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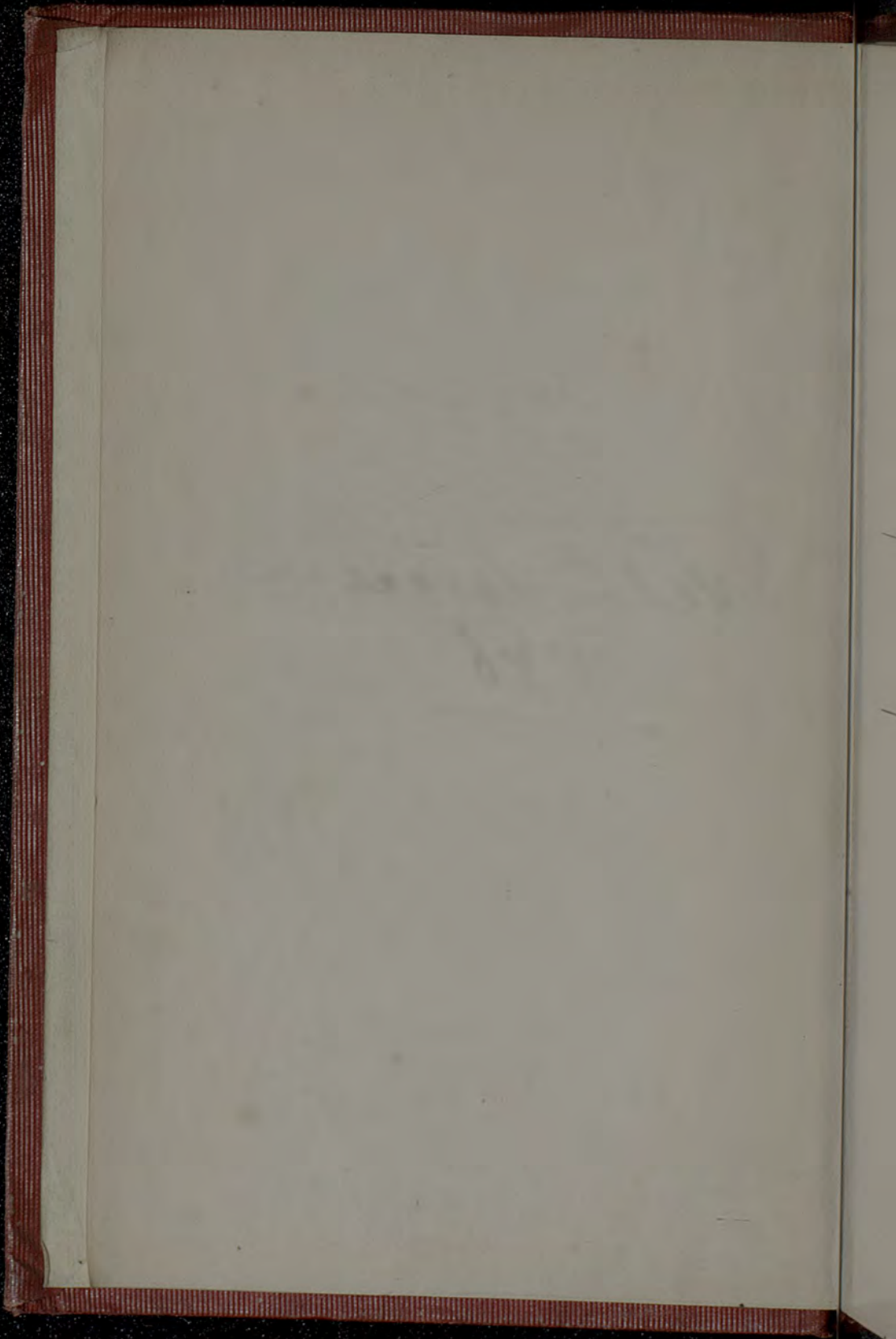
Given to her by Mrs Williamson

June 13<sup>th</sup> 1852

Edith Kleeve

1876







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FORTITUDE.

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London—Printed by Darling & Son, Leadenhall Street.

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FORTITUDE,

A TALE.

By

Mrs. Hoftand.

Author of

*Africa Described. Integrity. Decision. Patience.*

*Moderation. Reflection. Self-Denial.*

*Clergyman's Widow &c &c.*

Assail'd in patience she receiv'd the shock,

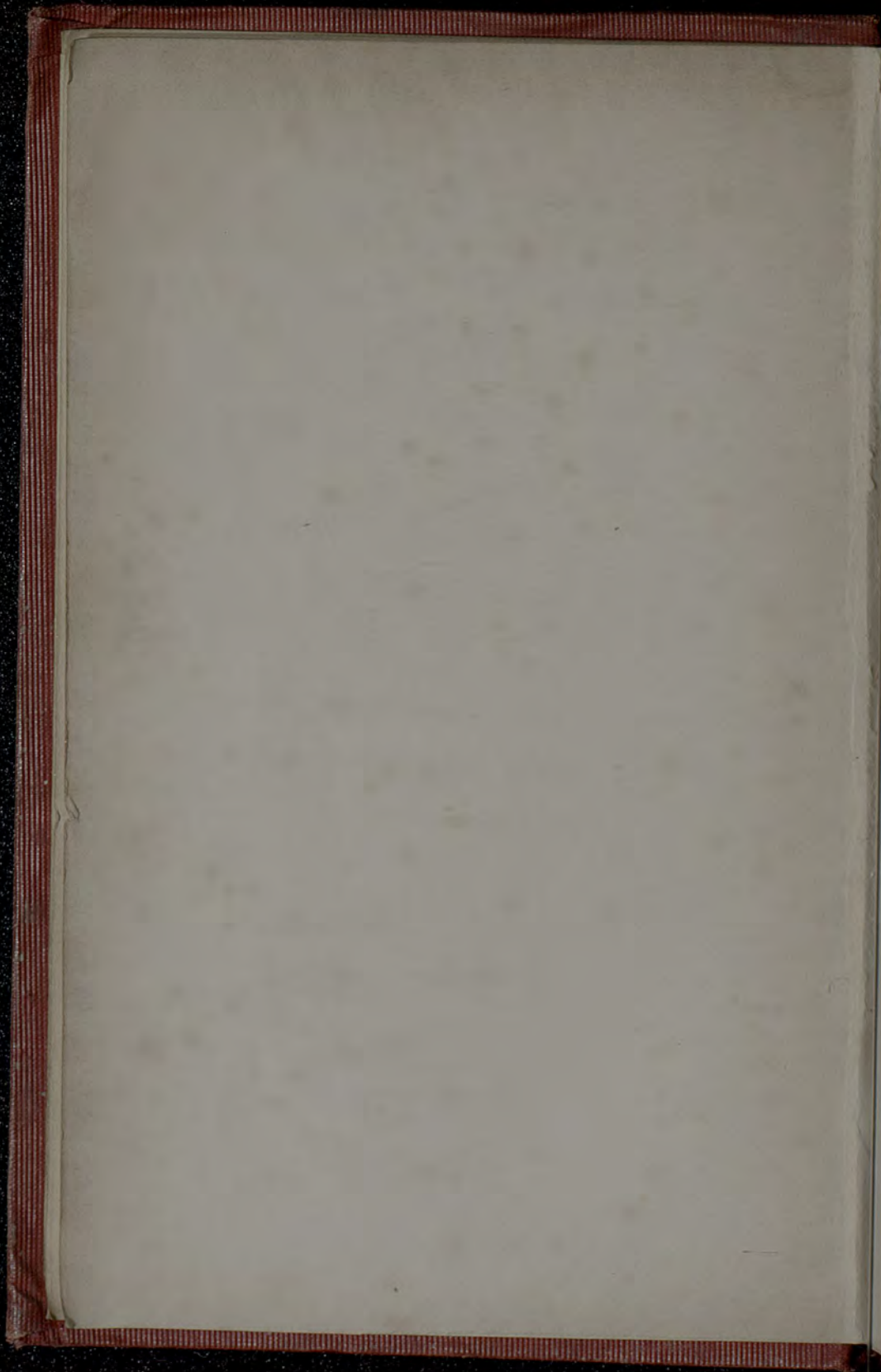
Soft as the wave, unshaken as the Rock.

CRABBE

LONDON,

A. K. Newman & Company.





1721

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# FORTITUDE.

A TALE.

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BY MRS. HOFLAND,

AUTHOR OF

AFRICA DESCRIBED; ENERGY; MODERATION;  
INTEGRITY; DECISION; REFLECTION;  
SELF-DENIAL; YOUNG CADET;  
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CLERGYMAN'S WIDOW; &c.

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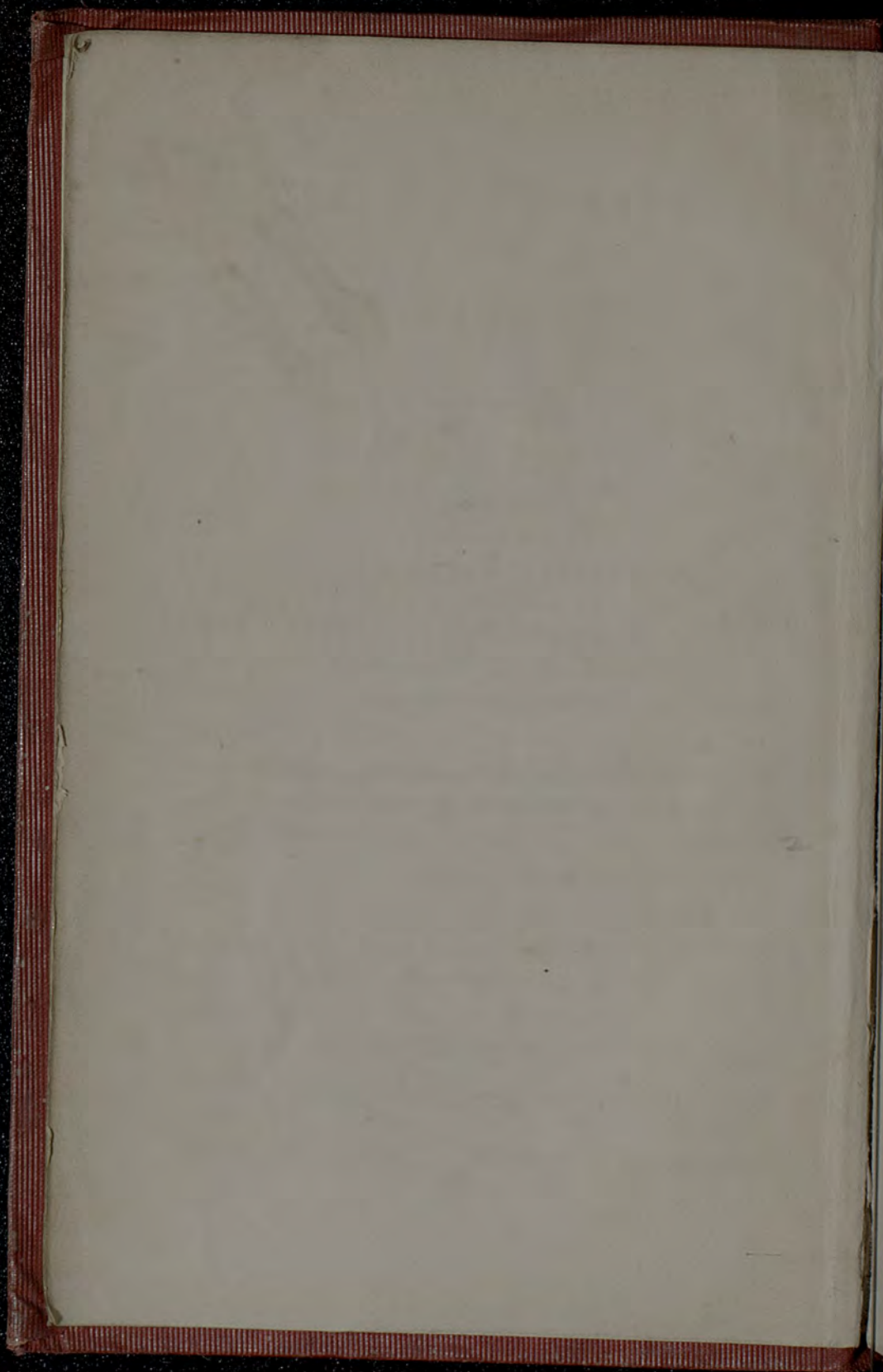
NEW EDITION.

LONDON:

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1838.





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# FORTITUDE.

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## CHAP. I.

“ I MADE no remark on the subject of your violent sorrow yesterday,” said Mrs. Ratchliffe to her daughter, in the spring of 1742, “ for I thought it natural that you should cry for the loss of your pretty lap-dog ; but now you have had time to reflect on the circumstances and must see the necessity of the case, your conduct in thus continuing to weep and lament, appears to me very blameable indeed.”

“ But how can I help it, mama ? when I remember how much Fido loved me, and remember too that he was shot—poor thing !”

“ By remembering *also* that the poor animal went mad, and of course placed every one of us in danger of the most awful and irremediable affliction the history of human suffering supplies. Consider for a moment, how much each, or all,



of the present circle were in the habit of fondling Fido, and you will then become aware that you have more cause for gratitude to God, than for sorrow in your own deprivation, in losing even a pleasing and attached animal."

Sophia's imagination was not less lively than her sensibility, and when thus awakened by her mother's remonstrance, it presented her with objects of contemplation too dreadful for affection so tender as hers to endure. She beheld in her mind's eye, her revered father, her idolized mother, her beloved sister, raving in madness, howling in terror, or expiring in agony, in consequence of being bitten by the poor dog whose destruction she had so blameably lamented. Horror-stricken by the images her too vivid fancy presented, and conscious that she had apparently loved her family too little, and her favourite too much, she burst again into tears, and throwing herself on her knees before her mother, earnestly intreated her forgiveness, and rapidly accused herself of much more error than she had really been guilty of.

"You have my forgiveness, Sophia, and shall also have my advice, when you are able to attend to me."

She struggled to overcome her emotion, and



when her tears ceased to flow, sat down by her mother, wiped her eyes, and looked at her with the expression of one seeking instruction.

“A woman without feeling in every sense of the word,” said Mrs. Ratcliffe, “I consider to be a kind of monster in society, alike useless and hateful; but a woman whose sensibilities are too acute, uncontrouled, and ill-regulated, is in herself an unhappy creature, and the source of uneasiness to all who are connected with her—at best helpless, but frequently burdensome. Of what use is the compassion which never rises to charity? or the sympathy that can participate sorrow, yet never seek to relieve the subject of its troubles? and such will generally be found the conduct of those who give the reins to their feelings. They weep when they should act—their minds become enervated, and open to the influence of passion, rather than reason; impulse supplies the place of principle; affections are misplaced, duties neglected, time wasted, and that which should be the best season of life, spent in forming subjects of regret for that portion which has inevitably many sources of anxiety and burdens of its own to contend with.”

“But, dear mother, how can one help feeling too much, if they feel at all?”



“By exerting self-controul, by earnestly praying for Fortitude, and exercising that portion of it which you *do* possess, since it is more or less implanted in every ones nature.”

Sophia blushed so deeply that the suffusion overcame the redness on her cheeks and eyelids, her bosom heaved, and she evidently struggled much to suppress new, and perhaps violent emotion, but at length she said in a faltering voice—“And have I then lost my fortitude? the very quality for which both yourself and my father were wont to praise me so much within this very year?”

Mrs. Ratcliffe remembered but too well the patience and resolution, almost the *heroic* fortitude, with which her daughter had about a year before endured severe and long-continued pain, arising from an accident to her foot, and finally submitted to a distressing operation by which it was restored. Her own eyes filled with tears, she eagerly drew the dear child (over whom she had then long bent in sorrow and alarm,) to her bosom, and tremulously said—“Thou wert indeed, my Sophy, a pattern of patient endurance in thy long affliction, and of strength of mind, in meeting that trial from which thy mother shrunk. All I can wish for



in thy future character, is an attainment of the power to meet *mental* affliction with the same calmness and holy resignation evinced by thee at that trying time, and that thou wilt carry that power (which has already been signally proved,) into *every part* of thy mind and conduct. God only knows how soon it may be called for."

Mrs. Ratcliffe was too much agitated herself to say more, and Sophia recalled to mind the circumstance of her father having named the receipt of certain letters in a mysterious manner to her mother some days before, in consequence of which she had appeared restless and low-spirited; but the misfortune which had since then befallen her dog, and the more immediate alarm given to the family, had obliterated this incident from her memory. It now struck her, that some serious misfortune threatened the happiness of her beloved parents; but she could form no idea of its nature, since all were at present in health, and, so far as she knew, in affluence. She felt a sense of her own insignificance as a girl not yet fifteen, and just convicted of something blameable, to inquire into the cause of her mother's uneasiness, yet could not forbear to look inquiringly, as she said—"Dear mother, should



I be tried in any unexpected way, I trust God will be my support; for your sake I will do my best to bear the infliction, come in what shape it may."

"I am unhappy and anxious, Sophia, on a subject of the last importance to us both—no less an one than the wisdom and the safety of your dear father."

"My father! surely he is a wise and good man too; he will injure no human being, and I hope no one intends to injure him?"

"Listen to me, Sophia—I have exhorted you to the fortitude demanded by mature mind, and I am going to place a confidence in you, which I would give to few women who had numbered twice your years. Your father is a Ratcliffe, one of that unhappy family who have always adhered to the dynasty of the Stuarts, and bled for them both in the field and on the scaffold."

"Oh yes! I know that; our cousin, Lord Derwentwater, has been at one time condemned to death—but that is all over now. I recollect when I was a very little girl, papa took me on his knee, gave me wine from his own glass, and told me to drink to the 'King over the water,' but you begged him never to do so again, and he never has; my sister Blanche would not know



what was meant by such an expression, but it is certain I *do* know who is our lawful king: is it likely that he should come again and claim his own?"

"I greatly fear that he will attempt it, Sophia, in which case he will draw inevitable destruction on his own head, and that of every unhappy being who joins his standard."

"But surely he has a right to try if he can regain his own crown, and every one who loves justice must assist him. If my father were to go abroad, and a stranger come and turn us out of our house, would it not be a sin of such crying magnitude, that every tenant on the estate who had hearts in their bosoms would rise to protect us?"

"Crowns are very different property to either land or money, my dear Sophia; they are bestowed and held, for the benefit of the nation; they descend hereditarily for the same reason, in order to prevent confusion, and secure advantages to the people governed. It may be hard upon an individual that his father, either by weakness or wickedness, forfeits the station to which he was born, or flies from his duties and abandons his rank, but he must submit to his misfortune as other men do. In private life the



son of a spendthrift father reduced to poverty is exceedingly to be pitied, we all know; but should he seek by nefarious means to regain the property his father squandered, surely he would be amenable to the sentence pronounced on all criminals?"

"This is a new way of viewing the case, mother, and perhaps a right one; but it makes no difference between the feelings of kings and subjects, and every history I ever read communicates an idea of their entire distinctness. If you would place them under the same moral government which binds private persons, where would be loyalty, and chivalrous attachment, and gallant exploits? Surely there is a peculiar species of personal attachment due to kings from their subjects, which it is very natural to transfer to their unoffending and perhaps excellent offspring."

"It may be natural and amiable, so to feel, Sophia, towards the interesting young man whose appearance I dread so much; nay, I will go farther and say, that the desertion of himself and family, as to the pecuniary aid they were entitled to, is utterly disgraceful to our government; but neither that, nor any other circumstance, can justify them in disturbing this coun-



try, now prosperous and happy, by bringing upon it the greatest of all miseries, a civil war. You can little imagine, my love, the variety of horrors and sorrows, that must ensue in all ranks of life—the contention of opinions—the breaking up of old friendships and young attachments—the terrible solicitude of parents for their sons—the deprivation children must experience of the fathers who provided them with bread—the devastation of whole tracts of country—the burning of villages, the slaying and pillaging, and maiming, that will ensue, outstripping even the bloody field of battle in its horrors; and then the executions! the terrific executions that will follow—the wretched wives—the agonized widows—the starving orphans!”

Mrs. Ratcliffe ceased to speak from the severity of her emotions, and all the floating visions of successful warfare, and triumphant glory, which had lately swam in the mind of Sophia, vanished before the stern realities depicted by her mother, and which were evidently greater than she had fortitude to contemplate. Fixing her eyes upon her with an expression of equal solicitude and compassion, the poor girl tried to whisper a hope that things could not be quite so terrible as her fears suggested.



“Worse, far worse,” said Mrs. Ratcliffe, with a groan, “for though I was very young at the last rebellion, and saw but a small portion of its evils, yet I beheld whole families utterly stripped of their property, and compelled to seek precarious subsistence in a far distant land. I saw some whom I loved most fondly, go forth to fight on either side, whom I never beheld again; and——but I will not harass you further, my child, nor compel you to exertion of fortitude as yet uncalled for—your power of secrecy I must insist upon; the projected invasion may entirely blow over, and God in his goodness avert from us the renewal of scenes I can never forget; but at all events, *we* of all other persons must seem ignorant; oh that we may be so, that we could be so!”

Sophia, oppressed by a burthen her heart had never known before, most devoutly said “Amen” to that desire, nevertheless she could not regret that she was rendered the partaker of her beloved mother’s fears and griefs; and she was fully aware that it was necessary she should not be known to have any, seeing that her situation in life appeared to be one of singular felicity. Her father’s fortune was large, he was a man of highly-cultivated mind, enjoying an extensive



circle of acquaintance, during the winter months when he resided in the environs of London, and he possessed a beautiful mansion in one of the most romantic dales in Derbyshire. He was tenderly attached to her mother, for whom he had waited with the patience of the patriarch many years, in consequence of the difference in political opinions between their parents, and was exceedingly fond of his daughters, whom he instructed himself in the more solid parts of their education.

Female accomplishments were not then easy of attainment as now, but Sophia and Blanche were not ignorant of music, and being both gifted with fine voices, contributed much to the pleasure of their parents when they "warbled their wood-notes wild," in the rocky glens and woodbine bowers near their secluded mansion. They were proficient in embroidery, but by no means slaves to the use of their needle, for Sophia was fond of books, and her father indulged her in the use of them and directed her choice, desiring that she should also lead the taste of Blanche, who with equal sweetness of disposition and lovingness of temper, had less facility in learning and less powerful mind than her elder sister.



The conversation we have detailed took place in the neighbourhood of Kennington, the first winter when the girls were permitted, even in any degree, to mix with the society which partook their parents' hospitalities. This would have been still withheld, if the awakened fears of their mother had not induced her to believe it necessary to their future welfare, to attain a degree of self-possession and mental firmness, which was incompatible with their natural bashfulness and their retired habits, during childhood. Their improvement justified her conclusion, and as the information of which she had received hints was not repeated, by degrees her fears died away, her cheerfulness returned, and Sophia lost the sense of alarm, yet retained memory of the lesson conveyed along with it.



## CHAP. II.

THE summer which Mr. Ratcliffe and his family now retired to enjoy in Derbyshire, passed pleasantly. The aspect of public affairs presented nothing likely to excite and interest the apparently-forgotten partialities of Mr. Ratcliffe, or, by the same rule, alarm his wife; and as each party well knew that they could neither think nor feel alike on *this* subject, united as they were on all others, they wisely forbore all allusion to it.

In consequence of this forbearance, their daughters knew less of the general surmises and desultory news connected with the subject, than many persons who were far less immediately concerned, than it could be supposed possible for one of the Ratcliffes to be. The execution of the last Earl of Derwentwater was never alluded to, and although the existence of his proscribed brother was well known to his nearest relative, who was also his sincere friend, it was seldom adverted to, and the correspondence he



still held occasionally with his cousin, formed no subject of family communication. Politics, with all their train of anxieties, heart-burnings, and bickerings, seemed entirely banished, and so wisely did Mr. Ratcliffe fulfil the duties of a country gentleman, and extend the pleasures of good neighbourhood, by scientific pursuits, or elegant improvements, that all within his circle pressed to share his friendship; the long-existing barriers of party were swept away, and the happiest intercourse took place with every description of persons.

Sophia and Blanche partook not only the pleasures such society naturally gave, but the improvement necessary for the formation of their own character. The elder was more particularly benefited, because, although a girl of many attainments and decided abilities, she was naturally so timid, or at least bashful, as to be incapable of doing herself common justice, from a deficiency of self-possession, lamentable even in the young, where modesty is the most natural virtue and most pleasing endowment. Sophia listened with interest, thought deeply, and at length ventured occasionally to speak, though with great diffidence; this exertion of mental courage her parents never failed to reward by smiles or words;



they knew it cost their gentle girl an effort, and they desired to see her gain the place in society which she had a right to hold.

Sir Arthur Vernon, whose seat was within a little distance, had been concerned in some magisterial business with Mr. Ratcliffe, which not only proved to him the superior abilities, and strict integrity of that gentleman, but fully persuaded him that the reports made some years before on the subject of his being disaffected to the reigning family were false, and could have their origin only in the circumstance of his relationship to the unfortunate and lamented Earl. Unquestionably Sir Arthur reasoned according to his wishes, rather than his knowledge; since however quiescent Mr. Ratcliffe might be, he was too high-minded a man, and too loyal a subject (according to his own interpretation of loyalty), to say any thing calculated to mislead another. They suited each other as companions; they were alike family men, fond of domestic ties; and as the Baronet had especial need of a kind neighbour, at the period when they were introduced to each other, it was no wonder that their acquaintance speedily ripened into friendship, and they had almost daily intercourse.

Sir Arthur was the father of two sons and



four daughters; at the time of which we speak, his heir, a young man of very moderate intellects and weak health, was rapidly sinking to the grave, a circumstance little lamentable in itself, but rendered so by the overwhelming sorrow of Lady Vernon, who had, with the amiable predilection of a mother, loved that branch of her family the most, who most required her care. Henry, the second son, had been presented with a commission not long before, and was abroad in this time of affliction, so that kind and sympathizing neighbours were doubly valuable. Such became every branch of the Ratcliffe family to that of the Vernons.

But Sophia was the more especial friend and favourite of all—the eldest daughter was of her own age, and delighted in her as a companion, the younger ones looked to her alike for pleasure and instruction; and since their sorrows necessarily stripped the parents of that which might have been deemed awful in their manners or character, the generous pity and amiable attentions of Sophia won *their* hearts entirely. The tenderness of her nature, the abilities and attainments of her mind, even the playfulness of her fancy, were alike drawn upon for their solace, in a manner the most efficacious and endearing,



and the girl of sixteen became important to them as the friend of sixty.

As no military engagement prevented his return, Henry Vernon had not been long the heir of his father's house before he visited it, to the unbounded joy of his parents and sisters. He had long been indeed the pride and joy of his father, who had given him every advantage of education, and from his infancy imbued his mind with every noble and virtuous sentiment. It was no wonder that he invited Mr. Ratcliffe to see the son of whom he had spoken so much, for he had no other country friend of whose judgment he had an equal opinion, and we all know how anxiously we desire to have those especially dear, appreciated justly by the discerning. The name of this newly-acquired friend somewhat startled Henry, for he had heard rumours on the Continent indicative of preparations on behalf of the Pretender, which might place his adherents in an awkward situation, if any such remained; but his observations were cut short by an assurance that Ratcliffe had too much good sense to entertain either hope of such a cause, or liking for it. It was well known he had married the heiress of a family who were bitter enemies to the Stuarts, and



although respect for the memory of a cousin he must lament (since friends and foes alike honoured poor Lord Derwentwater) might prevent him from arming on behalf of the present family, he would answer for his never opposing them.

Henry soon returned Mr. Ratchiffe's visit, and after that time there was no occasion for his father to repeat these assurances. He was charmed with all he saw and all he heard at the White Cliffe, and day after day found a necessity of calling there as he rode to make visits in the neighbourhood, or walking thither to carry books or music, in which case it was necessary to rest and partake the family dinner. On his return he dilated on the intelligence of his host, the good sense and maternal wisdom of his lady, or the prettiness of Blanche, but rarely did he trust himself to speak of Sophia, though she was ever uppermost in his mind; and little did he consider the red and white complexion of Blanche as worthy to stand in competition with the finished loveliness of her sister's face, aided as it was by a form, which at once was light, elegant, and dignified.

These visits were certainly sanctioned by both fathers, although neither could doubt their tendency, since it was certain that Henry was fre-



quently left alone in the library with Sophia by Mr. Ratchiffe, and if Sir Arthur thought Henry at a loss for an errand, he never failed to supply him with one; and when he at length ventured to speak of her his heart had selected as "a ladye love," his father not only re-echoed his praises, but told him of many a proof given by her in his absence, of excellence in disposition and soundness in judgment.

At "this hint," no wonder the young man flew with more than ordinary speed to the mansion where his heart already was, yet he bore his usual apology, a book, and began to speak in a melancholy tone, observing, "that he had just heard of the long-expected death of the great poet Pope."

"I am sorry, very sorry," said Sophia; "after Milton, no one sang so sweetly as Pope—'we shall never see his like again.'"

Something for which a young warm heart is *very sorry*, but which is not therefore a personal and near affliction, naturally infuses a tone of mind calculated to awaken the fullest confidence and the tenderest affections of the heart. Henry found this the happy moment for declaring his love, and between blushes and fears and half-permitted hopes, Sophia accepted his vows, for



she doubted not her parents' sanction, though she referred him to them in apparent doubt; for so momentous, even awful, did her situation appear to her, so inadequate did she deem herself to any decision, that however full and perfect was her preference, she shrunk from its avowal.

But not for long did this sense of fear and bashfulness embarrass her—soon did her bosom's choice receive the full sanction of both her parents, and her “bosom's lord sit lightly on his throne.” Her mother earnestly desired that she should not marry till she attained eighteen, and Sir Arthur also wished his son to have passed his minority before entering on so serious a situation; a request so reasonable, and so much in accordance with the wishes of his affianced bride, could not be refused.

Sir Arthur now sought to free his son from an engagement no longer necessary to his comfort, or in his own opinion consistent with his future duties; but this the young man to a certain degree opposed, inspired by that sense of honour a susceptible and noble spirit could not forbear to indulge, when conscious of having received private intimation that his services might be required. For this purpose he repaired to London, and Mr. Ratcliffe's family



made their accustomed journey thither also, so that the pleasures of town succeeded to those of the country, as shared by the young couple, both of whom improved much in that knowledge of life and its duties, called for in their situation. It was a time when the continual pressure of thought gave a species of premature maturity to the minds of young persons so situated; and as there appeared little probability of Henry leaving the army with honour, without which he would remain, Sophia began already to feel those fears and anxieties which must belong to the wife of a soldier, and which, in her case, were coupled with an increasing sense of esteem for one whom every day rendered more dear, because the better known.

Both families returned to the country in May, for at that period nature gave the tone to fashion in that particular; but Sir Arthur and Henry remained till the beginning of June, the former being more anxious than ever to secure the society of a son, whose presence had restored his mother's happiness, and whose expected union would ensure his own. Scarcely, however, had they returned, and the lovers felicitated themselves on the circumstance, when young Vernon was commanded to join his regiment, then on its



march towards Scotland, and this was accompanied by the astounding information, "that Prince Charles Edward had not only effected a landing, but secured a considerable body of Highland troops."

Fleet horses and a well-stored purse would enable the young man to reach his commanding officer at the place specified, and yet permit him to devote some hours to her, who, in this hour of hurry and alarm, seemed endowed with tenfold claims on his heart and his imagination. To fly instantly to her abode, and in revealing the purport of his visit, become also earnest in entreating immediate marriage, was perhaps as natural in him, as it might appear ill-judged and unadvisable to another. He was young and ardent, his love sanctioned, not less than returned, and in the agitation of the moment, no wonder he sought to lessen the pangs of parting, by the only medium which presented itself to his mind. He foresaw the horrors of civil war, as they might affect her family, and he earnestly desired to secure her the protection of his own, not less than to insure his own rights in a creature so beautiful, attractive, and young, who might, in the commotion of the times, be thrown



into the busy world, and prove as fascinating to others as himself.

The blanched cheek, the tearful eyes of Sophia, and still more the speechless distress, which spoke the severity of the shock she had received, were an assurance of the strength of her affection beyond any words; and when at length she found them, although to deny a request which she was convinced her parents could not sanction, and which, on reflection, his own better judgment would condemn, there was in her manner so much of deep feeling and consistent purpose, as tended to soothe his fears on the score of her constancy; but he was again urging her to consider her personal safety, when Sir Henry interrupted him, to say, "that an express had arrived, urging his immediate departure, accompanied by an intimation which seemed to mark himself and family as objects of suspicion."

To clasp her to his bosom, recommend her to his father again and again, and amid the suffocating sense of sorrow to utter a few predictions of his speedy and happy return, was all that poor Henry was now capable of. He left Sophia in a state which appeared more like death than life, to the care of Blanche, for her parents had that morning made an excursion to Matlock to



meet a friend. It was her first affliction, and for a short time she bent beneath it. Henry's danger, Henry's absence, were sources of bitter grief, but the more she ruminated on the subject, the more she became convinced that this was the beginning of sorrows only; a cloud big with threatening tempest had settled on her head, and the result might be as terrible as the beginning was painful.

From the inefficient consolations of a kind but unreasoning sister, Sophia retired to seek that strength to combat with grief and meet misfortune, her situation required, at the footstool of divine mercy. She felt the weakness of her nature, the acuteness and despondency of her feelings, but yet believed that "His strength might be made perfect in her weakness," and therefore sought in humility and faith for help from above. When she had ceased to pray, she meditated long on the maxims of her mother, which appeared to have been given with portentous anxiety against the coming of the present evil time, and sincerely did she strive to prove by her conduct they had not been given in vain. Earnestly as she desired to repose her griefs on that maternal bosom, which she well knew would most tenderly sympathize with her, she yet de-



terminated to spare that sympathy as much as she was able.

Pale and with swollen eyes, yet a composed countenance, did Sophia descend to the usual sitting-room, when the sound of their carriage wheels announced the return of her parents. It was well she had attained this degree of self-conquest, for it appeared that her mother was seriously ill, and obliged to be lifted from the carriage. They were accompanied by a medical man, who had pronounced the disorder a paralytic attack, arising from a mental shock, and earnestly recommended great attention to whatever could soothe and cheer the patient, whose recovery must depend upon the tranquillity in which her mind was kept.

So great was the alarm experienced by Mr. Ratcliffe, on behalf of a wife to whom he had been so long, and so fondly attached, that it was evident his very attentions were of too affecting a nature to be good for a patient so situated, and Blanche could only weep.

On this eventful night Sophia took her station by the sick-bed of her to whom she had looked for consolation, and with unceasing vigilance watched her every movement, and anticipated her every wish; controlling alike those feelings



which had been awakened by her own peculiar trouble, and the alarm excited for a mother so tenderly beloved, and so truly estimable. She answered her questions with an unfaltering tongue, presented her medicines with a steady hand, and under pretext of keeping the light from her mother's eyes, prevented her own sad countenance from attracting attention.

From this truly affectionate management the anodyne administered took its proper effect; and before morning she had the satisfaction to announce to her father that her mother had dropped into the quiet slumber their physician had so earnestly desired for her.

“Then all is well,” said Mr. Ratcliffe. “God be thanked by us all, for it will preserve her mind from the attack, and at the worst confine it to the limbs. Have you any idea, my dear Sophy, of the circumstance which affected your mother so severely? But why do I ask? you cannot have heard that the prince—I mean our *sovereign*, has landed in Scotland.”

The struggle of her bosom would not be suppressed, and she burst into a passion of tears.

“Poor girl! poor girl! I see you know but too well your Henry is called into action; this is indeed hard, very hard—believe me, my child,



had he been the son of that suffering angel, on whose account I feel such terrible solicitude, he could not have been dearer to my heart. Undoubtedly it was for his sake and yours, that her apprehensions were so awakened, as to produce the effect we lament, for scarcely had the news been communicated, when she dropped down on the floor, saying, as she fell—"My child is the victim—my dear Sophy!"

As Ratcliffe spoke he wept, and Sophy silently flung herself upon his breast to comfort him, not less than gratefully to acknowledge his kindness to herself, and that one beloved far more, of whom he had spoken so affectionately; but even while pressed to his heart, she remembered the more immediate claimant, and tearing herself away, though with much to hear and to relate, she returned to the bedside of the invalid, resolved so to tutor every word and gesture, that sorrow for her sake should not mingle in the cup which she could not fail to see must be drank to the very dregs, by that exemplary mother who had been to her alike the indulgent parent, and the wise preceptor.



## CHAP. III.

A SHORT time served to confirm the hopes of the physician, so far as the life of Mrs. Ratcliffe and her mental faculties were concerned, but an incurable weakness affected her limbs; and to use the phrase of a later day, her nerves were so shattered by the shock she had received, that she became henceforward the victim of perpetual fears. All the nobler energies of her once powerful mind were suspended, if not destroyed, and instead of assisting to restore peace to her daughter's heart, she leaned upon that daughter for consolation of every kind; and in the terror she experienced, lest evil should befall her husband, appeared to forget any other person in existence was perilled by the invasion of the Pretender.

So painful were her prognostications, and so naturally did they accord with the apprehensions entertained by her own heart, both on behalf of her lover and her father, that Sophia, in these her first days of initiation in the school of adversity, might have sunk under her sense of



grief, if she had not received a most affectionate letter from Henry, the very first hour in which it was possible for him to write. Who that has ever loved, can forget how invaluablely dear was the *first* communication they received from one with whom they had garnered the early affections of a fond, confiding, and yet demanding heart? Who has not read, in the simplest sentences of the beloved writer, far more than would have met another eye, or touched another heart, and long after every word was committed to memory indelibly, unfolded again and again the precious document, and feasted the eyes on the most illegible scrawl with rapture? It will be evident that the value of a letter, in such a time of perturbation and distress, was tenfold, and that Sophia was of a character at once to receive most gratefully the consolations it imparted, yet to conceal her treasure with that maidenly sense of somewhat guilty possession, which so well becomes a modest nature. A letter was however of too much importance, when received from the army, to be held sacred, and the moment Mr. Ratcliffe heard of its arrival, he stepped to the room where his wife was confined, and inquired eagerly, "if Henry had informed Sophia of the situation of the Prince?"



Sophia, blushing, held out her letter, but he declined receiving it, saying—"I am sure Henry's letter is all it ought to be, my dear; but surely he must have told you something of the army?"

"He says the Pretender receives daily accessions from the Highlands, that he has reached Perth, and been proclaimed King of Great Britain there; that Lord George Murray, the Viscount Strathallan, and many other persons of consequence, have joined him, and he is convinced he will arrive at Edinburgh before they shall be able to reach it."

"He is right—Charles Edward will be in the capital of his father's northern kingdom before Cope can arrive to dispute his possession, and once there, will receive reinforcements from every clan worthy the name—glorious! gallant spirit! thou wilt redeem thy birthright!"

"Never, never, *never*," was ejaculated in a deep, low voice, by the invalid; but even as he spoke, Mr. Ratcliffe left the room, evidently delighted and excited in an extraordinary manner.

Hitherto his whole mind had been apparently absorbed by the illness of his wife, and Sophia's anxieties on account of the health and safety of two persons so dear to her, had not taken into



consideration the bias of her father. She now saw clearly his desire of success to those her lover deemed rebels, and thought it not improbable that at a more advanced period he might join their standard—this was indeed a house divided against itself, and all that her mother had foretold and suffered appeared already half realized. She recollected that nearly a week had passed since her mother's attack, yet neither messenger or visitor had appeared from the house of Sir Arthur Vernon, and her very soul sickened at the idea of divided sentiments, divided interests, amongst those who had so lately appeared to have one heart, one mind, in all the nearest and dearest business of life.

Seeing her stand pale, motionless, the very image of consternation, the unhappy mother exerted herself to call upon her for some little office of love, that might divert her for a moment from a contemplation of affairs it was so difficult to endure, and then added—"Rouse yourself, my dear child, by any mode of action, so as to prevent the stupor of despair, or the confusion arising from conflicting sentiments and wishes to affect your mind. Of one thing be assured—your father's conclusions are false ;



poor Henry may suffer—he may fall—(which God forbid), but his cause will be triumphant.”

“ Yet his letter speaks of a foe successful and advancing.”

“ It is natural that the Highlanders should join any one who offers them revenge for injury, even now uppermost on their minds; also that a few needy Scottish noblemen, whose fathers lost life and property in the last rebellion, should seek for any change which may better their condition; but here in England the invader will find neither friends nor succours. Neither his claims, his valour, nor his virtues (for such perhaps he has), will avail in a country which prospers under a settled government, and has the wisdom to know it does, though it may have little love for the foreigner who is at the head of that government, and, like his ancestor, will punish with all the rigour of a conqueror the unhappy wretches who make this effort on behalf of him they deem their lawful king. Your father, your *inestimable* father, will be one of the first victims.”

“ Surely not, unless he positively unites himself with their party; and I trust his friendship for Sir Arthur, his feelings for me, and above all, his remembrance of your claims upon him,



will deter him from taking any positive part. You are now better, dear mamma, you can talk to him, entreat him; I am sure he will not refuse your wishes, when they only request him to be neutral."

As Sophia spoke, she threw herself on her knees by the bedside, and taking the hand of her mother, drew it to her lips, to her heart, gazing upon her with a look of such deep solicitude, such fond entreaty, that it appeared impossible she could be repulsed by any one, much less a fond and tender mother. Nor was she, for equal tenderness and consideration was evident in the countenance of her mother, as she replied—"Alas! my child, you know not what you ask. On a point of this nature, neither your father nor any other *man* will listen to a *woman*, whether it were the wife he loved, the mother he honoured, or even the beloved one whom he sought. Why then should I harass unnecessarily the kind heart which cannot cease to feel all I would say, and is therefore suffering at this very moment the twofold solitudes which belong to private and public sorrows? Shall his wife, a wife for whom he is already suffering, add to his burden? God forbid!"

"But surely you mistake—he is not unper-



suadable by nature, and now, when his heart is softened by your sufferings, and fully sensible of the peculiarity of my situation, he might be induced to continue neutral. I would have you ask no more."

"I do not know, Sophia, that he has been neutral, for on this subject our lips were sealed towards each other. A grievous thing it is, my child, when those so closely tied have even a single secret; that such an one exists among the principal nobility of the country, I am well aware, but that renders my share of the affliction no less. If your father can, with honour and consistency, remain a mere spectator of this awful conflict, I am persuaded that, for our sakes, he will; but if he has pledged himself to different conduct, surely it would ill become *us* to tempt him to dishonour. Our difficulties, in short, cannot be got over; all we can do is to endure their consequences, and so far as we can to support one who we know is, for our sakes, a grievous sufferer."

Sophia could not indeed even look at her father, without reading in his countenance the truth of this assertion. There was about him a feverish restlessness, which prevented him from following any occupation, or finding amusement



from any source ; and whilst the whole business of his life was to learn news, he durst not trust his lips to make inquiry, lest he should betray the deep interest he took in whatever should transpire. In this dilemma, poor Blanche became the most general medium for gaining knowledge, whilst his eldest daughter was confined to her mother's sick-bed ; but so soon as the partial amendment of Mrs. Ratcliffe enabled her to attend to him, he sought to initiate Sophia in the means of obtaining information, in which she was the more likely to succeed, on account of her own deep interest in the result.

Apart from her personal stake in the field of battle, this young person would naturally have been most inclined to favour the wishes of the invader, for all that was romantic and chivalrous, all that was likely to awaken the generous enthusiasm of a kind and noble spirit, naturally enlisted itself on his side ; but she not the less clearly saw that those who had induced him thus to break up the very foundations of social order, and overwhelm the country with a flood of misery, were guilty of the most horrible incendiarism. There was however in her mind, as in that of her father, a species of hurry and excitement, which almost forbade the power of



thinking; and to expect and pine for the lack of information, be disappointed of receiving it, or wretched in consequence of gaining it, became inevitably the great business of life, save at those times when, in all the agonies of solicitude and conscious weakness, the wearied spirit looked to the God of Providence for the rest and confidence so greatly needed.

Yet prayer itself, that most blessed privilege and comfort of the Christian, loses much of its power to bless, when its objects of petition refer to those great affairs in human existence which belong to peace and war. We all know that nations themselves, with all their commotions, are "as dust in the balance" before him to whom we look for help and consolation; but we cannot presume that He will stay the "madness of the people," or bid the floodgates of ruin subside, for the sake of a single worm of the earth, however it may writhe in its sorrows before him. We cannot exercise faith, as we do in the case of individual inflictions, and it is from faith all our consolation is derived. Often did these thoughts affect the mind of Sophia, together with that most distressing recollection, that her heart, if not her home, was divided against itself; that while she ardently desired success to



one who was infinitely dear, that very success might include destruction on another, to whom she was bound by the tenderest ties of consanguinity which nature acknowledges.

At length arrived news of the battle of Preston-Pans, and the decided victory obtained over the Government forces was evidently so delightful to Mr. Ratcliffe, that nothing less than the misery too evident in his daughter's face, would have prevented him from illuminating his house, and feasting his tenantry; but he could not recollect that it had probably been the cause of death to her lover, that excellent young man, whom he justly valued, and allow himself to speak of that pleasure he really felt. From her more immediate fears on this head, terrible as they necessarily were, Sophia in the course of a very few days gained relief, through the medium of her friend, Miss Vernon, who in a clandestine manner informed her that herself and mother were going by a circuitous route to Northumberland, to meet and attend upon her brother, who had been wounded, but not dangerously, and had been conveyed by a friend towards his own house, where they hoped to find him.

She added, that her father felt it his duty, as a



magistrate and landholder, to remain in his own house, and so far as he was able, protect his family and tenantry; but that he cautiously avoided all intercourse with his neighbours, deeming it the part of a wise person to keep as far aloof from political discussion as his situation permitted.

It was therefore evident that *her* father was a suspected person among his neighbours, and that she had rightly judged the apparent inattention of the Vernons was not accidental; still the relief afforded by Maria's note was kind and welcome, though its being left by a hurried messenger without desire of answer to the writer, or of letter for him to whom she was hastening, proved the writer either under the influence of fear, or formed part of a system for dividing her from him with whom her heart was united only the more firmly, from their mutual misfortunes. At this distressing juncture, Sophia could scarcely help regretting that she had not yielded to his wishes and become irrevocably his; but then who would have nursed her mother? and how did she know how much her cares might be yet required for her now expecting and exulting father?



## CHAP. IV.

FROM this time, by means unknown to his family, Mr. Ratcliffe received frequent intelligence of the successes of Prince Charles, and although he forbore to speak of the contents of his letters, in the presence of his lady, they formed the sole subject of his conversation with Sophia, who had communicated to him the information she had received respecting Captain Vernon's situation. The wound which confined, without endangering him, he held to be a fortunate occurrence, since it left to others, what he termed "a rebellious and useless resistance to Prince Charles, who had now made good his advance to Edinburgh, and proved, by his wisdom and moderation in the hour of victory, how worthy he was to reign over a free and polished people." So many paragraphs did Sophia hear read of the excellence of his conduct, the benevolence of his heart, the elegance of his manners, and of that bravery which never fails to gain on female approbation, that scarcely could



she forbear to wish, since her Henry was a soldier, that his sword had been drawn for him she deemed the lawful sovereign, until she again devoted herself to her mother. Deeply had this afflicted woman lamented the event of a battle, which had not only been injurious to one whom she loved as a son, but had been fatal to that old friend and most exalted character, Colonel Gardiner, whom she had long loved as a father and revered as a saint. In vain did Sophia repeat her father's assertions, or name the various supporters of the Chevalier; not only did her mother repel, by reasons she deemed irrefragable, the success of his party in England, but she would earnestly pray against it, as being the herald of all possible injury to her country and destruction to her church—the cause of utter ruin to her children, and worthy the deprecation of their mistaken and misguided father.

Difficult indeed was the path before Sophia, and from these jarring opinions she was unable to repose her own mind on that of either parent, at the time when she was called upon to support both; for notwithstanding the daily excitement of Mr. Ratcliffe, he could not fail to be unhappy, and to feel the severity of that



scourge now visiting his country. Naturally brave, and habitually active, had he actually taken service with the Prince, whatever might have been the result, it is certain he would have been happier than he was, in a state which subjected him to suspicion and *surveillance*, the dread of injuring his family irreparably, and the consciousness of being an ineffectual ally to the party he espoused. His fine full figure became attenuated, his general health affected, his spirits were subject to perpetual fluctuations, and so pitiable became the expression of his anxious countenance, that his alarmed wife now sought only to contribute to his comfort; and ceasing to speak of the Prince or his cause, was continual in her exhortations to Sophia, on the score of cheerful obedience to her father's will, and the necessity of exertions for his amusement.

Winter, with all its loneliness and desolation, was now around them; but neither impracticable roads, nor snow-clad mountains, prevented them from learning that an irruption was made into England, Carlisle taken, and the Chevalier advancing. Every creature around them was either overpowered with fear or awakened to anger; for the inhabitants of the dis-



tract where they lived were wholly agricultural, ignorant of politics, and entirely swayed by their landlords, who were all well-wishers to the existing government, with the exception of Mr. Ratcliffe and one or two distantly-situated men, whose mental grade was far inferior. His situation therefore resembled that of a Christian among Turks, a Protestant in Ireland; whatever might be their innate conviction of his moral worth, or their remembrance of his good actions, every brow looked scowlingly towards the owner of White Cliffe, as one who had helped to bring a pestilence on the country; and many a strong hand and bold heart held itself ready for deeds of the most terrific nature, and the few who loved *him*, and would therefore have adopted his cause, were cowed by numbers.

Successful and high-spirited, undaunted, because unenervated by luxury and prosperity, the Chevalier pressed bravely on, and now it was said was at Manchester, and forming an English regiment under the command of Colonel Townley. This gentleman was a friend of Ratcliffe's, and sincerely did he desire to be similarly employed; but he cast about for followers in vain through his own neighbourhood, and soon learnt with sorrow, that the number of



men obtained in that manufacturing district, only amounted to two hundred.

No matter! the sanguine youth pushed on, and dreary as the country was, as though its romantic beauties had been revealed in their spring-tide hour, he hastened through Derbyshire, and made its little capital his temporary home, to the astonishment and consternation of the metropolis, which now exerted all its powers in furnishing the means of resistance. The King, in person, took the command of the troops then encamped on Finchley Common; the Duke of Cumberland, and the main army, were assembled at Litchfield, within two stages of him; yet here he caused his father to be proclaimed with great solemnity, and quartered his troops with the air of one who had encamped for the winter.

Short, however, was his stay, for on calling a council of his Highland chiefs (naturally a discordant company, each of whom deemed himself an independant sovereign, and held all his men as vassals, who admitted no commander save their lord, and were as undisciplined as they were courageous), every man seemed to have different opinions as to the mode of procedure, and many quarrelled so outrageously,



that scarcely could the presence of the Prince prevent them from personal hostility. The elements of dissolution were evidently therefore in the body; but there was still another principle at work, undermining that unity so necessary for its preservation—the want of unanimity was aided by the want of money.

Had the Prince pushed his fortune, by pursuing the march so successfully begun—but we have nothing to do with conjectures—“sufficient to his day was the evil thereof,” for he filled the whole kingdom with consternation, division, sorrow, and eventually blood, and achieved nothing for himself, save distress and defeat—nothing for his cause, save vain regrets and they would not have been long felt, if the heartless cruelty, the inquisitorial meanness, and griping selfishness of the existing government, had not compelled men to believe that even a papist and a Stuart could not have proved worse. Happily many adherents to this cause were never discovered to be such; but time, the great revealer, has proved, from the correspondence of the exiled family, that many of the first nobility were completely implicated. Death, the great leveller, has most happily now settled the succession.



When Mr. Ratcliffe learnt that the Prince was near Derby, he left his own house alone and on foot, and as he did not return till late the following night, and after a short stay took his fleetest horse and was again absent until the middle of the following day, Sophia had no doubt but he had visited the Prince during the first absence, and was busied in his affairs the second. Her heart revolted at this, for although she had in childhood had a natural leaning to the generous and chivalric feeling which inclined the young and high-spirited to take the side of the fallen, yet as a woman who had listened not only to a mother she revered, but to a lover whose every word was sacred in her eyes, it may be supposed that her affections had long wavered, and that the blood of her wounded lover had put the finishing stroke to that she once held to be loyalty. Yet so dear was her father, so painfully did he divide her heart, so much did she respect his silence on the subject, and the care he took to be secret for their sakes, that it was impossible for her to attain that degree of mental composure which consistency of opinion generally bestows. Her heart was torn between conflicting fears and wishes—she prayed for peace indeed, but dared not believe her



prayers would be answered; all she could do was to endeavour to brace her mind to meet some terrible calamity about to fall upon her, but in what manner she knew not.

On the evening of the fifth of December, as she was reading the New Testament to her mother, her father, who had again been out for several hours, sent to say he wanted her in the library; and the servant added, "my master says he may employ my young lady some hours, ma'am, so you will please to let Alice get you to bed."

Mrs. Ratcliffe answered "very well," but her countenance fell, and the moment the servant had withdrawn, she seized the hand of her daughter, saying with great emotion—"Your father undoubtedly wants you to write for him, Sophia: be careful what you do—again I say, the cause in which he has now fully embarked, I doubt not will never prosper: do not injure yourself—do not place a bar between yourself and that excellent young man, who will soon be most probably your only protector."

"I apprehend my father wishes me to do something for him, which it might be imprudent for him to do for himself—my handwriting is unknown to every one except Henry, and my



insignificance as a woman and a young one, may be a protection to me in cases where it might be hereafter death to him to meddle, and——”

“Death!” cried her mother, “*death!* go this moment, do any thing, every thing, to save your father; my life is bound in his—nay, all our lives, my child; and come what may, neither lover, nor law, can fail to honour a devoted daughter.”

Sophia saw clearly that in the excitement awakened by terror, which acted with treble force on her debilitated frame, her mother did not reason justly, and she tried to call on her own mind for a proper estimate of her probable temptations; but she was again sent for and hurried by the servant to the library, which was distant from the dressing-room, and built almost separate from the house, to which it was connected by a long passage.

When she entered, the appearance of her father was ill calculated to subdue the inward agitation she experienced; he looked at her long and tenderly, as if combating with certain ideas or intentions respecting her, and she perceived that his late hurried journeys, and evident anxieties, had rendered him alike ill and unhappy: she saw no marks of writing or letters on the library



table, and though he had locked the door and listened to the steps of the servant as he retreated, he appeared incapable of opening the business for which he wanted her. "It was possible that he had heard bad news of Henry;" the moment this struck her, she caught his hand, eagerly entreating that he would tell her all he had learnt? she could not articulate that name ever uppermost in her mind.

"It is unnecessary to tell you *all*, my dear; enough to say, I know the Prince's cause is ruined, and to-morrow he will leave Derby."

Sophia inwardly thanked God, but she would not utter a word that could wound her father's ear, in this hour of disappointment and affliction.

"I have heard by various means, and with no little exertion and fatigue, the situation of his opponents, and I have so far conveyed him information, that I do not doubt of his following my advice; but this he cannot do without receiving money, which I have promised him: here it is," added Mr. Ratcliffe, drawing a parcel from a drawer, and laying it beside a bundle that she had already remarked upon the table.

There was a long pause, in which Sophia was revolving in her mind the danger to which her father might have exposed himself by collecting



money at this time, and Mr. Ratcliffe, looking out of the window, as if to ascertain the state of the night, which was extremely cold, accompanied with snow and sleet, at length turned suddenly round, as if he had gained courage from losing sight of her troubled but kind countenance, and said—"You are fragile to the eye, my dear Sophia, but yet you are in as perfect health as the cares of the times and your attendance on your poor mother admits—you could venture out on such a night as this, to— to effect a *great* purpose?"

"Undoubtedly I could, but it must be a *great* one."

"It is to save your father—you will not call that a little one."

Sophia could only answer by throwing herself into his arms and murmuring—"I will do my best."

"I wish you, my love, to go to Derby this evening, and carry this parcel to the Prince; do not tremble, my child, I shall be with you, *near* you at least. I have provided the disguise of a gipsy-girl, which may be worn over your own clothes. I have secured the little pony, and so far saddled him, that I know you can manage to ride. I will walk beside you



till we arrive within half a mile of the town, when you can walk forward."

"Alone!—surely not *alone*; it will be midnight."

"Listen to me, Sophia—if you *cannot, dare* not, undertake this painful adventure (painful God knows I feel it to my inmost heart), I must go myself. You are aware that my remarkable height renders disguise so difficult, as to be almost impossible, and that since every thing must be done on the instant, even that cannot be procured; in short, if I go I shall be seen, for all my motions are under *surveillance*; but for your movements I have provided: as you arrive at the head inn, a Highland sentinel will meet you and conduct you to the Prince. I will give you the pass-word at the moment of our parting, lest in the present hurry of your spirits it should escape you."

Sophia saw in a moment that indeed her father must not venture, and much as their servants were personally attached to the family, since, except the butler, the more intelligent and elderly had been brought up on the estate, which belonged to her mother's ancestry, their political bias was decidedly against his cause, which they beheld with horror, as that of Po-



pery. She knew his nature so well as to be assured that the aid he had promised, he would give at any risk, nor could she wish it to be withheld in the day of the Prince's misfortune, and as the means of facilitating his removal—she felt as if nothing would be too much to give him, so he would rid the country of his presence, and restore it to the blessings he had so wantonly and cruelly interrupted.

Though little able to speak, for her heart throbbed violently, as her trembling hands opened the bundle, Mr. Ratcliffe saw that she not only complied with his wishes, but would fulfil his mission, for he knew that the modesty of her nature was combined with strength of mind, as well as that capacity and intellect necessary for action in a moment of emergency. With a heart overflowing with affection and admiration—perhaps even gratitude, he assisted her to put on the clothes he had borrowed, and in bathing her fair face with a brown liquid, then led her gently through a window passage into the garden, leaving behind him sufficient light to communicate to his servants the idea that they were still employed in reading or writing.

Sophia was soon placed on her humble steed, and her father strode rapidly beside her; nei-



ther of them durst speak, lest their voices should be recognised, but their way lay through narrow lanes, rarely visited at a late hour by the simple and superstitious inhabitants of a part of the country then wholly agricultural. There was a moon, but it was frequently obscured by the snow-loaded clouds, and the sleety atmosphere around them; but the wind, which was pretty high, drove them forwards; and although the disagreeableness of her situation would make itself felt, the presence of her father was a protection, and the belief that she should be instrumental in fulfilling his dearest wishes, and saving him from the dilemma in which he was placed, soothed her inmost soul. She thought that Henry himself, however grieved he might be to know her situation, would love her the better for an exertion so praiseworthy; and her mother, her long-suffering mother, would see the necessity of keeping her so long in suspense, and rejoice in her ability to fulfil her wishes.



## CHAP. V.

AT length Mr. Ratchiffe laid his hand on the bridle held by his daughter, and drawing near her, whispered his instructions, observing that she would have nearly a mile to walk; but as the moon was brighter than it had been, he thought it would be imprudent in him to leave the shade, which the hedges, though leafless, still afforded.

“It is only of the town and the men I am afraid; we have hitherto seen only one person, and that a boy, so that I shall walk to Derby comfortably enough; and returning, do I find you here?”

“Of course, my love, unless something very threatening drives me hence—I mean, you know, something that will discover me.”

“*Father*,” said Sophia, with a clear unhesitating voice, “I conjure you, for my mother’s sake, to run no risks. Do not make my present exertion void, by thinking of me—I had almost said *caring* for me. I am in God’s hands; I



trust him; he will be my safeguard—I do not tremble now.”

Fearful, however, that the severe emotions she had experienced when this extraordinary errand was proposed to her, might return, she sprang forward, as fast as the slippery ground permitted, and was quickly beyond the view of her anxious father, who retreated into the narrow lane from which they had emerged, and counted the moments until his darling returned, offering up many a devout ejaculation in her behalf, and wondering how he had ever gained courage to expose her thus, though it was far more for her beloved mother's sake than his own that he had done it.

When poor Sophia entered the town of Derby, her heart began to beat almost audibly, and every step she took increased her desire to return and declare her inability to fulfil her father's wishes; but then came her father's danger—her mother's agony, and nerved her anew for the untried scene on which she was entering.

Happily all around her were silent as death; the inhabitants, like most English people at that time, considered the Highlanders as savages it was their policy to propitiate, and these men, harassed with the rapidity of their late march,



were generally sunk in slumber, or even when pursuing excess, were so far obedient to their lords, as to keep close within their quarters. Many were indeed disgusted with a service which had hitherto offered little personal pillage, and were meditating a return to their native mountains: all happily favoured the silent progress of the firm-hearted yet frequently alarmed Sophia.

The faint lamps and struggling moonbeams sufficed to shew her a way she was so much in the habit of traversing, and as she approached the inn, one man passed her who came from a house near. It was a kind of comfort to her that she was nigh her journey's end, yet when the sentinel (whom she had not seen, from her eyes being directed to the person in question,) laid his hand upon her arm, she started and faintly screamed; the man stood still, but being reprimanded by the Highlander, pursued his way; and as she now recollected herself, the necessary pass-word was given, and the sentinel, with much humility and courtesy, conducted her into the house and up a flight of stairs.

The door of a large room, in which there were few lights but many persons, was thrown open, and Sophia, dazzled, bewildered, and ready to



faint at finding herself the only female present, among so many men, all of rank and one of royalty, stood at the door unable to proceed. It did not appear that any of the party were sufficiently disengaged to notice her, and the delay would have operated favourably in her behalf, since the native dignity of the gentlewoman, aided by the incalculable importance of her father's gift, at such a moment, could not have failed to reassure her, if the scene before her had not been of such a painful nature as to have compelled her to forget her own solitudes in the fate of a stranger.

Before her stood a group of fierce-looking persons, several of whom were clad in the Highland costume, which she had never seen before, and who were, with menacing gestures, pressing on a very gentlemanly-looking person, about her father's age, who evidently quailed beneath the danger which threatened him; two extended arms on either side held a pistol close to his temples, and, just as the door was closed upon her, a rough voice cried out—"Fire! this instant, fire! my people are below, and will remove the carrion."

"Yes, fire—why hesitate?—our safety demands it."



“ Hold!” cried a voice behind the group ;  
“ what do you mean by this conduct, gentlemen?—Shall the life of my father’s subject be disposed of without reference to me?—Will you become executioners in my presence, without my permission?”

An universal murmur pervaded the room, yet no words reached the ears of Sophia distinctly ; but as the company before her fell back, she saw distinctly the speaker was a young man of most prepossessing appearance. The general style of his person and bearing was noble, his complexion fair, almost to feminine brilliancy, and his light curling hair suited well with that and his full blue eye ; but she was drawn from the observance of his person to his words.—“ Withdraw the pistols, gentlemen. I myself wish to question the prisoner, and your strange conduct will render him unequal to answering me.”

As the Prince spoke, he returned to his chair, which was placed near the fire, and before which was a low footstool ; he resumed it with the air of one born to ascend a throne.

But obedience had not followed his mandate—the pistols were still held as in the very act of giving death, and the unhappy prisoner, harassed by previous fatigue, and astonished,



not less than alarmed, by his situation, seemed every instant on the point of fainting.

“Is it thus my commands—I may say my *entreaties*, are attended to?” said the Prince, in a tone, which, despite of her own personal embarrassment, and her dread of witnessing something terrible, touched her very heart, and bade her, for the moment, conceive what might be the loyalty and the sympathy of her father, towards one so distressingly situated.

At this moment the pistols were removed.

“Who are you, sir? and whence do you come?”

“My name is Steer; I am a merchant in the town of Sheffield.”

“For what purpose did you come to Derby?”

“Simply from motives of curiosity to see your royal highness, and learn what was passing as a matter of news.”

“A spy—a spy—a rascally spy!” was murmured on all sides.

“Gentlemen, I am no spy,” said the prisoner, looking around with recovered self-possession, “neither am I a politician; I came here on an idle errand, perhaps; but it was with no evil intent towards one party or the other. I am a man of old and honourable family, and



one engaged, to their own loss, in the cause of the Stuarts, as St. Edmondsbury (from whence I come) can witness."

"Then you take part with us?" said one of the party.

"I am a family man, engaged in commerce. I can take no part, nor have I formed any opinion as to the merits of either cause."

Again there was a cry of loud disapprobation, and again the pistols were raised and several swords half drawn from the scabbard, when the Prince, in a commanding voice, ordered the prisoner to be put into the adjoining room, and the door to be locked, observing, "there was only one entrance, therefore he would be safe; but that for his own part he believed the gentleman to be a perfectly honest and harmless person."

"It was thus Charles Stuart lost crown and life at Carisbrook," said one of the chiefs, indignantly turning on his heel, from the door through which the stranger was thrust; in doing so his eye caught the form of Sophia, as she stood shrouded in her dark drapery by the door.—"Ha!" cried he, as if in recovered good-humour, "the gipsy lassie—marry, but she's welcome, come what may."

In another moment Sophia found herself, she



scarce knew how, ushered forward to the presence she feared to encounter, but with whose really distressing situation she now felt herself so thoroughly acquainted, as in a measure to reassure her, by that sense of sorrowful equality which removes distinctions of every kind, even when it increases respectful consideration. In few and hurried words she presented the heavy purse she bore, and the duty of him who sent it, and retreated as quickly as her trembling limbs permitted her.

The Prince had expected the boon, and knew, as he imagined, it was really gipsy hands from which he was to receive it; but it so happened, that although Sophia's fair face was darkened, the delicate hand remained, in the hurry of the moment, undisguised, and no gloves had been provided as a part of the costume. It was instantly conceived by the young adventurer how the case stood, and laying down the weighty purse, he yet kept possession of the hand, and rising with an air of the utmost respect and brotherly attention, he led her towards the door, saying in a low voice—"Lady, I can never sufficiently express my obligations to your worthy father and yourself; but the time may come, nay, *will* come, when they shall be justly acknow-



ledged: you have doubtless had great difficulty in coming hither—I fear you are alone—would you that I send any of these, my friends, with you, as protectors?”

“ Oh! no, no—pardon me, my Prince—I would be *alone*.”

“ Perhaps you are right—at all events your wishes are sacred.”

The Prince raised the hand he held to his lips, opened the door, and in another moment the sentinel, who was expecting her departure, appeared, and preceded her out of the house as far as his short beat permitted—when he turned she was again alone.

When Sophia lifted up her head, and began to address herself to her journey homeward, she perceived a man a little in advance, who, turning his head, looked at her with great earnestness. It immediately struck her that she might avoid him by turning into the yard of the inn, and making her exit at another gateway, with which she was acquainted from having driven through it sometimes in her father's carriage, and she therefore turned in with the air of one who perhaps belonged to the premises. On this side of the house ran one of the open galleries common to most inns a century ago, and which



we believe may be still found at the one in question, and whilst going below it, she heard a slight noise, followed by a voice, saying—"Hist, hist—my good girl, is that you? I am the prisoner—stop for a moment."

Sophia stopped instantly, and looking up, said in a whisper—"What can I do for you? How can I help you?"

"Tell me where I may get over the rail, and jump down safely."

"Here," cried she, running forward to a place where some out-housing joined the gallery.

The prisoner's eyes pursued her light form to the proper place; he sprang from the gallery upon a slippery roof, but, aided by her voice and her weak but willing hands, he alighted safely.—"Those mad Highlanders," said he, "made so much noise in the delight of receiving some package, that they never heard me open the window; but I shall be immediately missed, since the treasure will be deposited in the Prince's bed-room, in which they placed me; I dare not therefore attempt to take my horse. Can you guide me out of this place before they begin to search for me? Can you put me in the road to Basslow?"

"Willingly," said Sophia, hurrying forward.



She passed the gate, which she expected to find on the latch, and then gave rapid directions to the stranger, together with a trifle of money, for she found he had been stripped of all by the soldiers who seized him. Scarcely was he gone, when looking back, she perceived persons issuing from the house, and running with lights towards the stables, and in great alarm she sought to regain the road from which she had diverged, looking eagerly to the moment when she should receive the protection of her father.

The wind and sleet now blew full in her face, and there were moments when she could scarcely meet it, but the thoughts of having accomplished her fearful errand, and of having been the means of safety to her father, nerved her heart, and she looked forward with joy to the reward which awaited her, in the relief afforded to the country by the removal of the rebel army, and more especially in the restoration of her mother's happiness.

Alas! she had need of every internal help, for on arriving at the place appointed, there was no appearance of her father or the pony, and she was compelled to enter on the long dreary way alone, and unknowing the reason of his absence, whom she well knew incapable of desert-



ing her for any cause short of that which involved his life. It was in vain she recalled her own words to her mind, and said again and again, "it was only right that he should use all possible caution." The recollection that it was seven long miles from her home appalled her, and the cold, which affected her breathing, and retarded her progress, appeared to gather round her heart, even as it were a palpable weight, sinking her feeble steps into the very earth.

Still from one point to another of the dimly-discerned road, she hoped at all events to find her four-footed friend tethered to some place, by that careful parent, who, until now, had never "suffered the winds of heaven to visit her face too roughly;" but for nearly two miles had she thus expected, and no sound, save the wind rustling through the hedges, had met her ear—nor any sight her eyes, save the scudding clouds, which so frequently intercepted the light, that she pursued her way in darkness, continually stumbling over stones, or slipping on the smoother parts of the surface, so as to double, nay treble, the fatigues of the way. When she had proceeded about three miles, her road emerged from close lanes, over a common, now covered with light snow, and exhibiting scarcely any marks of



pathway, and knowing how terribly she might suffer from losing herself in a country so wild and desolate, Sophia stood still to recollect herself, and explore by the faint light some marks of footsteps, as her guide to the next lane she ought to enter.

At this moment she became sensible that some person was near her, though she could scarcely define by what medium it was made known to her, for she heard no foot-fall on the snow; she was not aware of any form intercepting the light, but something breathed within a little distance. Had it been her father, who had unseen been following, he would have spoken on her arrival at a part of the road so puzzling—if it were a stranger, who was dogging her steps for the purpose of discovery, it was necessary to preserve silence, and perhaps to diverge from the road, and aim at reaching some cottage, rather than a house so conspicuous as her own must be.

Determined to effect, at all hazards, the safety of her father, she would have now turned to the right, but it became impossible, for a tall undefined form was now close to her left hand, and moved so exactly as she herself moved, that it might have been her shadow; it moved, so far as she could see, like a pillar of snow, and for a



few seconds she thought it must be the bole of a tree, and that its apparent motion arose from the swimming in her own head. This conclusion soon failed, as her hurrying steps, in a great measure guided by the object in question, soon conducted her into the very lane it became necessary that they should enter, and with speechless horror she found the strange object still close by her side, and the world and the light shut out on either hand, save that the faint moonbeams seemed to render the uncouth form still more towering, and its hue more ghastly and uncertain.

That no inhabitant of this world was her companion, poor Sophia now felt certain, nor durst she increase her own sense of danger by stealing another glance towards it. Brought up, as she had been, in the heart of Derbyshire, surrounded by the most superstitious peasantry in Great Britain, it had been utterly impossible for her parents to prevent tales of ghosts and barghersts, of mountain spirits that awake the storm, and glens visited by those who had been murdered there, from reaching her ear, and greatly exciting a mind not less discriminating than imaginative. As she grew up, her father had succeeded in eradicating fears, and laughing away much that



then struck her as ridiculous; and her mother, by implanting sound religious principles, and reliance on that God who rules alike the visible and invisible world, had offered a more efficacious safeguard to her mind; but still memory remained, together with that reliance on the truth of those who had related tales of the wonderful and the supernatural, so amiable in trusting childhood—some of these appearances had belonged to the very place she was passing; could she doubt that she was an unwilling witness to the fact?

At this moment, perhaps, Sophia wished that she had listened less willingly to her father's reasons, and was ready, with Milton, to say she would,

“ Lest they meet my blasted view,  
Hold each strange tale devoutly true;”

but she could not reason, she could only pray. Lifting up her heart to God, she earnestly besought protection, and professed confidence in his deliverance; but still her heart beat, her trembling limbs could scarcely support her frame—she had a consciousness of vicinity to something on which she could not look and live—of something also, sent perhaps to warn her of the destruction already fallen on her pa-



rents, or her distant lover, to punish her perhaps for her unlawful errand, or prophesy its consequences.

Yet often did she determine to end her suspense, by that awful appeal to her unearthly attendant, which she had been told it was lawful to use on such occasions; and once or twice did she pause for this purpose, but as the figure stopped also, her heart again throbbed, all power of articulation ceased, and she found that although, by great mental exertion and the aspirations of faith, she might continue to endure her situation yet a little longer, to do more was altogether impossible.

Let no one, in our happier and more enlightened day, smile in contempt on poor Sophia's ideal fears. Whatever might be the object, the apprehension was *real*, the sensation of dread produced by the most awful source the mind can conceive, and of course her situation was utterly helpless. We all know that men of strong minds, who have met death in the field, and even braved him on the scaffold alike with mental and physical energy, have quailed before visions, and even trembled at sounds, and it is difficult in the present day to estimate the severity of their trials.



Under this terrible infliction Sophia still walk-  
en on, her very sense of fatigue, and all ideas of  
danger from discovery, lost sight of in the new  
and overwhelming persuasion that she was  
haunted by some unholy and unhappy spirit ;  
yet she struggled to sustain self-possession, to  
rely on Almighty protection, and more especially  
to cast herself on the promises of the Gospel,  
fully believing, that as evil spirits were subject  
to the Saviour in the days of his incarnation, so  
would his followers be still protected from their  
influence (even the influence of fear), if they  
had indeed faith in his promises and his pre-  
sence. A thousand times she repeated to her-  
self—" Lo! I am with you to the end of the  
world"—" All things shall work together for  
good to those who believe in my name," and  
many other texts, indicating that Him whom she  
served was " a present help in time of need."  
From the many reasons against the possibility  
of such appearances as offered by her father, and  
formerly admitted by herself, she could derive  
no help, for was not proof to the contrary be-  
side her? many had seen it before, many trem-  
bled under it—what right had she to exemption?  
how could her imperfect obedience and defi-



cient faith avert that visitation which God in his wisdom had permitted ?

So soon as her first agonies of extreme terror subsided, and her mind had obtained that extraordinary power (for such it must certainly be deemed) of believing herself in such a presence, and yet retaining reason, and becoming capable of exercising religious aspirations, she was struck with the possibility of this awful being becoming to her a certain guardian from all other evils—a sentinel no human being would dare to challenge, an existence before whom kings would shiver, and even their armies retreat, and under whose convoy it was certain she had been directed in the true path, and must have travelled in it nearly three miles, for even in the uncertain light she was sensible of having passed several places which might be termed landmarks, and which had been noticed by her father as indicating certain distances. Surely, at the end of the present path, his power of annoyance would cease; the Providence beneath whose eye he continued to revisit “the glimpses of the moon, making night hideous,” would say, “hitherto shalt thou go, but no further.”

Consoled by this idea, Sophia at length perceived, with a sensation of expectation and hope



none of us can fully estimate, a certain gate to her right, indicative of the termination of the haunted lane. Scarcely could she forbear a scream of joy, and jaded as she was by the length of the way, and the misery she had experienced, it is certain she sprang forward to pass it, with a celerity she had no longer strength to sustain; the consequence was, that she fell prostrate on the ground before she attained her object.

In another moment a pair of strong but kind arms were around her, and a voice, which was music in her ears, although the accents it uttered were in the broadest dialect of the country, assured her "that she was safe, and no one should hurt her." To her at this moment it was enough to know that her companion was flesh and blood, and her almost exhausted frame seemed to recover instant energy.

With this energy every faculty of the mind seemed restored, but the wearied frame sank proportionably. She found that her rough assistant believed her to be that which she appeared, and eagerly recalling her own ability of speaking, in the tone and language of the Peak, she thanked him, but trusted herself with few words; and after observing that she was used to



travel in all weathers, intimated an intention of proceeding towards a village beyond White Cliffe, where many of her supposed fraternity were wont to shelter.

“Then I wish thee good night,” said the man; “thee beest past the haunted lane, so be I, thank God. White Cliffe itself will be a guide to thee soon—it lies away to the reight.”

“Good night,” faintly murmured Sophia, lothe in truth to part with the late object of her terror; and no sooner was he really gone, than the effects of that terror were felt by her in tremor and even gasping horror. She tried indeed to praise God for her relief—she sought to rally her powers, even to rejoice in what she had accomplished, but nature refused to second her endeavours, and although she still dragged on her weary steps, she wept and sobbed with almost hysterical affection.

Again she was startled—a man—a man and not a ghost approached her now, and new fears seized her, but in another moment she was relieved. The voice so long desired met her ear—the protection and comfort so truly needed was given her, and Sophia sank into the arms of her fond and pitying father.



## CHAP. VI.

As may be supposed, Mr. Ratcliffe had been seen, and therefore compelled to escape upon the pony, and since his return had been in extreme anxiety, going backward and forward on such part of the road as he deemed most secure from interruption and suspicion, until he met his daughter. On placing her in security by the library fire, and enabling her to change her wet garments, and take the refreshment her exhausted state so greatly required, he was struck by the extreme paleness of her complexion, and the peculiar expression of her countenance, on which terror had impressed its character as with a seal. His heart ached to its inmost core, as he gazed upon his heroic, though suffering darling, and he exclaimed—"My love, something has happened to you, I am sure, beyond the distress and perplexity of your mission. You have been frightened, Sophia?"

As he spoke, big tears rolled down his cheeks, and it was evident that self-reproach afflicted



him to the most distressing degree; his daughter instantly determined not to increase it by relating her terrible adventure, and in a cheerful tone she assured him, that although it was true she had suffered from cowardice, it was not less so that she had been sustained by the mercy of that Heavenly Father, who, she trusted, would render her labour of love effective. She told him all she had observed of the Prince, and her fears for the prisoner, whom she had so happily assisted. To her alarm on his account, Mr. Ratcliffe immediately laid the distressing expression which had struck him, and fearful that a fever might be the consequence, he lost no time in inducing her to retire. Seeing how much he was affected by solicitude on her account, she consoled him as well as she was able, but sought her bed under the belief that it would be long ere she should be able to leave it, for her inmost soul seemed shaken by the trial she had undergone.

Yet, on the following day, Sophia was again seated by the bed-side of her mother—her flowing tresses were not turned grey by terror, nor had fever seized on her agitated nerves; nevertheless she had endured a shock, which she felt that many years would fail to eradicate, but



which might yet add to that power of sustaining trials, it would be too likely her situation, in the present crisis, would require. Every recollection it furnished to her, tended to render her the more aware of her obligations to her mother, and, if possible, her tenderness to that beloved sufferer was still more visible; whilst on *her* part, the firm belief that Sophia had, by the past exertion, saved her husband from conduct that must have ruined him, rendered her doubly dear.

In the course of the day, the servants joyfully promulgated the fact of the Prince's removal, and many tales were told as to the misconduct and folly of the chieftains by whom he was surrounded. To this information succeeded various rumours on the subject of his retreat, concerning which Mr. Ratcliffe experienced continual anxiety, especially as they were mixed up with exaggerated accounts of the forces raised against him. Sophia took more interest in his safety than she had done before she saw him, but since there was one whose life had been jeopardized by him, infinitely more dear, all her wishes on the subject went to his expulsion from a country he had rendered alarmed and unhappy; she could not be sorry to have assisted one who personally had perhaps many virtues, but deeply



did she deplore his having placed himself in a situation to require such service; and little as she had hitherto seen of its evils, civil war, however stirred up, appeared to her a crime unequalled in the annals of human guilt—a misery, compared to which, even the pestilence which desolates nations is light.

How soon did these ideas appear to be fully realized! the young adventurer began now to experience those terrible reverses which have rendered him endeared to the compassionate by his sufferings, immortalized to the brave and the romantic by his courage and his misfortunes. Day after day told of his altered situation, and proved that the friend of his need had been truly the prophet of his future fate. England evidently rejected him, and from France he received not the succours on which he had been taught to place the most positive reliance; and the Highland soldiers, brave and generous, but quarrelsome, undisciplined, and unaccommodating, increased his difficulties, while they protected his person.

Yet with all the power of a wealthy country, a considerable army, headed by experienced generals, and volunteer bodies rising against him on every side, the gallant adventurer retreated



safely to Scotland, reinforced his garrison at Carlisle, and until his arrival at Glasgow, permitted no pillage to the wild troops under his command, or laid any town under subjection in his progress. This commercial city, on account of its steady adherence to the existing government, was heavily taxed by him, but yet there was nothing in his conduct indicative of tyranny or different to established usage.

Whatever was good in the conduct of the Prince, as conveyed by general report, evidently raised the spirits of Mr. Ratcliffe, and as success also smiled upon him in several actions after his return, he was apt to prophesy more favourably to his cause; but gloom and dismay still rested on his household, and in vain did poor Sophia seek to rally her powers of entertainment in the behalf of her parents, though her efforts were incessant. It was with trembling fingers that she touched the instrument, and with a faltering voice that she essayed to sing; but yet she did essay, and the few rays of consolation which shone through the gloom, were procured entirely by her exertions.

Yet deep and heavy were her own peculiar woes. The family of Vernon still held aloof from all communication, and she could only



hope that Henry was better, because she judged that he was not dead from the appearance of his family, the head of whom was now absent in London. How he could forbear to write to her, she could not divine, aware, as she was, that for him she could have run all risks—then how did she know that he had not again joined the army? might he not be one of the victims in General Hawley's ill-concerted engagement, and suffering, perhaps dying, on the very spot over which her own father was exulting? or, should the Prince indeed be successful, should he again enter England a victorious invader, and eventually gain the throne, what might be the fate of one who had in the first onset fought bravely against him?

If this thought passed the mind of Sophia, it did not fail to bring with it the comfort of believing that she had earned a pardon for him and all his tribe, cruel as she deemed the desertion she now experienced; but on this view her mother never permitted her to dwell. She said there might be much bloodshed, but there could be no conquest; the people of England were not given to enthusiastic attachment to one whose personal merits were unknown, and whose ancestors had forfeited the confidence of their fathers;



they were not so addicted to change as to prefer one they dared not trust, even to another whom they might not love, yet felt it a duty to support, since he had been appointed by themselves.

“ I wish there were no kings,” said the youngest daughter, impatiently; “ what sorrow they make in the world!”

“ Poor child! you might as well wish there were no men. Depend upon it, wherever power exists, it will sometimes be used wrongfully, not from intention, but error of judgment; and it is hard to condemn men for conduct either imposed upon them by their connections, or rendered by false conception an apparent duty. Let us remember only, it is written, ‘ the powers that be are ordained of God,’ and we shall then see it our duty to obey, and even uphold the rulers he hath set over us.”

But difficult, nay, impossible, did Mrs. Ratcliffe find her own doctrine become, when, from a reverse in the Prince’s affairs, conduct diametrically opposite to his own was exercised against his ill-fated followers, and the savage spirit which formerly perpetrated the massacre of Glencoe (that eternal stain on the memory of our first foreign sovereign), rendered the field of Culloden less the scene of victory than of execution, and



where, in the very lust of blood, the mere spectators of the scene were included in the carnage.

Soon were the prisons filled, the gibbets prepared—objects of mere suspicion in late months were now pounced upon, with a celerity frequently sharpened by private animosity; and whilst the defeated adventurer wandered from one shieling to another, obtaining scanty bread from the famishing inhabitants, every where pitied and relieved, even by his enemies, and guarded at the risk of life, when a price was set upon his head, which would have enriched whole generations of those among whom he sojourned. No higher proof can be given, that “sweet are the uses of adversity,” in its effects on the human character, than in tracing the fidelity, disinterestedness, and magnanimity shewn by this defeated, starving, and injured people; whilst, on the other hand, success awakened revenge, oppression, and cruelty, utterly unworthy of a brave nation, and a triumphant sovereign\*.

\* No one can recal this period of national suffering and delinquency to mind, without contrasting the conduct observed towards our own erring countrymen, and that pursued in the Peninsula to our active enemies and supine friends. The Duke of Cumberland was a brave soldier, and towards his own people a humane man; but when compared with the Duke of Wellington, he becomes an angel of darkness contrasted with one of light. “Blessed are the merciful, they shall obtain mercy.”



But we must leave general remarks to attend to the feelings natural to the family in whom we are interested. From the time when the utter destruction of the Pretender's hopes was announced, Mrs. Ratcliffe roused herself, with an energy of which her late weakness appeared to have deprived her, and insisted upon her husband seeking safety by flight.—“I know,” said she, “that proscriptions of every kind will abound, but since they are just now operating only in the northern counties, you may use the time for escape. I will not attempt to accompany you, as it would attract notice, but I will follow you to the ends of the earth, or I will, if it be more advisable, continue to live here, so much in our usual style as to give no occasion of remark on your absence, which may be laid to the account of ill-health, which your appearance justifies. Your cousin is on the Continent, but I advise you not to join him, since, although his sentence is null (for thirty years are passed since it was pronounced), as he has been in society with the banished family, and has taken service with the French monarch, he may be held as suspected in this affair. No; go, I entreat you, to the Low Countries; take our faithful Hill with you, and in securing your safety, give



myself and your daughters the comfort which will enable us to manage every other thing according to your wishes: there is sufficient money in the house for your present purpose, and other valuables that may be made available, should your stay be protracted."

That this advice was in itself as good as on the part of the giver it was disinterested, Mr. Ratcliffe could not doubt; but the more cloudy the horizon around them, the more he felt that the man and the father ought to be at his post; and he could not look at his fragile, but noble-minded wife, without feeling how cruel it would be to purchase his own safety, by a flight which might subject her to those apprehensions for his safety and his happiness, which were of all other evils the most injurious to her. Although her ancestors had bled in the cause which placed the present family on the throne, and the estate on which they now resided was her personal property, and was settled upon her and her children, alike by her father's will and her marriage settlement, his contempt and mistrust of the present government induced him to believe that it might be wrested from her, if he were not present to defend her rights; and since he believed that no possible act of treason could personally attach



to him, he determined to wait the effect of time, in the vain hope that the storm would spend itself in the district where actual warfare had taken place.

Such was his view of affairs, as given to his wife and daughters, and to which the former, grateful for his affection, seemed willing to give way, when Sophia eagerly exclaimed—"No, father, no! Derby must undergo an inquisitorial search after suspicious persons, and you and Mr. M—— will be unquestionably examined, in which case you cannot escape. For you know you cannot swear falsely, and as you have not only corresponded with, but assisted the poor Prince, may they not seize upon you, throw you into prison, and even make the sins (what they call sins) of your ancestors a plea against you, which, in conjunction with *that* which we know to be true, will condemn you. They may not murder you—oh no, cruel as men say they are, that will not be done; but should they send you to the plantations in America—oh! think of our sufferings, not less than your own, under such appalling circumstances."

"My dear, you suffer your fears to outrun even the just cause there is for fear. I wish to go to our house at Kennington, to appear as my



neighbours do, unconnected with this unhappy attempt; but, as you say, should I be seized, I must abide the consequences, for neither as a Ratcliffe will I tarnish my honour, nor as a Christian forswear myself. In order, however, to soothe your minds, and prove to you in how high respect I hold your advice, I will prepare myself for removal, should any thing alarm us, by gathering money together, which, after my late disbursement, is not an easy matter; and remember (since I may be taken unawares at any moment) that I shall part from you under a sense of your kindness, your generous self-abandonment, your——”

The agonized husband and father could say no more, but after a few moments of deep emotion and mingled tears, they all parted for the night, humbly hoping that they might be spared the trial they deprecated so sincerely, and dreaded so much.

This hope was short-lived; Sophia, harassed by many fears, was unable to sleep, and before she left her bed, was informed by her maid that she must rise, as two persons below desired to see her.

Scarcely had the message been given, when her mother entered the room, and before she



spoke, began hastily to arrange her daughter's dress; her very appearance bespoke something extraordinary, and the poor girl eagerly exclaimed—"What is the matter, dear mother?—where is my father?"

"He is gone to Burton, happily, to call on a tenant; it is *you* who are sent for: there is a commission sitting at Derby. I fear, indeed I cannot *doubt* your journey thither is known."

Sophia remembered the supposed ghost, and could not doubt either, and her agitation became most distressing.

"Remember, my child, to be very guarded in the answers you give; my maid, Glossop, shall accompany you; but it is probable that you may not have the support of her presence. My beloved child, do not allow the circumstance of being examined before men to overpower you—they will not insult innocence, though they seek to detect error. I abhor cunning, you know, and a lie is a sin before God you must not commit; but you are not called upon for *full* confession before man, himself an insufficient judge. Be firm, weigh your words, consider their tendency, as they may affect your father, and, not improbably, your lover; and in silent breathings to Almighty God, look for assistance in your



hour of trial ; he will make ‘ rough places plain, and crooked paths straight before you.’”

“ But will no time be given me, dear mother, to collect my thoughts—to commit my awful case to Heaven ?”

“ No, my child, not even for necessary food ; even now, the men below await your coming impatiently ; with them there is a desire to prevent all power of recollection, and arrangement for defence. They are the servants of a foreign prince, who has no sympathy with his subjects, no compassion for their errors, and who, rejoicing in an elevation to which his birth nor merits have entitled him, seeks only to hold it as by a gripe of iron. Depend on no pity, seek to obtain no favour ; yet be not hopeless, for He ‘ who ruleth the wills and affections of sinful men,’ can raise up friends in the midst of foes. Elijah, you know, was fed by ravens, yet they are birds of prey ; this trial may require more self-control, more mental exertion than the last, but not so much of courage and endurance.”

Sophia remembered her long-continued agony of fear, and silently said, “ that may be true ;” but still her heart quailed at the trial before her.



## CHAP. VII.

PALE, but calm, and with a countenance in which the most worldly-minded and penetrative person could read no guilt, though they might see in its very openess and artlessness, the power of being misled, Sophia, utterly unable to take even slight refreshment, presented herself to those persons whose duty it was to place her before the bench of magistrates, composed partly of commissioners from London, and partly of loyal gentlemen in office, and resident in the vicinity.

On arriving at Derby, she had expected to be conducted to the town-hall, but found, with a sensation of dismay, that her examination was to take place at the inn, and in the very room where, three or four months previous, she had seen the Prince, and, of course, incurred the penalty she was now paying. There was a division in the room, formed by a temporary barricade, behind which sat six or eight gentlemen;



but Sophia, shrinking to the side of the room in which was the greatest number of persons, and where her appearance was most likely to be shrouded, endeavoured to recal her mother's advice, and lift up her heart to Heaven, whilst she closely attended to the circumstances around her, and sought to prepare for the questions probably awaiting her.

In a few seconds she found that her own case was even now before the court, as a stout, coarse-looking, and singularly tall man, was at that moment standing before the commissioners, and answering to the name of David Dobbs.

"You say that you were out on the night of the twenty-fifth of December, and saw a young woman, whom you believe to be a daughter of Mr. Ratcliffe's, of White Cliffs?"

"Why, yees, I doa think she wor, but I doasn't say soa positive."

Sophia listened as if her very soul was absorbed in hearing.

"Relate to us what you know of the matter."

"As I war comin on past this'n house, I seed a young woman, dressed like a koind of a beggar, but wi' nice white stockings an shoes. All at wonst, one o' them Heeland sodgers jumps forard an lays his hands on her, and



brings her right into th' house. Well! it was a varry sare night, soa I went to my sister's, an I borrowed a horse-cloth an threw it over my shoulders, and then I put a tub on my head, an over *that* I put——”

“ This is nothing to the purpose,” cried a commissioner; “ what more did you see of the young woman ?”

“ That's what I'm going to tell your worship; altogether I was a queer kind of a figure, an I were sadly scarred at having to walk thro' a certain place, as has a bad cracter; but before I got to it, who I should spy, but that very lass the Heeland sodger had forced into this house——”

“ Forced, do you say, fellow ?” said several voices.

“ Why, yees! *forced* I call it—becase for why? he laid houd on her arm an drew her right into this house.”

There was a murmur which proved that the last words of the witness were unsatisfactory; and in another moment Sophia Ratcliffe and William Steer were called together to the bar.

In the person thus cited to appear, Sophia recollected the unhappy prisoner to the Prince, whose death she had dreaded to witness in that



very room. It was, however, a short relief to her, that he was first called upon to announce who he was, and as his answer exactly coincided with that given on the eventful night in question, she felt assured that he was an honest man, and trusted that he would not prove to her an inconsiderate, or, in other words, a condemnatory witness.

To those interrogatories which went to proving if he had seen the Prince, and for what reason he visited Derby at the time in question, his replies were given promptly, and with the same literal attention to fact displayed on his previous examination; after which, he was desired to look at Sophia, and say whether he recollected her person as being in the presence of the Pretender, during his time of imprisonment.

To this he replied by saying, "it was impossible for him to identify the young lady before him, as being a girl in coarse garments, who was brought into the room, he believed, at the very time when he was expecting a pistol to be fired through his head—he was not prepared to say whether she was *dragged* in or not, the state of his mind rendering him incapable of observation; but from her manner of leaving the place, and the little he saw of her afterwards,



he judged her to have been nearly as much under coercion as himself."

The changes in poor Sophia's complexion, though her features remained unmoved, told all who looked upon her, that however she might have been disguised, and however incapable the person under examination might be of speaking to her person, yet she was in truth the party suspected. It appeared to be the determination of the commissioners, in all examinations and trials on this unhappy cause, not only to deny the prisoner the benefit of doubts, agreeable to the merciful directions of English law in criminal cases, but to turn all that might be deemed dubious against them; and because the supposed criminal was young and beautiful, they considered it the more necessary to steel their hearts against these attractions. Unquestionably her father was the true delinquent in their eyes; but since punishment and example were the order of the day, more especially when the terrific pursuit of victims was first entered upon, to obtain two criminals instead of one became an important object; and men not previously cruel or unjust, either influenced by strong party feelings, which never fail to blind the judgment, or moved by ambition to distinguish themselves



for a loyalty which claimed reward, pursued the system of persecution, with a zeal which at this period we behold with horror, forgetting that we daily witness the same spirit at work amongst us, but have been hitherto most happily saved from its effects, so far as regards property and life. Whigs and Tories are now content with defacing the virtues, denying the talents, misjudging the motives, and blackening the characters of each other.

There was at this moment a close drawing together and rapid exchange of opinion between the inquisitorial band assembled on this awful occasion, two or three of whom Sophia recollected as those who had occasionally sat at her father's own hospitable board; but her eye did not happen to see one face which she could recognise as a *friend*; of course she saw no one calculated to ameliorate the evidently stern character of the London commissioners. Whilst this disheartening circumstance pressed upon her mind, one of these iron-hearted strangers suddenly said to her—"Girl—will you swear—will you (having no fear of God before your eyes,) *positively swear* that you were not the person spoken of as being in disguise in the night specified?"



In a low but distinct voice, she replied—  
“ You have not questioned me, sir. If you had, I should not have denied the circumstance of my disguise, nor of my presence—my *unwilling* presence here.”

“ Come! that is right—you are willing to speak freely: you are a heroine, I doubt not, and think a handsome young prince a proper subject for a midnight visit: so you came, you say! to—to—for what purpose—what *pretended* purpose?—speak!”

“ I shall say no more,” was Sophia’s answer, uttered with increased power, and a calmness that surprised the questioner.

“ You will say no more, my pretty Miss—very good—you have said enough to make your father well acquainted with the person who has a facility in hanging, drawing, and quartering—to say nothing of his management of your own delicate person under the gallows—he will not be nice in——”

There was a faint murmur of disapprobation near her, and such was the effect of this brutal and cowardly attack, that for a moment Sophia quailed under the dread of outraged decency; but one beseeching glance upon her own countrymen restored her, and with a dignity, of



which her youth and her timidity gave little promise, she stepped some paces forward, and said—"Sir, I am hitherto unheard and uncondemned; you have no right to inflict upon me language, which is in itself not only a suffering, but a sin. As a prisoner, on slight and unproved suspicion, I ought to be held clear till I am proved guilty. As a subject who has never uttered word against my king now upon the throne, I claim his majesty's protection; and as an affianced wife——"

At this moment blushes—burning blushes, suffused her pale cheek, even her very hands; and the many eyes that were upon her, the very whispered blessings that broke on her ear, for a time completely overpowered her; but at length she added—"Yes! the affianced wife of a brave officer, now languishing under the wounds he has received from the army of Prince Charles, I claim to be judged fairly, and at least to be exempted from insult, and treated as the daughter of one gentleman, and the intended wife of another."

The moment she had ceased to speak, Sophia shrunk back into the body of persons, who, moved by curiosity and compassion, had pressed forward to hear and look upon her, and she



found herself, she knew not how, supported by the encircling arm of Mr. Steer, who, now no longer a trembling prisoner in the presence of enemies, might be called, in the language of Shakespeare, "a man of worship;" he eagerly whispered her—"Be of good cheer; though I said little, it was because I meant much, and wished to quash the proceedings at once; be assured that I feel for you, as I should for my own dear Alice\*."

The person who had endeavoured to browbeat and insult the poor girl, also enveloped himself, as it were, amongst his party, several of whose voices were speaking, as if decrying the course he had taken; and two persons were heard to declare, "that if it were possible to believe that a young lady of Miss Ratcliffe's description could by possibility be supposed to have entered the Pretender's presence by force, or by chance, they should consider her wholly free from

\* From this dear Alice, to whom the writer was related by marriage, she received the account of her father's detention at Derby, and the conduct of the Prince, for whom he ever retained a lively regard. Unhappily the story was concluded with the account of his death; for the terrible cold he caught on the night of his escape, fell upon his lungs, and induced consumption, of which he died about six months after the period above alluded to. She died about thirty years ago, at a very advanced age.



blame; but what, save her being the bearer of important intelligence, or perhaps pecuniary aid to *him*, or some of his officers, could by possibility lead a woman of her habits to travel from home, in such a night, at such an hour?"

"Surely, gentlemen," said a voice, that thrilled the heart of Sophia, for it was within a little time dear and familiar, "a young and attached woman might venture far to learn news of one, whose life was dearer than her own, and known to be in jeopardy? It is in times of distress and tumult, that we learn to know how much the weak can encounter, and the affectionate endure. I pledge my honour to the fact she has stated, of her engagement to a devoted servant of his majesty."

The idea thus started by Sir Arthur Vernon seemed to be generally adopted by the commissioners, and was warmly dilated upon by the country gentlemen, who, of course, felt more kindly towards her, and were eager to exonerate her from the blame which they knew could only belong to her father; and in confining the charge to her, they sought to save a neighbour, who, however he might err in his politics, they well knew to be excellent in his morals. Whilst they were thus reasoning, the persons crowding



into the room expressed strongly their pity for a "poor girl that had a wounded sweetheart, and just crept out to see after him." Nor were there wanting many who personally knew her, and sincerely pitied her, although they would have been willing to sacrifice her father.

After a short consultation, she was discharged by the commissioners, who, whatever might be the suspicions they still entertained, might now think, that by an act of leniency towards the daughter, the father would be thrown off his guard, and some overt act be discovered, notwithstanding the care he had taken, or the apparent indifference he had evidently exercised.

The severity with which she had been addressed in the first instance, together with her consciousness of the transaction, and the full belief that the persecuting parties would secure one victim at least, rendered Sophia almost incapable of estimating properly the joyful intelligence of her own release, and she was nearly insensible, when replaced by Mr. Steer in the carriage which had conveyed her thither. As, however, she re-entered the lane in which she had suffered so much from false fear, the powers of her mind became restored, and most devoutly did she thank God for her present deliverance, and be-



seech him to bestow strength for the future. She anticipated the joy her return would give to her unhappy mother and affrighted sister, but scarcely wished to find her father at home, knowing how severely he would suffer on her account, and she could not bear that his self-reproach should afflict him in a moment of joy like this.

Alas! her wishes were more than verified, for the day wore away—night passed—other, and other days succeeded, and the master of the mansion returned not to his dwelling, and his afflicted wife sank under the agonies of doubt and apprehension, and was again laid upon the bed of sickness. Sophia endeavoured to sustain her mother, by representing the wisdom of her father's flight, and its being the consequence of her own advice; and to this Mrs. Ratcliffe fully agreed, but she feared that he had been seized by the government, and was confined in some unknown prison; and since every day now teemed with dreadful stories of men being dragged from prison and executed, whose fate was till then unknown to their nearest relations, her own apprehensions were perpetually excited; and it might truly be said,



she "suffered a thousand deaths in fearing one," for that *one* was her beloved husband's.

Amongst the many executions heard of as taking place at Carlisle, Penrith, York, &c., none affected our family circle so severely, as those of two amiable, high-spirited young men, the sons of a nonjuring clergyman, who lived within twenty miles of White Cliffe. His wife died of a broken heart, in consequence of learning that her "brave and beautiful," her *only* children were taken; and at the very time the afflicted husband returned a mourner from the grave of her whom sorrow had rendered doubly dear, he found the men appointed by the commissioners fixing the heads of his two sons on the posts of his garden gate.

Many of his humble parishioners had attended to the grave the remains of that excellent woman, who had partaken the cares of her husband, as the pastor of a country flock, and administered every help within her power to all around her; and they had followed to his desolate home, at a humble distance, him whom they alike revered and pitied, and who had no friend near him save an old servant. The moment they became sensible of the outrage now committed on his feelings, indignation min-



gled with compassion; and the perpetrators of an act, worthy only of a Parisian mob, would have been the victims of their excited passions, if the good man himself had not stepped on the wall, and throwing out his arms, entreated them to consider what they were about. The moment his voice arrested them, attention was given, and when he besought them to honour the precepts he had taught them, by obedience to the law, and thus enable him to sustain his manifold afflictions—when he said, “I have no longer a son in the flesh; will ye, who are my spiritual children, rebel against me?” the most determined hand was relaxed, the fiercest eye was filled with tears, and the base tools of far baser masters were suffered to depart uninjured. The good man, taking off his hat, and discovering a head grown grey with sorrow more than time, and cheeks furrowed by tears, thanked them with faltering accents, and then, still uncovered, walked slowly through the gate deformed by such bloody trophies, silently thanking God that the mother had been spared the agonizing spectacle\*.

\* The particulars of this sad story were given to me many years ago, by a sensible and good woman, one Betty Simpson, who lived servant at the time with this clergyman, whom she al-



This tremendous infliction on a family so highly esteemed, was of course discussed very much throughout a country district like that in which it had happened, and which so far resembled it, as to possess also a family subject to suspicion. Sophia wished to keep knowledge of the fact from her mother, but this she could not effect, as every servant talked of it. The consequence was, a great increase of alarm for the safety of her husband, and a kind of nervous expectation of seeing his head being brought before her: so dreadfully distressing did this idea become, and so much did it spread through the household, that Sophia (though she feared every thing like encountering the world from which she had long been separated,) determined on removing to their house in Kennington, in the hopes that change of scene would induce some change in her mother's harassed mind, and

ways spoke of as the best man she had ever known; nor were his wife, and the "dear young gentlemen," less the objects of her praise; they had joined Prince Charles on his route, and accepted commissions: young, brave, and ardent, and believing their cause a just one, it was not surprising that they should thus act, nor that they should afterwards suffer; but the cruelty practised on the bereaved parent was execrable. Betty lived several years afterwards with him, and she said, "poor master always took off his hat as he went past the heads." They were buried with him at last.



not without fears that the idea which haunted her so painfully, was but a presage of the misfortune awaiting them at White Cliffe.

It was not easy to accomplish her object, for they had very little ready money; but as they travelled with their own horses, the matter could be managed, and valuable property, in a small compass, could be taken with them and disposed of in London. This was of course a better plan than by applying to the tenants, or encroaching on the banker, subject them to a suspicion of what was to them an unnatural state of poverty. Sophia, made by sorrow prematurely wise and considerate, provided as she was able for every contingency, packed with her own hands plate and jewellery, and settled to leave home at so early an hour, that their removal might subject them to no observation, yet without affecting any desire of secrecy.

Fatigued by her exertions, she was about to retire, when a note, carefully sealed, was brought by their favourite old servant, who said, "That it had been left by a country lad he never saw before, who ran away the moment after he had delivered it."

The note contained in the first place an injunction to secrecy, and in the next, an earnest



entreaty that Miss Ratcliffe would meet the writer at a place specified, within the hour; adding, that she might bring the old butler as a guard, to a certain place, but no further, as every word of conversation must be strictly private, being of the last importance to herself, and others exceedingly dear.

The handwriting was disguised, and the words misspelt, but Sophia felt almost certain Sir Arthur Vernon was the writer or contriver; and believing he had learnt something of her father, or would at length give her a letter from his son, she resolved to obey his injunction, but without acquainting any one, save old Robert, with her intention. Through his management the domestics went soon to rest, and she left home under his escort, so far as the place specified for separation.

Truly has it been said, "when the mind's at ease, the body's delicate." Previous fatigue and long anxiety had rendered her weak and nervous, and she had that peculiar dread of thunder, to which some persons are subject from their birth; nevertheless, though the skies were dark with clouds, and lightnings played on the distant mountains, she went resolutely forwards. Sometimes she walked rapidly, as if to learn



the extent of the misfortune she yet dreaded to know; at others, she walked trembling and irresolute, as if already crushed to the earth, and utterly incapable of sustaining more; but there were moments when love, which is ever allied to hope, whispered something like comfort to her heart, by connecting her clandestine interview with information respecting her beloved Henry.

At length she reached the spot, which was a shed on the edge of the moors, about three miles distant from home, and where she perceived a man standing wrapt in a cloak, and whose hat was flapped over his face. For a moment she felt afraid of him, as a stranger in whose power she had placed herself; but on this point she was soon re-assured—the party in question was indeed Sir Arthur Vernon. “You have done well to come, Sophia; it is necessary that I should see you once more, for all our sakes,” were his first words.

“But my father, sir—know you where he is?”

“I know nothing of your father—nothing at all—would that I had never known him!”

The stern tone in which these words were uttered, though calculated to increase her alarm and dejection, in some sort roused the mind of



Sophia, for how could she bear to hear her parent thus slightly esteemed; but as if he knew what was passing in her busy thoughts, the speaker immediately added—"Do not mistake me, for a hasty word, Sophia; if I could help, or save your father, I would, but that, alas! I cannot do. You must be sensible, that in adventuring so far as I did, when you were examined, I subjected myself to suspicion; but you do not yet know that when I dined afterwards with the commissioners, in the warmth of conversation I allowed the circumstance of your engagement being with my own son to escape me. Since then, several circumstances have come to the knowledge of these parties, which tend still more strongly to implicate me; and, in short, my situation is alarming."

"*Your* situation! well may ours be bad."

"Listen to me, my poor girl. Henry's wound rendered him so weak, that so soon as he could be removed, his physician advised his taking a voyage to Lisbon, and as I was naturally anxious to prevent him effectually from intercourse with your family, during this time of trouble, and also hinder his return to the army until his health was established fully, I readily consented to his embarkation, accompanied by



his mother and eldest sister. My enemies now accuse me of collusion—say, that I have removed my family and my property, expedited your father's flight, and intend to follow myself, in order to procure foreign succours to the discomfited but still existing wanderer—a tissue of falsehoods altogether."

Sophia sunk sick at heart upon a heap of heath collected in the shed; she felt as if the plague-spot was upon her, and she had infected all around her; her heart seemed swelled to bursting, yet she shed no tear, though in the anguish of her spirit she groaned aloud, and a convulsion shook her limbs.

"I feel for you, Sophia, God knows I do," said Sir Arthur, "especially as I am aware that your father is denounced as a rebel and declared an outlaw. That he is personally safe, I have every reason to suppose—in fact, I believe him to be in less jeopardy than myself."

Sophia burst into a violent but salutary flood of tears, and it is probable that her companion wept also, for he interrupted her not, but slowly walked up and down the shed, ejaculating, "Excellent child!—unhappy girl!—what a wife she might have been!"

When the passion of bitter grief and con-



sternation had somewhat spent itself, Sophia became sensible that the storm she had apprehended was now raging, for the peals of thunder were tremendous, and the lightning so vivid, that the wide moors appeared one sheet of flame, and might have given the idea of a burning world. Sophia instinctively shrunk back, and faintly murmured—"I must wait here a little longer."

"God knows whether we shall either of us ever quit the place—I expect the thatch to take fire every moment, yet there is no going out. Last summer you know, Sophy, a man and boy were killed by one flash, just below this place; indeed, few summers pass, but some poor fellow returning from the market——Heavens! what thunder!—Sophia, speak to me—do you live?"

"Yes, I live, and for my mother's sake ought to desire life; otherwise, surely it would be a mercy if——"

"Hush, child, it becomes not us to wish for death under any circumstances; let us pray—let us pray for *mercy*."

"Mercy! what else can the weak and sinful pray for? But surely it is of more importance that we should obtain it for the life to come, than seek for it in the life we endure? For



our future state we have a Mediator, a Redeemer, but in this world our situation admits of little hope. Man has little mercy for his brother worm."

"None! none!" cried Sir Arthur; "the more blood they shed in the North, the more they desire to shed; even the lowest soldiers are sacrificed, or spared for tortures and death in a distant climate; and they will destroy *me*, who have served them so faithfully, who have deserted you, my poor girl (the idolized of my noble-hearted boy), at the very turn of a die, and make my widow and children beggars, as you and your excellent mother are already, or soon will be. But that long peal now rolls distantly—think you the storm has spent itself?"

"It has—yes, I am sure the worst is past. I will go now, for I am full of fear for poor Robert; he has waited for me, I doubt not, though at great peril. Heaven forefend that harm should have befallen him!"

"Think not of *him*; you have a man near you far more unhappy, and who must speak, ere we part, of that painful business which brought us together."

Sophia had heard of much that was painful already, for the utter ruin of her father, the



injury to those he had loved, was predicted ; what else could she expect or bear ?

“ After what I have said, Sophia, of the danger and utter ruin to myself and family, consequent on our supposed connection, or, I ought to say, our *past* connection, you cannot be surprised at my desiring effectually to break it off for ever.”

“ Surely it is already broken ; even when, in my extreme distress, I spoke of my engagement publicly, I felt despair of ever beholding my suffering, and perhaps alienated friend again.”

“ The former you have innocently made him, the latter he can never be without your own permission ; but when I most solemnly assure you, that unless you are completely renounced by him, his father may be condemned to death, his mother rendered a houseless widow, with four helpless girls, and his own name be coupled with disgrace, his fortunes annihilated, and he be made, as your father now is, a wandering exile in friendless poverty, surely you will see the necessity, terrible as it is. Would he be the virtuous young man you have known him, if he were capable of thus dooming his family to destruction, and himself not only to a wretched,



but an useless existence, he who might be a blessing to so many?"

Sophia covered her face with her hands, as if to shut out the very air from witnessing the terrible agitation of her heart—the many deeply-buried, but still existing hopes, which had long laid there, and in fact sustained her in all her trials. Were they all to be torn up by the very roots? Ah! why had the storm passed by?

Yet surely the unhappy father, the evidently alarmed man, had a right to speak and to demand a sacrifice. In the moment of terror and difficulty he had proved himself a friend, and in the general confusion of the times, it was too probable that his past services to the government might be forgotten, and his partial assistance to her cause be remembered to his loss. Confiscation, not less than death, was the "order of the day," and he was well known to be a man of great wealth, far exceeding that of her father; his wife, his daughter were dear to her (the more dear that they, even now in a distant land, administered to the wants of Henry). Every reason thus adduced called upon her imperatively to resign him, though at the same time they rang the knell of her last hopes, her most distant expectations of any earthly happiness.



Under this full persuasion, she at length slowly replied—"I see it all too plainly—Henry must renounce me; he has my full permission to do so, *entirely, unequivocally*. I well know he will remember me with kindness—will pity me—will pray for me; I ask no more; we are parted this night for *ever*. Oh, no, I recal that word—we are parted so long as either of us live."

"You are the same virtuous and sensible girl I always thought you—incapable of selfishness in any possible shape, and alive to every nobler, and I may truly say, every *Christian* principle of action. But, dear Sophia, hear me."

"I do hear you—I obey your wishes; you can ask no more."

"Yes, I have still to ask that you will find most difficult to grant. Henry loves you, not merely with the ardour of a young, fond heart, attached to a lovely person and endearing manners, but with a perfect confidence in your attachment, and esteem for your virtues; in short, I know he *never* will resign you, cost what it may to himself or others, but from a conviction of your falsehood to himself, or, what would I say? of *decided* impropriety of conduct."

Had the late thunder, in its terrible sounds, spoken inarticulate words to the trembling and



astonished girl, scarcely could she have been more confounded and overwhelmed. Gasping for breath, shaking from head to foot, feeling her very heart grow cold within her, and preserving apparently only one spark of life, the deep sense of unutterable and unmerited injury, she stood before Sir Arthur, in the now restored light of a waning moon, like a statue, pale, calm, speechless, almost sublime, in the fulness of sorrow and surprise,

Seizing her hand, he drew her towards him; he besought her, by every tender term and affectionate adjuration, to recal her scattered senses, to consider the afflictions she had it in her power to avert from her Henry and his house, and recollect what would be the severity of her sufferings, when those evils actually fell upon them which she had the power to avert.

There lives not one pure-minded and innocently-devoted girl who will not conceive the heart-rending predicament in which Sophiastood. To save her heart's chosen from every evil, and at any sacrifice, was the first wish of that heart; but then to become dishonoured in his sight, an object of loathing to his memory, conscious of loving him entirely and exclusively, to consent to appearing the very thing she abhorred to the



man whom of all others she esteemed—impossible! No wonder she exclaimed—“ I have never, even for a moment, ceased to love Henry—never smiled, or scarcely spoken to another; I cannot therefore be made to appear such an one as he would renounce from such motives.”

“ You say truly, Sophia, I am certain; but circumstances favour the possibility of those slanderous conclusions, on which alone I can build the hopes of dissolving your engagement with a man so attached as Henry is to you. The Prince was young—handsome—for a time successful; you saw him but once, I *know*, but it was possible you should have seen him previously. Might not ambition and love influence you, as they have done others? My son had been long parted from you—your own father might encourage the infatuation.”

“ No, no, my dear father loves Henry—laments his situation.”

“ I believe that also; but it is only by such insinuations, such *calumnies*, borne out by circumstances, that the bond can be dissevered which binds my whole family to destruction. You will say I might have effected the purpose without rendering you a party; but to this I answer, that not only did I shrink from the base-



ness of such conduct, but I foresaw that if Henry sought for explanation from you, and obtained it, he would only be the more decidedly attached. No, I must know that you will not defend yourself—that you will at least suffer tacitly, and accept injury as if it were only justice. I ask you, Sophia, have you the love, the magnanimity, the generosity, to save Henry by such a medium? Were there any other that could answer the purpose that would tear him from you, I would not, could not, ask you for such a sacrifice. Am I not the father of four innocent daughters? Can I not estimate the value of female reputation?"

The extreme agitation and distress with which these words were uttered, the recollection of Henry's pure and noble sentiments, the steadiness and delicacy of his attachment, and his belief that death alone could break their engagement (an engagement he had so fervently desired to render irrevocable), all pressed upon her memory, assuring her that his father had spoken the truth, and she exclaimed, in a tone of utter despair—"Well, well, say what you please—insinuate sufficient poison for your purpose. I *will not* defend myself by *word* or *letter*. Henry, dear Henry, we may yet meet before the



judgment-seat of God, and you will then know that in life and death, you, only *you*—to save you, to preserve *you alone*, could I thus submit.”

She sank again upon the ground, and Sir Arthur thought she had swooned; but finding she was not blessed by such a temporary oblivion, he began eagerly to speak of her mother, and their probable situation hereafter, declaring his intention to furnish them in some secret manner with pecuniary help, and at the same time offering her a well-stocked purse, as the medium of her speedy removal.

“I am provided,” said Sophia; “but were I not, from you, least of all, could I accept help of that nature. Come now what may, the *greatest*, if not the *last* sorrow, has been met.”

As she spoke, she arose, and crawled, rather than walked forth. Sir Arthur Vernon could not leave her, much as he dreaded being seen, until she arrived near the spot where old Robert was indeed waiting, though drenched by the thunder shower, which was still falling: he then, after earnestly beseeching her to pardon him, and rely on his friendship, rushed into a cop-pice, and was lost to her for ever, as she believed and wished.

How she gained her home and her chamber,



she scarcely knew, but as her sister was happily awake, proper care was taken of her, and restoratives administered; but either her energies were completely exhausted, or stupor had succeeded sorrow, for she appeared in a state of utter self-abandonment, until the feeble voice of her mother was heard, and she was given to understand that all things were ready for their journey. All that she had to dread for the future then rushed upon her mind, together with the necessity of hiding from her suffering parents the extent of those miseries which awaited her; and blaming herself for having suffered her own personal share of evil to engross her so much (terrible as she felt that evil to be), she rose, and hastened, as quickly as her feeble and wearied state admitted, to the carriage.

“ I shall see sweet White Cliffe no more—my dear native place, where I have been so happy with my father, and with my dear Henry, *mine* no more—oh, never, *never* more!”

But to think and to weep was not the way to comfort that bereaved parent, who now seemed to read her destiny in the countenance of her daughter, and to think every sigh she breathed was the harbinger of some new sorrow. Sophia, ill as she really felt, and much as she desired



time to think over the eventful conversation she had lately held, roused herself, to repeat her belief in her father's safety, and assure her that she had received information of it indirectly, from one who knew more than he could venture to declare. Thus consoled, the invalid sustained her journey better than could have been expected; and on the third evening they reached Kennington in safety.



## CHAP. VIII.

THE house in which they now took up their residence, was a little distance from the road, being separated by a garden; but the family were sensible, at a very early hour, that great numbers of persons were pressing towards the common, from which they were only distant a few hundred yards; and since Robert appeared as ignorant of the cause as themselves, Blanche applied to the person who took care of the premises in their absence, observing, "that some great show seemed going forward."

"Show!" exclaimed she, "yes, indeed, a most horrible show! Didn't you know, Miss, that seventeen rebel gentlemen are all to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, this very day? I have thought of nothing else all night."

Blanche sank down on the nearest seat in a fainting state; and Sophia, pale, trembling, and almost equally overcome, earnestly entreated the attention of the servants to her, whilst she hastened to her mother's bed-side, to prevent her



from rising, and by every possible medium save her from the knowledge of that most horrible execution. So greatly did the sounds increase, from the number of carriages, the crying of hand-bills, and the universal murmur made by large bodies, that although Mrs. Ratcliffe's bedroom was at the back of the house, it unavoidably disturbed her. Happily she adopted the idea of the disturbance being caused by a fire in the neighbourhood, and frequently put the harrowing question to Sophia of, "are you sure the danger does not threaten *us*?" Alas! well did the poor girl know how nearly they might have shared it—nay, that it even then hung over them.

Though, by unremitting vigilance and entreaties to those around her, she thus spared her mother knowledge of a fact, which, in her present weak state, might have unsettled her reason, yet she was herself in such a situation, as to be compelled to hear circumstances that made the blood curdle at her heart, rendered the government a nest of demons in her sight, and human nature itself loathsome. It had, however, the effect of softening in her view the conduct of Sir Arthur Vernon; for how could she doubt the sincerity of his terror, if he were



liable, in consequence of assisting her, to ruin so complete, and death so revolting? But new troubles soon called her from this terrific subject; it was indeed too true that her father was an outlaw, his estates confiscated and seized upon, and his family of three delicate females consigned to beggary and houseless want.

The rich and young have little dread of poverty, until its pangs are upon them. Compared with the loss of friends, and the attacks of pain and sickness, it appears a light evil, with which they are equal to grapple; and poor Sophia, under the sense of galling injury, and successive alarms, had not hitherto suffered comparatively from the fear of it, nor did her mother, for one great anxiety had swallowed all the rest. But when the means of life were thus suddenly arrested, when the power of providing for the many who had long eaten their bread, and enjoyed the protection of their roof, was withdrawn, and their own means for bare existence reduced to a mere trifle—then indeed they felt that the ban was upon them, that they must drink the very dregs of the cup of affliction.

Sophia sought counsel from her mother as to the disposal of all the valuables she had secured, and the plans necessary to be adopted; and



having done so, she entered calmly, but determinately, into their execution, tenderly but earnestly urging the well-disposed but weaker mind of her sister to second her. Both were so young and lovely in their persons, that they could not possibly venture into London, but in their butler they had a faithful coadjutor, and by his means were soon enabled to pay off the servants, make an agreement with the landlord of their house, from whom they held it on lease, and prepare themselves for seeking a humble home in a cheap part of the country the ensuing Christmas.

Such arrangements may be conveyed in a few lines to the reader, but the sufferings of a long life seem concentrated, whilst they are taking place with the unhappy families so situated; and in no other case are those who have "fallen from an high estate" so much to be pitied, as when victims from political causes. To them it avails not that they have been prudent in their expenditure, or charitable in their disposal of the goods of fortune, virtues and talents; the attainments which might benefit mankind, the beneficence which has already blessed an important circle, the dearest ties of life, and the fondest hopes of its beloved connections, are alike crush-



ed and commingled with all that is most worthless and hateful in society, the best bonds of which are dissevered.

He, therefore, who directly or indirectly lights up the flames of civil war in his country, performs the acts of a demon in his wickedness, and a madman in his blindness; he has

“Cried havoc! and let loose the dogs of hell,”

and who shall say where their scent shall fail, or their passion for blood be glutted? who shall dare to hope that his own breast shall remain untainted by their contagious influence? when all around are strongly biassed and prejudiced, who can preserve his own rectitude? who retain compassion and mercy, when party spirit possesses his mind, and cruelty has ceased to disgust it, when he has the power of cheating even his own conscience into the belief that injury to one man is justice to another, that to destroy a portion is to benefit the whole?

Every servant was now gone, save old Robert and the woman before spoken of; the horses and carriage first, and portions of the furniture afterwards, had been sold, so that a little remained in three rooms only, and that of the most humble quality. Perhaps the contrivances and



occupation thus given, somewhat blunted the acuteness of that sorrow, which inevitably arose from parting with servants who were naturally endeared to them by time and habit, and had "eaten of their bread, and drank of their cup," so long as the younger branches could remember, and who left them under a sense of sympathy in their affliction, far exceeding all they had previously manifested in the country, the horrible events they witnessed having opened their eyes to the extent of misfortune now falling on the family.

One circumstance alone prevented them from seeking that humble abode, to which they now looked during the autumn months, in which Mrs. Ratcliffe could best bear removal—the kind and unceasing attentions of her old friend and physician, Doctor Mead, whose very presence, when all the friends of former days hung aloof, was a cordial to them all. He not only administered to the health of the fallen family, but took a warm interest in their affairs; and trusting that the spirit of severity towards persons connected with the late rebellion had in some degree subsided, bade them yet look for better days, and busied himself in gaining information as to a cheap and retired place, where they



might at least weep unseen, and starve unnoticed.

At length he told them, that a cottage was secured near the village of Wortley, in Yorkshire, which, in its situation, so greatly resembled Derbyshire, that it could hardly fail to suit their health, and at the same time would be free from points of similarity likely to awaken distress; "and I would earnestly advise," he added, "that you should constantly employ yourself and sister in some mode of industry, that shall not only induce, but *compel* you to attention. The quiet exertion of fortitude is much more difficult in fact, than those more positive and awful acts of energy, by which the mind at times accomplishes wonders. Do not forget, that it is the constant drop which wears out the stone, more than the torrent which overwhelms it; and that the very busy are never the very unhappy. Your mother will, I fear, continue weakly, so long as your father's fate is undecided; for her it would have been better if"—— "I would have you get down before the frosts set in."

Well did Sophia foresee, that ere long they must indeed, by some means, gain help for themselves, and that beloved parent who was



dependant on them for every comfort ; but how she could at the same time secure the advantage of living in a cheap place, and the power of disposing of the only merchandise she could offer to the public, she could not imagine. Both herself and Blanche could embroider in a superior manner, and this elegant labour was much in demand at the time for court-dresses, waist-coats, and ladies shoes, and could, through the medium of Robert, be readily procured in London ; but the facilities of present intercourse with the metropolis were then unknown to the country, and whilst she earnestly desired to form some plan for procuring employment, she also foresaw great difficulty arising from the distance, and almost repented that she had agreed to travel so far, and in seeking retirement, lose the benefit of usefulness.

In the beginning of December they were ready to depart ; their last remaining property had been turned into money, their last bill discharged, and their few and bare necessaries packed, and should Mrs. Ratcliffe be tolerable, they would start on the following day ; but as they had still the remainder of their term before them, it had been agreed that she should not be incommoded, when Robert stepped up



stairs to say, "a young man desired to see Miss Ratcliffe, as he was instructed to deliver his message to her alone."

Sophia, conceiving it to be a messenger from their landlord, from whom they had experienced much consideration, immediately went down, followed at a little distance by Robert.

Fixing his eyes on the servant, and addressing Sophia in a hurried whisper, the person in question said—"If you be Miss Sophia Ratcliffe, from Derbyshire, I am to conduct you directly to Mr. Ratcliffe; your servant may attend you, but it is best done secretly."

"Where?—where is he?" cried Sophia, in distressing eagerness.

"Why, where should he be, Miss, but in the Tower. Sure all the world knows as how he is to be murdered—I mean, beheaded, to-morrow morning."

Sophia dropt senseless on the floor; but Robert, having heard the latter words, eagerly raised her, and procuring the usual remedies, did not call her sister. The moment her eyes reopened, he told her eagerly, "that it was Lord Derwentwater whom the messenger meant, and not his master, whom he trusted was still safe from his enemies."



“ Lord Derwentwater! Mr. Ratcliffe!” ejaculated Sophia, but slowly recovering from a shock so terrible.

“ Yes, ma’am, it is poor Lord Derwentwater, or rather I should say, Mr. Ratcliffe, my master’s cousin, they are now sacrificing, on the plea of his sentence being passed thirty years ago, though he told them he was a subject and a servant of the King of France. I heard of it, and hoped we should all be got out of the way before it took place. I held my tongue, as in duty bound, also begged the doctor not to speak, for I thought it might kill madam outright, and could do *you* no good to know it.”

Sophia was thus to a certain degree reassured, though deeply afflicted, for well did she know how dear this gentleman was to both her parents; and fully did she in his fate read the impossibility of her father’s return. Alas! what a fatality seemed to await on all her journeys! but she dared not recur to the last, lest its bitter sorrow should wholly incapacitate her; and closely muffling herself up, she took the arm of Robert, and set out to obey the distressing mandate.

But as it was impossible for her to walk far after her recent shock, scanty as money was be-



come, the good servant procured the first coach he could, and with little loss of time she was driven to the Tower.

The evening was now set in, for days were very short, and a misling rain descending; and as she approached those awful prison walls, which were once

“ With many a foul and midnight murder fed,”

and of late blushed with blood that might have made the morning pale, her heart sank within her, and shame mantled her thin cheek, as the night of her last summons to a secret conference arose again before her. The sound of falling chains, the loud quick voice of the sentinel, the tremendous clang of closing doors, recalled her to herself and her present awful situation.

At a certain point, after many stairs had been ascended, many long passages traversed, the messenger, who had been hitherto her guide, stayed the steps of Robert, with whom he remained, and consigned Sophia to the care of a subordinate officer; and in less time than she felt desirable to herself, since her agitation increased the farther she advanced, she found herself in a large and ill-lighted room, with the



prisoner before her, and his guardian behind her, but remaining close by the door.

‘Since the previous rebellion, when Lady Nithisdale succeeded in effecting the escape of her son, by exchanging clothes with him, thereby furnishing a devoted wife, in our own day, with a plan she successfully executed, state prisoners had not been allowed to receive their friends without the eye of the keeper being upon them, though conversation might take place unregistered by his ear. Twice had the man told Sophia to go forward; she felt unable to proceed; she knew herself in the presence of one rendered sacred by sorrow, at once a stranger and a friend—one so nearly the inhabitant of another world, that he seemed already invested with the awful characteristics of a departed spirit.

She was aroused from her consternation by a kind and almost familiar voice, and the warm grasping of a kindred hand; the sense of fear and sorrow subsided into the meltings of deep compassion, and she wept freely, yet not violently, endeavouring so to overcome her feelings, as to prove that she desired to attend to his wishes, and give as great a degree of consolation as her visit could impart.



But though the prisoner made many kind inquiries, and referred to many circumstances in early life, indicative of the affection he had always felt for those most dear to her, he had no commands to issue; he was not only calm but cheerful, and when adverting to his long exile, the loss of his brother, and the total confiscation of his property, spoke of his approaching death as a termination of those troubles, which advancing age might have rendered more distressing; and although he referred to what he deemed the illegality of his condemnation, it was without one bitter observation, one reproachful allusion. He thanked her warmly for visiting him under such circumstances, and commended his sincere and long-felt friendship to her mother, entering into their plans for the future, with as much genuine interest as if he could have witnessed them; adding, in a low voice—"Alter the a of our name into an e on your removal, and drop the e final.

Sophia, fixing her eyes on his still fine countenance, as she answered, in the same tone, "I will," she perceived that he was extremely anxious to gain her closest attention, and therefore returned his regards fully, on which he said—"When any one addresses *you personally,*



whether young or old, native or foreigner, and says—‘ An old man grey with grief hath need of money,’ you will give him all the help you are able.”

“ I will—oh ! yes, I will be prepared.”

Her eyes asked more—it was evident he had seen her father, had arranged this with him ; but as if he were afraid of her questioning him, he added—“ Do so, my dear, but ask no questions, make no confidants ; he who may be trusted as to *honesty*, must not be relied on for *judgment*, and——”

The man gave notice that the time allowed for the interview had expired ; the prisoner took Sophia’s hand, and tenderly kissed her cheek ; she trembled, and tried vainly to say farewell. “ Do not fear for me—yet pray for me, my child,” were his last words.

The door closed—Sophia beheld him no more, but his heroic tranquillity in death, and his conduct in life, are recorded in history. It is nevertheless strange, that whilst James the First has been universally blamed for executing Sir Walter Raleigh, on the strength of a sentence passed twelve years previous, little has been said on the conduct of that monarch who sent Ratchiffe to



the block, in consequence of one passed thirty years before.

Although the sorrowful recital, which Sophia was under the necessity at this time of making to her mother, naturally affected her exceedingly, and brought the probable fate of her husband more immediately before her eyes, yet the certainty it gave her of that husband's life, and still more, the hope of her being able to assist him, tended so greatly to reanimate her mind, that it evidently benefited her health; and in a few days they set out on their long wearisome journey, and arrived at their poor and desolate home, with more power to encounter the many difficulties which surrounded them, than could have been expected.

Their very first care was so to arrange their finances, as to place a certain sum in a package, which might at any instant be given to the messenger they had been taught to expect; and although it was little likely that he should come soon, since the fate of the last Ratcliffe would teach him to avoid all hazards, yet they alike felt it an imperative duty to be ready, and also to render the sum in question as large as they could by possibility spare. That point settled, the next was the regulation of their little house-



hold—the renunciation of every accustomed luxury, and that disposal of time and necessary toil, which would best enable them to effect their own intentions.

It is difficult to keep a secret in a small cottage, where the parlour only can pretend to be a large closet, and the kitchen is of the same proportions. Scarcely had the words, “What can we do with poor Robert, Sophia?” passed the lips of Mrs. Ratcliffe, when, as if in answer, Robert himself appeared before her.

“Madam, I can do *all*, indeed I can; for though you did not know it, I have cooked for you four months past. The garden here will be a good thing if it is well managed; and you know I always loved to help the gardener; and indeed (barring a wash-tub), I can turn my hand to any thing;—besides, besides—I have something more to say.”

“But surely, Hill, it would be much better for you to look out for a suitable situation; there are many great houses hereabouts, where so well educated and superior a servant might be properly situated. I know all you would say, I know your regard for us all, for your master’s sake, and your desire to help *us*; but



to be a mere drudge in your old age, and an unpaid one too, I cannot think of it."

"Madam, forgive me; I am more proud than becomes me, perhaps, but I never yet served man but my *own* master, and by God's help I never will. I am an Englishman, and therefore no son of a bondman; but you know I was the son of his father's servant; I played with him as a child, I waited upon him as a youth; and as a man I was trusted by him in all his affairs, whether of money matters or political difficulties. When troubles came, you yourself advised him to fly, and to take Hill with him; and often have I laid down in my clothes, ready at the moment to obey his bidding and to share his troubles."

"That you have, I doubt not, my worthy friend."

"No, madam—*servant*, not friend, but yet friendly I trust, with all due regard and proper humility. Now only please to look at what would be my situation, if so late in life (for I am four years older than his honour,) I went into a new family, with new ways, and, as it might happen, very different opinions on points of conscience. Could I hear my master's conduct reviled? could I hear his death desired? Nay, should



I not go positively mad in my old age, if I were told, even by the first lord in the land, 'that the *last* Ratcliffe were caught, and would be presently brought to the block?"

"You would—you would indeed, my good Robert; but come what will, to this misery you shall never be condemned by my consent," cried Sophia.

"Nor mine," said Mrs. Ratcliffe; "it was only your good I wished for in parting, and if that is not effected I give it up at once."

"Thank ye, madam, thank ye kindly. I have never been a man to care for the lucre of gain, but I have nevertheless saved money; and what my father saved before me is all safe; so that if you please to tell me when the time comes (and come it must), all I have to say is, "there it is." If I cannot give it to him who gave it me, why surely his flesh and blood ought to take it."

With these words Robert again ensconced himself in the little kitchen.

For many years, as may be supposed, this worthy man had been called "Mr. Hill," in the servants' hall, and generally "Hill," by his master; but the young ladies of the family had not cured themselves of the more affec-



tionate appellative of their childhood, and the Robert who had "borne them in his arms a thousand times," seemed to them a kinder title; but Sophia now determined to cure herself of the custom, without diminishing the feeling. Looking at their situation with the tranquillity it demanded, but which the view was little likely to obtain, from one so sunk by misfortune and so gifted by sensibility, she saw clearly that the very circumstance of a man-servant being a part of their establishment, would draw upon them observations, which the slight alteration in the spelling of their once noble, but now obnoxious name, could not obviate. Yet Robert's residence was the only comfort left them on the face of the earth, and as a friend or supposed relative, he would be also an invaluable protector to two young women, remarkable in their persons, and necessarily different in their manners, from those around them; and with his assistance, and occasional help from their poor neighbours, they would escape the necessity of keeping a servant, who might be a spy, and before whom they must inevitably keep silence, on every subject connected with their past history, and their present thoughts. She well knew that her father had always confided in him, and



that but for his absence at Kennington, he would not have required her services on the night she shrunk from recalling to mind; he was involved in their difficulties, partook their anxieties, devoted himself to their interests—ought he not, therefore, to be henceforward one of themselves? without this adoption, how could they accept his services, or the assistance they well knew his heart yearned to bestow, and which Sophia, in the generosity of her own nature, meant unhesitatingly to accept, whenever it was needed? those who can give nobly can accept nobly also.

A very few words between the parties sufficed to show they had but one will, one wish, on the subject; and the first time Mrs. Ratcliffe was able to sit down to dinner, she found a little square table, laid by her youngest daughter, on which were placed plates for four. As the old man brought a small basin of broth to his lady, in the first place, his eye glanced on this arrangement, and blushing (for even an old man may thus be moved), he eagerly snatched away the knife and fork, saying—“Poor Miss Blanche was not used to lay cloths.”

“She has nevertheless done it all right, Hill; she has prepared a place for you opposite her



own. We are too poor now to have two tables, and much too poor in friends to part with one of them."

"It cannot be, madam—it cannot be;" and the faint blush subsided to very paleness, followed by tears.

"Pray sit down," said Sophia, playfully; "I must not have a dish spoiled which I have helped to cook;" adding, in an under tone, "remember how soon my mother is affected, and how much she suffers afterwards."

Robert obeyed, and struggled with his feelings; he could not eat, but he could listen to that sweet young casuist, whose pleaded reasons convinced him, that an elderly friend was a safer character to them than a disguised servant, and might be the means of facilitating hereafter, some intercourse with him on whom all their thoughts were alike continually dwelling.

Alas! not *all*, for so soon as they were really settled in their humble home, and Sophia, conscious that her own skill and quickness exceeded that of Blanche, had taken to her embroidery, with the full determination of being unremittingly industrious, than Henry rose upon her mind's eye, in all the most en-



dearing traits of his character. The idea of his sufferings, under the belief of her falsehood, at the very time when he lay wounded and helpless, appalled her; and as the scenes of blood and desolation receded further from her eye, the less reason could she see for submitting to the mandate imposed by his father, and consenting to the murder of her own reputation; nor could she help persuading herself that she had a right to declare the whole truth, if Henry should demand it. Often would words she had heard her father repeat in jest, from Hudibras, cross her mind—

“ He that imposes an oath, makes it ;  
Not he that for convenience takes it.”

And she thought that if ever human being had a right to break a promise, it was herself, and *that*, not only for her own sake, but his, whose faith in every human being would be inevitably shaken for her sake. Sometimes she hoped that it had not been acted upon, that sufficient time had not elapsed to render inquiry after her safe—yet the spring was again returning, and the “ din of war” was dying away in the land. There was an impression in general, that the *last* of the Ratcliffes had fallen, and even the most



violent enemies of the cause for which he died, gave a sigh to his memory; was it not therefore very possible for love, which can accomplish so much, to have sought out her retreat, have soothed her sorrows?—But no! for her there was no love, no hope; she had been herself the suicide of that tender bond, which would have softened penury and lightened labour; and by pointing to some distant period of existence on which the expectation of happiness could expatiate, render the thorny path before her comparatively smooth.

The cheek of Sophia became again pale, her frame languid, her speech slow, and her mind abstracted; all the family declared, “that confinement was ruining her health and spirits, and that upon her they all depended;” and her mother forgot every other solicitude in prescribing for her health, inducing her to take exercise, and maintaining that there could be no necessity for such incessant labour, observing, “that she would write to Dr. Mead and state all her symptoms.”

But the words of the benevolent physician were engraven on Sophia’s memory, and she well knew that in one sense she was following his advice; but when giving it, he knew not



that her heart contained the canker-worm, which was now gnawing it to the very core, and called for aid, in addition to that exertion he had so wisely recommended.

Could Sophia have verified the prophetic fears of those around, by sinking slowly into an early grave, unnoticed and unlamented, she felt at this period of her sad history, that it would have been "sweet to die," sweet to quit for ever, that which she had indeed found to be a world of trouble, and throw herself, in humble hope and perfect resignation, on the mercies of that Redeemer, who was himself made flesh, that "he might be touched with the infirmities" of frail and suffering humanity. But when in happier moments she allowed reason to predominate over feeling, she saw clearly that a principle of vitality was still strong in her frame, which, though delicate, was healthy, that the path of duty was that of useful, and even yet (to a certain degree) happy existence. He who had said, "I will not break the bruised reed," could yet render her again that which she had been—the support of her bereaved mother, the example to that beloved sister, whose fond eyes were continually bent upon her, and the comfort of that humble friend, whose every thought was em-



ployed to serve or benefit her. Surely, whatever might be her own perhaps erring wishes, arising rather from disgust at this world than fitness for another, she had not "so learned Christ," as to shrink from the cup it was the will of her Heavenly Father that she should drink?

Sophia's short periods of retirement now saw her pray more and weep less; she prescribed boundaries to her meditations; and when "thoughts which lie too deep for tears," and therefore sink the surer into the soul's wounds, would needs press too closely, she would abandon her embroidery, hasten into the garden, and, despite of her sense of feebleness, become busied with the flowers which Robert had planted for her gratification. To foster these beautiful productions was a species of double benevolence, for it raised the flowers and the old man's spirits at the same time; and he had soon the satisfaction to perceive, that between the cup of warm milk he daily fetched from the nearest farmhouse at six in the morning—the smell of the fresh earth as he dug it beside her—the short walk in the neighbouring meadow—the frequent chit-chat she held with poor children, "just as if they were little Whitecliff lads and lasses," was altogether bringing her gently round, and



no doubt summer would establish her, and even make her a strong woman.

When Sophia saw her poor mother fondly looking out for her return, and felt the ready fingers of Blanche untying her bonnet, or pointing out how much work she had done in her absence, her heart reproached her for having, in a selfish desire for repose, ceased to feel the value of those dear ties still left to her, and she resolved, by every medium in her own power, to second that strength she looked with humility and faith to receiving from above.

For this purpose she abstained from dwelling on those tender subjects of regret, and those daily-felt, though quietly-endured privations, which affected her the most as they regarded her mother; nor would she suffer her imagination to depict, as it were wont, her beloved and revered father an exile, without a place in which to lay his head. On the contrary, she tried to believe that his late relative might have procured him friends, that as an excellent linguist he might support himself by teaching, or gain employment in the counting-house of a merchant. She believed that even Sir Arthur, whom she had esteemed a cruel enemy, would not publish a slanderous tale against her, though he judged it



expedient to work by such a medium on the mind of his son ; and she rejoiced to observe that her long-harassed mother had obtained a better state of health and more mental serenity, since their retirement, than she had once dared to expect for her : if she could continue to procure employment, and attain the health necessary to its pursuit, she could now be content, and even thankful.

In Wortley Hall, from which they were about half-a-mile distant, the Honourable Mr. Wortley Montague resided some months in the year : but as his celebrated lady had at this time taken up her abode in Italy, and he was a man much devoted to study, he kept but little company, and in no way disturbed such of his humble neighbours as were unconnected with his establishment ; and beyond a few anecdotes connected with the eccentricities of a son who had been a source of sorrow to him, and the absence of a wife who had ceased to be a comfort to him, they were wholly unacquainted with him or his visitors. Autumn, however, brought many of these for the diversion of shooting, as there are extensive moors near Wortley, and our retired family found themselves all at once subjected to



more observation than they would have been, in the busiest parts of London.

On the second Sunday after the arrival of this influx of visitors, the girls abstained from going to church; but as they had been seen there, and their abode discovered, it was perhaps not surprising that the fields around their cottage should promise more game than the moors, or that it should be found a convenient place to ask for a draught of water—a stitch in a shot-bag—help for a lame dog—or relief from any evils to which sportsmen are subject. Never had poor Mr. Hill been so busy, when his master's house at the same period was the scene of diffusive hospitality; and never had his diligence then equalled his vigilance now. Ready at every call, his cold civility and prompt attention at once repelled intrusion, and forbade a pretension of offence; it was alike impossible to become familiar with him and to resent his behaviour; and every one, in the hour of conviviality, had some new *ruse* to tell of him they termed the “old impracticable.”

A newly-arrived guest listened to these observations with great interest, for he was the bearer of a letter from Doctor Mead to the lady addressed as Mrs. Redliff, and he became anx-



ious to conceal the chance he possessed of beholding the paragons of cottage beauty, of whom so much was said. He was sufficiently informed on the subject of their situation, to be aware of the inconvenience and apprehension to which high-minded and sensitive females must be liable, under such circumstances; and he felt for them the interest of a brother, even before he beheld them.

A day of summer rain, so violent as to tie the whole party to the billiard-table, enabled him to effect his purpose, so far as to gain access to Mrs. Ratcliffe, who received her friend's letter with the most lively pleasure she had long evinced: and finding the bearer to be a young man for whom he had a great regard, at that time pursuing his studies at Oxford, with an intention of entering his own profession, she was led to speak of her health and that of Sophia, during the previous spring. Whilst thus engaged, Blanche, not aware of the stranger, (for of late they had lived up stairs), entered for some silk required by her sister.

She was very lovely at all times, but her colour, heightened by surprise, at seeing as a guest, one of their supposed intruders from the Hall, rendered her, in the eyes of the young



man, even dazingly beautiful; and he was gone whole ages in love, before Sophia made her appearance, and received also a note from the good doctor, addressed to herself, as being an especial favourite.

Mr. Herbert did not visit the cottage again, until the late gay bevy of idle men of fashion had left the country, and then he found almost daily reasons for looking in. Either he had heard from Doctor Mead, or he was about to write to him; he had been fortunate in shooting partridges, or his friend's gardener had been so in rearing choice plants; the vacation was nearly over, and since it would be long, *very long*, before he could see them again, he had ventured once more, &c.

It was, in short, the moth playing about the candle, till destruction ensues; for poor Herbert knew, that although his father was a man of family, he with difficulty supplied his college expences, and would never forgive the folly of taking an unportioned wife—that years must pass, the young, best years of life, before he could hope to establish himself in a profession demanding time and experience to obtain confidence. But what is knowledge of this kind, when opposed to that ardent passion, which,



though suddenly awakened by personal attraction, is afterwards increased by esteem, and aided by the sorrowful but romantic interest, which was inevitably attached to a young creature, so strikingly displaced by misfortunes from the situation she was born to fill.

Nor can we be surprised that Blanche gave her innocent heart frankly into the keeping of one whom her mother approved, and Sophia owned she respected, even whilst she sighed at what she justly deemed a most melancholy prospect. True, she had not herself pined under that "hope deferred which maketh the soul sick," for her hopes had been crushed as by a millstone; but she could well conceive how many heart-aches must be endured, in fears for the future, before that future could offer the respectable home, the protecting husband, which she indeed earnestly wished for one so virtuous and amiable as her own sweet sister.

For herself, the poor girl had no fears; what was poverty? surely nothing to her, for she had faced it, and knew the worst. It was enough she loved, and was herself beloved; and, like others, she was in the first stage of a new and delightful existence, until the hour of parting came, when she was utterly overwhelmed with



affliction, and proved too surely, how much of sorrow is mingled with our very joy.

But long delayed as might be the hopes, and precarious as were the expectations of poor Blanche, it is certain her new engagement somewhat raised the spirits of the depressed family, by re-uniting them in a slight degree with the world, from which they were cast out, without thereby compelling them to that intercourse from which they still naturally shrank. Hitherto all they could gather of public affairs, could be collected only by Mr. Hill, who never sought for information, lest he should excite suspicion, but yet eagerly listened to what was passing between others, at those times when he entered the village to purchase necessaries, or took the produce of the young ladies' hands to the nearest market-town, in order to forward it to London. Now they heard all that could interest them of public affairs, together with that, which to them was a subject of importance, the progress of one united to them in heart and mind, and whose warmest wishes sought only a more sacred bond.

As "increase of appetite grows with that it feeds on," no wonder that in the following spring, poor Hill became anxious to visit White



Cliffe, and hear the news of that dear neighbourhood, or that those he always most respectfully termed "his ladies" were equally anxious, although they alike agreed, that he should go by a circuitous path, and both enter Derby and return, as if he were from London.

It will be readily conceived, that poor Hill's political bias was precisely that which he had received in early life from his master, and that which, according to his ideas, was part and parcel of the Ratcliffes, both in their blood and that of their dependants. He had nevertheless heard sufficient on the other side, to abate his predilections, and being brought up, as well as his master, in the Protestant religion, which became the more valuable in his eyes, after accompanying him through the grand tour, as he afterwards entertained much fear of papistical ascendancy. Under feelings therefore so controlled, notwithstanding his ardent attachment to his master, he had preserved what was called "a good name," among those who had formerly been most enraged against the rebels, and who at one time considered him a kind of foreigner and interloper amongst them; therefore he prepared to revisit the old place, with the hope of escaping insult, though not pain.



In this respect he was not disappointed—in every farmhouse he found a warm welcome, in every cottage eyes that shone with joy, quickly followed by tears; for how many fond inquiries suggested recollections of the most moving nature, to grateful and affectionate rustics, whose narrow circle of ideas, and bounded comforts, had once moved round White Cliffe, as the centre of all that was great, or good, or dear! Sorrow for their own loss, indignation for the injury committed on the lady of the manor and the rightful heiresses, were the sole subjects of conversation; and so little notion had they of the pain they gave to one whose feelings were better controlled, that poor Robert soon found himself utterly unequal to sustaining the trial he had imposed upon himself, and hastened to return.

One circumstance, however, he ascertained, of great but painful moment; Captain Vernon had never returned to his home, nor, so far as he could learn, to the country; and Sir Arthur with his lady were then on a voyage to Madeira, with their two youngest children, both of whom were dying of the same complaint which took their eldest brother.

An old servant of the family, who gave this



account, said her master was like a stricken man—he went about the house quite moping and bewildered; talked of his son being a wanderer among heathen lands, and that he should go childless to his grave; that her lady always spoke of Henry as lost for ever to them, and never failed to weep bitterly, if any one spoke of his marrying and settling in the country; and she added, looking earnestly into Robert's face, "if you could tell me any news of any part of Mr. Ratcliffe's family, that went to saying things were well with them, it would, I do really think, do both my lady and Sir Arthur more good than any thing in this wide world."

"I dare say they wish them well, but, since they are gone abroad, if I even could tell any thing, it would be of no use."

Fearful of interrogatory trial, he then hastened away, and was happy when he was fairly out of the country, and approached that humble roof which sheltered those he honoured so entirely, from such melancholy comparisons, and agonizing recollections, as those awakened in his own bosom. He knew, it is true, that memory must often harrow up their hearts, by recalling scenes and sorrows; but still he trusted, and truly, that they escaped much, in not seeing



old faces, hearing pathetic lamentations, and beholding the devastations which had already taken place in their house and gardens.

“ A wanderer on the face of the earth—for my sake a wanderer, and bearing in his lacerated heart that barbed dart, which no novelty can amuse, no power of time, or distance, extract. Oh! Henry, my own dear injured Henry, you may despise, but you cannot cease to remember me—to pity me; all that is too plain—we are alike punished to no end.—Yet I know not that—Sir Arthur is a suffering man, but he is yet a free one; he is in affliction, the hand of God has smitten him; but it is better to fall into his hands, than into the hands of man; and who can say, but by sacrificing me, he has cleared himself from the suspicion which alarmed him so much. Can I regret this? Can I forbear to extend full forgiveness to one so harassed? let me at least say, ‘ Lord, I forgive; help thou the unforgivingness of my erring nature.’ ”

Such thoughts as these would often arise in poor Sophia’s mind, after hearing the account of a family, in whom, for good or evil, she must ever remain so deeply interested; and often would she now steal out alone, into a



meadow near them, that she might think more freely on the subject of her only and most oppressive secret. Alas! such meditations were an inevitable renewal of sorrows, and it was happy for her, that her thoughts were one day broken in upon by an extraordinary incident.

She had twice, since Mr. Hill's return, seen an old man, who had not the general appearance of the peasantry about him, near the house; but her own heart was at that time too full of sad thoughts, to exercise either curiosity, or that compassion which was more congenial to her nature, and which, although he had not the appearance of a beggar, it was possible he might claim; for many of their poor neighbours had been benefited by the skill of her mother in cases of disease. When, however, she saw the same person, in the same direction, looking earnestly upon her, she stopped, and inquired, in her usual gentle voice, "If he wished to speak with her, or any of the family?"

"Etez vous So-py Raidlafe?" looking cautiously around.

"I am Sophia Redliff," she answered, in a low distinct voice.

Fixing upon her a pair of dark, deep-set eyes, he uttered slowly, words which arrested



the very pulses of life. "*An old man grey with grief hath need of money.*"

"Where is he? tell me, kind stranger, where he is? how he has been this long time? But come into the cottage this moment."

The stranger replied in a French patois, in which she could only make out a positive denial to enter the house in which she lived, or speak to any person but herself; and she remembered the injunction she had received, and instantly ran back to the house for the long-cherished packet. On delivering it, she addressed the stranger in French, telling him to say "her mother was well;" on which he poured forth a long and, apparently, fervent and grateful eulogy on her father, for having saved himself and wife by his kindness, during a fever; and she understood he had been at White Cliffe seeking them, and was about going away in despair, when the appearance of Mr. Hill there revived his hopes, and he had succeeded at length in tracing his steps: he then entreated her to give him food, and a trifle of money, as he was in want; but still refused to venture near the dwelling.

Of course Sophia rapidly collected all she could, but her secrecy equalled her celerity; and



until she had supplied, to her utmost, the wants of the stranger, and saw him at some distance, she did not return to the house, where her mother remained in the utmost astonishment at her manner and movements, and could scarcely comprehend the change which had taken place in her countenance, when running in, she threw her arms round her neck, crying—"He lives—he lives, and is well! we may perhaps all meet again."

"What can you mean, my dear girl?"

"She means, dear madam, my master is found; nothing else in this world could have moved her so much," said Robert.

But who can describe the varied emotions, the thankfulness to Heaven, the recollected sorrow, the multitudinous inquiries, and the perpetual injunctions to secrecy, which passed from lip to lip, all wanting to hear something it had been impossible to learn; and Mrs. Ratcliffe almost insisting the stranger himself was her husband, and poor Sophia deceived by some artful disguise. "Had *I* seen him," she cried, "I must have known him, despite of all the pains he has undoubtedly taken: oh that I could obtain but one single word, on which to dwell for the remainder of my pilgrimage!"



“ Dear mother, my poor father is a very insufficient disguiser, as my own sad exhibition in that way gave proof; and, depend upon it, he could not diminish himself from above six feet into a man shorter than the milkman; and though you will say sorrow and poverty may have altered him grievously, they cannot have puckered up his singularly fine features into those of a withered old Belgian, with nothing passable about him save two jet-black eyes.”

“ Your father’s were hazel,” said the fond wife, still doubtfully.

“ Ay, madam; but no one can mistake a Ratcliffe. Where could be found such a fine young man as Lord Derwentwater, when he was brought to the block in my young days? and my master was then as like him as a brother could be; and the last was a noble-looking man, I’ll be bound, and one who could not be mistaken. Thank God, his honour loves his family too well, to attempt a thing it would be impossible to accomplish, and would be the ruin of us all, for surely we live upon hope.”

These assertions were too true not to be fully acceded to, though each individual envied Sophia the happiness of having seen a man who had seen one so dear; and though she in fact



gained no information, save that her father existed, and most probably in the Low Countries, every word she could recollect, and every look the man might be supposed to give, was canvassed and commented upon; and for many days it might be truly said, even Blanche forgot her lover in her father.

But, alas! other and more vulgar cares compelled themselves to be heard. During the absence of Robert, the sisters having completed the embroidery of a court-dress, for which they were to receive the sum of twenty-five guineas (now become to the little establishment one of great importance), they had sent it, carefully packed, by a person who promised to deliver it to the carrier, regularly entrusted on such occasions. It unfortunately happened that their neighbour trusted another neighbour, less regular than himself, who suffered it to fall in a dirty place, by which means the direction was completely effaced, with the exception of the words "with great care;" in consequence of which the really prudent carrier refused to take it.

The light box therefore lay unnoticed in the office of the only coach which in that day dragged its "slow length along" from Leeds to the metropolis, through Barnsley, to which place



it was taken; and the first notice poor Sophia received of the misfortune, came from the tradesman who expected it, and was angry and distressed by the delay, which he yet confessed he could not attribute to *her*, since he had found her punctual heretofore. Whether it was her fault, or her misfortune, he declared that nothing should again tempt him to confide materials so valuable, and an order so important, in the hands of a person who resided at such a distance; and, as if to render the misfortune still more appalling, he added a bill of the velvet, which was absolutely terrifying to persons at once so honourable and so poor.

Out of evil, good will sometimes arise! Such was the distress of the ladies, that Robert laid all his means of relief before them, declaring that although he would in the first place raise heaven and earth to find the package so lost, he would, in case of the worst, give the savings of his life to the payment of a debt so overwhelming, since they appeared to consider it a just one. His property they now found consisted of monies, which produced him thirty-three pounds a-year, and was so placed that any part might be drawn out at pleasure. They were aware that the principal had been diminished since



their residence at Wortley; and the only resolution arising from his information was, that no circumstance whatever should induce them to decrease it further—any alternative was better than that of robbing his old age of that subsistence, the want of which must increase with every succeeding year.

The day after the letter arrived (which was not until it had been a week in the Barnsley office), Robert set out for that place, and learnt that the box in question had been sent to Sheffield. This town was fourteen long miles distant, nevertheless he lost not a moment in following it, and though worn down with fatigue, had at least the satisfaction of finding that it was in safe hands. The persons of this office having no other medium of ascertaining the direction or the owner, had opened it, and finding in the first place a magnificent court-dress, concluded it must belong to the only person within ten miles entitled to wear it, and had accordingly sent it to the Marchioness of R—, and it was then gone to W—h House, within four miles of the village from whence it had been sent.

To follow it thither was of course the anxious searcher's intention, but whilst he remained rest-



ing in the George Inn, the package was returned, in order that it might be forwarded without delay to the proper parties, there being yet time to effect that purpose. So glad was the old man to see all was safe, that the Leeds coach coming in, whilst, with the landlady's assistance, he was once more arranging the unlucky package, he determined to deposit it himself in the hands of that person whose good-will was so important; and having only the money required for an outside place, he departed, by no means properly equipped for such a journey, and already overdone with fatigue.

The people at the inn undertook to forward a messenger to Wortley, so that the family were soon made easy on the subject of poor Hill's journey, and the safety of the precious package. But, alas! their next information was from their unfailing friend, the great physician of the day, to whom he had been under the necessity of applying, in consequence of being seized with a rheumatic fever, from which he believed it impossible that he should recover, and he earnestly desired to see the only friend to whom he could speak of his revered master and the ladies.

The happy result to Robert, was relief from all his dangerous symptoms, removal into better



lodgings (for the generous servant had denied *himself* even common comforts); but notwithstanding all that skill and kindness effected, his limbs were grievously crippled, and, as he said, in most desponding tone, "all his gardening at an end."

"Then take this to buy cabbages," said Doctor Mead, laying something beyond the reach of the patient, as if to form a comment on the exhortation he had been giving him, to exert himself despite of pain. He then, with a more serious air, sent his good wishes to Mrs. Ratcliffe, and an assurance that if she prevented Blanche from ruining herself and his young friend by marrying too soon, in his opinion they would eventually be prosperous and happy.

From this message Robert justly augured that he should not see his considerate and noble-minded benefactor again; and before his carriage had rolled from the door, he had scrambled to the spot and seized on the precious deposit, which, with eyes streaming with gratitude, he found to be a bank bill for a hundred pounds. The joy he experienced seemed to banish the remaining disease which had so lately afflicted him, for not only would it make all strait in the circumstances of the cottage, but enable them to



lay by that necessary store for the wants of his master, for which he knew they were at that very time anxious to minister ; and would be still more so, when they should witness the condition to which he was now reduced, since it would lead them to entertain fears for one not much younger, and far more subjected to the evils under which he had suffered.

With sincere sympathy, and compassion of the most painful nature, was he indeed received, and truly thankful were they all for the supply of money he brought, which was now wanted extremely ; but the good doctor's boon they thought it hardly right to employ, at a time when he to whom it was given had so much need of additional comforts.

Truly has Sterne said, " there are times when contention may be rendered sweet," and this was one of them ; but so rarely in that quiet and grief-subdued family was more than one voice heard at a time, that at the moment when the invalid was exerting himself to declare the boon was theirs, not *his*, and both girls eagerly replying, whilst their mother joined Robert in the idea of providing for another Belgian visiter, that a smart knock at the door not only silenced



but alarmed them, and impressed the idea of their having acted with impropriety.

Their visiter was a most respectable-looking female, about fifty, plainly, but yet *well* dressed, in the mode of years long gone by. Her eye glanced round the little humble parlour, with a look so penetrating, as to remind them sensibly of the terrors of their past days; but yet there was a quiet propriety in her manners, and an air of pity towards the invalid (who used two chairs as a couch), which won upon them all.

Addressing Mrs. Ratcliffe, as she seated herself near her, the stranger thus entered upon her mission—"I am, ma'am, the housekeeper at W——th House, and I am sent by my lady, the Marchioness, to speak to you respecting your daughters, for after many inquiries, we have found that they were the persons who executed a very beautiful dress, which by mistake was forwarded to my lady."

Mrs. Ratcliffe replied by expressing her warm acknowledgments of thankfulness for the promptness with which the Marchioness had returned the dress, and thereby enabling the real owner to obtain it in time; adding, however, that in consequence of taking it to town himself, in order to obviate all disappointment, her friend,



Mr. Hill, had contracted an illness, under which he still laboured.

“The lady who owns that beautiful dress ought to know his misfortune, and, so far as she is able, soften its effects. But there are few great people like *my* lady, that I may say safely; she thinks for every body, ma’am, and though there are people who consider her too religious, and too pertickler, and all that, yet I should be glad to know where they will find any body, high or low, that does half so much good in the world.”

Mrs. Ratcliffe said that herself and daughters lived in the most absolute retirement, yet they knew that the marchioness of R——m must be good, since her absence was a source of sorrow in the neighbourhood, and her return the signal for rejoicing.

“Very true, ma’am, so it is, and so I hope it will be for many a year to come; nevertheless, a more delicate creature as to health never lived; and if it were not that my lord watches her as if she were the apple of his eye, it is certain neither Mrs. Wiggins, nor myself, could preserve her precious life, for as to doctors, I count them as nothing; in her case, watching and nursing does all. Ay, madam, she is a very



different kind of person to that 'woman of genius,' as people call her, who is at the head of this village, Lady Mary Wortley Montague; nobody will catch her running away from her duties, and frisking about in foreign parts, spending money that belongs to her own *poor*, as one may say, and giving her wit and her eloquence, and all that, to any body but her own sad, lonely soul of a husband."

"She is coming home very soon," said Sophia, merely from the wish (in her ever inherent) of defending the accused.

"I am glad to hear it, Miss; it is never too late to mend. I remember her a sweet pretty woman, when she first married to Wharncliffe Lodge, and very taking in her manners to every body\*. She was not a fine woman, as my

\* Something more than thirty years since, the writer visited Wharncliffe, which is a most romantic place, worthy to give the title lately bestowed on its excellent owner, who, together with his lady, are a blessing to the most beautiful neighbourhood in Yorkshire. She saw there a Mrs. Dixon, a very aged, but highly intelligent woman, who had been nurse-maid to the Countess of Bute, and of course in the service of her mother, Lady Mary Wortley. She spoke of her most affectionately, and in the words, so far as I remember, here adopted. Of the two pictures of Lady Mary at Wortley, by Kneller and Jarvis, she preferred the portrait in an English dress, to the whole-length in the Turkish costume.



lady is, but somehow lovely, and quite wonderful as to her learning; so that when she went abroad she astonished people in foreign parts. Every body admired her, yet almost every body was willing to find something wrong about her: the truth is, she was just the very kind of person to be spoken of much worse than she deserved, for in her *cleverness* she thought she could do any thing; and, dear heart, be women ever so beautiful (the speaker looked at Sophia and Blanche), or ever so ingenious, and all that, still they must be modest, and quiet, and tractable, or the world will condemn them, and swell mole-hill errors into mountain faults."

To this the two elder auditors assented fully, but it was rather signified by gesture than words, on which the good woman (for such she truly was) observed, it did not become her to speak so much on subjects which she had nothing to do with. Her lady had sent her to say she wished to see one or other of the two persons who had executed the embroidery, which had by chance been submitted to her examination; of course she would prefer speaking with the elder sister, concluding she had done the more difficult parts; her intention was to inquire if she were willing to form a part of her household?



“ My daughter will, I dare say, wait upon the Marchioness,” replied Mrs. Ratcliffe; “ and should she be pleased to employ her, thankfully undertake her commissions; but I apprehend Sophia could not be induced to leave me.”

“ You are happy in having *two* daughters. Where my lady takes, I may say, she is no common friend; and as to my lord’s power, why bless you, ma’am, it’s quite wonderful—a friend is a friend.”

“ I will attend to her ladyship’s wishes; I will hear what she says; I—I will do my best,” cried Sophia, in much agitation.

“ Then, Miss, to-morrow the same man who brought me shall come for you; a more carefuller person never rode before a woman. He might a gone before Queen Elizabeth herself; but he has been used to it; my lady always chooses James to take her out for airings on horseback.”

Although the visiter rose to depart, as Blanche at this moment brought the tea-things, she stayed to partake this refreshment; after which both our young friends saw her back to the place where a neat groom and well-pillioned horse awaited her. There was about her an air of really motherly kindness, which awakened confidence and affec-



tion; and in the very circumstance of any human being visiting them with good intention, there was the attraction of novelty as well as approval.

All night long did poor Sophia think over the probable effects of her interview with the Marchioness. She had heard that she was a sickly, and in her principles a stern woman, but that she was generous as well as charitable, and her conduct regulated by a deep sense of religion, and a most scrupulous observance of rigid justice. Should she indeed offer to take her into her service, was it not her own imperative duty to accept the help to herself and family, thus providentially accorded? It was too evident that Robert would never again be the man he had been. Blanche, as a young woman, engaged to a gentleman by birth and profession, must not, could not, consistently enter upon any dependant situation; but for herself, discarded, dishonoured, surely if she could by industry supply her own wants, and lighten those around her, she ought gladly to submit to any situation, however humble or laborious, provided it were respectable.

As Sophia's wardrobe was now a scanty one, she endeavoured to supply its deficiencies by



even more than her usual neatness ; and for the first time dressed her hair in the mode now generally adopted, which was the very hideous one of combing it over a high cushion in front, and forming large flat curls on the sides. When we use the term hideous, our readers must not therefore suppose that she was consequently disfigured, for in truth her mother and sister thought she had never looked so well ; and it is certain that all persons look better in the *general* mode of dress, than they can do in any other, for the eye requires that to which it is accustomed. At the time we speak of, there was a distinction in the dress of ladies and servants, of which at present we see no examples ; the latter wore neither hoops nor hair powder, and might therefore be said to have great personal advantages accorded them, by the deprivation of such disfiguring adjuncts ; but it is yet certain that no gentleman would have approved the dress of his wife or sister without them.

Sophia had now lived nearly three years in poverty and seclusion, and she so subdued the natural aspirings of her heart by lessons of Christian humility, so strengthened her reliance on Divine mercy for support in the hour of need, that she felt a power of enduring trials



consequent on her situation, with patience, firmness, and even magnanimity. Nevertheless, her modest sensibility to the injuries pride and misconception might inflict, was necessarily acute; and there were moments when she almost repented her undertaking, and others when she determined to renounce all idea of residence, if she could do so without offence, and be enabled to secure work from the Marchioness and her friends. This was the more necessary, as her late employer had declined sending any more work to such a distance in the country, notwithstanding the punctuality with which it had been eventually delivered.

Mrs. Beatson, the housekeeper, received Sophia with kindness and courtesy, thereby sparing her from those exacerbations of spirit, even the best-regulated minds are subject to, when condemned to receive patronage from those who originally were far below themselves. After keeping her down stairs a sufficient time for the purpose of tranquillizing her mind, she proceeded with her to the dressing-room of the Marchioness, who was expecting her arrival.

That lady had been led to expect a gentlewoman, both from her housekeeper's account, and the note which accompanied the embroidered



dress, and indeed she wished for such an one ; but she did not therefore expect to see a beautiful and elegant young woman, who, although affected by the novelty of her situation, had no other embarrassment, but was evidently capable of retaining self-possession and exercising superior mental power in the presence of royalty. This power in those young people with whom she conversed, even amongst the highest born in the land, the Marchioness seldom found, for they were generally afraid of her. Her notions of duty were strict, and her exactions of respect severe ; she had never been herself a mother, therefore never known those thousand relaxing moments towards endearing infancy, which even the coldest and the sternest mothers experience ; and as she had been brought up in an orphan state, by rigidly-exacting guardians, who were yet efficiently good and kind, she had naturally adopted their manners towards others, together with the esteem she felt due to themselves.

Pale, tall, and stately, with finely-chiselled features, sharpened by disease, not time, and dressed in a precisely neat, yet not a fashionable style, without being much behind it, she struck Sophia as resembling in every respect the portraits of the Elizabethan day ; and she almost



started, when, with a weak yet sonorous voice, she thus addressed her—"Sophia Reliff, or Redliff, I have heard that you are a good daughter to an amiable invalid mother, indeed, that you work for her support; and of your capability of employing your needle well, I have had proof. Since your sister can supply your place at home, perhaps you would have no objection to exercise your abilities in my service. I am fond of embroidery, and have undertaken various things I am unable to finish."

As it was evident to Sophia the service would not be for any long period, she unhesitatingly answered, "that she would be happy to enter on such duties immediately\*."

"We shall see," said the lady, with an air so cold and repelling, that the poor girl felt afraid her often-tried fortitude would give way before that evil, which, although neither to be described nor complained of, yet seemed to fall like an ice-bolt on her heart, freezing at once her affections and her faculties.

After a pause, every moment of which in-

\* The interview here given between the last Marchioness of Rockingham and a beautiful young woman, previous to entering her service, was related by her to my mother, (of course many years afterwards,) many years ago.—B.H.



creased Sophia's dismay, Lady R——m again began to speak.—“ If you enter my service, it can be only as a *servant*, for although I may find in you a companion, I do not undertake to adopt you as one. In my notions of dress I am strict—in my requisitions decided; no person under my roof is allowed to wear curls, save Beatson, not even my own woman; it is true she is an elderly woman, and does not feel the hardship. What is to be done with your fine head of hair?”

“ I can cut it off, madam.”

“ I think not—I think not,” said Lady R—— shaking her head, but at the time smiling, and Sophia thought she had never seen any one smile so sweetly, therefore she was encouraged to say—“ I never have dressed my hair thus till to-day, and pardon me, if I erred in adopting this method, for it was done under the idea of being more womanly, and consistent with the station I was ambitious of obtaining, than when it hung about my face in ringlets.”

“ You were right; but I have no ringletted Misses in my service.”

“ Of course, madam; but I also thought it would set off my faded gown, and make me look



better in the eyes of those who might think me unmeet for their ladies' service."

"I see it all—your necessities, not your vanity, misled you. This is not the first time you have been in a nobleman's house, I am certain, you judge so justly of the people generally found there."

The "pure and eloquent blood" of that noble race, so lately rendered corrupt and attainted, mantled in the veins of Sophia, but she felt called upon for no reply beyond a curtsey.

"Well, go home, think of the matter, and talk it over with your mother. I shall give you thirty pounds a-year; and if you attend to me in my hours of languor (and I fear of fretfulness), I am sure the Marquess will reward you. If you see cause for declining my offer, write to Beatson, who will arrange also for your return now, after you have seen the place."

Thus dismissed, Sophia would have been glad to have returned instantly, for her mind was oppressed with the variety of its own sensations. This was however impossible; she found the good-natured Beatson in the anti-room, waiting for the purpose of shewing all the glories and beauties of that splendid mansion, where she



might be said to reign vice-queen, with more of pomp and circumstance than the real one.

At length Sophia, at her own request, set out homewards on foot, for she wished calmly to review her own capabilities and her own duties. Far, *far* rather would she remain with her idolized mother, even to share a crust of bread beneath a still humbler roof; but so far as she could see, even that could not be obtained. Every mode of gaining it passed for the thousandth time before her eyes, but only to rise and fade again; whereas, her own wages and Robert's income secured all that was required for the inhabitants of the cottage; and it was almost certain, that by increasing the circle of Blanche's duties, her mind would be drawn from that endearing subject, which at present "engrossed it wholly;" and since she had, in her letter to her father, which had lain long in the packet, advised that he should next apply through the medium of Robert, as being less liable to suspicion, she could find no possible reason for refusing the offer of a lady, whose means of assistance, in more than pecuniary aid, might hereafter be accorded.

So clearly did Mrs. Ratcliffe see the wisdom and necessity of securing the situation, that



difficult as the task of parting with such a daughter must be, she yet thankfully acceded to the plan, and fully exhibited once more that fortitude she had strenuously and happily fostered in her daughter. Nevertheless, she earnestly besought her to weigh well the difficulties before her, previous to actually engaging with them, saying—"Otherwise the friends you seek to make may become enemies you have no power to withstand."

"In leaving you and dear Blanche, I must suffer; and in becoming a dependant, I cannot fail being sensible to some mortification; but surely that is a mere trifle, after what I have gone through."

"Alas! my child, the world has many sorrows to which you are yet a stranger, though your cup has been filled to overflowing. You have, for instance, never lived with a bad-tempered person; the rapid gust of passionate anger has never roused that which might be inflammable in your own temper to recrimination, or bade you tremble in terror under the injustice and violence of its accusations; neither have you been subjected to the peevish inuendoes, the coldly scornful insinuations and haughty sneers of still more malignant, though less obstreperous



natures. No, Sophia, we have been a family of love; and greatly do I fear, my poor child, that with no other canst thou live with even moderate comfort, or what may rather be termed *endurable* misery."

"I have certainly not shared this galling trouble, dear mother; but I have witnessed enough of it in the conduct of two of our tenants, to be aware of its harassing nature. Be assured, I hold myself as one entering upon a new and painful state of existence—I am going to secure roses by treading on thorns; but well they will repay me, if they preserve to you the humble comforts with which you are content, and enable us, by remitting help to my father, to prove that we 'have bread, and to spare.'"

Thankful as Mrs. Ratcliffe was to find her daughter in that frame of chastened expectation, most likely to contribute to her future comfort, and willing as she herself seemed to be to try if she could live without the only human being who could in any way supply the loss of her husband, yet when she saw Sophia begin to cut off those beautiful tresses, which her father had so often admired, she protested against her doing so, and insisted upon their remaining un-



shorn, adding, that it was very possible to roll them tightly up under one of the small mob-caps she herself wore, and which she would immediately give her for that purpose.

“ But what will be the use of keeping it ? ”

“ The present use is its warmth, which my little lawn cap cannot supply—a reason so decided, that the Marchioness, as an invalid herself, must allow it, should she inquire ; but as it will indeed be cut off to the eye, it is not likely she should do so, since even her dairy-maid cannot be more modestly attired than you will be.”

“ But surely, dear mother,” cried Blanche, “ of the two evils, it is better to be without hair, than to have the finest in the world, and never shew it from year end to year end. I am sure I could work my fingers to the bone, or I could live on a bit of oat-cake a week together ; but I must honestly confess, I could not make myself into an old woman at twenty-one (and Sophy is scarcely that), for any prospect or reward ; besides, what would Herbert say ? ”

“ In the four last words, dear Blanche,” said Sophia, “ you have indeed offered a reason I could not have withstood. I have no Herbert—no father ; I therefore make no sacrifice in part-



ing with my poor locks : however, we will say no more—I *have* a mother, and I will obey her wishes ; besides, health is invaluable to one who has no other fortune.”

“ Life, health, and beauty, are all God’s gifts, and may not be lightly parted with,” said Mrs. Ratcliffe ; “ and no one is guiltless, who is suicidal in his conduct, even towards the least important.”

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## CHAP. VIII.

WE pass over the parting scene, as Sophia herself did, rapidly; for she wisely doubted herself, and her transformation was so great in appearance, and to her mother and sister evidently so distressing, that although Robert declared he had never thought her half so pretty (seeing she was the very image of her grandmother), she thought the sooner she departed out of sight the better.

Far different were the feelings with which she was received; for although the Marchioness almost started with surprise, in the first instance, as if disproving the evidence of her senses, and afterwards made a penetrating survey, as if to detect some stray love-lock, some little point in which coquetry might lurk, or conscious beauty exult, Sophia came out clear from the shadow of such imputation, and of course exalted in the eyes of her truly upright judge, who, from that hour, felt for her both admira-



tion and affection, though, for the present, she simply expressed approval.

From this time, the life of one who had found existence painfully eventful, became so singularly monotonous, that, with a mind less energetic and less happily devoted to the duties and affections in which she might be said "to live, move, and have her being," it would have been wearisome, and even disgusting. Youth is not the exclusive season for happiness, but it unquestionably is for that description of it which we term enjoyment, or felicity; it is the care-repelling, the trifle-loving, the confiding, courageous, and unselfish portion of our being, therefore we cannot help desiring that it should be passed in those scenes and occupations, most likely to ensure at once the growth of its peculiar virtues, and that happy freedom from care, and buoyancy of spirit, which belong to the spring of our days, for we can be young only once.

Sophia's time was passed principally in the dressing-room of her lady, and some hours regularly devoted to embroidery; after which, to her great relief, a portion was given to reading aloud, books of history, biography, or devotion. The Marchioness seldom spoke, but when she



did, her observations were full of ability, and her tone that of kindness. There appeared about her, for the most part, a physical inability, an insufficiency of vitality, for exertion; yet when the Marquess entered, her dark full eyes never failed to brighten with pleasure, and the gaiety and vivacity he was remarkable for exhibiting in conversation, gave her evident delight, and appeared so far restorative, that after he was gone, she would refer to the subjects of his conversation, and draw out the opinions of Sophia relative to them, evidently pleased to perceive they had been attended to, by one whom she held capable of appreciating that which was excellent. The hours thus spent in tranquillity enabled the lady to sustain the fatigue of conversing in the evening, with the friends generally assembled in her splendid mansion; but they did not equally prepare poor Sophia for the long, lonely period, which followed to her, in which her heart sighed for the beloved society of her mother and sister, or looked back to those early, happy days, when her Henry's step had sounded like music to her ear.

Solitude is indeed the nurse of love, and thus Sophia found it, for the early passion which had



been so cruelly thrown back upon her heart to wither and die, which so many successive sorrows had tended to eradicate, and a life of continual anxiety on more pressing subjects, doomed almost to forgetfulness, in this season of comparative ease and seclusion, revived; and many an hour passed unconsciously, in musing on the past, whilst many a tear gave proof that the insidious flame which consumed her peace, had been "scotched, not kill'd," by either time or circumstance.

Under this renewed influence, she became necessarily curious, to the greatest degree, on the subject of young Vernon's present situation, and that of his family also; and since it was not likely that poor Robert would visit White Cliffe again, how could she become possessed of information? If, indeed, she could have brought herself to joining Mrs. Beatson's parties, where persons from London continually might be found, some news might be obtained; but as it had been her especial privilege to remain alone if she preferred it, she thankfully adopted a system, which spared her from the most galling circumstance attendant on her servitude; and whilst she avoided all familiarity with the upper servants, yet the amenity of her



manners, and the humility of her deportment, secured their good-will.

When the summer evenings became long, she was enabled, now and then, to get over to Wortley, where, it might be truly said, "her presence made a little holiday;" and where she had, at length, the satisfaction of finding the family in great spirits, in consequence of having again learned the safety of its exiled head.

It appeared, that on the previous day, as old Robert was creeping out to make their little purchases, a young woman, of somewhat peculiar appearance, had twice passed him, and on his reaching a perfectly sequestered spot, accosted him in a foreign accent, with those memorable words uttered two years previous to Sophia; beyond them, little could be collected from his messenger.

It therefore appeared that Mr. Ratcliffe was endeavouring to subsist on the least possible means, in some very cheap place, still considering himself an object of suspicion, and avoiding that notice he might attract by residing in a large town, where his countrymen occasionally visited. Happy were they all, in the idea that he would not only receive relief,



but be ignorant of the wants of those who sent it.

Sophia immediately determined to appropriate whatever she might receive from the Marquess as a present, to the purpose of providing for this most dear and sacred purpose, and again her unhappy father obtained the ascendancy in her mind; but on her return, every other subject was suspended, in that of the Marchioness announcing an intention of soon setting out for London, and taking Sophia as a part of her household.

The young mind loves variety, however it may be situated; and although Sophia almost dreaded the recurrence of her own melancholy recollections, when the metropolis should again rise before her, she yet wished for some change of scene, some power of looking, without seeming to look, on the aspect of public affairs, which were not then, as now, disseminated, day by day, through public journals, into every nook and cranny of society. It had frequently struck Sophia as strange, that lady R——, who would often treat her with more of confidence than she appeared to give any other person, and who frequently of late sent kind messages and valuable presents to her mother,



should yet never make, either directly or inferentially, any inquiry on the subject of her former life, or her education. Sometimes she thought it must be already known, and that this silence arose from a delicacy, of which her cold but noble-hearted patroness was very capable—at others, she concluded, that as the Marquess was a decided Whig, his lady did not choose to become acquainted with circumstances, which might induce him to blame her, for taking under her protection a mysterious and unknown person, probably allied to the proscribed faction.

As these thoughts passed her mind, the dreadful idea would sometimes arise with overwhelming force, “that it was not only possible that she might be one day suddenly remembered and announced as the daughter of an exiled outlaw, but as stained with scandalous reports, far more likely to awaken the resentment and horror of the lady who now fostered her so confidingly.” So terrible was the bare idea of an infliction of this nature, that she was utterly unable to sustain it; and she found herself compelled to fly to books, or work, or the good housekeeper’s detail of innumerable troubles, in order to conceal the confusion



of countenance, the dismay, and sense of unutterable disgrace, which imagination alone would awaken when this too probable evil arose to her contemplation.

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## CHAP. IX.

By slow stages London was at length reached, and with so much less injury to Lady R—— than she was wont to experience, that the Marquess accorded high praise to her attentive new attendant, immediately proving his sense of her merits, by a present, which brought tears of gratitude into her eyes, for it was associated with her father.

“ So then !” said Sophia, “ London is at peace—no preparations for war, no terrific and unnatural executions deform its environs, nor the voice of exulting but cruel triumph echoes through its streets ; all appears gay and happy, as it was seven years ago, when I too was happy ; since then I seem to have lived a whole life, and to have become almost an aged woman.”

Yet never had Sophia been more bloomingly beautiful than now ; but so much more striking was her appearance in London, than the country, so far as dress was concerned, that even



the Marchioness permitted her to use her own discretion in altering it. But Sophia had too little care on the subject, or too just a taste, to make any change; she wished not to ape the smartness of ladies' maids in London, and she believed that her present plain style would prevent her from being recollected by the former friends of her family. The only person she desired to see was Doctor Mead, and it was immaterial in what dress she might appear before so old and excellent a friend.

It was surprising to Sophia to find how soon a house in Grosvenor-square may, under the same controlling influence, assume the characteristics of a country seat. She soon found herself stitching at the same frame, *tête-à-tête* with the same pale, quiet, but yet sovereign lady, who ruled her destiny in W—— House. The same scanty, but yet pleasant intercourse passed—the same solitary hours succeeded; but it was certain there were more sounds of gaiety and bustle than before; every one of the household seemed more alert and important; and such of the strangers as she happened to pass, in moving about the house, whether masters or men, fixed their eyes upon her in a manner equally new and disagreeable.



To avoid these rencontres was now her especial care, and one of no little difficulty, for large as a London house may be, it is yet much smaller than a nobleman's mansion in the country, and the principal passages must be occasionally traversed by all. In passing the dining-room one day, just at the moment when the servant was quitting it, and the door open, a voice struck on the ear of Sophia, which made her involuntarily stop, as if horror-struck, although she sought to fly from it, even to the ends of the earth—it was high and harsh, and speaking in reply to some unknown observation.

“ If the old Baronet says so, he lies; I examined the young creature myself at Derby, and a prettier girl, and one more modest withal, my eyes ne'er looked upon. The very minutes of the case prove she never saw the Pretender but once, and then by compulsion, and when he was surrounded by his staff.”

The words “ true,” and “ right,” seemed to be pronounced by many voices; but the door closed, and at once relieved and disappointed, Sophia crawled back alarmed, and yet somewhat gratified, to her usual retreat, loud bursts of laughter, which might arise from her misfortunes, continuing to follow her.



She dreaded the *denouément* of the following day; but although she happened to see the Marquess several times, there was neither word nor look, which indicated his knowledge of her being connected with the dispute which had evidently occurred at his table. Often did she now sincerely desire to be known, for her actual love for the Marchioness (which had grown from small beginnings to a considerable stature), and her full reliance on her consideration and justice, led her to hope for a just judgment, and she felt as if the testimony of her rude examiner must have weight, since it was that of an enemy. Every night she nearly resolved to speak herself, and believed she had gained courage for the purpose, but before the morning her design was dismissed, because she felt that she would be throwing also the secrets of her father before the eye of a man in power, who probably might hold himself in conscience bound to reveal them. Fully was she now convinced that good men may take different views of the same question, and arrive at those conclusions which are condemnatory of each other's conduct; and forcibly did that prayer of our excellent Liturgy strike her, "From all uncharitableness, good Lord, deliver us." Alas! how few are



charitable in the best sense of the word ; how few learn to do by others, what they desire that others should do for them !

At length the morning came when Sophia was released from her easy yet wearisome duties, and permitted to proceed to Bloomsbury, for the purpose of visiting that truly great man, who might be termed the prince of physicians, having at that time no rival in Europe, save his fellow-student and friend, Boerhaave. Though now fourscore, he was still equal not only to the duties of his profession, but to the demands of that extensive hospitality, which rendered his house (once inhabited by his eccentric predecessor Radcliffe,) the great rendezvous of men of science and learning, rank and talent, not less than the refuge of suffering merit, and the nursery of rising genius, whatever department it appeared in.

Here at least there was no mark on the name of a Ratcliffe, and the old servant who admitted and partly recollected her as a child, showed her into the library, with an air which proved how welcome she would be to that aged master, whom he frequently feared to disturb.

“ You do not know me, dear sir, but yet



you will not receive Sophia Ratcliffe as a stranger?"

The old man rose, seized her hand, and kissed her cheek; then casting a glance towards the door, said—"Why do you come disguised, my love? you can personally have no enemy—and your poor father is surely too wise to have ventured here?"

"Oh! no—my father I trust is still safe; I am no way in disguise, but in my present dependent situation, adopt the dress deemed eligible by the good lady who has taken me under her protection, as suitable for my station: she is a strict observer of old forms and customs."

"I know her well—she is a good woman, but the oldest person of her age in all Europe, and would have made an admirable lady abbess in the strictest convent in Christendom; nevertheless you are safe, my child, very safe with her; and her husband *may* and *will* befriend you when the time comes."

"Alas! sir, I see no time on which to rest for hope: our poor cousin Ratcliffe suffered, after a lapse of thirty years, you know."

"Yes, yes, but our present man will not last *ten*, I question if seven years; and depend upon it, my little Sophy, when we have once



more an English prince on the throne, we shall have kindly feelings towards the subjects of that throne; besides, he will come to us in his young days, when men may be violent, but are never obdurate. Like other people, I was sorry when his father died, but I believe it is all for the best; since if he had lived, he would have arrived at that period of existence, when people are the least malleable. I could never hammer a man's prejudices out of him at forty—give me young men, or lacking them, old boys such as myself."

"Then I trust Mr. Herbert continues to enjoy your regard?"

"He does entirely, for he is clever by nature, and industrious by love; and it will not be long before I may be able to do him essential service—not in this country, for you know I have two sons-in-law, Nichols and Wilmot, who expect, naturally, all the help I can give to the profession; but since I have applications from other countries, to recommend well-qualified persons, it will not be long before our rosy-cheeked Blanche—but why do your roses blanch, my good girl?"

"Must my sister leave the country, sir?"

"To be sure she must, or be very unworthy



of *her* sister. She will be well and happily married, and must go where her duties call her, and where she will be more essentially valuable, and of course dear to her husband. If you were in the East Indies, with Henry Vernon, would you not be happy?"

"The East Indies! is it possible he should be gone thither?"

"So his father tells me; and many others have mentioned him, always in words redounding to his praise: he is assisting a worthy man, Mr. Holwell, in ameliorating the condition of the natives, and will do much good, if the climate spares him: you know, of course, that his mother and the two youngest girls are dead?"

"I know nothing *of course*, dear sir; but I am sorry to learn this, very sorry indeed—poor Sir Arthur!"

"Ay, he is indeed to be pitied; but Louisa is very attentive to him—he is now quite a desponding old man. Whatever may have been his hopes, or his ambition in days past, all is over now. I take it he has been very ill-treated, first used, and then dismissed, nay, even calumniated, by those he served, a misfortune that alike befalls those who "put their trust in princes, and those who court the people."



The doctor was told his carriage was waiting, and therefore Sophia rose to depart, but he insisted on setting her down. As they continued to converse he earnestly impressed upon her the wisdom of remaining where she was, even after Blanche might leave her mother, saying, "you can procure her a good servant, and visit her every week, and old honesty Hill hobble over to the great house with news; so that if you can sustain your present life——"

"Sustain! dear Doctor, I have nothing to *sustain*; I have much to be thankful for: surely I have not been so ungrateful as to complain of my present situation?"

"You have not; but allow me to say, there are some complaints the physician may judge of better than the patient. Your employment is sedentary, you have no society, and your solitude is melancholy, because it is banishment, without reprieve, from your fellow-creatures. With the second table gentry you *cannot* associate, and it seems with the first you *must not*—nor perhaps would you be happy if you did. Eminently calculated to enjoy the intercourse of congenial minds, and to forget, in the amusement of the hour, the painful incidents which haunt your memory, you are condemned to an



unnatural silence, or a formal acquiescence, at a time when both your age and your sex demand freedom of speech as a birthright."

"But my vivacity was quenched long before I went to W—— House, you know, sir, and of course I can bear the silence and monotony, better than many others would do; and since it relieves me from the affliction of poverty to my mother, I assure you I am contented, nay, sometimes very thankful."

"Yes! thankful to God: cherish your religion, Sophy, it is at *all* times the soul's best sustenance; to the unfortunate it is necessary food. But see, we are approaching the rock to which you are chained, not like Prometheus, to have your liver eaten, I trust, but your heart strengthened in every virtue. I will call on you before long, in the mean time take this note, and——"

"I cannot, indeed I cannot; you know not how rich I am."

"*You!* who thought of giving any thing to you, who can do, and nobly has done, all for herself? No! this little matter is for wedding clothes for our pretty Blanche, and is a proper compliment, if you please so to consider it, to your mother's daughter. Since the lady of the



dolorous countenance chooses to veil your charms, display your taste in enhancing those of your sister."

Sophia could not, dared not, refuse, and warmly did she press the withered hand which offered it; but she could not speak; the good man sought to relieve her, by insisting that she should make an immediate confession as to her escort; but he too was affected, and as he drove off, ejaculated in sorrow, " God help thee, Ratcliffe! thou art indeed a bereaved exile robbed of such a daughter."



## CHAP. X.

Two very short interviews afterwards with this admirable man, in one of which she met Mr. Herbert, who was now about to proceed (under the highest auspices of that country,) to Prussia, and was arranging all things for his marriage, concluded the London season to Sophia, who prepared herself gladly to return, being anxious to see her sister and her mother, and enable them to bear the trial, which their separation (however desirable) must certainly prove to both.

Once or twice, when employed in making purchases for Blanche, Sophia had thought she saw Sir Arthur Vernon, who looked earnestly at her, with a kind of doubtful recognition; but such was the flutter of her spirits at these times, and his person was in some respects so altered, that she concluded herself deceived. Believing, as she now could not fail to do, that he had effectually, and for ever, parted her from his son, who had probably been married



some time, or, at all events, would marry in the far distant country to which his sorrow had driven him, she could not wish to renew any degree of acquaintance with him. Yet when she thought of him as one "smitten of God and afflicted," his best hopes blighted, the staff of his age far removed, and that age expedited in its infirmities, her heart softened, her eyes were suffused with the tears of pity, and she felt a desire to pour into his ear the condolence her forgiveness might afford him.

Summer was rich in all its glowing radiance of beauty, when the wide demesnes of W—— broke upon their view, in all the variety of hill and dale, deeply foliated woods, the growth of centuries, and new plantations enriched with flowery shrubs: tall stags tossing their antlered brows, and timid fawns, were seen browsing in the shade; and as they approached the house, a long train of servants poured forth to welcome the noble owner, and that upright mistress, who, like "a mother in Israel," dealt blessings in unostentatious plenty through the land, and ruled her own household in peace and righteousness.

Always essentially kind, on learning the probability of her sister's marriage taking place



very soon, Lady R—— desired that Sophia would go home, and remain not only until it was over, but until her mother should be reconciled to the change. As this was, however, so indefinite a term, that it almost amounted to dismissal, she added—“ Provided I have no return of my complaint: no one manages my faintings well but you, or can arrange my pillows so comfortably.”

Delighted as Sophia always was to behold those so dear to her, and charmed as every creature must be with liberty, yet it must be concluded that the *residence* she now first obtained, after three years absence, made her sensible to many wants, which had been less palpable during visits which lasted but for a few hours, nor could she help shrinking from the idea of Mr. Herbert's view of their poverty: true! he had beheld it before; he had been treated candidly, and even his father fully informed on the subject: nor would his lovely bride be unfurnished with whatever could grace her person, or be required by her situation; but still she felt the loss of many things it was painful to withhold from another habituated to receive them. The inhabitants of the cottage had ceased to require, almost to recollect them;



therefore she forbore to inquire for that which could not be supplied, and sought only, by any medium of self-sacrifice, to contribute to Blanche's comfort.

But before the bridegroom arrived, stores of every kind had been sent from the great house, and Robert once more drew forth reluctant corks from bottles of racy Burgundy, for the honoured guest, whom yet he held to be the purloiner of the last gem of his master's house; and often did he dilate on the duty of treating her with especial tenderness, who had been nurtured so gently, loved so fondly; forgetful the while—

That poverty's cold winds and crushing rains,  
Beat keen and heavy on her tender youth;

and that she was on the point of being—

—————into a brighter soil  
Transplanted safe, where vernal suns and showers,  
Dispense their wisest, largest influence.

But the young, sanguine, and happy lover was not inclined to quarrel with any one for overrating Blanche, for whom he could have willingly served as long as Jacob; and seeing his expected term had been most happily cut short by the generous aid of his venerable



friend, he might be said to be astonished by the acquisition of his happiness, as well as delighted. The same emotions had place in the gentle bosom of Blanche; but there the joy was chastened by the thought of leaving that beloved mother from whom she had never been parted a single day, and that kind sister, who she loved with unbounded affection, and honoured as an example of every virtue.

As Mr. Wortley was now dead, and Lady Mary in London, Mr. Herbert's arrival was unknown at the Hall, and his marriage strictly private, Robert officiating as father, and Sophia as bridesmaid. Large tears rolled down the old man's face, for he thought of the time when another wedding was expected, where the true father was to have given away her elder sister; still, the sight of his master's daughter in her own carriage, was a great consolation, and seemed in his view an augury of returning fortune. "Who knew how soon she might find her father, when once she had reached the Continent; and how happy must Mr. Herbert be to give his old age the asylum he so much needed!" an idea which had already occurred to every one in the circle.

Blanche departed, and with her so large a



portion of her mother's life seemed fled, that Sophia dreaded returning; nevertheless there was an early summons from the Marchioness, which must be obeyed; and now indeed she was wanted most, for a long dangerous illness, the consequence of too much exertion and excitement, followed. A large party, it appeared, had arrived soon after Sophia went to the cottage; and the mistress of the mansion, with whom

“ Life itself was but one long disease,”

finding the loss of her, who was the only suitable companion for one so weak, had sought that one vainly, by mingling with the many, and the consequences became distressingly apparent.

The same patience, attention, firmness, and kindness, which had formerly rendered Sophia so valuable to her mother as a nurse, was now exerted so beneficially for her patroness, as to bring her at length to convalescence, which her medical attendants honestly attributed more to her care, than the exertion of their own skill. Of course many persons were employed to administer to the wants of one so wealthy and so dear, and both Beatson and her own woman, as persons of experience, and truly attached to their lady, were her first attendants; but they



were soon discarded by the physicians, as being unable to *insist* on any thing the patient objected to; "how could they force their lady to take so much nasty medicine?"

The young nurse did not *force*, but she reasoned—she entreated; and when delirium rendered her "pleaded reasons" ineffective, her perseverance and resolution yet carried the point. She was always listened to, always obeyed; and as the mind became restored, so did it cling to her with the helplessness of infancy, and the affection of maternal confidence; and scarcely had her own mother ever reposed on her affections with more perfect reliance and endearing gentleness, than the hitherto cold, stately, and apparently-unrelaxing Lady R——.

But unhappily, from habit, she required incessant attention, and forgetting that it had formerly been divided among several, therefore not burdensome to any one, she became so anxious to retain Sophia always near her, both night and day, that her constitution, excellent as it was, gave way, and the Marquis saw clearly that she was sinking beneath the toil, now the anxiety had ceased. So soon as he could do it, without affecting his lady too much, he pointed out the paleness of her complexion, the attenuation of



her form, and called on the medical attendant to confirm his statement, and point out the means of relief to one who had proved herself so valuable. "More air and exercise, relief by change of scene, and medicines to strengthen the system and restore the appetite," were prescribed.

"Sophia shall visit her mother," said the Marchioness; "but it must only be for an hour at a time—she shall go twice every day; will that do?"

"Admirably!" returned her lord; "I will myself take her thither: come, child, put on your bonnet, and we will go."

"Pardon me, my Lord, I am unequal to going so far as Wortley to-day."

"You are not required—your mother lives now at W——; and so short is the distance to her present cottage, that, weak as I know you are, between Beatson and myself you will manage."

Yes! there indeed the fond, anxious mother was found, in a small, but cheerful dwelling, embellished by the taste and kindness of the owner, and rendered every way comfortable and commodious, by those servants who ministered to his wishes, in rendering it a beautiful and pleasant abode; nor was there omitted that more sub-



stantial bounty, which would enable the inhabitants to find with their new dwelling the means of supporting it.

Here indeed Sophia soon regained health and spirits, for though her absences were short, they were seasons so full of pleasure, from seeing her mother's altered situation, that even when both of them remembering "some things were, that were most dear," and still in a state of exile and suffering, and even when their tears fell freely, yet gratitude to Heaven, and thankfulness to man, gave a sweet sense of hope to the heart, that as so much which they never expected had been granted, even more was possible.

When the Marchioness herself was able to visit the cottage, she lost no time in going; and being naturally pleased with the superior manners, fine understanding, and sincere piety of Mrs. Ratcliffe, these visits were frequently renewed, as she found there the society which amused and satisfied, without fatiguing her. At these times Mr. Hill was never seen until the moment of her ladyship's departure, when, lame and old as he now appeared, his attendance at the door was at once active and profoundly respectful; and when, with the sympathy of those who themselves know what suffering is, she



would inquire respecting his complaints, his answers were given in good language, and with that unhesitating, though modest manner, natural to one who had often replied to the questions of a far superior person. Yet still he was somewhat of a puzzle to the Marchioness, and she one day said to Sophia—"That Mr. Hill is a fine old man—he is your uncle, I suppose?"

"No, ma'am, he is no relative of ours, but an old friend."

"Perhaps an old servant, Sophia. But I ask no questions. I am sure he is a good man, and I am sorry to find him a suffering man. I will speak to Doctor Wright about him."

At this moment Sophia felt certain that she was known, as she had always suspected, but that her kind protectress was determined to remain ignorant of any particulars which might compel her to a change of conduct; and therefore, without wishing for concealment, or attempting disguise, both parties continued silent, on the only subject which could by possibility have made a breach between them. Time moved, although they appeared to stand still; and since, for the three following years, the Marchioness declined venturing to the metro-



polis, the following circumstances alone are worthy of record in the history of Sophia.

Every account from Blanche and her worthy and prosperous husband was good, but no endeavours on the part of either had enabled them to trace the beloved exile; therefore Robert, with the more vigilance, had, at the same season when the last messenger appeared, wandered in the old haunts about the period when two other years expired. When no one was seen, he began to fear, that as the last remittance had been but half of the former, search had been made at a shorter distance of time, and failed, in consequence of their removal; and notwithstanding his many ailments, he determined, since they could now afford it, to set out and seek his master. This was however happily frustrated, by the welcome appearance of the female stranger, who was now urged to return thither, sooner than before, but was never beheld again.

In the letter accompanying this package, Mr. Ratcliffe was told of the marriage of his youngest daughter, and her present situation, and they therefore doubted not, that if life and health were still granted, they would in due time hear of his arrival in Prussia. That his messengers, though poor, were honest, they could no longer



doubt, since on the present occasion he had ventured a few words, written in a disguised and tremulous hand, thanking them for their love, and assuring them that he still hoped for better times, and restoration to his country.

The death of the clergyman of the parish introduced Sophia to a new, but most welcome avocation, for she became the almoner of the Marchioness, and although thereby introduced to many a scene of sorrow which charity could not alleviate, and occasionally to many a character which charity could not reform, still the employment was precisely of that nature most calculated to occupy and interest her heart. Naturally inclined to exercise her affections and her judgment, called upon to endure much without complaint, and to meet much with courage and fortitude, she knew by what medium the weak might be supported in mind, not less than the poor sustained by nutriment. From early life she had been habituated to the offices of charity; and since she had never sought for "display," either on behalf of herself or her parents, to her it was immaterial from whom help came, so help was given. True, it was sweet to her ear to listen to the eulogies of the Marchioness; but for herself, her labours, her investigations, her



prescriptions, she disclaimed all praise—enough for her that the suffering were relieved, the poor assisted, the ignorant instructed.

When the time again arrived that Mr. Ratcliffe was expected to send for his usual succour, and poor Robert had looked out long in vain, Sophia (only the more anxious, because she was the better able to supply her father's wants,) could not forbear to share his rambles, or become his substitute, in which case she always went alone, believing, from the cautious conduct of those persons Mr. Ratcliffe had hitherto sent, that they would not otherways address her. One fine evening in autumn, as she was returning, wearied with her fruitless expedition, a coach passed her, in the direction to Wortley Hall, containing, as it appeared, only an invalid gentleman and his valet.

Recollecting that the late occupiers were dead, and their heirs were young, Sophia was saying to herself, "Who can this be?" when the carriage stopped, and a servant quickly ran after her, to beg she would be pleased to speak one moment with his master, who was very ill, and could not alight.

Ever alive to the claims of compassion, she instantly turned round, and found herself at the



open door of the carriage, before she had time for question, when the occupant, eagerly putting out his hand, said in a faltering voice—"Come into the carriage, I entreat you, dear Sophia. I am very ill, and cannot die in peace till I have spoken with you. It was my intention to send and request an interview."

Was it then Sir Arthur Vernon who addressed her at last in the language of friendship? and could she refuse to hear one, evidently so ill, and at one time so near to her heart? impossible!

In silence Sophia took the opposite seat in his coach, and looked at him inquiringly, but kindly.

"I have never been able to discover where you were hidden, till within a fortnight, when Doctor Mead, in pity to my anxiety, informed me; it was the last kindness he could show either of us, as he died two days afterwards."

"Died, did you say? have I lost my dear old friend, he who stood by us through all the storm!"

Sophia, as she spoke, burst into tears; it was the moment of surprise and awakened feeling, and no wonder she yielded to it.

"Yes! this very day he will be buried by the side of his beloved brother, in the Temple



Church, lamented and honoured by all. His end calls not for tears, Sophia."

"It does not, in one sense, yet I owe him the tribute of grateful and tender recollection, for he loved all whom I loved. May the blessings of the broken-hearted, the bereaved, the impoverished, rest upon his name for ever! May the praises of those to whom he restored life, and the prayers of those whom in death he comforted, follow his purified spirit to its awful audit!"

"Amen—amen!" said Sir Arthur, and a pause ensued.

"Sophy," said the Baronet, at length, "you know no more of me and mine, than I have hitherto known of you and yours, save that the public prints may have told you that I am a widower—a lonely one, for Louisa is married, and her young sisters dead. My son, my only son, he to whom my heart, in its pride and hope, looked up—he whom you once loved—whom you cannot have forgotten——"

"Forgotten!" exclaimed Sophia, in a tone which mingled many soft and many bitter feelings.

"No, you cannot forget, because you still pity him; you deem him, not less than yourself,



a victim to his father's system of alienation from his beloved, his affianced bride. You are right; the supposed discovery—no, it was not that, for to this hour he maintains your innocence—say then, his horror at finding your name was injured, so distressed, so maddened him, that he went from Madeira to the East Indies, where he negotiated an exchange into another regiment; and since then (as that country has been the seat of unceasing warfare) his honour forbids him to return, until the expiration of that term, which will send him back a wretched invalid, to mourn the loss of every relative and every hope."

"Perhaps not; if he lives, he may form new connections, acquire——"

"Never—*never!* he is by nature constant to any object of pursuit, slow in binding himself to any mode of action, or any object of affection, resembling in that respect his mother, who never recovered the loss of her first-born. I tell you this, simply as a circumstance in his character I have ascertained by observation. Heaven is my witness, it is not to deter you from forming, or ratifying another engagement."

"Sir Arthur, you must be aware that I can have no such engagement. As a Ratcliffe, I could form no tie with the servants among whom



I am numbered; with their superiors my tainted name, far more than my tainted blood, would forbid connection with the worthy and the religious; and I ask your own heart, if the expectant wife of Henry Vernon would *condescend*, even in the day of poverty, and under the sentence of disgrace (as promulgated by yourself), to any other?"

A groan, which seemed almost that of expiring life, was her only answer.

"I afflict you," said Sophia, "and I desire most sincerely not to do it. Tell me, in one word, if I can in any possible way relieve or serve you? Think of me as he may, the father of Henry Vernon must ever be important and interesting to me."

"Important! interesting! thank you, child, thank you. Here, *here* is the proof of what my conscience, my desires, my earnest wishes for Henry's happiness, have dictated."

As Sir Arthur spoke, he, with great difficulty, drew from his pocket a paper, which he offered to Sophia, saying eagerly—"Take it, child, take it—you ought to have one of them. There have been three written; one I have sent to Harry, but God only knows whether it will ever



reach him, or not reach him till it is too late ; for although I believe no man ever was more attached to woman than he has been to you, yet he was at the time so young, that I fear—I greatly fear—I have been wrong, very *wrong* ; but I did it for the best ; I sought to save us all from imminent peril.”

“ Do not agitate yourself, Sir Arthur ; you have not strength to bear it. What may this paper contain ?”

“ A full confession of the permission I extorted from you, and the means I employed, through two persons, to induce my son’s belief that you were unworthy of his love, little foreseeing, that in the excess of his misery, he should therefore fly from you to the ends of the earth.”

“ And you have signed it ?”

“ It is signed also by three witnesses, to whom I related every particular, and who agreed with me, that never woman performed an act of such pure devotedness, such exalted heroism ; many have risked life, some have given life, but none have made such a sacrifice as you. I judge of how much it has cost you, by knowing what it has cost myself—in fact, I have had no other disease, and you see that it has worn me to a



shadow. Could I have repaired my error; but, alas! until I knew life was fast waning to its close, I had not power for reparation—I could not stamp myself a *villain* and a *coward*; and now, even *now*, I pray *you*, as I have prayed others, to let the grave close over me. Yes, spare me a little longer, ere you tell the truth.”

“ I have never yet had to contend with an accuser, nor even heard the affair alluded to, save once, and then I was defended—my poverty, and the humility of my station, have saved me, I trust, from being the subject of slander.”

“ Yes, the world easily forgets that which it no longer sees; but so far as it was possible, I too protected you, by rendering my instruments of injury silent to all, except my son, so far as gratitude for favours could bind them. But I seek not to apologize—no, in repentance alone can I find hope, not in excuses.”

Sophia began to soothe the evidently-suffering and sinking man, when the servant who rode with him and was waiting, opened the door to say, “ that evening was rapidly advancing, and he ought not to be out late.”

“ True, true—my evening is indeed far ad-



vanced ; but let me not again injure you, Sophia. Go, my dear, go ; but say one word, if you can—say you forgive me.”

“ I have forgiven you a long time : I will not say I did so *soon*, although I soon became a witness of scenes that taught me to estimate the feelings which drove you to become the executioner of all my earthly hopes, the destroyer of all my earthly possessions ; for what had I left, but my good name ?”

Sophia wept, but perceiving how much her tears affected the Baronet, she proceeded to say, as well as she was able—“ But be comforted ; I have met with noble protectors, who are alike ignorant of the pitiable, or the slanderous story which attaches to my unhappy name, and will hardly resign the faithful servant of seven long years on light accusations. My secret fears, my conscious shame, my unseen blushes, the struggles between that integrity which made my promise sacred, and the desire to defend my own innocence, more especially as the cause for it (on the score of your safety) wore away, have been *severe* ; but I have not suffered like *you*—oh no, it is indeed better to be sinned against than sinning.”



The servant again interposed. Kind looks, and a warm pressure of the hand, were exchanged; Sophia found herself alone, and knew she should never more behold the man she once held as a father.

Evening was closing in, and hearing voices within a little distance, she became alarmed, and walked forward in much perturbation, yet not without occasionally smiling at her own fears, when she contrasted her present situation with that dreadful night, when she would have welcomed the lightning's bolt upon her breaking heart; but so long calm and uneventful had been her life, it was no wonder that a scene like that she had passed, disturbed and distressed her.

As she was frequently at her mother's cottage in the evenings, her absence was unremarked, and in retirement she eagerly read the testimonials so valuable, and to her so deeply affecting. Unhappily, the sorrows of memory, the apprehensions of love, the doubts and fears which belong to those who have yet some little cause for hope, rose to her mind, and the questions—“Would Henry receive the paper? would he believe it, confide in it, repent his own rash conduct in having quitted Europe so hastily?”



Would he, *could* he, feel again as he had done, the tenderness of early passion? Ah! no, the rose might retain some portion of its perfume, but the bloom was fled for ever."



## CHAP. XI.

IN autumn W—— House was always full of company, and this year they were particularly gay, in consequence of which the Marquess was seldom seen by Sophia, whose quiet occupations were pursued as usual, in the early part of the day, with his lady.

One morning, however, he entered, and abruptly addressing Sophia, said—“ Pray, young lady, tell me truly, are you noble? I mean, are you allied to, or descended from nobility?”

The question so astonished Sophia, coming, as it happened to do, at the very moment when she was engaged in the duties more particularly appertaining to a menial, as she was then dressing the Marchioness, that she felt it as a species of reproach, and she replied in embarrassment—“ Surely, my lord, nothing in my manners or conduct can have been misconstrued into the assumption of—of—of *any thing* to which I have no pretensions.”

“ Don't be frightened, my good girl, nothing



could be farther from my intentions ; I merely wanted to ascertain the fact, if it were one (and, by-the-bye, I see nothing very impossible in the case of an undoubted gentlewoman proving noble), on account of a conversation I have just been holding with my friend, Horace Walpole. He saw you last summer, it appears, when he was here, and met you again this morning. You have no need to colour, child ; many gentlemen have seen you for *moments*—you permitted no more ; the ‘ unblenched majesty,’ as Milton calls it, of your strict propriety, has been admirable ; but *revenons nous*. My friend is the best judge of pictures, and perhaps of faces, in England, and for both, as objects of study, he has the most extraordinary memory in existence : he knows the touch of a painter, or the descent of a feature, to a nicety ; and in consequence of a portrait he has lately seen, maintains that you are descended immediately, or collaterally, from Lord Fitzwalter, who was a Ratchiffe, and created in 1485 ; the poor fellow soon after forfeited life and title, but the blood was restored about 1500. How any man, in his sober senses, can talk of a family mouth, or the arch of an eyebrow, descending three centuries, I cannot



imagine; but this Horace maintains, and instances yourself."

"I really think I can trace a good deal of such likeness in many old houses. Mr. Walpole may be right," said the Marchioness.

"In one sense he is never wrong, for what he wants in argument he makes up in wit; but *this*, I maintain to be the mere fancy of a connoisseur, a lover of virtù, an antiquarian, who, with all his dabbling research, likes an excuse for looking twice at a young face, for once in an old book. He insists that there are lines in the mouth, a formation in the eyelid, and I don't know what besides, that come directly from this doughty baron, so that our Sophia must be his descendant; and he argues, not a left-handed one, since the name of Redliff, or even Reliff, as the people hereabouts call her, is a very natural corruption."

"Well, I again say, I think Mr. Walpole makes out a very probable case," said the lady, looking kindly on Sophia, as if encouraging her to speak.

"No such thing," said the Marquess, eagerly interposing; "the Fitzwalters have been dead and forgotten ever since the wars of the Roses, I'll be bound for it (though I recollect nothing



about it). Had Horace said he could trace her likeness to the handsome Lord Derwentwater (I mean no offence, Sophia), there might have been some sense in that—some likeness, probably. Heavens! what is the matter? what have I said?"

"Truth, my lord, *truth!*"

Sophia had heard the latter words of the Marquess with a countenance perfectly blanched by terror and expectation, not from any desire at this moment to disown her family, but from a fear of having forfeited esteem, by not doing it sooner, and from certain recollections connected with what she had heard in London at his lordship's table. As she spoke under this strong emotion, she dropped upon her knees before the Marchioness, and covered her face with her hands.

"Poor girl—poor girl! I see it all," said the lady; "she belongs, as I have often suspected, to some of that unhappy faction; but I had no idea she could be a Ratcliffe."

"I wish I had known it sooner," said the Marquess, with a sternness of manner entirely new to him.

Sophia instantly arose, and looked humbly but firmly towards him, who she now considered



her judge, saying—"I would you had, my lord. Heaven is my witness, that I have earnestly desired to inform you I was the daughter of the last Ratcliffe; but I knew your integrity as a man, and your loyalty to the King, and I feared giving pain to your humanity on the one hand, or constraint to your principles on the other."

"You had *additional* reasons for desiring to remain unknown. The daughter of the rebel might be forgiven; but where the fame of the *woman* was not unscathed—and there are those who whisper a——"

"Who dares so to speak of her!" cried the Marchioness, with emotion; "who, under my roof, so speaks of one that has long lived under my own eye—partaken with me the duties of life, and all the most holy offices of religion; whom alike the virtuous and profligate men, who have occasionally visited us, have declared to be uniformly modest, invariably consistent?"

The warmth and agitation of one rarely moved, affected Sophia with a gratitude so intense, that she longed to give it vent in thanks as fervent as her feelings; but checking herself, she turned to the Marquess, and said—"Unquestionably I had a right to believe myself



calumniated, for I had permitted the infliction, for reasons named in this paper. I place it in your hands, my lord, as an act not merely of self-justification, and that explanation you have a right to demand, but also in confidence, since I gave an indirect consent to the request of the writer not to divulge it until his death."

"I see it is signed by Sir Arthur Vernon, and witnessed by some of my own friends. I suppose I shall now learn, that when he was suspected by the government, it was not unfairly."

"On the contrary, my lord, he was a zealously loyal man. Unfounded suspicion drove him to the commission of, what I think, a great error, but which few men so situated would perhaps hesitate to commit. As I would be grateful to a friend, so let me be just to an enemy."

"He is at least no longer such; he died last week at Harrowgate."

Sophia gave a momentary start, and the colour forsook her face; but recovering, she said—  
"Now, my lord, I entreat, I beseech you, to read that paper, and, if need be, inquire of the witnesses. I ask this not only for my own sake, (for what am I now?) but for your lady's sake,



whose goodness ought not to have been showered on the unworthy."

"Nor has it, I am confident. Read as many papers as you please, my lord, and come to what conclusions you may, *my* mind is made up, I tell you beforehand. She may have been belied, she may even have been misled; but remember, that I sought her, she did not sue to me, and I did it in consequence of her *excellent conduct*, which conduct has been maintained through all the most trying days of youth, in adversity, and in *comparative* prosperity. She is naturally open as the day, yet, as a daughter, she could keep a secret, it appears, and——"

The Marquess left the room whilst his lady (who had never shown half the same affection for any one but himself) was yet speaking. When the door was closed, Sophia, catching her hand, and devouring it with kisses, whilst her tears poured over it, endeavoured, though inarticulately, to thank her for having believed her incapable of deception, even whilst she was denied the comfort of being ingenuous.

"I believe you, Sophia, to be blest by nature with a good disposition, and, what is far better, to be on principle a sincere Christian; and I know myself to be indebted to you, for that



which gold cannot reward, and which affection is called on to repay. Under this sense of the matter, even Thomas Wentworth (tenderly as I love and much as I honour him,) shall not shake my love nor abate my bounty, though he may as my husband alter our relative position: you may be sent hence, but not beyond my means of proving, that——”

“ Oh! no, no, dearest madam, say nothing, do nothing for me that shall for a moment obscure your happiness, your full, free, blessed confidence in each other. I am not married, I never shall be—but——”

“ I deny that assertion altogether,” cried the Marquess, gaily, as he re-entered, “ for this plain reason—that although a single woman may be a most excellent person, she is never quite as good, because never so much tried, as a married one. Give me your hand, my dear—your Sophia is a glorious girl, and I love you for defending her, though I am a little afraid of the effects of excitement; I must have no tears, my own love, lest they should bring them to the eyes of many.”

“ But, Sophia, (you little Jacobite!) where did the old sinner (I beg your pardon, for he



was in truth a man much to be pitied,) give you this very valuable document?"

"I have no longer the shadow of a disguise with your lordship. About three weeks since, I walked in the evening to Wortley, in the vain hope of seeing a person, who has at certain periods, once in two years, come from the Continent, to receive the little we were able to send my father. That little, made more by your bounty, I was doubly anxious on the subject.— Well, my lord, coming home from this excursion, Sir Arthur passed me and stopped me, and so earnestly requested me to come in to him, that——"

"You did. I know it all, and more than you do; for some of my visitors going out to recognise the abode of the partridges, saw you get out of the old invalid's carriage, and not seeing him, viewed the affair with the eye of an Othello, which I, not having the same optics, rejected altogether as false or foolish. It was this coincidence of suspicious subjects which made me so foolishly angry, and awakened Lady R—— to your vindication so effectually."

"She is sorry to tell you, you must now leave her. Sophia will get her to her couch for an hour or two; but don't look grave, I shall soon



be better, and then we will see what is to be done."

After this happy *denouement*, there were many consultations of "what was to be done;" for sincerely did the Marquess wish to obtain the pardon of Mr. Ratcliffe, and not less to procure the restoration of Mrs. Ratcliffe's property, the detention of which he considered to be utterly illegal, seeing it was her own, by every tie the law acknowledges, and her ancestors were well known as the warm partizans of the reigning sovereign's father; and it could have been only in that confusion of mind revenge produces, that the law could have been so wrested from its purpose. The Marquess was now anxious that Sophia should lay all the particulars of her sad story before that friend whom she had in fact already interested; but he was suddenly called home, in consequence of his father's troubles, and the possibility of doing good for the present rendered more than doubtful.

Another summer succeeded, and the spring of a second advanced. It was now possible that the important papers of the late Sir Arthur might be replied to by his son; would he answer them in person? but how was he situated?



had the climate spared him? had the field of battle not proved fatal to him, before the proofs of her innocence reached him? and if he had so escaped, most probably he was married: "no matter, (Sophia tried to say,) if he knew her to have been innocent."

The family were again in London, a circumstance very agreeable to Sophia, because it promised facility in learning news from India, the El Dorada to which every eye was looking, the field for which brave and sanguine spirits were panting. Alas! this year brought little news, save of a disheartening import. Calcutta had been retaken, cruelty of the most distressing kind had been practised; and the reprisals likely to be made by the British forces would inevitably involve many lives, and produce more striking results than could as yet be calculated upon.

With this painful and general information, Sophia was compelled to be content. Happily her mother had received, and could communicate that which was far more satisfactory: a letter from Blanche informed her, "that she had once more been held to the bosom of her long-lost father, who had paid them a short visit, which he had delayed until the ambassador



withdrew. She said he did not think it desirable to reside with her, as it might be injurious to her excellent husband, and had therefore returned to a village in Flanders, distant from all public roads, and every way suitable."

It will be readily conceived, that Sophia, in the very relief obtained on account of one great object of anxiety, was thrown more immediately upon the other, as a subject of perpetual and painful contemplation; and there were times when she almost wondered to find herself capable of resting with so much deep and tender interest, on the memory of one from whom she had been so long parted, and who had passed, as it were, into another state of existence. So soon as her mother perceived how much every thing connected with the East interested and occupied her mind, she became extremely anxious to wean her from a train of thought inimical to her present happiness, and too likely to end in complete disappointment; and happy would she have been if Sophia could have looked with a kindly eye on one who well merited her love, and had rendered her mother the confidant of his wishes.

This was the vicar of the parish, a young man not long since presented to his living by



the Marquess, who had long known him, and highly esteemed him; and would be so likely to second his suit warmly, that Sophia earnestly besought her mother to save her from persecution, by declining most firmly, on her behalf, Mr. Bailey's addresses. It was in vain Mrs. Ratcliffe urged the congeniality of their dispositions, the happiness of an union undivided (as her own had been) by *one* conflicting opinion; the extensive good within the power of a clergyman's wife, easy in her circumstances, unfettered by the cares of rank, and influential from her husband's ministry. Sophia acknowledged the truth of all her observations, the merit of him for whom she pleaded, and even the possibility of her yielding to her wishes a few years ago; but now she felt the thing utterly impracticable—she had brooded on one idea too lately and too tenderly, to render her capable of admitting another to displace it.

“And are you, Sophia, so listless, so enervated, that you cannot contend with yourself? Is it possible that the matured mind of a woman entering her thirtieth year, should shrink from a trial comparatively light to those she encountered under twenty?”

“No, mother—I trust I could endure as



much sorrow, encounter as much labour, face as much danger, as I ever did, if my duty demanded it ; but I cannot believe myself called upon to marry one man, when I am conscious that my mind is affected still very strongly by another. I pretend to no romantic constancy, and am well aware I have no rational expectation of ever seeing Henry Vernon again, much less of finding him a bachelor for my sake ; but I have for so many years contemplated celibacy as my lot in life, have so completely embraced it, with all its bearings of good or evil, that I am actually unwilling to resign the freedom it bestows."

" My dear Sophia, how can you, who are in fact a servant (however easy the yoke may be), pretend to possess freedom ? knowing its value, I would have you take it."

" Pardon me, mother ; love makes every yoke easy, I grant ; but matrimony without it is a heavy yoke—a fetter far stronger than any servitude : how many wives, in the course of your long life, must you not have known to be slaves !"

" That may be true, Sophia ; but yet, believe me, I have known single women who would have changed places with them, to avoid the



loneliness and weariness of uncheered and unconnected age ; and you must grant, that, at all events, servitude is no inheritance."

" Generally speaking, it is *not* ; therefore I never blame the maids, when they take the young men around us, for they marry on equal terms ; this you know I cannot do : I will not give a generous man an unportioned wife ; love and friendship have no exclusive property, for the heart is rich alike in what it bestows and receives ; but marriages entered upon as convenient contracts, ought to bring equal capital in the partnership. I am certain you think so ; for who is more independent than yourself, dear mother ?"

Sophia took her departure with a laughing countenance, and an intention so to parry any future attacks her anxious parent might make ; but at the same time, a resolution to school her own heart, and teach it the wisdom of self-control, on that encroaching subject, which had indeed occupied it of late too much. On entering the house, she observed that company had arrived, and a gentleman from town was said to be closeted with the Marquess, relating the particulars of the king's death.

" The king's death !" exclaimed Sophia, has-



tening towards the dressing-room of her lady ;  
“ oh ! if this be true, we may indeed hope.”

The Marchioness confirmed the information, but said she had heard no other particulars : she apprehended Lord R—— would set out for town immediately ; and added, “ you and I must soon follow, I fear ; no ! let me rather say, I hope ; for I trust the young king, who is a most amiable man, will listen to your petition for your poor father ; his accession appears to me the very time for it.”

“ It *is* the time, the very time,” cried Sophia in breathless agitation ; “ yes ! we have now a British king on the throne, who may be moved for the sufferings of his people ; and if the Marquess will (and dear old Doctor Mead said he would),”——

The Marquess this moment entered, and hastily inquired what she wished him to do ? adding, “ you have heard of the king’s death ; it was extremely sudden—he was gone in a moment.”

“ And I conclude,” said his lady, “ you are come to say that you are going also, in another sense.”

“ Not till to-morrow, my dear, for I must retain my present guest one night, for all our



sakes; he is one of the most remarkable men living, and, what is more to the purpose, I really believe one of the best."

"I did not hear who had arrived; I only heard the important news he brought," said Lady R——.

"You know, when we were last in London, nothing was talked of but the cruelty of the Nabob Sarajah Dowla, who threw a hundred and forty-six persons into a prison not eighteen feet square, called the Black Hole, all of whom died, save twenty-three, and several of these afterwards perished. Well! one of the survivors, one of the greatest sufferers in this little congregation of victims, is now under this roof. My friend, Lord F——, at whose house he arrived a few days since, dispatched him with the intelligence, thinking that a journey this mild weather would be pleasant, after his long confinement on board."

"Pray, my lord, is it known who were his fellow-sufferers?"

"Of course; you shall see him, Sophia—you shall inquire for yourself; for, in truth, it is for your sake that I delay setting out till to-morrow."

"Is he still affected by that horrible impri-



sonment? How does he look, poor creature?" said the Marchioness.

"Very different, I apprehend, from what some of *us* have known him; but a man not much turned of thirty may regain health and person undoubtedly. This gentleman has abilities which may fully suffice for the latter."

"Is it poor Holwell himself?"

"Oh! no, it is Colonel Sir Harry Vernon. I once meant to surprise Sophia; but it is better to prepare her for what might, in the first instance, prove the *shock* of his appearance."

Astonishment, pain, and pleasure, rapidly succeeded each other in the breast of Sophia; and so violent was the throbbing of her heart, that she was completely ashamed of it, and retired hastily to hide the confusion she could not conquer. "Had Henry arrived in England in consequence of his father's information? it proved that she was still dear and valuable in his sight; was not he already acquainted with her situation, and had used his mission as a pretext for seeing her? or, was the whole affair the result of chance, and might he not be at this moment the husband of another?"

She was not long permitted to seek that composure her sense of peculiarity in situation ren-



dered her desirous to obtain. In a very short time a summons to the library, where a stranger was said to await her, brought her once more into the presence of one so long loved and deplored, resigned with difficulty, but yet, as it had appeared for years, resigned *fully, effectively*.

It was a consolation to see Henry without witnesses; but could the pale, sallow stranger, who advanced with feeble steps towards her, be *her* Henry? could time, or climate, or suffering of any description, have indeed effected such a change? it could not be.

If painful surprise thus seized upon Sophia, as she gazed wistfully on her prematurely aged lover, surprise of a different nature, yet not pleasurable, affected that lover. He was astonished at beholding her in the most perfect bloom of womanhood, whom his imagination had depicted, forlorn, faded, dispirited, the wreck of her former self—whom he eagerly sought to comfort and restore, so far as he was able. In the present confusion of his thoughts, she too appeared the same, yet not the same; for although a far finer woman than his own slight girl, and perhaps more beautiful than the cherished miniature still hanging on his neck,



the total loss of her flowing tresses, and the general style, though not the material, of her dress, gave him a painful impression. Was his affianced wife a servant *only*, and could she bear her degradation so well?

Henry spoke, and all doubt vanished; his every feature, however changed, seemed restored by his voice, and redeemed from all its imperfections, by his bitter lamentation for their long parting, and the delicacy with which he adverted to that still dear, and now forgiven parent, whose very error had originated in love. As Sophia replied, and, at his request, retraced the history of past years, he clearly saw that she had emerged by slow degrees from past sorrows, and had only regained her beauty and equanimity, in consequence of the pious fortitude she had acquired in former years, and her sense of joy and gratitude, in receiving justice from his father's confession in the later ones. Those personal afflictions which had reduced him to the shadow of his former self, and, too probably, rendered him an invalid for life, had fallen precisely at the time when she was emerging from the cloud which had overwhelmed her so long.

Thought followed thought, most rapidly—



changed as he must be in her eyes—necessary as it might be that “ he should live his wooing days again,” might not this admirable creature be *once more* “ wooed and won ?” If, as a mere girl, she had, in the fulness of her love, and the generosity of her noble nature, consented to make, for his dear sake, the most awful sacrifice a creature so pure and faultless could offer—if, in the bloom of youth and beauty, she had retained, even to her thirtieth year, the power of resisting all solicitations to change her state, and forego the bond so utterly unlikely to be realized—surely there was hope even for him ?

On “ this hint he did not however speak ;” he inquired kindly after her mother, and on learning her situation, proposed immediately to visit one so long dear to him, and whom he should henceforth regard as his own : he adverted to the situation of her father, and spoke of the disposition of the new king as being in itself excellent in all respects, therefore likely to operate in Mr. Ratcliffe’s favour : without claiming rights on the old foundation, he yet identified himself with every thing that was dear to her ; concluding by declaring his intention to visit Blanche immediately, draw from



her the residence of her father, whom he would then seek and convey to the coast, that he might be in readiness to receive the pardon he confidently predicted obtaining, having himself claim to be considered.

“ You are not strong enough for any such exertion,” said Sophia, with an air of tenderness towards his person, and full confidence in his friendship. “ No, indeed, I wish you had the power, but you have not.”

“ Pardon me, Sophia, I am quite well enough, and the change of air will be beneficial. I have an excellent constitution—my ailments are all on the surface; like a battered coin, I can still be weighed and not found wanting; and how can I be better employed, than in purchasing liberty for your father, and happiness for you?”

“ You are still Henry Vernon—the same Henry—the *very* same.”

“ Oh! no, Sophia—no! would that I were, for then you would behold your young lover at your feet. Painfully is he conscious, that absence, as our former favourite says—

‘ Has written strange defeatures in his face;’

but since not one has been written in his heart,



beyond the agonizing period which drove him in the hour of madness to the east, he hopes that change of circumstances, of climate, and even of habit, may, in time, so far accustom you to the change, that by and by, when you have witnessed my devotion to your heart's most holy wishes as a daughter, my desire to render fortune subservient to your happiness, my——”

“ Think you then, Henry Vernon, so meanly of Sophia Ratcliffe, as to suppose that a change in the *casket* could alter her sense of the value of its *gems*? Can you suppose her who was capable of resigning life's best gift (her untarnished reputation), incapable of a wife's, a lover's, most sacred duties? Can you suppose that a daughter who endured terror, sorrow, disgrace, and poverty, for a beloved father, is less capable of meeting whatever Heaven may send, for one to whom the vows of her young heart were given in its first full and holy confidence, and to whom her riper years accord a no less sacred claim?”

“ My own Sophia! my once-expected bride! I have no words with which to thank you; but what shall I say? you are so lovely—indeed so beautiful, that—that——”



“ That I may sing with our Derbyshire maidens, Henry—

‘ My face is my fortune, kind sir, as you know,  
For my father, alas ! can no dowry bestow.’

But the first dinner-bell is ringing, and, for the present, I must say good bye.”

Sophia knew that the Marchioness’s maid was then with her, so she hastened to her own room, and with a little assistance, once more gave to light her long-imprisoned tresses, and arrayed herself in the manner fit for a guest at the table of her noble host, where Henry was not the only person (small as were the party), who gazed upon her with surprise and admiration.

To Mrs. Ratcliffe, with whom they spent the evening, the return of Sir Henry seemed the harbinger of every other good ; although in looking at him, her eyes filled frequently with tears, and she would ejaculate—“ If Henry is so altered, what will my poor husband be ? if youth thus suffers, how must age suffer ?” On learning his intention of seeking immediately for Mr. Ratcliffe, so soon as he had ascertained, through the good offices of the Marquess, that a petition in his behalf would meet consideration



from the new king, old Robert earnestly entreated leave to accompany him, declaring, "that he already felt half well, and the sight of his beloved master would make him twenty years younger."

"You shall at least go to Harwich, my good Hill; but your first care must be to conduct your lady to London; her presence there is absolutely necessary."

This exertion indeed appeared inevitable, and in the excitement of the hour, together with the persuasion she had long adopted, in favour of a native prince, Mrs. Ratcliffe felt herself equal to any thing; and it was finally agreed that they should share the chariot in which Sir Henry had travelled, seeing that it was equally necessary to them all to avoid cold and fatigue. Sophia undertook to provide them with a suitable home, in the neighbourhood of Grosvenor-square, to which she would conduct them on their arrival.

In the course of this tedious journey, it became evident both to Sir Henry Vernon and Mrs. Ratcliffe, that so far had the good old man overrated his strength, or so much had the new-found hopes he indulged injured him by agitation, that it would be hardly likely he



should long survive ; and so highly did the baronet esteem his devotedness of affection to his master, and his master's house, during their long season of want and sorrow, that he felt himself newly nerved in their cause, by a desire to reward his "labour of love."

They arrived in London at the time when the royal obsequies were performing at Windsor, where the Marquess and his lady then were, so that Sophia was enabled, with all the vigilance of kindness, and the ability of practised knowledge, to administer to the aged and the invalid travellers, the peculiar assistance each required. In the eyes of him who had so long been unblest by those thousand endearing attentions woman only can supply, and accustomed only to the unmeaning servilities of sable attendants, she appeared to him in the light of a ministering angel, rather than "one of earth's common mould," and her wishes were commands he was eager to obey, a circumstance which, although not calculated upon by her, had the happiest effect upon his health ; for Sophia had been long a student in that school where every woman should take lessons ; for every woman is called upon, more or less, to perform the duties of a nurse.



In a very few days, Sir Henry, happy and recruited, set out, and had the relief of meeting him whom he sought in Amsterdam; for the news of the late king's death had reached him, and he set out to the nearest great city, in order to gain public intelligence, inspired with hope from those words which Blanche had repeated to him, as spoken by Doctor Mead. Both parties were so altered, that neither could know the other; but the name of Sir Henry Vernon being repeated by several mouths at the Custom-House, caught the attention of Mr. Ratcliffe, and induced him to inquire for a person who could hardly fail to communicate information it was important to him to hear, and who was probably related to a family he had been led to conclude extinct, from having heard, in general terms, Sir Arthur had lost his wife and children, and died a broken-hearted man.

As a tall stooping figure of a man, with an abundance of white hair flowing on his shoulders, approached Sir Henry, in the dress of the Flemish peasantry, he was struck with somewhat of elegance in his gait, and that character of countenance, in which adversity has contended with courage, until both have set



their seal upon the features. "Poor old man, he has seen better days! I must hear what he has to say," said he to himself.

The moment he spoke, the English tongue, the manner, nay, the lineaments of a face, which even now resembled those of Sophia, told him that his search was most happily anticipated; and catching hold of the breast of Ratcliffe's coat, he exclaimed—"Ah! sir, is it possible I should so soon have secured you?"

Instantly wrenching his hand from its grasp, with lips of a death-like paleness, but with eyes into which shot a gleam of brilliance to which they had been long strangers, the alarmed man cried out—"By what right, sir, do you make me captive?—I am protected——"

"Protected! ay, that you are, by an angel's guardianship, and not less by pity and friendship: but am I indeed so changed, that you do not remember Harry Vernon?—this is beyond my fears."

"Harry Vernon! my poor Sophia's lover!—I thought he had been dead long since; but I see, I now see how it was—you have been a prisoner, and dead to her."

"I have been many years in the East Indies, and suffered much."



“ Yes! that you have; but you are returned, and are now in your father’s place,” said Mr. Ratcliffe, as the tears rolled slowly down his furrowed cheeks.

“ I am only just returned; I have not even seen my only relative, Louisa, for she is now in Scotland; but I have seen your lady, and my own Sophia. I came from them to seek you, through the information of Blanche, in order to bring you to the coast, since we hope, through the medium of that powerful nobleman, whose lady has been long your daughter’s friend, together with certain claims which I have on government, to induce our new and amiable young sovereign to reverse your outlawry, and restore at least the estates of Mrs. Ratcliffe.”

It is unnecessary to say more, than that the exile declared his unequivocal attachment at *this* time to the reigning Prince; for during his long banishment, he had been convinced that the family for whom he would at one time have gladly displaced his grandfather, would have endeavoured to rule his country in the same way they saw practised by the French monarch, and sought to plant that religion, which was inimical alike to civil freedom and the simplicity of Christianity. Long and deeply-interesting



was the conversation now held, for both had much to hear, and much to relate; and each had for the other sincere esteem, and that returning affection which time alone had suspended. Of the true cause of Henry's long absence and apparent desertion of his daughter, Mr. Ratcliffe, as well as his wife, was happily ignorant; but as the same distressing absence might have arisen from causes connected with his profession, and had been evidently painful and injurious, there was no reason to advert to it farther by either party.

In the mean time, the young monarch had entered on his awful duties, with a truly conscientious sense of their importance, and a mind well calculated for the business demanded by his station. The Marquess (who had been advanced to that dignity by the late monarch) soon ascertained that he was well inclined to any act of mercy, and that he had a sense of justice, which rendered him alive to the claims of one, whom his extraordinary memory traced as the daughter of faithful adherents to his own family. He was surprised and happy to find in a Prince, whose education had been conducted by a mother, so much of knowledge and discernment; and not less so, that the coldness and distance



with which he had been treated by those who should have secured his affections, and thereby cherished his virtues, had not chilled the ingenuous warmth of youth, or deadened the sympathies which belong to a kind and generous nature.

With the Princess of Wales the Marchioness had always kept up as great a degree of friendship as the jealousy of the late King, and the welfare of her husband permitted, or more; she was therefore received now with peculiar attention, and her influence with his mother soon rendered the king not only propitious to their wishes, but determined in their behalf. This resolution was most happy, as there was a strong adverse influence at work in the minister's mind, not because he had a personal objection to an act calculated to place the sovereign in a good light, or that his political bias ran high against a fallen faction, but simply because he loved to rule singly and absolutely, and to be his sovereign's sovereign.

On the very morning when Sir Henry Vernon had arrived in town, and was relating the meeting with Mr. Ratcliffe to his thankful, weeping wife, Sophia rushed into her apartment, crying—  
“Come, dear mother, this very instant to the



Marquess, who is to conduct us to the palace. Now is the happy moment for presenting the petition. Ah! dear Henry, have you sped so soon?"

"I have, but I will tell you more as we proceed, for surely you will take me with you. I know the good Marquess will allow me to dress in his house."

They went together, but no word was spoken, for every heart was engaged in silent prayer to the King of Kings; yet the eye of Sophia glanced thankfully, lovingly, towards one so warm in the cause which now filled her heart—we might add *gladly*, for it was evident that his exertion had benefited him; half the hues of India were already dissipated in his complexion.

A few minutes were spent in arranging dress, a few words of encouragement uttered, and others of instruction, and four spirited horses were drawing them rapidly to the spot, where they were to receive the highest possible boon, or a refusal, which must end all hope of relief on earth.

On arriving at St. James's, Mrs. Ratcliffe became so affected, they feared her fainting, before she could reach the room through which the King would pass. The sight of her mother's



disorder fully recalled the mind of Sophia to the necessary assistance, the tranquillizing support required by her parent, and the firmness necessary for herself, should comment be made, or question asked, which demanded reply. The Marquess, not less than Sir Henry, was struck by the calm dignity her countenance assumed; the look of deep devotion and steady reliance with which she cast her eyes to heaven, and thence humbly downward, as if satisfied that her award would be in truth given rather by Heaven itself, than Heaven's vicegerent on earth.

The door opened—the ladies threw themselves at the same moment on their knees, but Mrs. Ratcliffe, oppressed beyond her powers, suffered her head to sink on Sophia's shoulder, who then drew the petition from her with her right hand, whilst her left was thrown around her mother to support her. Few subjects could have been found more worthy of a painter's skill, than that fainting wife, that lovely daughter, with her beseeching look and extended arm, offering to her young, handsome, and deeply-interested monarch, the first petition he had received, when about to meet, for the first time, the proud aristocracy who had so often bearded kings, and



the representatives of that people who had called his ancestors to the throne.

The petition was received with a smile that said volumes; a few words were uttered indicative of pity for Mrs. Ratcliffe, and a gracious bow to the Marquess, calling on him to attend the House, and all was over. Yes, the magnificent train, and he who was now become the fountain of honour, had departed; the Marquess too was gone, for it was time he should fill his seat and do homage to his sovereign.

“We are alone, dear mother,” said Sophia, assisting her to rise; “not quite alone, for Henry is with us.”

“My son—my son Henry; surely we want no other?”

“Certainly not, in my opinion,” said Sophia; yet were these words spoken at once with the fondness of a village maiden, and the mild majesty of one who could not “unsought be won,” by the possessor of a throne.

This little interview with royalty gained all which it had hoped for, and perhaps more, since it had been effected without the interference of Sir Henry, who still possessed the rights which belonged to him as a brave officer, a suffering subject, and the son of an injured father.



So soon as the outlawry was reversed, the estates and the blood restored (and all was done with the quick and accurate attention to all essential forms, for which the good young King was remarkable), Sir Henry exclaimed—“ Well, I may now tell you the truth : Mr. Ratcliffe is at Harwich ; I brought him thither myself, calling him Mynheer Steinhausen.”

“ Then,” cried old Robert, starting from his couch, “ as Jacob said, ‘ my son is yet alive ; I will go and see him before I die ;’ so do I say, my master is in his own land, I will go and see him, though I die.”

Every one thought it right to indulge him, under the idea that his strength might suffice for the purpose, and that disappointment might be fatal. At the earnest request of Sophia, Mrs. Ratcliffe remained at home ; and despite of the wishes of her own heart, and the entreaties of Henry, Sophia stayed also, to support and prepare her for a meeting so affecting. Under her benign influence, and steady, though tender controul, the long-harassed wife attained the power so to check her sensibility, and to merge her earthly happiness in her hopes of eternal felicity, that she became capable of receiving joy as wisely, as she had endured sorrow patiently.



How Mr. Ratcliffe felt on again meeting the beloved partner of so many happy years—the idolized daughter of so many hopes and such severe regret—how he had in the first instance received that excellent servant, whose conduct had rendered him the friend of his heart—or what were his emotions when he returned to his dilapidated mansion, and was received joyfully by a tenantry who had long lamented his loss, it is altogether impossible for us to say; nor can we reveal the mixed and peculiar emotion with which he knelt before his youthful monarch, and at once thanked him for the mercy he accorded, and voluntarily poured forth his conscientious vows of loyalty to his person.

And surely we are equally incapable of describing Sophia's feelings (well governed as they were), when she again beheld her parents in their old abode, and the blessings of the tenantry sounding in their ears. This feast of the heart was not however long uninterrupted, although the arrival of her beloved Blanche, her excellent husband, and their sweet offspring, added to its zest. Sophia was now willing to be married, and the Marquess insisted on his right to give away the bride, the Marchioness on her



right to provide pearls for the hair she had so long banished from sight.

On what did the bridegroom insist, now he was improved alike in health and fortune, (and did ambition move him) of profiting by the well-merited favour of his sovereign?

It was his urgent request to be received with his bride in White Cliffe, since he well knew the value of her society to her parents, to be permitted as a son "to rock the cradle of declining life," and prove to every one "his heart was as her heart," anxious to obliterate cares and sorrows, mistakes and misconduct from the memory, yet cherish the virtues and the gratitude arising from the remembrances attached to them, and to prove that his morality had its source in that religion, which could console the afflictions incident to this life, whilst it prepares us for a better.

Of Sophia it might be truly said, "she had sown in tears, but she reaped in joy;" nevertheless that joy never seduced her from the "narrow way which leadeth to everlasting life," nor the exercise of those duties which belonged to her station in society, her engagements as a wife, mother, and mistress. She who had been

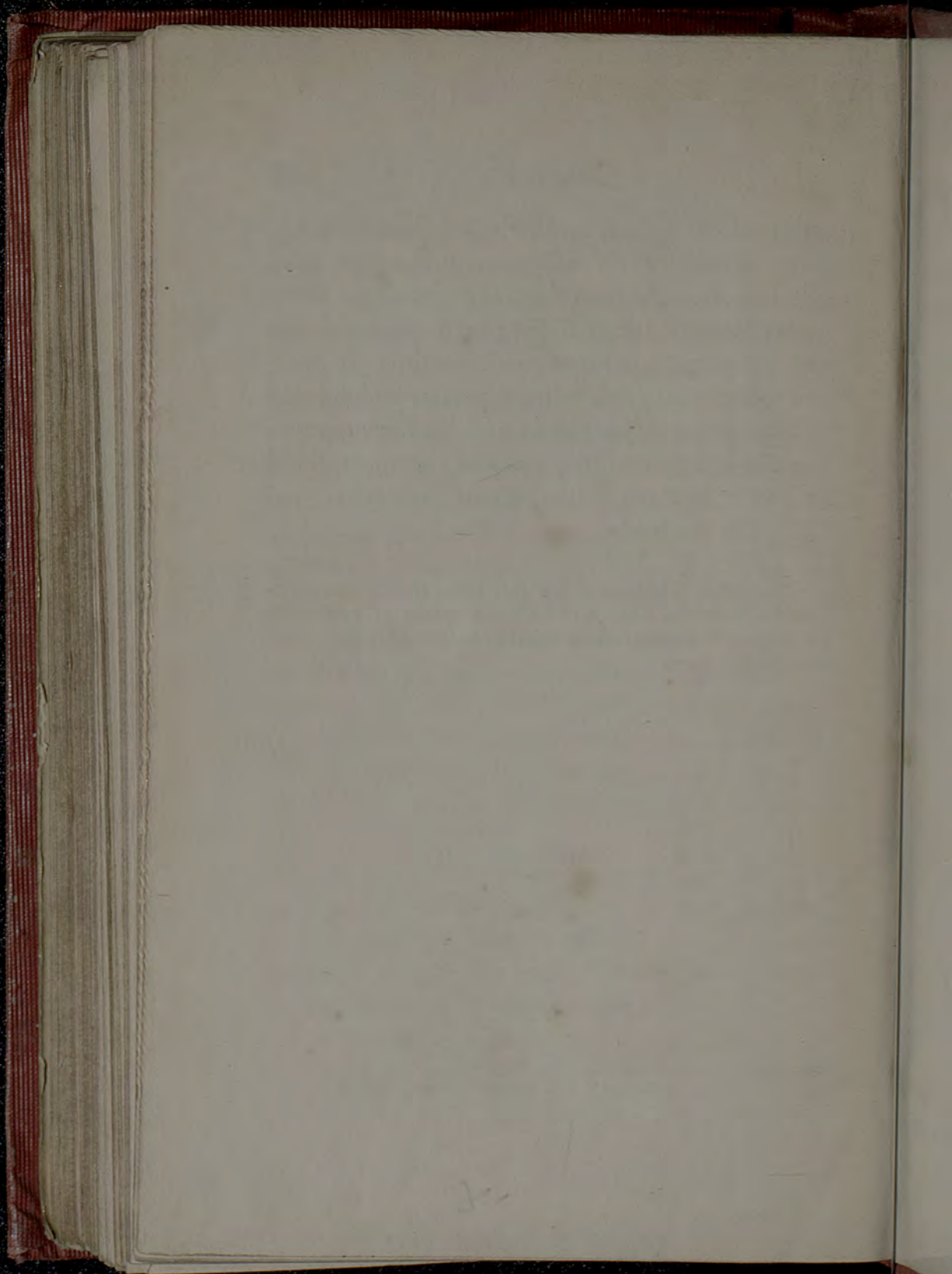


an obedient, loving, and helpful\* daughter, became naturally an affectionate, tender, and gentle wife. As a mother, she inculcated every disposition conducive to the practice of meekness and humility, combined with unflinching integrity, and that high-minded purity, which looks to Heaven for its judgment and its recompence; nor did she fail to inspire even the most timid of her little flock with patient endurance and Christian fortitude.

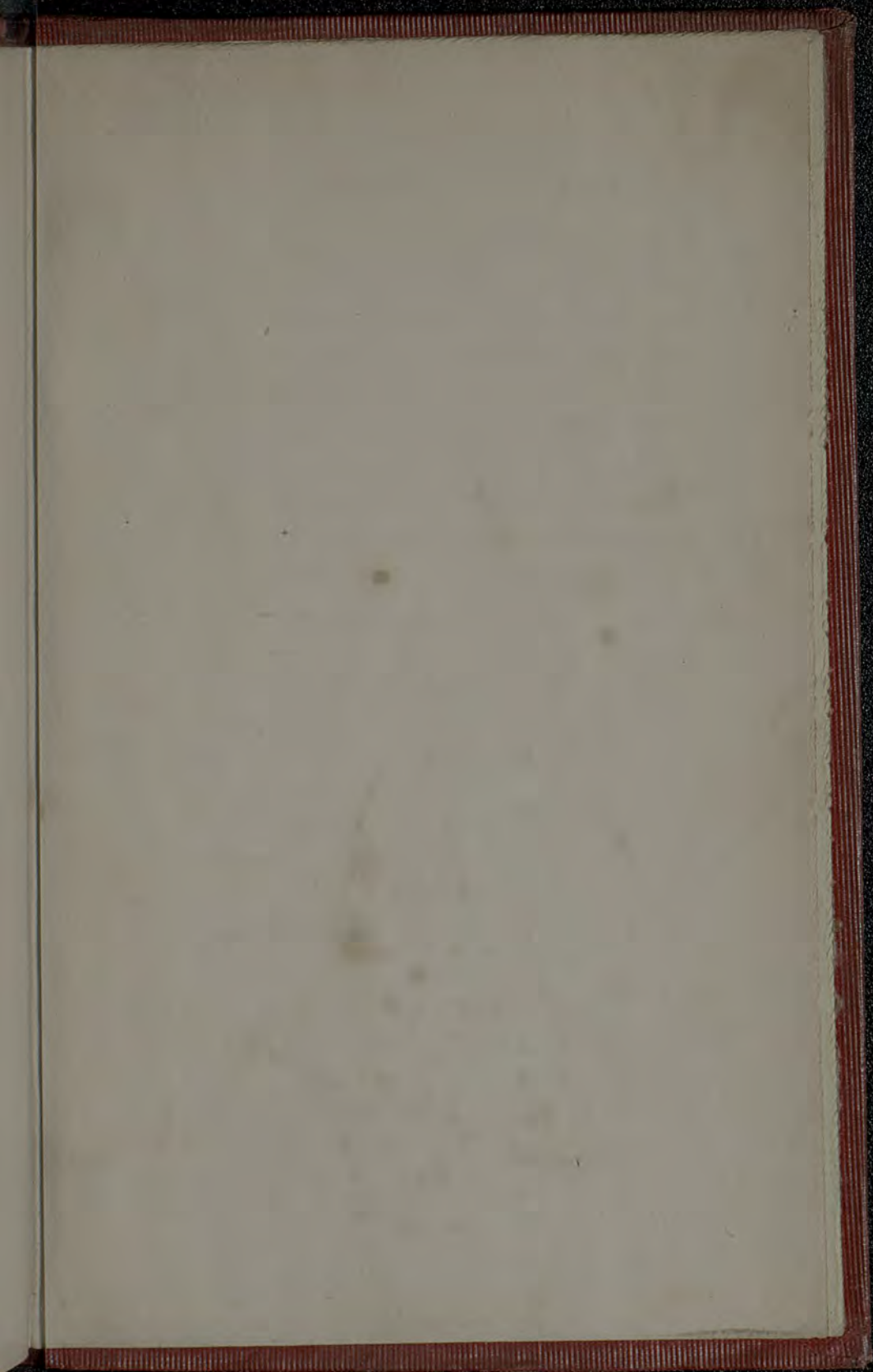
\* The author is induced to use this term, from remembering that the mother of Lady Grace Gethen speaks of her *helpful* daughter. Times alter terms, but they do not alter the virtues expressed by them.

THE END.

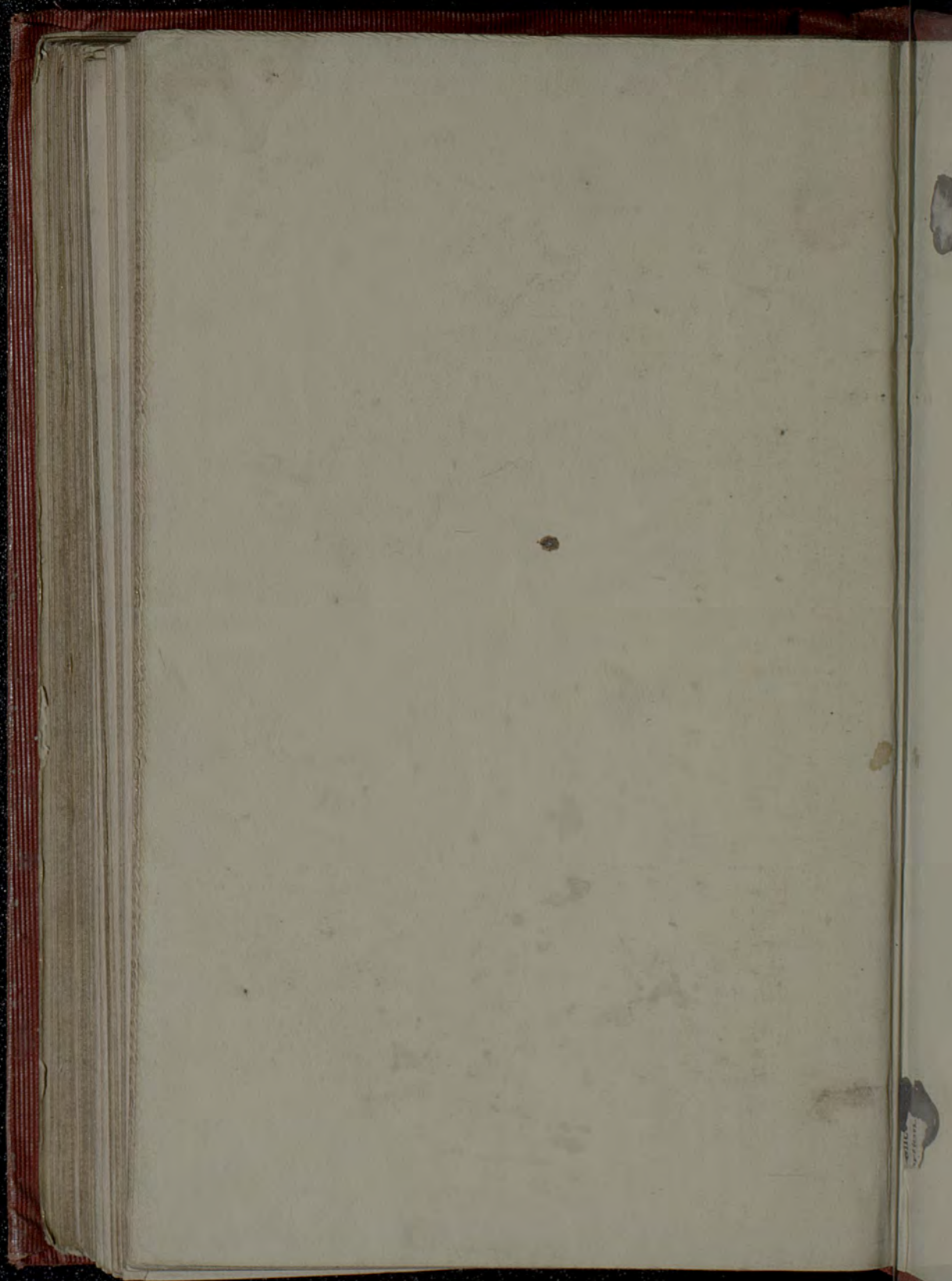




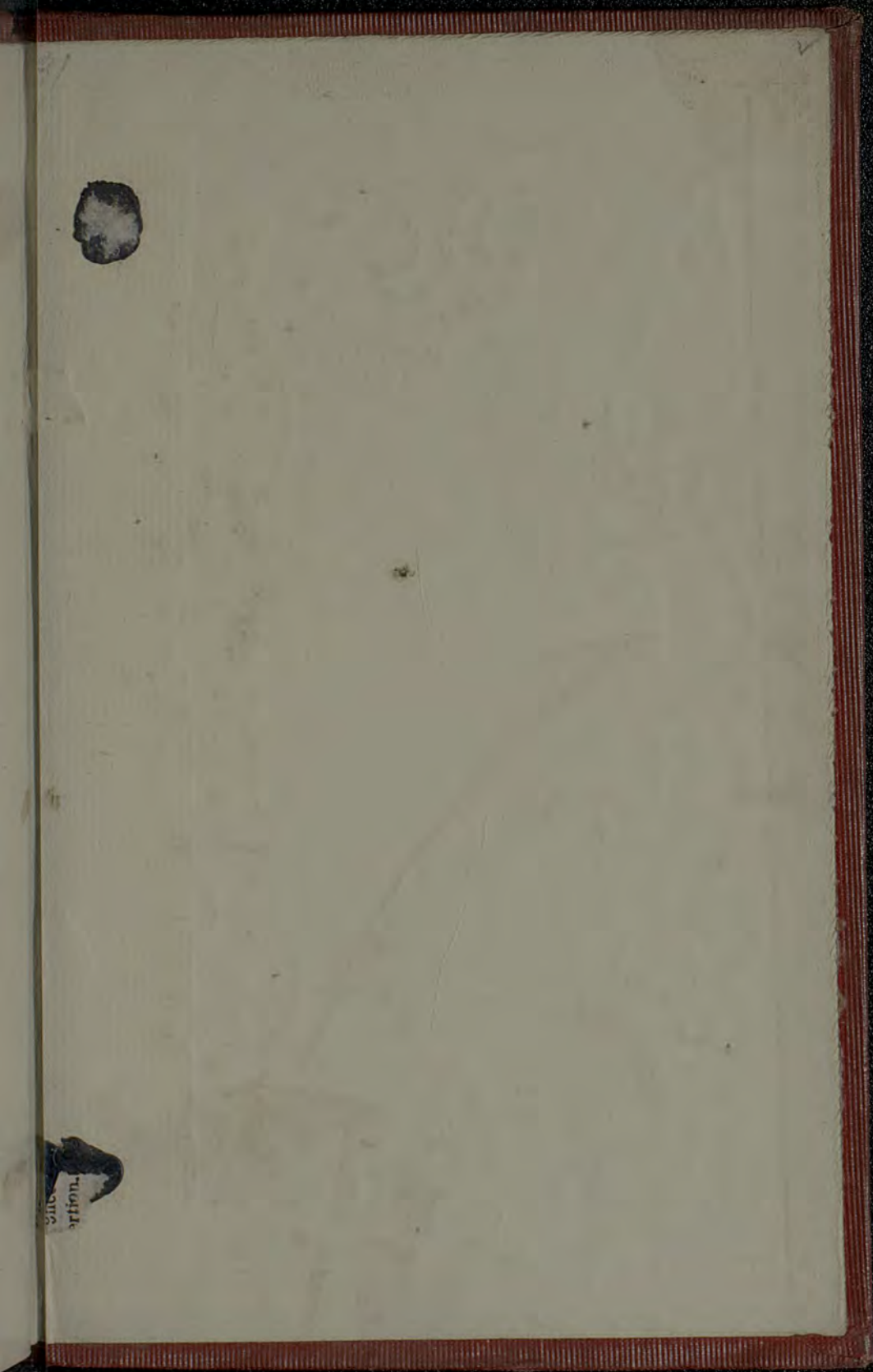












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