and consideration due to the wife of your father. *This*, at least, I shall exact from all my children, if it be not, as I fervently hope it will be, given willingly and gracefully."

When Isabel found strength and voice to read this letter of her father's aloud, the unexpected intelligence which it contained was received with blank amazement and troubled silence. This was first broken by the passionate and impetuous little Emma, who exclaimed, with flashing eyes and gleaming teeth, "I won't have a new mother! I won't have any mother but Isabel! I hate that Cecilia Weston, and I'll tell her so the very first thing! I won't let her kiss me, and I won't kiss papa if he brings her here. O sister, don't ask her to take off her things when she comes, and maybe she won't stay all night!"

"Hush, hush, darling!" said Isabel. "I think it probable you will like her much. I hear that she is a very beautiful woman."

"No, I won't like her! I don't believe she is pretty at all; but a cross, ugly old thing that will scold me and beat me, and make me wear frights of dresses, and maybe cut off my curls!"

This last moving picture was quite too much for "beauty," and she burst into tears, covering her ringleted head all up with her inversed pinafore.

Frank, now a tall, noble-spirited boy of fourteen, was calm and manly under these trying circumstances, but expressed a stern resolve, which he clenched by an impressive classical oath, never, never to call the unwelcome stranger *mother*. "Mrs. Allston" would be polite; "Mrs. Allston" would be sufficiently respectful; and by *that* name, and that only, would he call her. Isabel said nothing, but inwardly resolved thus herself to address the young wife of her father.

During this scene, little Eddie, who only understood enough to perceive that something was wrong, some trouble brewing, ran to his mamma, and, hiding his face in her lap, began to cry very bitterly and despairingly. But Isabel soon reconciled him to life, by administering saccharine consolation from the sugar-bowl before her.

It was finally with saddened and anxious spirits that the little affectionate family circle broke up that morning.

With the bustle and hurry of necessary preparations, the week passed rapidly, and brought Saturday evening, when the Allstons, with a few family friends, were awaiting the arrival of the judge and his fair bride.

There were not many marks of festivity in



THE DRIVE UP THE AVENUE.

the handsome drawing-room; there was somewhat more light, perhaps, and a few more flowers than usual. Isabel, who had never laid off mourning for her mother, wore to-night a plain black silk, with a rich lace cape, and white rose-buds in her hair; Emma was dressed in a light-blue barège, with her pet curls floating about her waist.

At length, rather late in the evening, a carriage was heard coming up the avenue, and soon after Judge Allston entered the drawing-room, with a tall and slender lady leaning on his arm. Shrinking from the glare of light, and with her head modestly bowed, Mrs. Allston entered, more as a timid and ill-assured guest than as the newly-appointed mistress of that elegant mansion. Isabel advanced immediately to be presented; offered her hand alone, but that cordially; made some polite inquiries concerning the journey, and then proceeded to assist the bride in removing her bonnet and shawl. She then called Emma, who advanced shyly, eyeing the enemy askance. She extended her hand in a half-diffident, half-defiant manner; but Mrs. Allston, clasping it in both of hers, bent down and kissed her, smiling, as she did so, on the loveliness of that face. The blood shot up to the very brow of the child, as she turned quickly and walked to a distant window-seat, where she sat, and looked out upon the garden. It was a moonlight night, and she could see the arbour and the gleaming of the white tombstone within, and she wondered sadly if her mother, lying there in her grave, knew about *this woman*, and was troubled for her children's sake.

Frank was presented by his father, with much apparent pride, to his young stepmother, who looked searchingly, though kindly, into his handsome yet serious face.

It was some time before Isabel found the opportunity closely to observe the person and manner of her father's bride. Mrs. Allston was, as I have said, tall, but would not have been observably so, perhaps, except for the extreme delicacy of her figure. She was graceful and gentle in her movements—not absolutely beautiful in face, but very lovely, with a most winning smile, and a sort of earnest sadness in the expression of her soft, hazel eyes which Isabel recognised at once as a spell of deep power—the spell which had enthralled the heart of her thoughtful and unsusceptible father. She looked about twenty-five, and did not look unsuited to Judge Allston, who, with the glow of happiness lighting up his face, and sparkling from his fine dark eyes, appeared to all far younger and handsomer than usual.

Isabel *felt* that her father was not entirely satisfied with the reception which his wife had met from his children; but he did not express any dissatisfaction that night, or ever after.

It was a happy circumstance for Isabel, in her embarrassed position, that the next day was the Sabbath, as going to church and attending to her household duties absorbed her time and attention; thus preventing any awkward *tête-à-têtes* with one whose very title of stepmother had arrayed her heart against her in suspicion, and determined though unconscious antagonism.

On Sunday afternoon, about the sunset-hour, Judge Allston had been wont to go with his children to visit the grave of their mother; but this Sabbath evening, I need hardly say, he was not with them there.

"How cool and shadowy looks that arbour at the end of the garden, where Miss Allston and the children are! Let us join them, dear Charles," said Mrs. Allston to her husband, as they two sat at the pleasant south window of their chamber. Judge Allston hesitated a moment, and then said in a lone tone, "That arbour, dear Cecilia, is the place where my Emma lies buried." The young wife looked startled and somewhat troubled, but said nothing.

On Monday, Isabel, after showing her stepmother over the house, resigned into her hands the housekeeper's keys, with all the privileges and dignities of domestic authority.

Day after day went by, and Isabel preserved the same cold, guarded manner toward her stepmother, though she often met those soft hazel eyes fixed upon her with a half-pleading, half-reproachful look, which she found it difficult to resist. Frank and Emma still remained shy and distant; and "the baby," constitutionally timid, would scarcely look at the stranger-lady, who sought in an anxious, ill-assured way to win its love and confidence. As little Eddie shrank from those delicate, inviting hands, and clung about Isabel, she would clasp him yet closer to her heart, and kiss his bright head with passionate fondness.

On Friday afternoon, Mrs. Allston's piano arrived. This was a great event in the family, for Isabel did not play, though she sang very sweetly, and Frank and Emma had a decided taste for music. Mrs. Allston was gifted with a delicious voice, which she had faithfully cultivated, and she played with both skill and feeling.

All the evening sat Judge Allston, gazing proudly and tenderly upon the performer, and listening with all his soul. Isabel was charmed in spite of her fears and prejudices, and the

children were half beside themselves with delight.

The next morning, as she came in from her walk, hearing music in the parlour, Isabel entered, and found her stepmother playing and singing the "May Queen," with Emma close at her side, and Frank turning over the leaves of the music. The touching words of the song had already brought tears; and when it was finished, Mrs. Allston suddenly dashed off into a merry waltz, and presently Frank was whirling his pretty sister round and round the room, to those wild, exhilarating notes. When the playing ceased, "Oh, thank you, *mother!*" said Emma, going up to Mrs. Allston. In a moment, the stepmother's arms were about the waist, and her lips pressed against the lips of the child. That name, and the glad embrace which followed, struck the foreboding heart of Isabel. Her eyes involuntarily sought the face of Frank, and she was not displeased to remark the lowering of his brow and the slight curl of his lip.

But the evening of the very next day, Isabel, on entering the parlour, found Frank alone with his beautiful stepmother, sitting on a low ottoman at her side, as she half reclined on a sofa, and leaning his head against her knee, while her soft, white fingers were threading his wavy, luxuriant hair. Isabel, giving one startled glance at the two, who were chatting pleasantly and familiarly together, crossed the room, seated herself at a table, and took up a book. Presently, Frank rose, and came and stood by her side. She looked up and murmured, with a slightly reproachful smile, "*Et tu, Brute!*" The boy coloured, and soon after left the room.

Thus the days wore on; Isabel feeling her treasures wrested one after another from the fond and jealous hold of her heart; sorrowing in secret over her loss, and still pressing her mother's holiest legacy, her child, dear little Eddie, close and closer to her breast.

One afternoon, when the hour came for their daily ride, she missed the child from her room. After looking through parlour, kitchen, and hall, and calling through the garden, she sought Mrs. Allston's chamber, from whence, as she knocked at the door, she heard the sound of singing and laughter. "Come in!" said a light musical voice. She opened the door hastily, and there sat little traitorous Eddie in his stepmother's lap, playing with her long, auburn ringlets, while she sang him merry songs and nursery-rhymes.

"Eddie!" exclaimed Isabel somewhat sharply, "you must come with mamma, and be dressed for a ride."

"No, no," cried the perverse child, "I don't

want to ride! Pd rather stay with my pretty new mamma, and hear her sing about 'little Bo-peep.'"

"No, my dear, you must go with your sister," said Mrs. Allston, striving to set the little fellow down.

Isabel advanced to take him, but he buried his face in his stepmother's lap, and screamed, "Go away, go away! I love this mamma best! I won't go to ride with you!"

Pale as death, Isabel turned hurriedly and passed from the room. She almost flew through the house and garden to the arbour, to the grave of her mother. There she flung herself upon the turf, and clasped the mound, and pressed her poor, wounded heart against it, and wept aloud.

"They have all left me!" she cried. "I am robbed of all love, all comfort; I am lonely and desolate. O mother, mother!"

While thus she lay, sorrowing with all the bitterness of a new bereavement, she was startled by a deep sigh, and, looking up, she beheld Mrs. Allston standing at her side. Instantly she sprang to her feet, exclaiming, "Have I, then, no refuge? Is not even *this* spot sacred from officious and unwelcome intrusion?"

"Oh, forbear, I intreat!" exclaimed Mrs. Allston, with a sudden gush of tears. "Pray do not speak thus to me! You do not know me. I seek to love you, to be loved by you — this is all my sin."

Isabel was softened by those tears, and murmured some half-articulate apology for the passionate feeling which she had exhibited.

"Dear Isabel," said her stepmother, "will you hear my little history, and then judge whether I have erred in assuming the relation which I now bear towards you?"

Isabel bowed her head in assent, and Mrs. Allston seated herself in the arbour; but Isabel remained standing, with a firm-set lip and her arms folded.

"I fear," began Cecilia, "that your father has not been as communicative and confidential with you as he should have been. I heard from him this morning, with much surprise, that he had told you very little concerning me and our first acquaintance. He said that you never seemed to wish for his confidence, and he could not thrust it upon you. I know that you must wonder greatly how your beloved father could choose a woman like me — poor and without station, or high connexions."

"No," replied Isabel coldly; "on the contrary, I wonder most that you, so young and richly endowed by nature, could prefer a man of the years and character of my father. I

know not what there is in him for a beautiful woman to fancy."

"Ah, Isabel," said Mrs. Allston, looking up reproachfully, "I never *fancied* your father. It is with a worthier, deeper, holier feeling that I regard him."

Isabel sat down on the rustic seat near her stepmother, who continued, in a low but fervent tone "Yes, Isabel! I *love* your father, dearly love him! He is the only man I have ever loved."

"What!" exclaimed Isabel; "were you not, then, a widow when you married him?"

"Why no, dear. Why did you suppose it?"

"I heard so—at least, I heard that you were in deep mourning."

"That was for my mother," replied Mrs. Allston, with a quivering lip; "yet, until now, I have not been out of mourning for many, many years. I have seen much sorrow, Isabel."

The warm-hearted girl drew nearer to her stepmother, who, after a brief pause, continued—"My father, who was a lawyer of S—, died while I was quite young—a school-girl, away from home, already pursuing with ardour the study of music. He left my mother very little besides the house in which he lived. My only brother, Alfred, a noble boy, in whom our best hopes were centred, had entered college only the year before father died. Then it was that my mother, with the courage of a true heroine and the devotion of a martyr, resolved to remove neither of her children from their studies, but, by her own unassisted labour, to keep me at my school and Alfred in college.

"She opened a large boarding-house in S—, principally for gentlemen of the bar, and, almost from the first, was successful. I remained two years longer at school, when a lucrative situation was offered me, as a teacher of music, in the family of a wealthy southern senator. I parted from my mother, from dear Alfred, and went with the Ashtons to Georgia. There I remained year after year, ever toiling cheerfully in the blessed hope of returning north, with the means of restoring my beloved mother to her former social position, and of freeing her from toil and care for the remainder of her days. This was the one constant desire of my heart—the one great purpose of my life. I thought not of pleasure; I cared not for distinction, or admiration, or love. I thought only of *her*—my patient, self-sacrificing, angel-mother."

Here Isabel drew nearer, and laid her hand in that of her stepmother, who pressed it gently as she continued—

"Brother Alfred, immediately on leaving college, commenced the study of the law. I

shall ever fear that he confined himself too closely and studied too intensely. His constitution was delicate, like his father's; and, after a year or two, his health, never vigorous, began to fail. Mother finally wrote to me that she was anxious about him; though she added perhaps her affection for the beloved one made her needlessly fearful. Yet I was alarmed, and hastened home some months before my engagement had expired. I had then been absent five years; but I had seen mother and Alfred once in that time, when they had met me on the seashore.

"It was a sultry afternoon in August when I reached S—. I shall never forget how wretchedly long and weary seemed the last few miles, and how eagerly I sprang down the carriage-steps at last. I left my baggage at the hotel, and ran over to my mother's house alone. I entered without knocking, and went directly to our mother's little private parlour, the room of the household. I opened the door very gently, so as to surprise them. At the first glance, I thought the room was empty; but on looking again, I saw some one extended on the familiar, chintz-coloured sofa. It was Alfred, asleep there. I went softly up and looked down upon his face. Oh, my God, what a change! It was thin and white, save a small red spot in either cheek. One hand lay half-buried in his dark chestnut curls, which alone preserved their old beauty; and that hand—how slender and delicate it had grown, and how distinct was every blue vein, even the smallest! As I stood there, heart-wrung with sudden grief, my tears fell so fast on his face that he awoke, and half raised himself, looking up with a bewildered expression. Just then dear mother came in, and we all embraced one another, and thanked God out of the overflowing fulness of our hearts. As I looked at Alfred then, his eyes were so bright and his smile so glad—so like the *old smile*—I took courage again; but he suddenly turned away and coughed lightly—but *such* a cough! It smote upon my heart like a knell.

"When I descended from my chamber that evening, after laying aside my travelling-dress, I found a gentleman, a stranger, sitting by Alfred's side reading to him, in a low, pleasant voice. That stranger, Isabel, was your father—Alfred's best, most beloved friend.

"I will not pain your heart by dwelling on our great sorrow, as we watched that precious life, the treasury of many hopes and much love, passing away. With the fading and falling of the leaf, with the dying of the flowers, he died!"

Here Mrs. Allston paused, and covered her face with her hands, while the tears slid slowly through her fingers. And she wept not alone. At length she continued—

"I have since felt that, with poor Alfred's last dying kiss, the chill of death entered into dear mother's heart; for she never was well after that night. Though she sorrowed bitterly for that only son, so good and so beautiful, she said she wished to live for my sake. Yet vain was that meek wish—vain were my love and care—vain the constant, agonised pleading of my soul with the Giver of life. She failed and drooped daily, and within a year she was laid beside father, and very near to Alfred. She died, and left me alone—a lone one in the wide world! Oh, how often, dear Isabel, have I, like you, cried out with that exceeding bitter cry of the orphan, 'Oh, mother, mother!'"

Here Isabel flung her arms around her step-mother, and pressed her lips against her cheek.

"In all this time," pursued Cecilia, "my chief adviser and consoler was the early friend of my mother, the generous patron of my brother—your father, Isabel. And when the first fearful days of my sorrow had gone by, and he came to me in the loneliness and desolation of my life, and strove to give me comfort and courage—telling me at last that he needed my love, even the love of my poor, crushed heart—then I felt that, in loving him and his, I might hope for happiness ever more. But ah! if in loving him, in becoming his wife, I have brought unhappiness to those near to him, and darkened the light of their home, I am indeed miserable!"

"Oh, do not say so, do not say so!" exclaimed Isabel. "You have won all our hearts. Have you not seen how the children are drawn towards you—even little Eddie, *my babe*? I have not yet called you by *her* name—I do not know that I can so call you *here*; but I can and will love you, and we shall all be very happy, and, by God's help, 'kindly affectioned one to another!'"

"Ah, my dear girl," replied Mrs. Allston, with a sweet smile, "I do not ask *you* to call me by a name of so much sacredness and dignity; only love me and confide in me—lean upon my heart, and let me be to you as an older sister."

* * * * *

The evening had come, and Mrs. Allston, Isabel, and the children were assembled in the pleasant family parlour, awaiting the return of Judge Allston from his office. Isabel was holding little Eddie on her knee. The child had already repeatedly begged pardon for his

naughtiness, and was as full as ever of his loving demonstrations. Cecilia was, as usual, seated at the piano, playing half-unconsciously, every now and then glancing impatiently out of the window into the gathering darkness. Isabel set down the baby-boy, and, going up to her, said, "Will you play the 'Old Arm-Chair' for me?"

"If you will sing with me," replied Cecilia, with a smile.

The two began with voices somewhat tremulous, but they sang on till they came to the passage—

I've sat and watched her, day by day,
While her eye grew dim—

here they both broke down.

Cecilia rose and wound her arm about Isabel's waist, and Isabel leaned her head on Cecilia's shoulder, and they wept together. At that moment, Judge Allston entered, and, after a brief pause of bewilderment, advanced with a smile, and clasped them both in one embrace. He said not a word then; but afterward, when he bade Isabel good-night, at the foot of the stairway, he kissed her more tenderly than usual, saying as he did so, "God bless you, my daughter!"

THE MORALISING ROSE.

At early dawn a sweetly-blooming rose,
Bent by its weight, drooped nearly to the ground;
And near, in lowly, modest, sweet repose,
A violet surcharged with dew was found.

Their blended sweets around them fragrance shed,
And their fine tints in lovely contrast shone;
Yet, as the encumbered rose bowed down her head,
She thought both hue and tint outdid her own.

"Ah! 'tis to be lamented, sweetest flower,
Thou wert not formed to raise thine head on high,"

So spake the rose, "to bloom in lady's bower,
And be for ever to the fair one nigh.

"So beauteous is thy colour, and thy scent
As far does mine exceed, as I in size
Do thee outvie; and yet thou dost frequent
Retirement, shunning every passer's eyes.

"Thine is a pattern which the young and fair
Should learn to imitate; for doubly sweet
Would seem their beauties if concealed with care,
Nor placed, like mine, the vulgar gaze to meet.

"As thou art treasured often after death
For thy sweet scent, so would their merits hold
A place in some fond bosom, even when breath
Its fragile shrine had given to kindred mould."

MRS. LIMPERANI.