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ORMOND;

OR,

THE SECRET WITNESS.

BY

B. C. BROWN,

AUTHOR OF WIELAND, OR TRANSFORMATION.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

"Sæpe intereunt aliis meditantes necem."

PHÆDRUS

"Those who plot the destruction of others, very often fall, themselves the victims."

PHILADELPHIA PRINTED,

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1811

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

LADY CASTLEREAGH,

THESE VOLUMES

are respectfully inscribed,

by her Ladyship's

most obedient, and humble Servant,

HENRY COLBURN.

INTRODUCTION.

To I.E. Rosenberg.

You are anxious to obtain some knowledge of the history of Constantia Dudley. I am well acquainted with your motives, and allow that they justify your curiosity. I am willing to the utmost of my power to comply with your request, and will now dedicate what leisure I have to the composition of her story.

My narrative will have little of that merit which flows from unity of design. You are desirous of hearing an authentic and not a fictitious tale. It will therefore be my duty to relate events in no artificial or elaborate order, and without that harmonious congruity and luminous amplification, which might justly be displayed in a tale flowing merely from invention. It will be little more than a biographical sketch, in which the facts are distributed and amplified, not as a poetical taste would prescribe, but as the materials afforded me, sometimes abundant and sometimes scanty, would permit.

Constantia, like all the beings made known to us, not by fancy, but experience, has numerous defects. You will readily perceive that her tale is told by her friend; but I hope you will not discover many or glaring proofs of a disposition to extenuate her errors or falsify her character.

Ormond will perhaps appear to you a contradictory or unintelligible being. I pretend not to the infallibility of inspiration. He is not a creature of fancy. It was not prudent to unfold *all* the means by which I gained a knowledge of his actions; but these means, though singularly fortunate and accurate, could not be unerring and complete. I have shown him to you as he appeared on different occasions, and at successive periods to me. This is all that you will demand from a

faithful biographer.

If you were not deeply interested in the fate of my friend, yet my undertaking will not be useless, inasmuch as it will introduce you to scenes to which you have been hitherto a stranger. The modes of life, the influence of public events upon the character and happiness of individuals in America, are new to you. The distinctions of birth, and the artificial degrees of esteem or contempt which connect themselves with different professions and ranks in your native country, are but little known among us. Society and manners constitute your favourite study, and I am willing to believe that my relation will supply you with knowledge, on these heads, not to be otherwise obtained. If these details be in that respect unsatisfactory, all that I can add, is my counsel to go and examine for yourself.

S.C.

Germany

ORMOND,

OR THE

SECRET WITNESS.

CHAPTER I.

Stephen Dudley was a native of New York. He was educated to the profession of a painter. His father's trade was that of an apothecary. But this son, manifesting an attachment to the pencil, he was resolved that it should be gratified. For this end Stephen was sent at an early age to Europe, and not only enjoyed the instructions of Fuzeli and Bartolozzi, but spent a considerable period in Italy, in studying the Augustan and Medicean monuments. It was intended that he should practise his art in his native city, but the young man, though reconciled to this scheme by deference to paternal authority, and by a sense of its propriety, was willing as long as possible to postpone it. The liberality of his father relieved him from all pecuniary cares. His whole time was devoted to the improvement of his skill in his favourite art, and the enriching of his mind with every valuable accomplishment. He was endowed with a comprehensive genius and indefatigable industry. His progress was proportionably rapid, and he passed his time without much regard to futurity, being too well satisfied with the present to anticipate a change. A change however was unavoidable, and he was obliged at length to pay a reluctant obedience to his father's repeated summons. The death of his wife had rendered his society still more necessary to the old gentleman.

He married before his return. The woman whom he had selected was an unportioned orphan, and was recommended merely by her moral qualities. These, however, were eminent, and secured to her, till the end of her life, the affection of her husband. Though painting was capable of fully gratifying his taste as matter of amusement, he quickly found that, in his new situation, it would not answer the ends of a profession. His father supported himself by the profits of his shop, but with all his industry he could do no more than procure a subsistence for himself and his son.

Till his father's death young Dudley attached himself to painting. His gains were slender, but he loved the art, and his father's profession rendered his own exertions in a great degree superfluous. The death of the elder Dudley introduced an important change in his situation. It thenceforth became necessary to strike into some new path, to deny himself the indulgence of his inclinations, and regulate his future exertions by a view to nothing but gain. There was little room for choice. His habits had disqualified him for mechanical employments. He could not stoop to the imaginary indignity which attended them, nor spare the time necessary to obtain the requisite degree of skill. His father died in possession of some stock, and a sufficient portion of credit to supply its annual decays. He lived at what they call a *good stand*, and enjoyed a certain quantity of permanent custom. The knowledge that was required was as easily obtained as the elements of any other profession, and was not wholly unallied to the pursuits in which he had sometimes engaged. Hence he could not hesitate long in forming his resolution, but assumed the management of his father's concerns with a cheerful and determined spirit.

The knowledge of his business was acquired in no long time; He was stimulated to the acquisition by a sense of duty; he was inured to habits of industry, and there were few things capable to resist a strenuous exertion of his faculties. Knowledge of whatever kind afforded a compensation to labour; but the task being finished, that which remained, which in ordinary apprehensions would have been esteemed an easy and smooth path, was to him insupportably disgustful. The drudgery of a shop, where all the faculties were at a stand, and one day was an unvaried repetition of the foregoing, was too incongenial to his disposition not to be a source of discontent. This was an evil which it was the tendency of time to increase rather than diminish. The longer he endured it the less tolerable it became. He could not forbear comparing his present situation with his former, and deriving from the contrast perpetual food for melancholy.

The indulgence of his father had contributed to instil into him prejudices, in consequence of which a certain species of disgrace was annexed to every employment of which the only purpose was gain. His present situation not only precluded all those pursuits which exalt and harmonize the feelings, but was detested by him as something humiliating and ignominious. His wife was of a pliant temper, and her condition less influenced by this change than that of her husband. She was qualified to be his comforter; but instead of dispelling his gloom by judicious arguments, or a seasonable example of vivacity, she caught the infection that preyed upon his mind, and augmented his anxieties by partaking in them.

By enlarging in some degree the foundation on which his father had built, he had provided the means of a future secession, and might console himself with the prospect of enjoying his darling ease at some period of his life. This period was necessarily too remote for his wishes; and had not certain occurrences taken place, by which he was flattered with the immediate possession of ease, it is far from being certain that he would not have fallen a victim to his growing disquietudes.

He was one morning engaged behind his counter as usual, when a youth came into his shop, and, in terms that bespoke the union of fearlessness and frankness, inquired whether he could be engaged as an apprentice. A proposal of this kind could not be suddenly rejected or adopted. He stood in need of assistance; the youth was manly and blooming, and exhibited a modest and ingenuous aspect. It was possible that he was, in every respect, qualified for the post for which he applied; but it was previously necessary to ascertain these qualifications. For this end he requested the youth to call at his house in the evening, when he should be at leisure to converse with him, and furnished him with suitable directions.

The youth came according to appointment. On being questioned as to his birthplace and origin, he stated that he was a native of Wakefield, in Yorkshire; that his family were honest, and his education not mean; that he was the eldest, of many children, and having attained an age at which he conceived it his duty to provide for himself, he had, with the concurrence of his friends, come to America, in search of the means of independent subsistence; that he had just arrived in a ship which he named, and, his scanty stock of money being likely to be speedily consumed, this had been the first effort he had made to procure employment.

His tale was circumstantial and consistent, and his veracity appeared liable to no doubt. He was master of his book and his pen, and had acquired more than the rudiments of Latin. Mr. Dudley did not require much time to deliberate. In a few days the youth was established as a member of his family, and as a coadjutor in his shop, nothing but food, clothing, and lodging being stipulated as the reward of his services.

The young man improved daily in the good opinion of his master. His apprehension was quick, his sobriety invariable, and his application incessant. Though by no means presumptuous or arrogant, he was not wanting in a suitable degree of self-confidence. All his propensities appeared to concentre in his occupation and the promotion of his master's interest, from which he was drawn aside by no allurements of sensual or intellectual pleasure. In a short time he was able to relieve his master of most of the toils of his profession, and Mr. Dudley a thousand times congratulated himself on possessing a servant equally qualified by his talents and his probity. He gradually remitted his attention to his own concerns, and placed more absolute reliance on the fidelity of his dependant.

Young Craig, that was the name of the youth, maintained a punctual correspondence with his family, and confided to his patron, not only copies of all the letters which he himself wrote, but those which, from time to time, he received. He had several correspondents, but the chief of those were his mother and his eldest sister. The sentiments contained in their letters breathed the most appropriate simplicity and, tenderness, and flowed with the nicest propriety, from the different relationships of mother and sister. The style, and even the penmanship, were distinct and characteristical.

One of the first of these epistles was written by the mother to Mr. Dudley, on being informed by her son of his present engagement. It was dictated by that concern for the welfare of her child befitting the maternal character. Gratitude, for the ready acceptance of the youth's services, and for the benignity of his deportment towards him, a just representation of which had been received by her from the boy himself, was expressed with no inconsiderable elegance; as well as her earnest wishes that Mr. Dudley should extend to him not only the indulgence, but the moral superintendence of a parent.

To this Mr. Dudley conceived it incumbent upon him to return a consenting answer, and letters were in this manner occasionally interchanged between them.

Things remained in this situation for three years, during which period every day enhanced the reputation of Craig, for stability and integrity. A sort of provisional engagement had been made between the parents, unattended however by any legal or formal act, that things should remain on their present footing for three years. When this period terminated, it seemed as if a new engagement had become necessary. Craig expressed the utmost willingness to renew the former contract, but his master began to think that the services of his pupil merited a higher recompense. He ascribed the prosperity that had hitherto attended him to the disinterested exertions of his apprentice. His social and literary gratifications had been increased by the increase of his leisure. These were capable of being still more enlarged. He had not yet acquired what he deemed a sufficiency, and could not therefore wholly relieve himself from the turmoils

and humiliation of a professional life. He concluded that he should at once consult his own interest, and perform no more than an act of justice to a faithful servant, by making Craig his partner, and allowing him a share of the profits, on condition of his discharging all the duties of the trade.

When this scheme was proposed to Craig he professed unbounded gratitude, considered all that he had done as amply rewarded by the pleasure of performance, and as being nothing more than was prescribed by his duty. He promised that this change in his situation should have no other effect than to furnish new incitements to diligence and fidelity, in the promotion of an interest, which would then become in a still higher degree than formerly a common one. Mr. Dudley communicated his intention to Craig's mother, who, in addition to many grateful acknowledgments, stated that a kinsman of her son had enabled him, in case of entering into partnership, to add a small sum to the common stock, and that for this sum Craig was authorized to draw upon a London banker. The proposed arrangement was speedily effected. Craig was charged with the management of all affairs, and Mr. Dudley retired to the enjoyment of still greater leisure. Two years elapsed, and nothing occurred to interrupt the harmony that subsisted between the partners. Mr. Dudley's condition might be esteemed prosperous. His wealth was constantly accumulating. He had nearly attained all that he wished, and his wishes still aimed at nothing less than splendid opulence. He had annually increased the permanent sources of his revenue. His daughter was the only survivor of many children who perished in their infancy, before habit and maturity, had rendered the parental tie difficult to break. This daughter had already exhibited proofs of a mind susceptible of high improvement, and the loveliness of her person promised to keep pace with her mental acquisitions. He charged himself with the care of her education, and found no weariness or satiety in this task that might not be amply relieved by the recreations of science and literature. He flattered himself that his career, which had hitherto been exempt from any considerable impediment, would terminate in tranquillity. Few men might with more propriety have discarded all apprehensions respecting futurity.

Craig had several sisters, and one brother younger than himself. Mr. Dudley, desirous of promoting the happiness of this family, proposed to send for this brother and have him educated to his own profession, insinuating to his partner that at the time when the boy should have gained sufficient stability and knowledge, he himself might be disposed to relinquish the profession altogether, on terms particularly advantageous to the two brothers, who might thenceforth conduct their business jointly. Craig had been eloquent in praise of this lad, and his testimony had, from time to time, been confirmed by that of his mother and sister. He had often expressed his wishes for the prosperity of the lad; and, when his mother had expressed her doubts as to the best method of disposing of him, modestly requested Mr. Dudley's advice on this head. The proposal, therefore, might be supposed to be particularly acceptable, and yet Craig expressed reluctance to concur with it. This reluctance was accompanied with certain tokens which sufficiently showed whence it arose. Craig appeared unwilling to increase those obligations under which he already laboured; his sense of gratitude was too acute to allow him to heighten it by the reception of new benefits.

It might be imagined that this objection would be easily removed; but the obstinacy of Craig's opposition was invincible. Mr. Dudley could not relinquish a scheme to which no stronger objection could be made; and, since his partner could not be prevailed upon to make this proposal to the friends of the lad, he was determined to do it himself. He maintained an intercourse by letters with several of those friends which he formed in his youth. One of them usually resided in London. From him he received about this time a letter, in which, among other information, the writer mentioned his intention of setting out on a tour through Yorkshire and the Scottish highlands. Mr. Dudley thought this a suitable opportunity for executing his design in favour of young Craig. He entertained no doubts about the worth and condition of this family, but was still desirous of obtaining some information on this head from one who would pass through the town where they resided, who would examine with his own eyes, and on whose discernment and integrity he could place an implicit reliance. He concealed this intention from his partner, and entrusted his letter to a friend who was just embarking for Europe. In due season he received an answer, confirming, in all respects, Craig's representations, but informing him that the lad had been lately disposed of in a way not equally advantageous with that which Mr. Dudley had proposed, but such as would not admit of change.

If doubts could possibly be entertained respecting the character and views of Craig, this evidence would have dispelled them. But plans, however skilfully contrived, if founded on imposture, cannot fail of being sometimes detected. Craig had occasion to be absent from the city for some weeks. Meanwhile a letter had been left at his lodgings by one who merely inquired if that were the dwelling of Mr. Dudley, and being answered by the servant in the affirmative, left the letter without further parley. It was superscribed with a name unknown to any of the family, and in a hand which its badness rendered almost illegible. The servant placed it in a situation to be seen by his master.

Mr. Dudley allowed it to remain unopened for a considerable time. At length, deeming it excusable to discover by any means the person to whom it was addressed, he ventured to unseal it. It was dated at Portsmouth in New-Hampshire. The signature was Mary Mansfield. It was addressed to her son, and was a curious specimen of illiterateness. Mary herself was unable to write, as she reminds her son, and had therefore procured the assistance of Mrs. Dewitt, for whose family she washed. The amanuensis was but little superior in the art of penmanship to her principal. The contents of the epistle were made out with some difficulty. This was the substance

of it:—

Mary reproaches her son for deserting her, and letting five years pass away without allowing her to hear from him. She informed him of her distresses as they flowed from sickness and poverty, and were aggravated by the loss of her son who was so handsome and promising a lad. She related her marriage with Zekel Hackney, who first brought her tidings of her boy. He was master, it seems, of a fishing smack, and voyaged sometimes to New York. In one of his visits, to this city he met a mighty spry young man, in whom he thought he recognized his wife's son. He had traced him to the house of Mr. Dudley, and on inquiry discovered that the lad resided here. On his return he communicated the tidings to his spouse, who had now written to reproach him for his neglect of his poor old mother, and to entreat his assistance to relieve her from the necessity of drudging for her livelihood.

This letter was capable of an obvious construction. It was, no doubt, founded in mistake, though it was to be acknowledged that the mistake was singular. Such was the conclusion immediately formed by Mr. Dudley. He quietly replaced the letter on the mantel-piece, where it had before stood, and dismissed the affair from his thoughts.

Next day Craig returned from his journey. Mr. Dudley was employed in examining some papers in a desk that stood behind the door in the apartment in which the letter was placed. There was no other person in the room when Craig entered it. He did not perceive Mr. Dudley, who was screened from observation by his silence and by an open door. As soon as he entered, Mr. Dudley looked at him, and made no haste to speak. The letter, whose superscription was turned towards him, immediately attracted Craig's attention. He seized it with some degree of eagerness, and observing the broken seal, thrust it hastily into his pocket, muttering at the same time, in a tone betokening a mixture of consternation and anger, "Damn it!"—He immediately left the room, still uninformed of the presence of Mr. Dudley, who began to muse with some earnestness on what he had seen. Soon after, he left this room, and went into another in which the family usually sat. In about twenty minutes Craig made his appearance with his usual freedom and plausibility. Complimentary and customary topics were discussed. Mrs. Dudley and her daughter were likewise present. The uneasiness which the incident just mentioned had occasioned in the mind of Mr. Dudley was at first dispelled by the disembarrassed behaviour of his partner, but new matter of suspicion was speedily afforded him. He observed that his partner spoke of his present entrance as of the first since his arrival, and that when the lady mentioned that he had been the subject of a curious mistake, a letter being directed to him by a strange name, and left there during his absence, he pretended total ignorance of the circumstance. The young lady was immediately directed by her mother to bring the letter, which lay, she said, on the mantle-tree in the next room.

During this scene Mr. Dudley was silent. He anticipated the disappointment of the messenger, believing the letter to have been removed. What then was his surprise when the messenger returned bearing the letter in her hand! Craig examined and read it, and commented with great mirth on the contents, acting all the while as if he had never seen it before. These appearances were not qualified to quiet suspicion; the more Dudley brooded over them the more dissatisfied he became. He however concealed his thoughts, as well from Craig himself as his family, impatiently waiting for some new occurrence to arise by which he might square his future proceedings.

During Craig's absence Mrs. Dudley had thought this a proper occasion for cleaning his apartment. The furniture, and among the rest, a large chest strongly fastened, was removed into an adjoining room which was otherwise unoccupied, and which was usually kept locked. When the cleansing was finished, the furniture was replaced, except this trunk, which its bulk, the indolence of the servant, and her opinion of its uselessness, occasioned her to leave in the closet.

About a week after this, on a Saturday evening, Craig invited to sup with him a friend who was to embark on the ensuing Monday for Jamaica. During supper, at which the family were present, the discourse turned on the voyage on which the guest was about to enter. In the course of talk the stranger expressed how much he stood in need of a strong and commodious chest, in which he might safely deposit his cloths and papers. Not being apprized of the early departure of the vessel, he had deferred till it was too late applying to an artizan.

Craig desired him to set himself at rest on that head, for that he had in his possession just such a trunk as he described. It was of no use to him, being long filled with nothing better than refuse and lumber, and that, if he would, he might send for it the next morning. He turned to Mrs. Dudley and observed, that the trunk to which he alluded was in her possession, and he would thank her to direct its removal into his own apartment, that he might empty it of its present contents, and prepare it for the service of his friend. To this she readily assented.

There was nothing mysterious in this affair, but the mind of Mr. Dudley was pained with doubts. He was now as prone to suspect as he was formerly disposed to confidence. This evening he put the key of the closet in his own pocket. When inquired for the next day, it was, of course, missing. It could not be found on the most diligent search. The occasion was not of such moment as to justify breaking the door. Mr. Dudley imagined that he saw in Craig more uneasiness at this disappointment than he was willing to express. There was no remedy. The chest remained where it was, and next morning the ship departed on her voyage.

Craig accompanied his friend on board, was prevailed upon to go to sea with him, designing to return with the pilot-boat, but when the pilot was preparing to leave the vessel, such was this

man's complaisance to the wishes of his friend, that he concluded to perform the remainder of the voyage in his company. The consequences are easily seen. Craig had gone with a resolution of never returning. The unhappy Dudley was left to deplore the total ruin of his fortune, which had fallen a prey to the arts of a subtle imposture.

The chest was opened, and the part which Craig had been playing for some years, with so much success, was perfectly explained. It appeared that the sum which Craig had contributed to the common stock, when first admitted into partnership, had been previously purloined from the daily receipts of his shop, of which an exact register was kept. Craig had been so indiscreet as to preserve this accusing record, and it was discovered in this depository. He was the son of Mary Mansfield, and a native of Portsmouth. The history of the Wakefield family, specious and complicated as it was, was entirely fictitious. The letters had been forged, and the correspondence supported by his own dexterity. Here was found the letter which Mr. Dudley had written to his friend requesting him to make certain inquiries at Wakefield, and which he imagined that he had delivered with his own hands to a trusty bearer. Here was the original draught of the answer he received. The manner in which this stratagem had been accomplished came gradually to light. The letter which was written to the Yorkshire traveller had been purloined, and another with a similar superscription, in which the hand of Dudley was exactly imitated, and containing only brief and general remarks, had been placed in its stead. Craig must have suspected its contents, and by this suspicion have been incited to the theft. The answer which the Englishman had really written, and which sufficiently corresponded with the forged letter, had been intercepted by Craig, and furnished him a model from which he might construct an answer adapted to his own purposes.

This imposture had not been sustained for a trivial purpose. He had embezzled a large share of the stock, and had employed the credit of the house to procure extensive remittances to be made to an agent at a distance, by whom the property was effectually secured. Craig had gone to participate these spoils, while the whole estate of Mr. Dudley was insufficient to pay the demands that were consequently made upon him.

It was his lot to fall into the grasp of men who squared their actions by no other standard than law, and who esteemed every claim to be incontestably just that could plead that sanction. They did not indeed throw him into prison. When they had despoiled him of every remnant of his property, they deemed themselves entitled to his gratitude for leaving his person unmolested.

CHAPTER II.

Thus in a moment was this man thrown from the summit of affluence to the lowest indigence. He had been habituated to independence and ease. This reverse, therefore, was the harder to bear. His present situation was much worse than at his father's death. Then he was sanguine with youth and glowing with health. He possessed a fund on which he could commence his operations. Materials were at hand, and nothing was wanted but skill to use them. Now he had advanced in life. His frame was not exempt from infirmity. He had so long reposed on the bosom of opulence, and enjoyed the respect attendant on wealth, that he felt himself totally incapacitated for a new station. His misfortune had not been foreseen. It was embittered by the consciousness of his own imprudence, and by recollecting that the serpent which had stung him was nurtured in his own bosom.

It was not merely frugal fare and a humble dwelling to which he was condemned. The evils to be dreaded were beggary and contempt. Luxury and leisure were not merely denied him. He must bend all his efforts to procure clothing and food, to preserve his family from nakedness and famine. His spirit would not brook dependence. To live upon charity, or to take advantage of the compassion of his friends, was a destiny far worse than any other. To this therefore he would not consent. However irksome and painful it might prove, he determined to procure hit bread by the labour of his hands.

But to what scene or kind of employment should he betake himself? He could not endure to exhibit this reverse of fortune on the same theatre which had witnessed his prosperity. One of his first measures was to remove from New York to Philadelphia. How should he employ himself in his new abode? Painting, the art in which he was expert, would not afford him the means of subsistence. Though no despicable musician, he did not esteem himself qualified to be a teacher of this art. This profession, besides, was treated by his new neighbours with general, though unmerited contempt. There were few things on which he prided himself more than on the facilities and elegances of his penmanship. He was besides well acquainted with arithmetic and accounting. He concluded therefore to offer his services, as a writer in a public office. This employment demanded little bodily exertion. He had spent much of his time at the book and the desk: his new occupation, therefore, was further recommended by its resemblance to his ancient modes of life.

The first situation of this kind for which he applied he obtained. The duties were constant, but not otherwise toilsome or arduous. The emoluments were slender, but my contracting, within limits as narrow as possible, his expenses, they could be made subservient to the mere purposes of subsistence. He hired a small house in the suburbs of the city. It consisted of a room above and below, and a kitchen. His wife, daughter, and one girl, composed its inhabitants.

As long as his mind was occupied in projecting and executing these arrangements, it was diverted from uneasy contemplations. When his life became uniform, and day followed day in monotonous succession, and the novelty of his employment had disappeared, his cheerfulness began likewise to fade, and was succeeded by unconquerable melancholy. His present condition was in every respect the contrast of his former. His servitude was intolerable. He was associated with sordid hirelings, gross and uneducated, who treated his age with rude familiarity, and insulted his ears with ribaldry and scurrilous jests. He was subject to command, and had his portion of daily drudgery allotted to him, to be performed for a pittance no more than would buy the bread which he daily consumed. The task assigned him was technical and formal. He was perpetually encumbered with the rubbish of law, and waded with laborious steps through its endless tautologies, its impertinent circuities, its lying assertions, and hateful artifices. Nothing occurred to relieve or diversify the scene. It was one tedious round of scrawling and jargon; a tissue made up of the shreds and remnants of barbarous antiquity, polluted with the rust of ages, and patched by the stupidity of modern workmen into new deformity.

When the day's task was finished, jaded spirits, and a body enfeebled by reluctant application, were but little adapted to domestic enjoyments. These indeed were incompatible with a temper like his, to whom the privation of the comforts that attended his former condition was equivalent to the loss of life. These privations were still more painful to his wife, and her death added one more calamity to those tinder which he already groaned. He had always loved her with the tenderest affection, and he justly regarded this evil as surpassing all his former woes.

But his destiny seemed never weary of persecuting him. It was not enough that he should fall a victim to the most atrocious arts, that he should wear out his days in solitude and drudgery, that he should feel not only the personal restraints and hardships attendant upon indigence, but the keener pangs that result from negligence and contumely. He was imperfectly recovered from the shock occasioned by the death of his wife, when his sight was invaded by a cataract. Its progress was rapid, and terminated in total blindness.

He was now disabled from pursuing his usual occupation. He was shot out from the light of heaven, and debarred of every human comfort. Condemned to eternal darkness, and worse than the helplessness of infancy, he was dependant for the meanest offices on the kindness of others; and he who had formerly abounded in the gifts of fortune, thought only of ending his days in a gaol or an almshouse.

His situation however was alleviated by one circumstance. He had a daughter whom I have formerly mentioned, as the only survivor of many children. She was sixteen years of age when the storm of adversity fell upon her father's house. It may be thought that one educated as she had been, in the gratification of all her wishes, and at an age of timidity and inexperience, would have been less fitted than her father for encountering misfortune; and yet when the task of comforter fell upon her her strength was not found wanting. Her fortitude was immediately put to the test. This reverse did not only affect her obliquely, and through the medium of her family, but directly, and in one way usually very distressful to female feelings.

Her fortune and character had attracted many admirers. One of them had some reason to flatter himself with success. Miss Dudley's notions had little in common with those around her. She had learned to square her conduct, in a considerable degree, not by the hasty impulses of inclination, but by the dictates of truth. She yielded nothing to caprice or passion. Not that she was perfectly exempt from intervals of weakness, or from the necessity of painful struggles, but these intervals were transient, and these struggles always successful. She was no stranger to the pleadings of love from the lips of others, and in her own bosom; but its tumults were brief, and speedily gave place to quiet thoughts and steadfast purposes.

She had listened to the solicitations of one not unworthy in himself, and amply recommended by the circumstances of family and fortune. He was young, and therefore impetuous. Of the good that he sought, he was not willing to delay the acquisition for a moment. She had been taught a very different lesson. Marriage included vows of irrevocable affection and obedience. It was a contract to endure for life. To form this connection in extreme youth, before time had unfolded and modelled the characters of the parties, was, in her opinion, a proof of pernicious and opprobrious temerity. Not to perceive the propriety of delay in this case, or to be regardless of the motives that would enjoin upon us a deliberate procedure, furnished an unanswerable objection to any man's pretensions. She was sensible, however, that this, like other mistakes, was curable. If her arguments failed to remove it, time, it was likely, would effect this purpose. If she rejected a matrimonial proposal for the present, it was for reasons that might not preclude her future acceptance of it.

Her scruples, in the present case, did not relate to the temper or person, or understanding of her lover; but to his age, to the imperfectness of their acquaintance, and to the want of that permanence of character, which can flow only from the progress of time and knowledge. These objections, which so rarely exist, were conclusive with her. There was no danger of her relinquishing them in compliance with the remonstrances of her parents and the solicitations of her lover; though the one and the other were urged with all the force of authority and insinuation. The prescriptions of duty were too clear to allow her to hesitate and waver; but the consciousness of rectitude could not secure her from temporary vexations.

Her parents were blemished with some of the frailties of that character. They held themselves entitled to prescribe in this article, but they forbore to exert their power. They condescended to persuade, but it was manifest that they regarded their own conduct as a relaxation of right; and

had not the lever's importunities suddenly ceased, it is not possible to tell how far the happiness of Miss Dudley might have been endangered. The misfortunes of her father were no sooner publicly known, than the youth forbore his visits, and embarked on a voyage which he had long projected, but which had been hitherto delayed by a superior regard to the interests of his passion.

It must be allowed that the lady had not foreseen this event. She had exercised her judgment upon his character, and had not been deceived. Before this desertion, had it been clearly stated to her apprehension, she would have readily admitted it to be probable. She knew the fascination of wealth, and the delusiveness of self-confidence. She was superior to the folly of supposing him exempt from sinister influences, and deaf to the whispers of ambition; and yet the manner in which she was affected by this event convinced her that her heart had a larger share than her reason in dictating her expectations.

Yet it must not be supposed that she suffered any very acute distress on this account. She was grieved less for her own sake than his. She had no design of entering into marriage in less than seven years from this period. Not a single hope, relative to her own condition, had been frustrated. She had only been mistaken in her favourable conceptions of another. He had exhibited less constancy and virtue than her heart had taught her to expect.

With those opinions, she could devote herself with a single heart to the alleviation of her parent's sorrows. This change in her condition she treated lightly, and retained her cheerfulness unimpaired. This happened because, in a rational estimate, and so far as it affected herself, the misfortune was slight, and because her dejection would only tend to augment the disconsolateness of her parents, while, on the other hand, her serenity was calculated to infuse the same confidence into them. She indulged herself in no fits of exclamation or moodiness. She listened in silence to their invectives and laments, and seized every opportunity that offered to inspire them with courage, to set before them the good as well as the ill to which they were reserved, to suggest expedients for improving their condition, and to soften the asperities of his new mode of life, to her father, by every species of blandishment and tenderness.

She refused no personal exertion to the common benefit. She incited her father to diligence, as well by her example as by her exhortations; suggested plans, and superintended or assisted in the execution of them. The infirmities of sex and age vanished before the motives to courage and activity, flowing from her new situation. When settled in his new abode and profession, she began to deliberate what conduct was incumbent on herself, how she might participate with her father the burden of the common maintenance, and blunt the edge of this calamity by the resources of a powerful and cultivated mind.

In the first place, she disposed of every superfluous garb and trinket She reduced her wardrobe to the plainest and cheapest establishment. By this means alone she supplied her father's necessities with a considerable sum. Her music, and even her books were not spared,—not from the slight esteem in which these were held by her, but because she was thenceforth to become an economist of time as well as of money, because musical instruments are not necessary to the practice of this art in its highest perfection, and because books, when she could procure leisure to read, or money to purchase them, might be obtained in a cheaper and more commodious form, than those costly and splendid volumes with which her father's munificence had formerly supplied her.

To make her expenses as limited as possible was her next care. For this end she assumed the province of cook, the washing of house and clothes, and the cleaning of furniture. Their house was small; the family consisted of no more than four persons, and all formality and expensiveness were studiously discarded; but her strength was unequal to unavoidable tasks. A vigorous constitution could not supply the place of laborious habits, and this part of her plan must have been changed for one less frugal. The aid of a servant must have been hired, if it had not been furnished by gratitude.

Some years before this misfortune, her mother had taken under her protection a girl, the daughter of a poor woman, who subsisted by labour, and who dying, left this child without friend or protector. This girl possessed no very improvable capacity, and therefore could not benefit by the benevolent exertions of her young mistress so much as the latter desired; but her temper was artless and affectionate, and she attached herself to Constantia with the most entire devotion. In this change of fortune she would not consent to be separated; and Miss Dudley, influenced by her affection for her Lucy, and reflecting that on the whole it was most to her advantage to share with her at once her kindness and her poverty, retained her as her companion. With this girl she shared the domestic duties, scrupling not to divide with her the meanest and most rugged, as well as the lightest offices.

This was not all. She in the next place considered whether her ability extended no farther than to save. Could she not by the employment of her hands increase the income as well as diminish the expense? Why should she be precluded from all lucrative occupation? She soon came to a resolution. She was mistress of her needle; and this skill she conceived herself bound to employ for her own subsistence.

Clothing is one of the necessaries of human existence. The art of the tailor is scarcely less use than that of the tiller of the ground! There are few the gains of which are better merited, and less infurious to the principles of human society. She resolved therefore to become a workwoman, and to employ in this way the leisure she possessed from household avocations. To this scheme she

was obliged to reconcile not only herself but her parents. The conquest of their prejudices was no easy task, but her patience and skill finally succeeded, and she procured needlework in sufficient quantity to enable her to enhance in no trivial degree the common fund.

It is one thing barely to comply with the urgencies of the case, and to do that which in necessitous circumstances is best. But to conform with grace and cheerfulness, to yield no place to fruitless recriminations and repinings, to contract the evils into as small a compass as possible, and extract from our condition all possible good, is a task of a different kind.

Mr. Dudley's situation required from him frugality and diligence. He was regular and unintermitted in his application to his pen. He was frugal. His slender income was administered agreeably to the maxims of his daughter: but he was unhappy. He experienced in its full extent the bitterness of disappointment.

He gave himself up for the most part to a listless melancholy. Sometimes his impatience would produce effects less excusable, and conjure up an accusing and irascible spirit. His wife, and even his daughter, he would make the objects of peevish and absurd reproaches. These were moments when her heart drooped indeed, and her tears could not be restrained from flowing. These fits were transitory and rare, and when they had passed, the father seldom failed to mingle tokens of contrition and repentance with the tears of his daughter. Her arguments and soothings were seldom disappointed of success. Her mother's disposition was soft and pliant, but she could not accommodate herself to the necessity of her husband's affairs. She was obliged to endure the want of some indulgences, but she reserved to herself the liberty of complaining, and to subdue this spirit in her was found utterly impracticable. She died a victim to discontent.

This event deepened the gloom that shrouded the soul of her father, and rendered the task of consolation still more difficult. She did not despair. Her sweetness and patience was invincible by any thing that had already happened, but her fortitude did not exceed the standard of human nature. Evils now began to menace her, to which it is likely she would have yielded, had not their approach been intercepted by an evil of a different kind.

The pressure of grief is sometimes such as to prompt us to seek a refuge in voluntary death. We must lay aside the burden which we cannot sustain. If thought degenerate into a vehicle of pain, what remains but to destroy that vehicle? For this end, death is the obvious, but not the only, or morally speaking, the worst means. There is one method of obtaining the bliss of forgetfulness, in comparison with which suicide is innocent.

The strongest mind is swayed by circumstances. There is no firmness of integrity, perhaps able to repel every species of temptation, which is produced by the present constitution of human affairs, and yet temptation is successful, chiefly by virtue of its gradual and invisible approaches. We rush into danger, because we are not aware of its existence, and have not therefore provided the means of safety, and the dæmon that seizes us is hourly reinforced by habit. Our opposition grows fainter in proportion as our adversary acquires new strength, and the man becomes enslaved by the most sordid vices, whose fall would, at a former period, have been deemed impossible, or who would have been imagined liable to any species of depravity, more than to this.

Mr. Dudley's education had entailed upon him many errors, yet who would have supposed it possible for him to be enslaved by a depraved appetite; to be enamoured of low debauchery, and to grasp at the happiness that intoxication had to bestow? This was a mournful period in Constantia's history. My feelings will not suffer me to dwell upon it. I cannot describe the manner in which she was affected by the first symptoms of this depravity, the struggles which she made to counteract this dreadful infatuation, and the grief which she experienced from the repeated miscarriage of her efforts. I will not detail her various expedients for this end, the appeals which she made to his understanding, to his sense of honour and dread of infamy, to the gratitude to which she was entitled, and to the injunctions of parental duty. I will not detail his fits of remorse, his fruitless penitence end continual relapses, nor depict the heart-breaking scenes of uproar, and violence, and foul disgrace that accompanied his paroxysms of drunkenness.

The only intellectual amusement which this lady allowed herself was writing. She enjoyed one distant friend, with whom she maintained an uninterrupted correspondence, and to whom she confided a circumstantial and copious relation of all these particulars. That friend is the writer of these memoirs. It is not impossible but that these letters may be communicated to the world, at some future period. The picture which they exhibit is hourly exemplified and realized, though in the many-coloured scenes of human life none surpasses it in disastrousness and horror. My eyes almost wept themselves dry over this part of her tale.

In this state of things Mr. Dudley's blindness might justly be accounted, even in its immediate effects, a fortunate event. It dissolved the spell by which he was bound, and which it is probable would never have been otherwise broken. It restored him to himself, and showed him, with a distinctness which made him shudder, the gulf to which he was hastening. But nothing can compensate to the sufferers the evils of blindness. It was the business of Constantia's life to alleviate those sufferings, to cherish and console her father, and to rescue him by the labour of her hands from dependence on public charity. For this end, her industry and solicitude were never at rest. She was able, by that industry, to provide him and herself with necessaries. Their portion was scanty, and if it sometimes exceeded the standard of their wants, not less frequently fell short of it. For all her toils and disquietudes she esteemed herself fully compensated by the smiles of her father. He indeed could seldom be prompted to smile, or to suppress the dictates of

that despair which flowed from his sense of this new calamity, and the aggravations of hardship which his recent insobrieties had occasioned to his daughter.

She purchased what books her scanty stock would allow, and borrowed others. These she read to him when her engagements would permit. At other times she was accustomed to solace herself with her own music. The lute which her father had purchased in Italy, and which had been disposed of among the rest of his effects, at public sale, had been gratuitously restored to him by the purchaser, on condition of his retaining it in his possession. His blindness and inoccupation now broke the long silence to which this instrument had been condemned, and afforded an accompaniment to the young lady's voice.

Her chief employment was conversation. She resorted to this as the best means of breaking the monotony of the scene; but this purpose was not only accomplished, but other benefits of the highest value accrued from it. The habits of a painter eminently tended to vivify and make exact her father's conceptions and delineations of visible objects. The sphere of his youthful observation comprised more ingredients of the picturesque than any other sphere. The most precious materials of the moral history of mankind are derived from the revolutions of Italy. Italian features and landscape constitute the chosen field of the artists. No one had more carefully explored this field than Mr. Dudley. His time, when abroad, had been divided between residence at Rome, and excursions to Calabria and Tuscany. Few impressions were effaced from his capacious register, and these were now rendered by his eloquence nearly as conspicuous to his companion as to himself.

She was imbued with an ardent thirst of knowledge, and by the acuteness of her remarks, and the judiciousness of her inquiries, reflected back upon his understanding as much improvement as she received. These efforts to render his calamity tolerable, and inure him to the profiting by his own resources, were aided by time, and when reconciled by habit to unrespited gloom, he was sometimes visited by gleams of cheerfulness, and drew advantageous comparisons between his present and former situation. A stillness, not unakin to happiness, frequently diffused itself over their winter evenings. Constantia enjoyed in their full extent the felicities of health and self approbation. The genius and eloquence of her father, nourished by perpetual exercise, and undiverted from its purpose by the intrusion of visible objects, frequently afforded her a delight in comparison with which all other pleasures were mean.

CHAPTER III.

This period of tranquillity was short. Poverty hovered at their threshold, and in a state precarious as theirs could not be long excluded. The lady was more accustomed to anticipate good than evil, but she was not unconscious that the winter, which was hastening, would bring with it numerous inconveniences. Wants during that season are multiplied, while the means of supplying them either fail or are diminished. Fuel is alone a cause of expense equal to all other articles of subsistence. Her dwelling was old, crazy, and full of avenues to air. It was evident that neither fire nor clothing would, in an habitation like that, attemper the chilling blasts. Her scanty gains were equal to their needs during summer, but would probably fall short during the prevalence of cold.

These reflections could not fail sometimes to intrude. She indulged them as long as they served, merely to suggest expedients and provisions for the future, but laboured to call away her attention when they merely produced anxiety. This she more easily effected, as some months of summer were still to come, and her knowledge of the vicissitudes to which human life is subject taught her to rely upon the occurrence of some fortunate though unforeseen event.

Accident suggested an expedient of this kind. Passing through an alley in the upper part of the town, her eye was caught by a label on the door of a small house, signifying that it was to be let. It was smaller than that she at present occupied, but it had an aspect of much greater comfort and neatness. Its situation near the centre of the city, in a quiet, cleanly, and well paved alley, was far preferable to that of her present habitation in the suburbs, scarcely accessible in winter for pools and gullies, and in a neighbourhood abounding with indigence and profligacy. She likewise considered that the rent of this might be less, and that the proprietor of this might have more forbearance and benignity than she had hitherto met with.

Unconversant as she was with the world, imbued with the timidity of her sex and her youth, many enterprises were arduous to her, which would, to age and experience, have been easy. Her reluctances, however, when required by necessity, were overcome, and all the measures which her situation prescribed executed with address and dispatch. One, marking her deportment, would have perceived nothing but dignity and courage. He would have regarded these as the fruits of habitual independence and exertion, whereas they were merely the results of clear perceptions and inflexible resolves.

The proprietor of this mansion was immediately sought out, and a bargain, favourable as she could reasonably desire, concluded. Possession was to be taken in a week. For this end, carters and draymen were to be engaged, household implements to be prepared for removal, and negligence and knavery prevented by scrupulous attention. The duties of superintendence and execution devolved upon her. Her father's blindness rendered him powerless. His personal ease

required no small portion of care. Household and professional functions were not to be omitted. She stood alone in the world; there was none whose services or counsel she could claim. Tortured by a multiplicity of cares, shrinking from exposure to rude eyes, and from contention with refractory and insolent spirits, and overpowered with fatigue and disgust, she was yet compelled to retain a cheerful tone in her father's presence, and to struggle with his regrets and his peevishness.

O, my friend, methinks I now see thee encountering the sneers and obstinacy of the meanest of mankind, subjecting that frame of thine, so exquisitely delicate, and therefore so feeble, to the vilest drudgery. I see thee leading thy unhappy father to his new dwelling, and stifling the sighs produced by his fruitless repinings and unseasonable scruples. Why was I not partaker of thy cares and labours? Why was I severed from thee by the ocean, and kept in ignorance of thy state? I was not without motives to anxiety, for I was friendless as thou, but how unlike to thine was my condition! I reposed upon down and tissue, never moved but with obsequious attendance and pompous equipage; painting and music were consolations ever at hand, and my cabinet was stored with poetry and science. These, indeed, were insufficient to exclude care; and with regard to the past I have no wish but that I had shared with my friend her toilsome and humiliating lot. However an erroneous world might judge, thy life was full of dignity, and thy moments of happiness not few, since happiness is only attendant on the performance of our duty.

A toilsome and sultry week was terminated by a Sabbath of repose. Her new dwelling possessed indisputable advantages over her old. Not the least of these benefits consisted in the vicinity of people, peaceable and honest, though poor. She was no longer shocked by the clamours of debauchery, and exposed, by her situation, to the danger of being mistaken by the profligate of either sex for one of their own class. It was reasonable to consider this change of abode as fortunate, and yet circumstances quickly occurred which suggested a very different conclusion.

She had no intercourse, which necessity did not prescribe, with the rest of the world. She screened herself as much as possible from intercourse with prying and loquacious neighbours. Her father's inclinations in this respect coincided with her own, though their love of seclusion was prompted by different motives. Visitants were hated by the father, because his dignity was hurt by communication with the vulgar. The daughter set too much value upon time willingly to waste it upon trifles and triflers. She had no pride to subdue, and therefore never escaped from well-meant importunity at the expense of politeness and good humour. In her moments of leisure she betook herself to the poet and the moralist for relief.

She could not at all times suppress the consciousness of the evils which surrounded and threatened her; she could not but rightly estimate the absorbing and brutifying nature of that toil to which she was condemned. Literature had hitherto been regarded as her solace. She knew that meditation and converse, as well as books and the pen, are instruments of knowledge, but her musing thoughts were too often fixed upon her own condition. Her father's soaring moods and luminous intervals grew less frequent. Conversation was too rarely abstracted from personal considerations, and strayed less often than before into the wilds of fancy or the mazes of analysis.

These circumstances led her to reflect whether subsistence might not be obtained by occupations purely intellectual. Instruction was needed by the young of both sexes. Females frequently performed the office of teachers. Was there no branch of her present knowledge which she might claim wages for imparting to others? Was there no art within her reach to acquire, convertible into means of gain? Women are generally limited to what is sensual and ornamental: music and painting, and the Italian and French languages, are bounds which they seldom pass. In these pursuits it is not possible—nor is it expected—that they should arrive at the skill of adepts. The education of Constantia had been regulated by the peculiar views of her father, who sought to make her, not alluring and voluptuous, but eloquent and wise. He therefore limited her studies to Latin and English. Instead of familiarizing her with the amorous effusions of Petrarcha and Racine, he made her thoroughly conversant with Tacitus and Milton. Instead of making her a practical musician or pencilist, he conducted her to the school of Newton and Hartley, unveiled to her the mathematical properties of light and sound, taught her as a metaphysician and anatomist the structure and power of the senses, and discussed with her the principles and progress of human society.

These accomplishments tended to render her superior to the rest of women but in no degree qualified her for the post of a female instructor: she saw and lamented her deficiencies, and gradually formed the resolution of supplying them. Her knowledge of the Latin tongue and of grammatical principles rendered easy the acquisition of Italian and French, these being merely Scions from the Roman stock.

Having had occasion, previous to her change of dwelling, to purchase paper at a bookseller's, the man had offered her at a very low price a second-hand copy of Veneroni's grammar: the offer had been declined, her views at that time being otherwise directed. Now, however, this incident was remembered, and a resolution instantly formed to purchase the book. As soon as the light declined, and her daily task at the needle had drawn to a close, she set out to execute this purpose. Arriving at the house of the bookseller, she perceived that the doors and windows were closed. Night having not yet arrived, the conjecture easily occurred that some one had died in the house. She had always dealt with this man for books and paper, and had always been treated with civility. Her heart readily admitted some sympathy with his distress, and to remove her doubts she turned to a person who stood at the entrance of the next house, and who held a cloth steeped in vinegar to his nostrils. In reply to her question the stranger said in a tone of the

deepest consternation—Mr. Watson do you mean? He is dead: he died last night of the *yellow fever*.

The name of this disease was not absolutely new to her ears. She had been apprized of its rapid and destructive progress in one quarter of the city, but hitherto it had existed, with regard to her, chiefly in the form of rumour. She had not realized the nature or probable extent of the evil. She lived at no great distance from the seat of the malady, but her neighbourhood had been hitherto exempt. So wholly unused was she to contemplate pestilence, except at a distance, that its actual existence in the bosom of this city was incredible.

Contagious diseases she well knew periodically visited and laid waste the Greek and Egyptian cities. It constituted no small part of that mass of evil, political and physical, by which that portion of the world has been so long afflicted. That a pest equally malignant had assailed the metropolis of her own country—a town famous for the salubrity of its air and the perfection of its police—had something in it so wild and uncouth that she could not reconcile herself to the possibility of such an event.

The death of Watson, however, filled her mind with awful reflections. The purpose of her walk was forgotten amidst more momentous considerations. She bent her steps pensively homeward. She had now leisure to remark the symptoms of terror with which all ranks appeared to have been seized. The streets were as much frequented as ever, but there were few passengers whose countenances did not betray alarm, and who did not employ the imaginary antidote to infection—vinegar.

Having reached home, she quickly discovered in her father an unusual solemnity and thoughtfulness. He had no power to conceal his emotions from his daughter, when her efforts to discover them were earnestly exerted. She learned that during her absence he had been visited by his next neighbour—a thrifty, sober, and well meaning, but ignorant and meddling person, by name Whiston. This person, being equally inquisitive into other men's affairs, and communicative of his own, was always an unwelcome visitant. On this occasion he had come to disburden on Mr. Dudley his fears of disease and death. His tale of the origin and progress of the epidemic, of the number and suddenness of recent deaths, was delivered with endless prolixity. With this account he mingled prognostics of the future, counselled Mr. Dudley to fly from the scene of danger, and stated his own schemes and resolutions. After having thoroughly affrighted and wearied his companion he took his leave.

Constantia endeavoured to remove the impression which had been thus needlessly made. She urged her doubts as to the truth of Whiston's representations, and endeavoured, in various ways, to extenuate the danger.

"Nay, my child," said her father, "thou needest not reason on the subject; I am not afraid; at least, on my own account, I fear nothing. What is life to me that I should dread to lose it? If on any account I should tremble it is on thine, my angelic girl. Thou dost not deserve thus early to perish: and yet if my love for thee were rational, perhaps I ought to wish it. An evil destiny will pursue thee to the close of thy life, be it ever so long.

"I know that ignorance and folly breed the phantoms by which themselves are perplexed and terrified, and that Whiston is a fool; but here the truth is too plain to be disguised. This malady is pestilential. Havock and despair will accompany its progress, and its progress will be rapid. The tragedies of Marseilles and Messina will be reacted on this stage.

"For a time we in this quarter shall be exempt, but it will surely reach us at last; and then, whither shall we fly? For the rich, the whole world is a safe asylum, but for us, indigent and wretched, what fate is reserved but to stay and perish? If the disease spare us, we must perish by neglect and famine. Alarm will be far and wide diffused. Fear will hinder those who supply the market from entering the city. The price of food will become exorbitant. Our present source of subsistence, ignominious and scanty as it is, will be cut off. Traffic and labour of every kind will be at an end. We shall die, but not until we have witnessed and endured horrors that surpass thy powers of conception.

"I know full well the enormity of this evil. I have been at Messina, and talked with many who witnessed the state of that city in 1743. I will not freeze thy blood with the recital. Anticipation has a tendency to lessen or prevent some evils, but pestilence is not of that number. Strange untowardness of destiny! That thou and I should be cast upon a scene like this!"

Mr. Dudley joined with uncommon powers of discernment a species of perverseness not easily accounted for. He acted as if the inevitable evils of her lot were not sufficient for the trial of his daughter's patience. Instead of comforter and counsellor he fostered impatience in himself, and endeavoured, with the utmost diligence, to undermine her fortitude and disconcert her schemes. The task was assigned to her, not only of subduing her own fears, but of maintaining the contest with his disastrous eloquence. In most cases she had not failed of success. Hitherto their causes of anxiety her own observation had, in some degree, enabled her to estimate at their just value. The rueful pictures which his imagination was wont to portray affected her for a moment; but deliberate scrutiny commonly enabled her to detect and demonstrate their fallacy. Now, however, the theme was new. Panic and foreboding found their way to her heart in defiance of her struggles. She had no experience by which to counteract this impulse. All that remained was to beguile her own and her father's cares by counterfeiting cheerfulness, and introducing new topics.

This panic, stifled for a time, renewed its sway when she retired to her chamber. Never did futurity wear, to her fancy, so dark a hue: never did her condition appear to her in a light so dreary and forlorn. To fly from the danger was impossible. How should accommodation at a distance be procured? The means of subsistence were indissolubly connected with her present residence, but the progress of this disease would cut off these means, and leave her to be beset not only with pestilence but famine. What provision could she make against an evil like this?

CHAPTER IV.

The terms on which she had been admitted into this house included the advance of one quarter's rent and the monthly payment of subsequent dues. The requisite sum had been with difficulty collected; the landlord had twice called to remind her of her stipulation, and this day had been fixed for the discharge of this debt. He had omitted, contrary to her expectations and her wishes, to come. It was probable, however, that they would meet on the ensuing day. If he should fail in this respect, it appeared to be her duty to carry the money to his house, and this it had been her resolution to perform.

Now, however, new views were suggested to her thoughts. By the payment of this debt she would leave herself nearly destitute. The flight and terror of the citizens would deprive her of employment. Want of food was an immediate and inevitable evil which the payment of this sum would produce. Was it just to incur this evil? To retain the means of luxurious gratification would be wrong, but to bereave herself and her father of bare subsistence was surely no dictate of duty.

It is true the penalty of non-payment was always in the landlord's hands. He was empowered by the law to sell their movables end expel them from his house. It was now no time for a penalty like this to be incurred. But from this treatment it was reasonable to hope that his lenity would save them. Was it not right to wait till the alternative of expulsion or payment was imposed? Meanwhile, however, she was subjected to the torments of suspense, and to the guilt of a broken promise. These consequences were to be eluded only in one way: by visiting her landlord, and stating her true condition, it was possible that his compassion would remit claims which were in themselves unreasonable and uncommon. The tender of the money, accompanied by representations sufficiently earnest and pathetic, might possibly be declined.

These reflections were the next morning submitted to her father. Her decision in this case was of less importance in his eyes than in those of his daughter. Should the money be retained, it was in his opinion a pittance too small to afford them effectual support. Supposing provisions to be had at any price, which was itself improbable, that price would be exorbitant. The general confusion would probably last for months, and thirty dollars would be devoured in a few weeks, even in a time of safety. To give or to keep was indifferent for another reason. It was absurd for those to consult about means of subsistence for the next month, when it was fixed that they should die to-morrow. The true proceeding was obvious. The landlord's character was well known to him by means of the plaints and invectives of their neighbours, most of whom were tenants of the same man. If the money were offered his avarice would receive it, in spite of all the pleas that she should urge. If it were detained without leave, an officer of justice would quickly be dispatched to claim it.

This statement was sufficient to take away from Constantia the hope that she had fostered. "What then," said she, after a pause, "is my father's advice? Shall I go forthwith and deliver the money?"

"No," said he, "stay till he sends for it. Have you forgotten that Matthews resides in the very midst of this disease. There is no need to thrust yourself within in its fangs. They will reach us time enough. It is likely his messenger will be an agent of the law. No matter. The debt will be merely increased by a few charges. In a state like ours, the miserable remnant is not worth caring for."

This reasoning did not impart conviction to the lady. The danger flowing from a tainted atmosphere was not small, but to incur that danger was wiser than to exasperate their landlord, to augment the debt, and to encounter the disgrace accruing from a constable's visits. The conversation was dropped, and presently after she set out on a visit to Matthews.

She fully estimated the importance to her happiness of the sum which she was going to pay. The general panic had already, in some degree, produced the effect she chiefly dreaded; the failure of employment for her needle. Her father had, with his usual diligence at self-torment, supplied her with sufficient proofs of the covetous and obdurate temper of her creditor. Insupportable, however, as the evil of payment was, it was better to incur it spontaneously, than by means of legal process. The desperateness of this proceeding, therefore, did not prevent her from adopting it, but it filled her heart with the bitterest sensations. Absorbed, as she passed along, by these, she was nearly insensible to the vacancy which now prevailed in a quarter which formerly resounded with the din of voices and carriages.

As she approached the house to which she was going, her reluctance to proceed increased. Frequently she paused to recollect the motives that had prescribed this task, and to reinforce her purposes. At length she arrived at the house. Now, for the first time, her attention was excited by the silence and desolation that surrounded her. This evidence of fear and of danger struck upon her heart. All appeared to have fled from the presence of this unseen and terrible foe. The

temerity of adventuring thus into the jaws of the pest now appeared to her in glaring colours.

Appearances suggested a refection which had not previously occurred, and which tended to console her. Was it not probable that Matthews had likewise flown? His habits were calculated to endear to him his life: he would scarcely be among the last to shun perils like these: The omission of his promised visit on the preceding day might be owing to his absence from the city, and thus, without subjection to any painful alternative, she might be suffered to retain the money.

To give certainty to this hope, she cast her eye towards the house opposite to which she now stood. Her heart drooped on perceiving proofs that the dwelling was still inhabited. The door was open, and the windows in the second and third story were raised. Near the entrance, in the street, stood a cart. The horse attached to it, in its form and furniture and attitude, was an emblem of torpor and decay. His gaunt sides, motionless limbs, his gummy and dead eyes, and his head hanging to the ground, were in unison with the craziness of the vehicle to which he belonged, and the paltry and bedusted harness which covered him. No attendant nor any human face was visible. The stillness, though at an hour customarily busy, was uninterrupted except by the sound of wheels moving at an almost indistinguishable distance.

She paused for a moment to contemplate this unwonted spectacle. Her trepidations were mingled with emotions not unakin to sublimity, but the consciousness of danger speedily prevailed, and she hastened to acquit herself of her engagement. She approached the door for this purpose, but before she could draw the bell, her motions were arrested by sounds from within. The staircase was opposite the door. Two persons were now discovered descending the stairs. They lifted between them a heavy mass, which was presently discerned to be a coffin. Shocked by this discovery, and trembling, she withdrew from the entrance.

At this moment a door on the opposite side of the street opened, and a female came out. Constantia approached her involuntarily, and her appearance not being unattractive, ventured more by gestures than by words, to inquire whose obsequies were thus unceremoniously conducted. The woman informed her that the dead was Matthews, who, two days before was walking about, indifferent to and braving danger. She cut short the narrative which her companion seemed willing to prolong, and to embellish with all its circumstances, and hastened home with her utmost expedition.

The mind of Constantia was a stranger to pusillanimity. Death, as the common lot of all, was regarded by her without perturbation. The value of life, though no annihilated, was certainly diminished by adversity. With whatever solemnity contemplated, it excited on her own account no aversion or inquietude. For her father's sake only death was an evil to be ardently deprecated. The nature of the prevalent disease, the limits and modes of its influence, the risk that is incurred by approaching the sick or the dead, or by breathing the surrounding element, were subjects foreign to her education. She judged like the mass of mankind from the most obvious appearances, and was subject like them to impulses which disdained the control of her reason. With all her complacency for death, and speculative resignation to the fate that governs the world, disquiet and alarm pervaded her bosom on this occasion.

The deplorable state to which her father would be reduced by her death was seen and lamented, but her tremulous sensations flowed not from this source. They were, in some sort, inexplicable and mechanical. In spite of recollection and reflection, they bewildered and harassed her, and subsided only of their own accord.

The death of Matthews was productive of one desirable consequence. Till the present tumult was passed, and his representatives had leisure to inspect his affairs, his debtors would probably remain unmolested. He likewise, who should succeed to the inheritance, might possess very different qualities, and be as much, distinguished for equity as Matthews had been for extortion. These reflections lightened her footsteps as she hied homeward. The knowledge she had gained, she hoped, would counterpoise, in her father's apprehension, the perils which accompanied the acquisition of it.

She had scarcely passed her own threshold, when she was followed by Whiston. This man pursued the occupation of a cooper. He performed journeywork in a shop, which, unfortunately for him, was situated near the water, and at a small distance from the scene of original infection. This day his employer had dismissed his workmen, and Whiston was at liberty to retire from the city,—a scheme which had been the theme of deliberation and discussion during the preceding fortnight.

Hitherto his apprehensions seemed to have molested others more than himself. The rumours and conjectures industriously collected during the day, were, in the the evening, copiously detailed to his neighbours, and his own mind appeared to be disburdened of its cares in proportion as he filled others with terror and inquietude. The predictions of physicians, the measure of precaution prescribed by the government, the progress of the malady, and the history of the victims who were hourly destroyed by it, were communicated with tormenting prolixity and terrifying minuteness.

On these accounts, as well as on others, no one's visits were more unwelcome than his. As his deportment was sober and honest, and his intentions harmless, he was always treated by Constantia with politeness, though his entrance always produced a momentary depression of her spirits. On this evening she was less fitted than ever to repel those anxieties which his conversation was qualified to produce. His entrance, therefore, was observed with sincere regret.

Contrary, however, to her expectation, Whiston brought with him new manners and a new expression of countenance. He was silent, abstracted, his eye was full of inquietude, and wandered with perpetual restlessness. On these tokens being remarked, he expressed, in faltering accents, his belief that he had contracted this disease, and that now it was too late for him to leave the city.

Mr. Dudley's education was somewhat medical. He was so far interested in his guest as to inquire into his sensations. They were such as were commonly the prelude to fever. Mr Dudley, while he endeavoured by cheerful tones to banish his dejection, exhorted him to go home, and to take some hot and wholesome draught, in consequence of which he might rise to-morrow with his usual health. This advice was gratefully received, and Whiston put a period to his visit much sooner than was customary.

Mr. Dudley entertained no doubts that Whiston was seized with the reigning disease, and extinguished the faint hope which his daughter had cherished, that their district would escape. Whiston's habituation was nearly opposite his own; but as they made no use of their front room, they had seldom an opportunity of observing the transactions of their neighbours. This distance and seclusion were congenial with her feelings, and she derived pleasure from her father's confession, that they contributed to personal security.

Constantia was accustomed to rise with the dawn, and traverse for an hour the State-house Mall. As she took her walk the next morning, she pondered with astonishment on the present situation of the city. The air was bright and pure, and apparently salubrious. Security and silence seemed to hover over the scene. She was only reminded of the true state of things by the occasional appearance of carriages loaded with household utensils tending towards the country, and by the odour of vinegar by which every passenger was accompanied. The public walk was cool and fragrant as formerly, skirted by verdure as bright, and shaded by foliage as luxuriant, but it was no longer frequented by lively steps and cheerful countenances. Its solitude was uninterrupted by any but herself.

This day passed without furnishing any occasion to leave the house. She was less sedulously employed than usual, as the clothes on which she was engaged belonged to a family who had precipitately left the city. She had leisure therefore to ruminate. She could not but feel some concern in the fate of Whiston. He was a young man, who subsisted on the fruits of his labour, and divided his gains with an only sister who lived with him, and who performed every household office.

This girl was humble and innocent, and of a temper affectionate and mild. Casual intercourse only had taken place between her and Constantia. They were too dissimilar for any pleasure to arise from communication, but the latter was sufficiently disposed to extend to her harmless neighbour the sympathy and succour which she needed. Whiston had come from a distant part of the country, and his sister was the only person in the city with whom he was connected by ties of kindred. In case of his sickness, therefore, their condition would be helpless and deplorable.

Evening arrived, and Whiston failed to pay his customary visit. She mentioned this omission to her father, and expressed her apprehension as to the cause of it. He did not discountenance the inference which she drew from this circumstance, and assented to the justice of the picture which she drew of the calamitous state to which Whiston and his sister would be reduced by the indisposition of either. She then ventured to suggest the propriety of visiting the house, and of thus ascertaining the truth.

To this proposal Mr. Dudley urged the most vehement objections. What purpose could be served by entering their dwelling? What benefit would flow but the gratification of a dangerous curiosity? Constantia was disabled from furnishing pecuniary aid. She could not act the part of physician or nurse. Her father stood in need of a thousand personal services, and the drudgery of cleaning and cooking already exceeded the bounds of her strength. The hazard of contracting the disease by conversing with the sick was imminent. What services was she able to render equivalent to the consequences of her own sickness and death?

These representations had temporary influence. They recalled her for a moment from her purpose, but this purpose was speedily re-embraced. She reflected that the evil to herself, formidable as it was, was barely problematical. That converse with the sick would impart this disease was by no means certain. Whiston might at least be visited. Perhaps she would find him well. If sick, his disease might be unepidemical, or curable by seasonable assistance. He might stand in need of a physician, and she was more able than his sister to summon this aid.

Her father listened calmly to her reasonings. After a pause he gave his consent. In doing this he was influenced not by the conviction that his daughter's safety would be exposed to no hazard, but from a belief that, though she might shun infection for the present, it would inevitably seize her during some period of the progress of this pest.

CHAPTER V.

It was now dusk, and she hastened to perform this duty. Whiston's dwelling was wooden and of small dimensions. She lifted the latch softly and entered. The lower room was unoccupied. She

advanced to the foot of a narrow staircase, and knocked and listened, but no answer was returned to the summons. Hence there was reason to infer that no one was within, but this, from other considerations, was extremely improbable. The truth could be ascertained only by ascending the stairs. Some feminine scruples were to be subdued before this proceeding could be adopted.

After some hesitation, she determined to ascend. The staircase was terminated by a door, at which she again knocked for admission, but in vain. She listened and presently heard the motion as of some one in bed. This was succeeded by tokens of vehement exertions to vomit. These signs convincing her that the house was not without a tenant, she could not hesitate to enter the room.

Lying in a tattered bed, she now discovered Mary Whiston. Her face was flushed and swelled, her eyes closed, and some power, appeared to have laid a leaden hand upon her faculties. The floor was moistened and stained by the effusion from her stomach. Constantia touched her hand, and endeavoured to rouse her. It was with difficulty that her attention was excited. Her languid eyes, were scarcely opened before they again closed, and she sunk into forgetfulness.

Repeated efforts, however, at length recalled her to herself, and extorted from her some account of her condition. On the day before, at noon, her stomach became diseased, her head dizzy, and her limbs unable to support her. Her brother was absent, and her drowsiness, interrupted only by paroxysms of vomiting, continued till his return late in the evening. He had then shown himself, for a few minutes, at her bedside, had made some inquiries and precipitately retired, since when he had not reappeared.

It was natural to imagine that Whiston had gone to procure medical assistance. That he had not returned, during a day and a half, was matter of surprise. His own indisposition was recollected, and his absence could only be accounted for by supposing that sickness had disabled him from regaining his own house. What was his real destiny it was impossible to conjecture. It was not till some months after this period that satisfactory intelligence was gained upon this head.

It appeared that Whiston had allowed his terrors to overpower the sense of what was due to his sister and to humanity. On discovering the condition of the unhappy girl, he left the houses and, instead of seeking a physician, he turned his step towards the country. After travelling some hours, being exhausted by want of food, by fatigue; and by mental as well as bodily anguish, he laid himself down under the shelter of a hayrick, in a vacant field. Here he was discovered in the morning by the inhabitants of a neighbouring farm house. These people had too much regard for their own safety to accommodate him under their roof, or even to approach within fifty paces of his person.

A passenger whose attention and compassion had been excited by this incident was endowed with more courage. He lifted the stranger in his arms, and carried him from this unwholesome spot to a barn. This was the only service which the passenger was able to perform. Whiston, deserted by every human creature, burning with fever, tormented into madness by thirst, spent three miserable days in agony. When dead, no one would cover his body with earth, but he was suffered to decay by piecemeal.

The dwelling being at no great distance from the barn, could not be wholly screened from the malignant vapour which a corpse thus neglected, could not fail to produce.

The inhabitants were preparing, on this account, to change their abode, but, on the eve of their departure, the master of the family became sick. He was, in a short time, followed to the grave by his mother, his wife, and four children.

They probably imbibed their disease from the tainted atmosphere around them. The life of Whiston, and their own lives, might have been saved by affording the wanderer an asylum and suitable treatment, or at least their own deaths might have been avoided by interring his remains.

Meanwhile Constantia was occupied with reflecting on the scene before her. Not only a physician but a nurse was wanting. The last province it was more easy for her to supply than the former. She was acquainted with the abode but of one physician. He lived at no small distance from this spot. To him she immediately hastened; but he was absent, and his numerous engagements left it wholly uncertain when he would return, and whether he would consent to increase the number of his patients. Direction was obtained to the residence of another, who was happily disengaged; and who promised to attend immediately. Satisfied with this assurance, she neglected to request directions; by which she might regulate herself on his failing to come.

During her return her thoughts were painfully employed in considering the mode proper for her to pursue in her present perplexing situation. She was for the most part unacquainted with the character of those who compelled her neighbourhood. That any would be willing to undertake the attendance of this girl was by no means probable. As wives and mothers, it would perhaps be unjust to require or permit it. As to herself, there were labours and duties of her own sufficient to engross her faculties, yet, by whatever foreign cares or tasks she was oppressed, she felt that to desert this being was impossible.

In the absence of her friend, Mary's state exhibited no change. Constantia, on regaining the house, lighted the remnant of a candle, and resumed her place by the bed side of the sick girl. She impatiently waited the arrival of the physician, but hour succeeded hour, and he came not. All hope of his coming being extinguished, she bethought herself that her father might be able to

inform her of the best manner of proceeding. It was likewise her duty to relieve him from the suspense in which her absence would unavoidably plunge him.

On entering her own apartment, she found a stranger in company with Mr. Dudley. The latter perceiving that she had returned, speedily acquainted her with the view of their guest. His name was M'Crea; he was the nephew of their landlord, and was now become, by reversion, the proprietor of the house which they occupied. Matthews had been buried the preceding day, and M'Crea, being well acquainted with the engagements which subsisted between the deceased and Mr. Dudley, had come thus unreasonably to demand the rent. He was not unconscious of the inhumanity and sordidness of this proceeding, and therefore endeavoured to disguise it by the usual pretences. All his funds were exhausted. He came not only in his own name, but in that of Mrs. Matthews his aunt, who was destitute of money to procure daily and indispensable provision, and who was striving to collect a sufficient sum to enable her and the remains of her family to fly from a spot where their lives were in perpetual danger.

These excuses were abundantly fallacious, but Mr. Dudley was too proud to solicit the forbearance of a man like this. He recollected that the engagement on his part was voluntary and explicit, and he disdained to urge his present exigences as reasons for retracting it. He expressed the utmost readiness to comply with the demand, and merely desired him to wait till Miss Dudley returned. From the inquietudes with which the unusual duration of her absence had filled him, he was now relieved by her entrance.

With an indignant and desponding heart, she complied with her father's directions, and the money being reluctantly delivered, M'Crea took an hasty leave. She was too deeply interested in the fate of Mary Whiston to allow her thoughts to be diverted for the present into a new channel. She described the desolate condition of the girl to her father, and besought him to think of something suitable to her relief.

Mr. Dudley's humanity would not suffer him to disapprove of his daughter's proceeding. He imagined that the symptoms of the patient portended a fatal issue. There were certain complicated remedies which might possibly be beneficial, but these were too costly, and the application would demand more strength than his daughter could bestow. He was unwilling, however, to leave any thing within his power untried. Pharmacy had been his trade, and he had reserved, for domestic use some of the most powerful evacuants. Constantia was supplied with some of these, and he consented that she should spend the night with her patient and watch their operation.

The unhappy Mary received whatever was offered, but her stomach refused to retain it. The night was passed by Constantia without closing her eyes. As soon as the day dawned, she prepared once more to summon the physician, who had failed to comply with his promise. She had scarcely left the house, however, before she met him. He pleaded his numerous engagements in excuse for his last night's negligence, and desired her to make haste to conduct him to the patient.

Having scrutinized her symptoms, he expressed his hopelessness of her recovery. Being informed of the mode in which she had been treated, he declared his approbation of it, but intimated, that these being unsuccessful, all that remained was to furnish her with any liquid she might choose to demand, and wait patiently for the event. During this interview the physician surveyed the person and dress of Constantia with an inquisitive eye. His countenance betrayed marks of curiosity and compassion, and, had he made any approaches to confidence and friendliness, Constantia would not have repelled them. His air was benevolent and candid, and she estimated highly the usefulness of a counsellor and friend in her present circumstances. Some motive, however, hindered him from tendering his services, and in a few moments he withdrew.

Mary's condition hourly grew worse. A corroded and gangrenous stomach was quickly testified by the dark hue and poisonous malignity of the matter which was frequently ejected from it. Her stuper gave place to some degree of peevishness and restlessness. She drank the water that was held to her lips with unspeakable avidity, and derived from this source a momentary alleviation of her pangs. Fortunately for her attendant her agonies were not of long duration. Constantia was absent from her bedside as rarely and for periods as short as possible. On the succeeding night the sufferings of the patient terminated in death.

This event took place at two o'clock, in the morning,—an hour whose customary stillness was, if possible, increased tenfold by the desolation of the city. The poverty of Mary and of her nurse; had deprived the former of the benefits, resulting from the change of bed and clothes. Every thing about her was in a condition noisome and detestable. Her yellowish and haggard visage, conspicuous by a feeble light, an atmosphere freighted with malignant vapours, and reminding Constantia at every instant of the perils which encompassed her, the consciousness of solitude and sensations of deadly sickness in her own frame, were sufficient to intimidate a soul of firmer texture than hers.

She was sinking fast into helplessness, when a new train of reflections showed her the necessity of perseverance. All that remained was to consign the corpse to the grave. She knew that vehicles for this end were provided at the public expense; that, notice being given of the occasion there was for their attendance, at receptacle and carriage for the dead would be instantly provided. Application at this hour, she imagined, would be unseasonable: it must be deferred till the morning, which was yet at some distance.

Meanwhile to remain at her present post was equally useless and dangerous. She endeavoured to

stifle the conviction that some mortal sickness had seized upon her own frame. Her anxieties of head and stomach she was willing to impute to extraordinary fatigue and watchfulness, and hoped that they would be dissipated by an hour's unmolested repose. She formed the resolution of seeking her own chamber.

At this moment, however, the universal silence underwent a slight interruption. The sound was familiar to her ears. It was a signal frequently repeated at the midnight hour during this season of calamity. It was the slow movement of a hearse, apparently passing along the street in which the alley where Mr. Dudley resided terminated. At first this sound had no other effect than to aggravate the dreariness of all around her. Presently it occurred to her that this vehicle might be disengaged. She conceived herself bound to see the last offices performed for the deceased Mary. The sooner so irksome a duty was discharged the better: every hour might augment her incapacity for exertion. Should she be unable when the morning arrived to go as far as the City-Hall, and give the necessary information, the most shocking consequences would ensue. Whiston's house and her own were opposite each other, and not connected with any on the same side. A narrow space divided them, and her own chamber was within the sphere of the contagion which would flow, in consequence of such neglect, from that of her neighbour.

Influenced by these considerations she passed into the street, and gained the corner of the alley just as the carriage, whose movements she had heard, arrived at the same spot. It was accompanied by two men, negroes, who listened to her tale with respect. Having already a burden of this kind, they could not immediately comply with this request. They promised that, having disposed of their present charge, they would return forthwith, and be ready to execute her orders.

Happily one of these persons was known to her. At other seasons his occupation was that of *wood-carter*, and as such he had performed some services for Mr. Dudley. His temper was gentle and obliging. The character of Constantia had been viewed by him with reverence, and his kindness had relieved her from many painful offices. His old occupation being laid aside for a time, he had betaken himself like many others of his colour and rank, to the conveyance and burial of the dead.

At Constantia's request, he accompanied her to Whiston's house, and promised to bring with him such assistance as would render her further exertions and attendance unnecessary. Glad to be absolved from any new task, she now retired to her own chamber. In spite of her distempered frame, she presently sunk into a sweet sleep. She awoke not till the day had made considerable progress, and found herself invigorated and refreshed. On re-entering Whiston's house, she discovered that her humble friend had faithfully performed his promise, the dead body having disappeared. She deemed it unsafe, as well as unnecessary, to examine the clothes and other property remaining; but, leaving every thing in the condition in which it had been found, she fastened the windows and doors, and thenceforth kept as distant from the house as possible.

CHAPTER VI.

Constantia had now leisure to ruminate upon her own condition. Every day added to the devastation and confusion of the city. The most populous streets were deserted and silent. The greater number of inhabitants had fled; and those who remained were occupied with no cares but those which related to their own safety. The labours of the artisan and the speculations of the merchant were suspended. All shops but those of the apothecaries were shut. No carriage but the hearse was seen, and this was employed night and day in the removal of the dead. The customary sources of subsistence were cut off. Those whose fortunes enabled them to leave the city, but who had deferred till now their retreat, were denied an asylum by the terror which pervaded the adjacent country, and by the cruel prohibitions which the neighbouring towns and cities thought it necessary to adopt. Those who lived by the fruits of their daily labour were subjected, in this total inactivity, to the alternative of starving, or of subsisting upon public charity.

The meditations of Constantia suggested no alternative but this. The exactions of M'Crea had reduced her whole fortune to five dollars. This would rapidly decay, and her utmost ingenuity could discover no means of procuring a new supply. All the habits of their life had combined to fill both her father and herself with aversion to the acceptance of charity. Yet this avenue, opprobrious and disgustful as it was, afforded the only means of escaping from the worst extremes of famine.

In this state of mind it was obvious to consider in what way the sum remaining might be most usefully expended. Every species of provision was not equally nutritious or equally cheap. Her mind, active in the pursuit of knowledge and fertile of resources, had lately been engaged, in discussing with her father the best means of retaining health in a time of pestilence. On occasions, when the malignity of contagious diseases has been most signal, some individuals have escaped. For their safety they were doubtless indebted to some peculiarities in their constitution or habits. Their diet, their dress, their kind and degree of exercise, must somewhat have contributed to their exemption from the common destiny. These, perhaps, could be ascertained, and when known it was surely proper to conform to them.

In discussing these ideas, Mr. Dudley introduced the mention of a Benedictine of Messina, who,

during the prevalence of the plague in that city, was incessantly engaged in administering assistance to those who needed. Notwithstanding his perpetual hazards he retained perfect health, and was living thirty years after this event. During this period he fostered a tranquil, fearless, and benevolent spirit, and restricted his diet to water and polenta. Spices, and meats, and liquors, and all complexities of cookery, were utterly discarded.

These facts now occurred to Constantia's reflections with new vividness, and led to interesting consequences. Polenta and hasty-pudding, or samp, are preparations of the same substance,—a substance which she needed not the experience of others to convince her was no less grateful than nutritive. Indian meal was procurable at ninety cents per bushel. By recollecting former experiments she knew that this quantity, with no accompaniment but salt, would supply wholesome and plentiful food for four months to one person[1]. The inference was palpable.

Three persons were now to be supplied with food, and this supply could be furnished during four months at the trivial expense of three dollars. This expedient was at once so uncommon and so desirable, as to be regarded with temporary disbelief. She was inclined to suspect some latent error in her calculation. That a sum thus applied should suffice for the subsistence of a year, which in ordinary cases is expended in a few days, was scarcely credible. The more closely, however, the subject was examined, the more incontestably did this inference flow. The mode of preparation was simple and easy, and productive of the fewest toils and inconveniences. The attention of her Lucy was sufficient to this end, and the drudgery of marketing was wholly precluded.

[1] See this useful fact explained and demonstrated in Count Rumford's Essays.

She easily obtained the concurrence of her father, and the scheme was found as practicable and beneficial as her fondest expectations had predicted. Infallible security was thus provided against hunger. This was the only care that was urgent and immediate. While they had food and were exempt from disease, they could live, and were not without their portion of comfort. Her hands were unemployed, but her mind was kept in continual activity. To seclude herself as much as possible from others was the best means of avoiding infection. Spectacles of misery which she was unable to relieve would merely tend to harass her with useless disquietudes and make her frame more accessible to disease. Her father's instructions were sufficient to give her a competent acquaintance with the Italian and French languages. His dreary hours were beguiled by this employment, and her mind was furnished with a species of knowledge which she hoped, in future, to make subservient to a more respectable and plentiful subsistence than she had hitherto enjoyed.

Meanwhile the season advanced, and the havock which this fatal malady produced increased with portentous rapidity. In alleys and narrow streets, in which the houses were smaller, the inhabitants more numerous and indigent, and the air pent up within unwholesome limits, it raged with greatest violence. Few of Constantia's neighbours possessed the means of removing from the danger. The inhabitants of this alley consisted of three hundred persons: of these eight or ten experienced no interruption of their health. Of the rest two hundred were destroyed in the course of three weeks. Among so many victims it may be supposed that this disease assumed every terrific and agonizing shape.

It was impossible for Constantia to shut out every token of a calamity thus enormous and thus near. Night was the season usually selected for the removal of the dead. The sound of wheels thus employed was incessant. This, and the images with which it was sure to be accompanied, bereaved her of repose. The shrieks and lamentations of survivors, who could not be prevented from attending the remains of a husband or child to the place of interment, frequently struck her senses. Sometimes urged by a furious delirium, the sick would break from their attendants, rush into the street, and expire on the pavement, amidst frantic outcries and gestures. By these she was often roused from imperfect sleep, and called to reflect upon the fate which impended over her father and herself.

To preserve health in an atmosphere thus infected, and to ward off terror and dismay in a scene of horrors thus hourly accumulating, was impossible. Constantia found it vain to contend against the inroads of sadness. Amidst so dreadful a mortality it was irrational to cherish the hope that she or her father would escape. Her sensations, in no long time, seemed to justify her apprehensions. Her appetite forsook her, her strength failed, the thirst and lassitude of fever invaded her, and the grave seemed to open for her reception.

Lucy was assailed by the same symptoms at the same time. Household offices were unavoidably neglected. Mr. Dudley retained his health, but he was able only to prepare his scanty food, and supply the cravings of child with water from the well. His imagination marked him out for the next victim. He could not be blind to the consequences of his own indisposition at a period so critical. Disabled from contributing to each other's assistance, destitute of medicine and food; and even of water to quench their tormenting thirst, unvisited, unknown and perishing in frightful solitude! These images had a tendency to prostrate the mind, and generate or ripen the seeds of this fatal malady, which, no doubt at this period of its progress every one had imbibed.

Contrary to all his fears, he awoke each morning free from pain, though not without an increase of debility. Abstinence from food, and the liberal use of cold water, seemed to have a medicinal operation on the sick. Their pulse gradually resumed its healthy tenor, their strength and their appetite slowly returned, and in ten days they were able to congratulate each other on their restoration.

I will not recount that series of disastrous thoughts which occupied the mind of Constantia during this period. Her lingering and sleepless hours were regarded by her as preludes to death. Though at so immature an age, she had gained large experience of the evils which are allotted to man. Death, which in her prosperous state was peculiarly abhorrent to her feelings, was now disrobed of terror. As an entrance into scenes of lightsome and imperishable being it was the goal of all her wishes: as a passage to oblivion it was still desirable, since forgetfulness was better than the life which she had hitherto led, and which, should her existence be prolonged, it was likely that she could continue to lead.

These gloomy meditations were derived from the languors of her frame: when these disappeared, her cheerfulness and fortitude revived. She regarded with astonishment and delight the continuance of her father's health and her own restoration. That trial seemed to have been safely undergone, to which the life of every one was subject. The air, which till now had been arid and sultry, was changed into cool and moist. The pestilence had reached its utmost height, and now symptoms of remission and decline began to appear. Its declension was more rapid than its progress and every day added vigour to hope.

When her strength was somewhat retrieved, Constantia called to mind a good woman who lived in her former neighbourhood, and from whom she had received many proofs of artless affection. This woman's name was Sarah Baxter. She lived within a small distance of Constantia's former dwelling. The trade of her husband was that of a porter, and she pursued, in addition to the care of a numerous family, the business of a laundress. The superior knowledge and address of Constantia had enabled her to be serviceable to this woman in certain painful and perplexing circumstances.

This service was repaid with the utmost gratitude. Sarah regarded her benefactress with a species of devotion. She could not endure to behold one, whom every accent and gesture proved to have once enjoyed affluence and dignity, performing any servile office. In spite of her own multiplied engagements, she compelled Constantia to accept her assistance on many occasions, and could scarcely be prevailed upon to receive any compensation for her labour. Washing clothes was her trade, and from this task she insisted on relieving her lovely patroness.

Constantia's change of dwelling produced much regret in the kind Sarah. She did not allow it to make any change in their previous arrangements, but punctually visited the Dudleys once a week, and carried home with her whatever stood in need of ablution. When the prevalence of disease disabled Constantia from paying her the usual wages, she would by no means consent to be absolved from this task. Her earnestness on this head was not to be eluded; and Constantia, in consenting that her work should, for the present, be performed gratuitously, solaced herself with the prospect of being able, by some future change of fortune, amply to reward her.

Sarah's abode was distant from danger, and her fears were turbulent. She was nevertheless punctual in her visits to the Dudleys, and anxious for their safety. In case of their sickness, she had declared her resolution to be their attendant and nurse. Suddenly, however, her visits ceased. The day on which her usual visit was paid was the same with that on which Constantia sickened, but her coming was expected in vain. Her absence was, on some accounts, regarded with pleasure, as it probably secured her from the danger connected with the office of a nurse; but it added to Constantia's cares, inasmuch as her own sickness, or that of some of her family, was the only cause of her detention.

To remove her doubts, the first use which Constantia made of her recovered strength was to visit her laundress. Sarah's house was a theatre of suffering. Her husband was the first of his family assailed by the reigning disease. Two daughters, nearly grown to womanhood, well-disposed and modest girls, the pride and support of their mother, and who lived at service, returned home, sick, at the same time, and died in a few days. Her husband had struggled for eleven days with his disease, and was seized, just before Constantia's arrival, with the pangs of death.

Baxter was endowed with great robustness and activity. This disease did not vanquish him but with tedious and painful struggles. His muscular force now exhausted itself in ghastly contortions, and the house resounded with his ravings. Sarah's courage had yielded to so rapid a succession of evils. Constantia found her shut up in a chamber, distant from that of her dying husband, in a paroxysm of grief, and surrounded by her younger children.

Constantia's entrance was like that of an angelic comforter. Sarah was unqualified for any office but that of complaint. With great difficulty she was made to communicate the knowledge of her situation. Her visitant then passed into Baxter's apartment. She forced herself to endure this tremendous scene long enough to discover that it was hastening to a close. She left the house, and hastening to the proper office, engaged the immediate attendance of a hearse. Before the lapse of an hour, Baxter's lifeless remains were placed in a coffin, and conveyed away.

Constantia now exerted herself to comfort and encourage the survivors. Her remonstrances incited Sarah to perform with alacrity the measures which prudence dictates on these occasions. The house was purified by the admission of air and the sprinkling of vinegar. Constantia applied her own hand to these tasks, and set her humble friend an example of forethought and activity. Sarah would not consent to part with her till a late hour in the evening.

These exertions had like to have been fatally injurious to Constantia. Her health was not sufficiently confirmed to sustain offices so arduous. In the course of the night her fatigue terminated in fever. In the present more salubrious state of the atmosphere, it assumed no

malignant symptoms, and shortly disappeared. During her indisposition she was attended by Sarah, in whose honest bosom no sentiment was more lively than gratitude. Constantia having promised to renew her visit the next day, had been impatiently expected, and Sarah had come to her dwelling in the evening, full of foreboding and anxiety, to ascertain the cause of her delay. Having gained the bedside of her patroness, no consideration could induce her to retire from it.

Constantia's curiosity was naturally excited as to the causes of Baxter's disease. The simple-hearted Sarah was prolix and minute in the history of her own affairs. No theme was more congenial to her temper than that which was now proposed. In spite of redundance and obscurity in the style of the narrative, Constantia found in it powerful excitements of her sympathy. The tale, on its own account, as well as from the connection of some of its incidents with a subsequent part of these memoirs, is worthy to be here inserted. However foreign the destiny of Monrose may at present appear to the story of the Dudleys, there will hereafter be discovered an intimate connection between them.

CHAPTER VII.

Adjacent to the house occupied by Baxter was an antique brick tenement. It was one of the first erections made by the followers of William Penn. It had the honour to be used as the temporary residence of that venerable person. Its moss-grown penthouse, crumbling walls, and ruinous porch, made it an interesting and picturesque object. Notwithstanding its age, it was still tenable.

This house was occupied, during the preceding months, by a Frenchman: his dress and demeanour were respectable: his mode of life was frugal almost to penuriousness, and his only companion was a daughter. The lady seemed not much less than thirty years of age, but was of a small and delicate frame. It was she that performed every household office. She brought water from the pump, and provisions from the market. Their house had no visitants, and was almost always closed. Duly as the morning returned a venerable figure was seen issuing from his door, dressed in the same style of tarnished splendour and old-fashioned preciseness. At the dinner-hour he as regularly returned. For the rest of the day he was invisible.

The habitations in this quarter are few and scattered. The pestilence soon showed itself here, and the flight of most of the inhabitants augmented its desolateness and dreariness. For some time, Monrose (that was his name) made his usual appearance in the morning. At length the neighbours remarked that he no longer came forth as usual. Baxter had a notion that Frenchmen were exempt from this disease. He was, besides, deeply and rancorously prejudiced against that nation. There will be no difficulty in accounting for this, when it is known that he had been an English grenadier at Dettingen and Minden. It must likewise be added, that he was considerably timid, and had sickness in his own family. Hence it was that the disappearance of Monrose excited in him no inquisitiveness as to the cause. He did not even mention this circumstance to others.

The lady was occasionally seen as usual in the street. There were always remarkable peculiarities in her behaviour. In the midst of grave and disconsolate looks, she never laid aside an air of solemn dignity. She seemed to shrink from the observation of others, and her eyes were always fixed upon the ground. One evening Baxter was passing the pump while she was drawing water. The sadness which her looks betokened, and a suspicion that her father might be sick, had a momentary effect upon his feelings. He stopped and asked how her father was. She paid a polite attention to his question and said something in French. This, and the embarrassment of her air, convinced him that his words were not understood. He said no more (what indeed could he say?) but passed on.

Two or three days after this, on returning in the evening to his family, his wife expressed her surprise in not having seen Miss Monrose in the street that day. She had not been at the pump, nor had she gone, as usual, to market. This information gave him some disquiet; yet he could form no resolution. As to entering the house and offering his aid, if aid were needed, he had too much regard for his own safety, and too little for that of a frog-eating Frenchman, to think seriously of that expedient. His attention was speedily diverted by other objects, and Monrose was, for the present, forgotten.

Baxter's profession was that of a porter. He was thrown out of employment by the present state of things. The solicitude of the guardians of the city was exerted on this occasion, not only in opposing the progress of disease, and furnishing provisions to the destitute, but in the preservation of property. For this end the number of nightly watchmen was increased. Baxter entered himself in this service. From nine till twelve o'clock at night it was his province to occupy a certain post.

On this night he attended his post as usual: twelve o'clock arrived, and he bent his steps homeward. It was necessary to pass by Monrose's door. On approaching this house, the circumstance mentioned by his wife recurred to him. Something like compassion was conjured up in his heart by the figure of the lady, as he recollected to have lately seen it. It was obvious to conclude that sickness was the cause of her seclusion. The same, it might be, had confined her father. If this were true, how deplorable might be their present condition! Without food, without physician or friends, ignorant of the language of the country, and thence unable to communicate

their wants or solicit succour; fugitives from their native land, neglected, solitary, and poor.

His heart was softened by these images. He stopped involuntarily when opposite their door. He looked up at the house. The shutters were closed, so that light, if it were within, was invisible. He stepped into the porch, and put his eye to the key-hole. All was darksome and waste. He listened, add imagined that he heard the aspirations of grief. The sound was scarcely articulate, but had an electrical effect upon his feelings. He retired to his home full of mournful reflections.

He was billing to do something for the relief of the sufferers, but nothing could be done that night. Yet succour, if delayed till the morning, might be ineffectual. But how, when the morning came, should he proceed to effectuate his kind intentions? The guardians of the public welfare at this crisis were distributed into those who counselled and those who executed. A set of men, self-appointed to the generous office, employed themselves in seeking out the destitute or sick, and imparting relief. With this arrangement Baxter was acquainted. He was resolved to carry tidings of what he had heard and seen to one of those persons early the next day.

Baxter, after taking some refreshment, retired to rest. In no long time, however, he was awakened by his wife, who desired him to notice a certain glimmering on the ceiling. It seemed the feeble and flitting ray of a distant and moving light, coming through the window. It did not proceed from the street, for the chamber was lighted from the side, and not from the front of the house. A lamp borne by a passenger, or the attendants of a hearse, could not be discovered in this situation. Besides, in the latter case, it would be accompanied by the sound of the vehicle, and, probably by weeping and exclamations of despair. His employment as the guardian of property, naturally suggested to him the idea of robbery. He started from his bed, and went to the window.

His house stood at the distance of about fifty paces from that of Monrose. There was annexed to the latter a small garden or yard, bounded by a high wooden fence. Baxter's window overlooked this space. Before he reached the window, the relative situation of the two habitations, occurred to him. A conjecture was instantly formed that the glimmering proceeded from this quarter. His eye, therefore, was immediately fixed upon Monrose's back door. It caught a glimpse of a human figure passing into the house through this door. The person had a candle in his hand. This appeared by the light which streamed after him, and which was perceived, though faintly, through a small window of the dwelling, after the back-door was closed.

The person disappeared too quickly to allow him to say whether it was male or female. This scrutiny confirmed rather than weakened the apprehensions that first occurred. He reflected on the desolate and helpless condition of this family. The father might be sick, and what opposition could be made by the daughter to the stratagems of violence of midnight plunderers? This was an evil which it was his duty, in an extraordinary sense, to obviate. It is true, the hour of watching was passed, and this was not the district assigned to him; but Baxter was, on the whole, of a generous and intrepid spirit. In the present case, therefore, he did not hesitate long in forming his resolution. He seized a hanger that hung at his bedside, and which had hewn many an Hungarian and French hussar to pieces. With this he descended to the street. He cautiously approached Monrose's house. He listened at the door, but heard nothing. The lower apartment, as he discovered through the key-hole, was deserted and dark. These appearances could not be accounted for. He was, as yet, unwilling to call or to knock. He was solicitous to obtain some information by silent means, and without alarming the persons within, who, if they were robbers, might thus be put upon their guard, and enabled to escape. If none but the family were there, they would not understand his signals, and might impute the disturbance to the cause which he was desirous to obviate. What could he do? Must he patiently wait till some incident should happen to regulate his motions?

In this uncertainty, he bethought himself of going round to the back part of the dwelling, and watching the door which had been closed. An open space, filled with rubbish and weeds, adjoined the house and garden on one side. Hither he repaired, and, raising his head above the fence, at a point directly opposite the door, waited with considerable impatience for some token or signal, by which he might be directed in his choice of measures.

Human life abounds with mysterious appearances. A man perched on a fence at midnight, mute and motionless, and gazing at a dark and dreary dwelling, was an object calculated to rouse curiosity. When the muscular form and rugged visage, scared and furrowed into something like ferocity, were added,—when the nature of the calamity by which the city was dispeopled was considered,—the motives to plunder, and the insecurity of property arising from the pressure of new wants on the poor, and the flight or disease of the rich, were attended to, an observer would be apt to admit fearful conjectures.

We know not how long Baxter continued at this post. He remained here because he could not, as he conceived, change it for a better. Before his patience were exhausted, his attention was called by a noise within the house. It proceeded from the lower room. The sound was that of steps, but this was accompanied with other inexplicable tokens. The kitchen door at length opened. The figure of Miss Monrose, pale, emaciated, and haggard, presented itself. Within the door stood a candle. It was placed on a chair within sight, and its rays streamed directly against the face of Baxter, as it was reared above the top of the fence. This illumination, faint as it was, bestowed a certain air of wildness on the features which nature, and the sanguinary habits of a soldier, had previously rendered, in an eminent degree, harsh and stern. He was not aware of the danger of discovery in consequence of this position of the candle. His attention was, for a few seconds, engrossed by the object before him. At length he chanced to notice another object.

At a few yards' distance from the fence, and within it, some one appeared to have been digging. An opening was made in the ground, but it was shallow and irregular. The implement which seemed to have been used was nothing more than a fire-shovel, for one of these he observed lying near the spot. The lady had withdrawn from the door, though without closing it. He had leisure, therefore, to attend to this new circumstance, and to reflect upon the purpose for which this opening might have been designed.

Death is familiar to the apprehensions of a soldier. Baxter had assisted at the hasty interment of thousands, the victims of the sword or of pestilence. Whether it was because this theatre of human calamity was new to him, and death, in order to be viewed with his ancient unconcern, must be accompanied in the ancient manner, with halberts and tents, certain it is, that Baxter was irresolute and timid in every thing that respected the yellow fever. The circumstances of the time suggested, that this was a grave, to which some victim of this disease was to be consigned. His teeth chattered when he reflected how near he might now be to the source of infection: yet his curiosity retained him at his post.

He fixed his eyes once more upon the door. In a short time the lady again appeared at it. She was in a stooping posture, and appeared to be dragging something along the floor. His blood ran cold at this spectacle. His fear instantly figured to itself a corpse, livid and contagious. Still he had no power to move. The lady's strength, enfeebled as it was by grief, and perhaps by the absence of nourishment, seemed scarcely adequate to the task which she had assigned herself.

Her burden, whatever it was, was closely wrapped in a sheet. She drew it forward a few paces, then desisted, and seated herself on the ground apparently to recruit her strength, and give vent to the agony of her thoughts in sighs. Her tears were either exhausted or refused to flow, for none were shed by her. Presently she resumed her undertaking. Baxter's horror increased in proportion as she drew nearer to the spot where he stood; and yet it seemed as if some fascination had forbidden him to recede.

At length the burden was drawn to the side of the opening in the earth. Here it seemed as if the mournful task was finished. She threw herself once more upon the earth. Her senses seemed for a time to have forsaken her. She sat buried in reverie, her eyes scarcely open, and fixed upon the ground, and every feature set to the genuine expression of sorrow. Some disorder, occasioned by the circumstance of dragging, now took place in the vestment of what he had rightly predicted to be a dead body. The veil by accident was drawn aside, and exhibited, to the startled eye of Baxter, the pale and ghastly visage of the unhappy Monrose.

This incident determined him. Every joint in his frame trembled, and he hastily withdrew from the fence. His first motion in doing this produced a noise by which the lady was alarmed; she suddenly threw her eyes upward, and gained a full view of Baxter's extraordinary countenance, just before it disappeared. She manifested her terror by a piercing shriek. Baxter did not stay to mark her subsequent conduct, to confirm or to dissipate her fears, but retired in confusion to his own house.

Hitherto his caution had availed him. He had carefully avoided all employments and places from which he imagined imminent danger was to be dreaded. Now, through his own inadvertency, he had rushed, as he believed, into the jaws of the pest. His senses had not been assailed by any noisome effluvia. This was no implausible ground for imagining that his death had some other cause than the yellow fever. This circumstance did not occur to Baxter. He had been told that Frenchmen were not susceptible of this contagion. He had hitherto believed this assertion, but now regarded it as having been fully confuted. He forgot that Frenchmen were undoubtedly mortal, and that there was no impossibility in Monrose's dying, even at this time, of a malady different from that which prevailed.

Before morning he began to feel very unpleasant symptoms. He related his late adventure to his wife. She endeavoured, by what argument her slender ingenuity suggested, to quiet his apprehensions, but in vain. He hourly grew worse, and as soon as it was light, dispatched his wife for a physician. On interrogating this messenger, the physician obtained information of last night's occurrences, and this being communicated to one of the dispensers of the public charity, they proceeded, early in the morning, to Monrose's house. It was closed as usual. They knocked and called, but no one answered. They examined every avenue to the dwelling, but none of them were accessible. They passed into the garden, and observed, on the spot marked out by Baxter, a heap of earth. A very slight exertion was sufficient to remove it, and discover the body of the unfortunate exile beneath.

After unsuccessfully trying various expedients for entering the house, they deemed themselves authorised to break the door. They entered, ascended the staircase, and searched every apartment in the house, but no human being was discoverable. The furniture was wretched and scanty, but there was no proof that Monrose had fallen a victim to the reigning disease. It was certain that the lady had disappeared. It was inconceivable whither she had gone.

Baxter suffered a long period of sickness. The prevailing malady appeared upon him in its severest form. His strength of constitution, and the careful attendance of his wife, were insufficient to rescue him from the grave. His case may be quoted as an example of the force of imagination. He had probably already received, through the medium of the air, or by contact of which he was not conscious, the seeds of this disease. They might have perhaps have lain dormant, had not this panic occurred to endow them with activity.

CHAPTER VIII.

Such were the facts circumstantially communicated by Sarah. They afforded to Constantia a theme of ardent meditation. The similitude between her own destiny and that of this unhappy exile could not fail to be observed. Immersed in poverty, friendless, burdened with the maintenance and nurture of her father, their circumstances were nearly parallel. The catastrophe of her tale was the subject of endless but unsatisfactory conjecture.

She had disappeared between the flight of Baxter and the dawn of day. What path had she taken? Was she now alive? Was she still an inhabitant of this city? Perhaps there was a coincidence of taste as well as fortunes between them. The only friend that Constantia ever enjoyed, congenial with her in principles, sex, and age, was at a distance that forbade communication. She imagined that Ursula Monrose would prove worthy of her love, and felt unspeakable regret at the improbability of their ever meeting.

Meanwhile the dominion of cold began to be felt, and the contagious fever entirely disappeared. The return of health was hailed with rapture by all ranks of people. The streets were once more busy and frequented. The sensation of present security seemed to shut out from all hearts the memory of recent disasters. Public entertainments were thronged with auditors. A new theatre had lately been constructed, and a company of English Comedians had arrived during the prevalence of the malady. They now began their exhibitions, and their audiences were overflowing.

Such is the motley and ambiguous condition of human society, such is the complexity of all effects, from what cause soever they spring, that none can tell whether this destructive pestilence was on, the whole, productive of most pain or most pleasure. Those who had been sick and had recovered found in this circumstance a source of exultation. Others made haste by new marriages to supply the place of wives, husbands, and children, whom the scarcely-extinguished pestilence had swept away.

Constantia, however, was permitted to take no share in the general festivity. Such was the colour of her fate, that the yellow fever, by affording her a respite from toil, supplying leisure for the acquisition of a useful branch of knowledge, and leading her to the discovery of a cheaper, more simple, and more wholesome method of subsistence, had been friendly, instead of adverse to her happiness. Its disappearance, instead of relieving her from suffering, was the signal for the approach of new cares.

Of her ancient customers, some were dead, and others were slow in resuming their ancient habitations, and their ordinary habits. Meanwhile two wants were now created and were urgent. The season demanded a supply of fuel, and her rent had accumulated beyond her power to discharge. M'Crea no sooner returned from the country than he applied to her for payment. Some proprietors, guided by humanity, had remitted their dues, but M'Crea was not one of these. According to his own representation, no man was poorer than himself, and the punctual payment of all that was owing to him was no more than sufficient to afford him a scanty subsistence.

He was aware of the indigence of the Dudleys, and was therefore extremely importunate for payment, and could scarcely be prevailed upon to allow them the interval of a day for the discovery of expedients. This day was passed by Constantia in fruitless anxieties. The ensuing evening had been fixed for a repetition of his visit. The hour arrived, but her invention was exhausted in vain. M'Crea was punctual to the minute. Constantia was allowed no option. She merely declared that the money demanded she had not to give, nor could she foresee any period at which her inability would be less than it then was.

These declarations were heard by her visitant with marks of unspeakable vexation. He did not fail to expatiate on the equity of his demands, the moderation and forbearance he had hitherto shown, notwithstanding the extreme urgency of his own wants, and the inflexible rigour with which he had been treated by *his* creditors. This rhetoric was merely the prelude to an intimation that he must avail himself of any lawful means, by which he might gain possession of *his own*.

This insinuation was fully comprehended by Constantia, but it was heard without any new emotions. Her knowledge of her landlord's character taught her to expect but one consequence. He paused to observe what effect would be produced by this indirect menace. She answered, without any change of tone, that the loss of habitation and furniture, however inconvenient at this season, must be patiently endured. If it were to be prevented only by the payment of money, its prevention was impossible.

M'Crea renewed his regrets that there should be no other alternative. The law sanctioned his claims, and justice to his family, which was already large, and likely to increase, required that they should not be relinquished; yet such was the mildness of his temper and his aversion to proceed to this extremity, that he was willing to dispense with immediate payment on two conditions. First, that they should leave his house within a week, and secondly, that they should put into his hands some trinket or movable, equal in value to the sum demanded, which should be kept by him as a pledge.

This last hint suggested an expedient for obviating the present distress. The lute with which Mr. Dudley was accustomed to solace his solitude was, if possible, more essential to his happiness

than shelter or food. To his daughter it possessed little direct power to please. It was inestimable merely for her father's sake. Its intrinsic value was at least equal to the sum due, but to part with it was to bereave him of a good which nothing else could supply. Besides, not being a popular and saleable instrument, it would probably be contemptuously rejected by the ignorance and avarice of M'Crea.

There was another article in her possession of some value in traffic, and of a kind which M'Crea was far more likely to accept. It was the miniature portrait of her friend, executed by a German artist, and set in gold. This image was a precious though imperfect substitute for sympathy and intercourse with the original. Habit had made this picture a source of a species of idolatry. Its power over her sensations was similar to that possessed by a beautiful Madonna over the heart of a juvenile enthusiast. It was the mother of the only devotion which her education had taught her to consider as beneficial or true.

She perceived the necessity of parting with it, on this occasion, with the utmost clearness, but this necessity was thought upon with indescribable repugnance. It seemed as if she had not thoroughly conceived the extent of her calamity till now. It seemed as if she could have endured the loss of eyes with less reluctance than the loss of this inestimable relic. Bitter were the tears which she shed over it as she took it from her bosom, and consigned it to those rapacious hands that were stretched out to receive it. She derived some little consolation from the promises of this man, that he would keep it safely till she was able to redeem it.

The other condition—that of immediate removal from the house—seemed at first sight impracticable. Some reflection, however, showed her that the change might not only be possible but useful. Among other expedients for diminishing expense, that of limiting her furniture and dwelling to the cheapest standard had often occurred. She now remembered that the house occupied by Monrose was tenantless; that its antiquity, its remote and unpleasant situation, and its small dimensions, might induce M'Crea, to whom it belonged, to let it at a much lower price than that which he now exacted. M'Crea would have been better pleased if her choice had fallen on a different house; but he had powerful though sordid reasons for desiring the possession of this tenement. He assented therefore to her proposal, provided her removal took place without delay.

In the present state of her funds this removal was impossible. Mere shelter would not suffice during this inclement season. Without fuel, neither cold could be excluded, nor hunger relieved. There was nothing convertible into money but her lute. No sacrifice was more painful, but an irresistible necessity demanded it.

Her interview with M'Crea took place while her father was absent from the room. On his return she related what had happened, and urged the necessity of parting with his favourite instrument. He listened to her tale with a sigh. "Yes," said he, "do what thou wilt, my child. It is unlikely that any one will purchase it. It is certain that no one will give for it what I gave; but thou may'st try.

"It has been to me a faithful friend. I know not how I should have lived without it. Its notes have cheered me with the sweet remembrances of old times. It was, in some degree, a substitute for the eyes which I have lost; but now let it go, and perform for me perhaps the dearest of its services. It may help us to sustain the severities of this season."

There was no room for delay. She immediately set out in search of a purchaser. Such a one was most likely to be found in the keeper of a musical repository, who had lately arrived from Europe. She entertained but slight hopes that an instrument scarcely known among her neighbours would be bought at any price, however inconsiderable.

She found the keeper of the shop engaged in conversation with a lady, whose person and face instantly arrested the attention of Constantia. A less sagacious observer would have eyed the stranger with indifference. But Constantia was ever busy in interpreting the language of features and looks. Her sphere of observation had been narrow, but her habits of examining, comparing, and deducing, had thoroughly exhausted that sphere. These habits were eminently strong with relation to this class of objects. She delighted to investigate the human countenance, and treasured up numberless conclusions as to the coincidence between mental and external qualities.

She had often been forcibly struck by forms that were accidentally seen, and which abounded with this species of mute expression. They conveyed at a single glance what could not be imparted by volumes. The features and shape sunk, as it were, into perfect harmony with sentiments and passions. Every atom of the frame was pregnant with significance. In some, nothing was remarkable but this power of the outward figure to exhibit the internal sentiments. In others, the intelligence thus unveiled was remarkable for its heterogeneous or energetic qualities; for its tendency to fill her heart with veneration or abhorrence, or to involve her in endless perplexities.

The accuracy and vividness with which pictures of this kind presented themselves to her imagination resembled the operations of a sixth sense. It cannot be doubted, however, that much was owing to the enthusiastic tenor of her own conceptions, and that her conviction of the truth of the picture principally flowed from the distinctness and strength of its hues.

The figure which she now examined was small, but of exquisite proportions. Her complexion testified the influence of a torrid sun; but the darkness veiled, without obscuring, the glowing tints of her cheek. The shade was remarkably deep; but a deeper still was required to become

incompatible with beauty. Her features were irregular, but defects of symmetry were amply supplied by eyes that anticipated speech and positions which conveyed that to which language was inadequate.

It was not the chief tendency of her appearance to seduce or to melt. Hers were the polished cheek and the mutability of muscle, which belong to woman, but the genius conspicuous in her aspect was heroic and contemplative. The female was absorbed, so to speak, in the rational creature, and the emotions most apt to be excited in the gazer partook less of love than of reverence.

Such is the portrait of this stranger, delineated by Constantia. I copy it with greater willingness, because, if we substitute a nobler stature, and a complexion less uniform and delicate, it is suited with the utmost accuracy to herself. She was probably unconscious of this resemblance; but this circumstance may be supposed to influence her in discovering such attractive properties in a form thus vaguely seen. These impressions, permanent and cogent as they were, were gained at a single glance. The purpose which led her thither was too momentous to be long excluded.

"Why," said the master of the shop, "this is lucky. Here is a lady who has just been inquiring for an instrument of this kind. Perhaps the one you have will suit her. If you will bring it to me, I will examine it, and, if it is complete, will make a bargain with you." He then turned to the lady who had first entered, and a short dialogue in French ensued between them. The man repeated his assurances to Constantia, who, promising to hasten back with the instrument, took her leave. The lute, in its structure and ornaments, has rarely been surpassed. When scrutinised by this artist it proved to be complete, and the price demanded for it was readily given.

By this means the Dudleys were enabled to change their habitation, and to supply themselves with fuel. To obviate future exigences, Constantia betook herself once more to the needle. They persisted in the use of their simple fare, and endeavoured to contract their wants, and methodize their occupations, by a standard as rigid as possible. She had not relinquished her design of adopting a new and more liberal profession, but though, when indistinctly and generally considered, it seemed easily effected, yet the first steps which it would be proper to take did not clearly or readily suggest themselves. For the present she was contented to pursue the beaten track, but was prepared to benefit by any occasion that time might furnish, suitable to the execution of her plan.

CHAPTER IX.

It may be asked if a woman of this character did not attract the notice of the world. Her station, no less than her modes of thinking, excluded her from the concourse of the opulent and the gay. She kept herself in privacy: her engagements confined her to her own fireside, and her neighbours enjoyed no means of penetrating through that obscurity in which she wrapt herself. There were, no doubt, persons of her own sex capable of estimating her worth, and who could have hastened to raise so much merit from the indigence to which it was condemned. She might, at least, have found associates and friends justly entitled to her affection. But whether she were peculiarly unfortunate in this respect, or whether it arose from a jealous and unbending spirit that would remit none of its claims to respect, and was backward in its overtures to kindness and intimacy, it so happened that her hours were, for a long period, enlivened by no companion but her father and her faithful Lucy. The humbleness of her dwelling, her plain garb, and the meanness of her occupation, were no passports to the favour of the rich and vain. These, added to her youth and beauty, frequently exposed her to insults, from which, though productive for a time of mortification and distress, she, for the most part, extricated herself by her spirited carriage and presence of mind.

One incident of this kind it will be necessary to mention. One evening her engagements carried her abroad. She had proposed to return immediately, finding by experience the danger that was to be dreaded by a woman young and unprotected. Something occurred that unavoidably lengthened her stay, and she set out on her return at a late hour. One of the other sex offered her his guardianship; but this she declined, and proceeded homeward alone.

Her way lay through streets but little inhabited, and whose few inhabitants were of the profligate class. She was conscious of the inconveniences to which she was exposed, and therefore tripped along with all possible haste. She had not gone far before she perceived, through the dusk, two men standing near a porch before her. She had gone too far to recede or change her course without exciting observation, and she flattered herself that the persons would behave with decency. Encouraged by these reflections, and somewhat hastening her pace, she went on. As soon as she came opposite the place where they stood, one of them threw himself round, and caught her arm, exclaiming, in a broad tone, "Whither so fast, my love, at this time of night?" The other, at the same time, threw his arm round her waist, crying out, "A pretty prize, by G—: just in the nick of time."

They were huge and brawny fellows, in whose grasp her feeble strength was annihilated. Their motions were so sudden that she had not time to escape by flight. Her struggles merely furnished them with a subject of laughter. He that held her waist proceeded to pollute her cheeks with his kisses, and drew her into the porch. He tore her from the grasp of him who first seized her, who

seemed to think his property invaded, and said, in a surly tone, "What now, Jemmy? Damn your heart, d'ye think I'll be fobbed? Have done with your slabbering, Jemmy. First come, first served," and seemed disposed to assert his claims by force.

To this brutality Constantia had nothing to oppose but fruitless struggles and shrieks for help. Succour was, fortunately, at hand. Her exclamations were heard by a person across the street, who instantly ran, and with some difficulty disengaged her from the grasp of the ruffians. He accompanied her the rest of the way, bestowed on her every polite attention, and, though pressed to enter the house, declined the invitation. She had no opportunity of examining the appearance of her new friend: this the darkness of the night, and her own panic, prevented.

Next day a person called upon her whom she instantly recognized to be her late protector. He came with some message from his sister. His manners were simple and unostentatious and breathed the genuine spirit of civility. Having performed his commission, and once more received the thanks which she poured forth with peculiar warmth for his last night's interposition, he took his leave.

The name of this man was Balfour. He was middle-aged, of a figure neither elegant nor ungainly, and an aspect that was mild and placid, but betrayed few marks of intelligence. He was an adventurer from Scotland, whom a strict adherence to the maxims of trade had rendered opulent. He was governed by the principles of mercantile integrity in all his dealings, and was affable and kind, without being generous, in his treatment of inferiors. He was a stranger to violent emotions of any kind, and his intellectual acquisitions were limited to his own profession.

His demeanour was tranquil and uniform. He was sparing of words, and these were uttered in the softest manner. In all his transactions he wad sedate and considerate. In his dress and mode of living there were no appearances of parsimony, but there were, likewise, as few traces of profusion.

His sister had shared in his prosperity. As soon as his affairs would permit, he sent for her to Scotland, where she had lived in a state little removed from penury, and had for some years been vested with the superintendence of his household. There was a considerable resemblance between them in person and character. Her profession, or those arts in which her situation had compelled her to acquire skill, had not an equal tendency to enlarge the mind as those of her brother, but the views of each were limited to one set of objects. His superiority was owing, not to any inherent difference, but to accident.

Balfour's life had been a model of chasteness and regularity,—though this was owing more to constitutional coldness, and a frugal spirit, than to virtuous forbearance; but, in his schemes for the future, he did not exclude the circumstance of marriage. Having attained a situation secure as the nature of human affairs will admit from the chances of poverty, the way was sufficiently prepared for matrimony. His thoughts had been for some time employed in the selection of a suitable companion, when this rencounter happened with Miss Dudley.

Balfour was not destitute of those feelings which are called into play by the sight of youth and beauty in distress. This incident was not speedily forgotten. The emotions produced by it were new to him. He reviewed them oftener, and with more complacency, than any which he had before experienced. They afforded him so much satisfaction, that, in order to preserve them undiminished, he resolved to repeat his visit. Constantia treated him as one from whom she had received a considerable benefit. Her sweetness and gentleness were uniform, and Balfour found that her humble roof promised him more happiness than his own fireside, or the society of his professional brethren.

He could not overlook, in the course of such reflections as these, the question relative to marriage, and speedily determined to solicit the honour of her hand. He had not decided without his usual foresight and deliberation; nor had he been wanting in the accuracy of his observations and inquiries. Those qualifications, indeed, which were of chief value in his eyes, lay upon the surface. He was no judge of her intellectual character, or of the loftiness of her morality. Not even the graces of person, or features or manners, attracted much of his attention. He remarked her admirable economy of time, and money, and labour, the simplicity of her dress, her evenness of temper, and her love of seclusion. These ware essential requisites of a wife, in his apprehension. The insignificance of his own birth, the lowness of his original fortune, and the efficacy of industry and temperance to confer and maintain wealth, had taught him indifference as to birth or fortune in his spouse. His moderate desires in this respect were gratified, and he was anxious only for a partner that would aid him in preserving rather than in enlarging his property. He esteemed himself eminently fortunate in meeting with one in whom every matrimonial qualification concentred.

He was not deficient in modesty, but he fancied that, on this occasion, there was no possibility of miscarriage. He held her capacity in deep veneration, but this circumstance rendered him more secure of success. He conceived this union to be even more eligible with regard to her than to himself, and confided in the rectitude of her understanding for a decision favourable to his wishes.

Before any express declaration was made, Constantia easily predicted the event from the frequency of his visits; and the attentiveness of his manners. It was no difficult task to ascertain this man's character. Her modes of thinking were, in few respects, similar to those of her lover. She was eager to investigate, in the first place, the attributes of his mind. His professional and

household maxims were not of inconsiderable importance, but they were subordinate considerations. In the poverty of his discourse and ideas she quickly found reasons for determining her conduct.

Marriage she had but little considered, as it is in itself. What are the genuine principles of that relation, and what conduct with respect to it is prescribed to rational beings by their duty, she had not hitherto investigated. But she was not backward to inquire what are the precepts of duty in her own particular case. She knew herself to be young; she was sensible of the daily enlargement of her knowledge: every day contributed to rectify some error, or confirm some truth. These benefits she owed to her situation, which, whatever were its evils, gave her as much freedom from restraint as is consistent with the state of human affairs. Her poverty fettered her exertions, and circumscribed her pleasures. Poverty, therefore, was an evil, and the reverse of poverty was to be desired. But riches were not barren of constraint, and its advantages might be purchased at too dear a rate.

Allowing that the wife is enriched by marriage, how humiliating were the conditions annexed to it in the present case! The company of one with whom we have no sympathy, nor sentiments in common, is, of all species of solitude, the most loathsome and dreary. The nuptial life is attended with peculiar aggravations, since the tie is infrangible, and the choice of a more suitable companion, if such a one should offer, is for ever precluded. The hardships of wealth are not incompensated by some benefits; but these benefits, false and hollow as they are, cannot be obtained by marriage. Her acceptance of Balfour would merely aggravate her indigence.

Now she was at least mistress of the product of her own labour. Her tasks were toilsome, but the profits, though slender, were sure, and she administered her little property in what manner she pleased. Marriage would annihilate this, power. Henceforth she would he bereft even of personal freedom. So far from possessing property, she herself would become the property of another.

She was not unaware of the consequences flowing from differences of capacity, and that power, to whomsoever legally granted, will be exercised by the most addressful; but she derived no encouragement from these considerations. She would not stoop to gain her end by the hateful arts of the sycophant, and was too wise to place an unbounded reliance on the influence of truth. The character, likewise, of this man, sufficiently exempted him from either of those influences.

She did not forget the nature of the altar-vows. To abdicate the use of her own understanding was scarcely justifiable in any case; but to vow an affection that was not felt, and could not be compelled, and to promise obedience to one whose judgment was glaringly defective, were acts atrociously criminal. Education, besides, had created in her an insurmountable abhorrence of admitting to conjugal privileges the man who had no claim upon her love. It could not be denied that a state of abundant accommodation was better than the contrary; but this consideration, though, in the most rational estimate, of some weight, she was not so depraved and effeminate as to allow to overweigh the opposite evils. Homely liberty was better than splendid servitude.

Her resolution was easily formed, but there were certain impediments in the way of its execution. These chiefly arose from deference to the opinion, and compassion for the infirmities of her father. He assumed no control over her actions. His reflections in the present case were rather understood than expressed. When uttered, it was with the mildness of equality, and the modesty of persuasion. It was this circumstance that conferred upon them all their force. His decision on so delicate a topic was not wanting in sagacity and moderation; but, as a man, he had his portion of defects, and his frame was enfeebled by disease and care; yet he set no higher value on the ease and independence of his former condition than any man of like experience. He could not endure to exist on the fruits of his daughter's labour. He ascribed her decision to a spirit of excessive refinement, and was, of course, disposed to give little quarter to maiden scruples. They were phantoms, he believed, which experience would dispel. His morality, besides, was of a much more flexible kind; and the marriage vows were, in his opinion, formal and unmeaning, and neither in themselves, nor in the opinion of the world, accompanied with any rigorous obligation. He drew more favourable omens from the known capacity of his daughter, and the flexibility of her lover.

She demanded his opinion and advice. She listened to his reasonings, and revolved them with candour and impartiality. She stated her objections with simplicity; but the difference of age and sex was sufficient to preclude agreement. Arguments were of no use but to prolong the debate; but, happily, the magnanimity of Mr. Dudley would admit of no sacrifice. Her opinions, it is true, were erroneous; but he was willing that she should regulate her conduct by her own conceptions of right, and not by those of another. To refuse Balfour's offers was an evil, but an evil inexpressibly exceeded by that of accepting them contrary to her own sense of propriety.

Difficulties, likewise, arose from the consideration of what was due to the man who had already benefited her, and who, in this act, intended to confer upon her further benefit. These, though the source of some embarrassment, were not sufficient to shake her resolution. Balfour could not understand her principal objections. They were of a size altogether disproportioned to his capacity. Her moral speculations were quite beyond the sphere of his reflections. She could not expatiate, without a breach of civility, on the disparity of their minds, and yet this was the only or principal ground on which she had erected her scruples.

Her father loved her too well not to be desirous of relieving her from a painful task, though undertaken without necessity, and contrary to his opinion. "Refer him to me," said he; "I will make the best of the matter, and render your refusal as palatable as possible; but do you

authorize me to make it absolute, and without appeal."

"My dear father! how good you are! but that shall be my province. If I err, let the consequences of my mistake be confined to myself. It would be cruel indeed to make you the instrument in a transaction which your judgment disapproves. My reluctance was a weak and foolish thing. Strange, indeed, if the purity of my motives will not bear me out on this, as it has done on many more arduous occasions."

"Well, be it so; that is best I believe. Ten to one but I, with my want of eyes would blunder, while yours will be of no small use in a contest with a lover. They will serve you to watch the transitions in his placid physiognomy, and overpower his discontents."

She was aware of the inconveniences to which this resolution would subject her; but since they were unavoidable, she armed herself with the requisite patience. Her apprehensions were not without reason. More than one conference was necessary to convince him of her meaning, and in order to effect her purpose she was obliged to behave with so much explicitness as to hazard giving him offence. This affair was productive of no small vexation. He had put too much faith in the validity of his pretensions, and the benefits of perseverance, to be easily shaken off.

This decision was not borne by him with as much patience as she wished. He deemed himself unjustly treated, and his resentment exceeded those bounds of moderation which he prescribed to himself on all other occasions. From his anger, however, there was not much to be dreaded; but, unfortunately, his sister partook of his indignation and indulged her petulance, which was enforced by every gossiping and tattling propensity, to the irreparable disadvantage of Constantia.

She owed her support to her needle. She was dependent therefore on the caprice of customers. This caprice was swayable by every breath, and paid a merely subordinate regard, in the choice of workwomen, to the circumstances of skill, cheapness and diligence. In consequence of this, her usual sources of subsistence began to fail.

Indigence, as well as wealth, is comparative. He indeed must be wretched, whose food, clothing, and shelter, are limited, both in kind and quantity, by the standard of mere necessity; who, in the choice of food, for example, is governed by no consideration but its cheapness, and its capacity to sustain nature. Yet to this degree of wretchedness was Miss Dudley reduced.

As her means of subsistence began to decay, she reflected on the change of employment that might become necessary. She was mistress of no lucrative art but that which now threatened to be useless. There was but one avenue through which she could hope to escape from the pressure of absolute want. This she regarded with an aversion that nothing but extreme necessity, and the failure of every other expedient, would be able to subdue. This was the hiring herself as a servant. Even that could not answer all her purposes. If a subsistence were provided by it for herself, whither should her father and her Lucy betake themselves for support?

Hitherto her labour had been sufficient to shut out famine and the cold. It is true she had been cut off from all the direct means of personal or mental gratification; but her constitution had exempted her from the insalutary effects of sedentary application. She could not tell how long she could enjoy this exemption, but it was absurd to anticipate those evils which might never arrive. Meanwhile, her situation was not destitute of comfort. The indirect means of intellectual improvement in conversation and reflection, the inexpensive amusement of singing, and, above all, the consciousness of performing her duty, and maintaining her independence inviolate, were still in her possession. Her lodging was humble, and her fare frugal, but these temperance and a due regard to the use of money would require from the most opulent.

Now retrenchments must be made even from this penurious provision. Her exertions might somewhat defer, but could not prevent, the ruin of her unhappy family. Their landlord was a severe exacter of his dues. The day of quarterly payment was past, and he had not failed in his usual punctuality. She was unable to satisfy his demands, and Mr. Dudley was officially informed, that unless payment was made before a day fixed, resort would be had to the law, in that case made and provided.

This seemed to be the completion of their misfortunes. It was not enough to soften the implacability of their landlord. A respite might possibly be obtained from this harsh sentence. Entreaties might prevail upon him to allow of their remaining under this roof for some time longer; but shelter at this inclement season was not enough. Without fire they must perish with the cold; and fuel could be procured only for money, of which the last shilling was expended. Food was no less indispensable; and, their credit being gone, not a loaf could be extorted from the avarice of the bakers in the neighbourhood.

The sensations produced by this accumulation of distress may be more easily conceived than described. Mr. Dudley sunk into despair, when Lucy informed him that the billet of wood she was putting on the fire was the last. "Well," said he, "the game is up. Where is my daughter?" The answer was, that she was up-stairs.

"Why, there she has been this hour. Tell her to come down and warm herself. She must needs be cold, and here is a cheerful blaze. I feel it myself. Like the lightning that precedes death, it beams thus brightly, though in a few moments it will be extinguished forever. Let my darling come and partake of its comforts before they expire."

Constantia had retired in order to review her situation and devise some expedients that might alleviate it. It was a sore extremity to which she was reduced. Things had come to a desperate pass, and the remedy required must be no less desperate. It was impossible to see her father perish. She herself would have died before she would have condescended to beg. It was not worth prolonging a life which must subsist upon alms. She would have wandered into the fields at dusk, have seated herself upon an unfrequented bank, and serenely waited the approach of that death which the rigours of the season would have rendered sure. But as it was, it became her to act in a very different manner.

During her father's prosperity, some mercantile intercourse had taken place between him and a merchant of this city. The latter on some occasion had spent a few nights at her father's house. She was greatly charmed with the humanity that shone forth in his conversation and behaviour. From that time to this all intercourse had ceased. She was acquainted with the place of his abode, and knew him to be affluent. To him she determined to apply as a suppliant in behalf of her father. She did not inform Mr. Dudley of this intention, conceiving it best to wait till the event had been ascertained, for fear of exciting fallacious expectations. She was further deterred by the apprehension of awakening his pride, and bringing on herself an absolute prohibition.

She arrived at the door of Mr. Melbourne's house, and inquiring for the master of it, was informed that he had gone out of town, and was not expected to return for a week.

Her scheme, which was by no means unplausible, was thus completely frustrated. There was but one other resource, on which she had already deliberated, and to which she had determined to apply if that should fail. That was to claim assistance from the superintendants of the poor. She was employed in considering to which of them, and in what manner she should make her application, when she turned the corner of Lombard and Second Streets. That had scarcely been done, when casting her eyes mournfully round her, she caught a glimpse of a person whom she instantly recognized passing into the market-place. She followed him with quick steps, and on a second examination found that she had not been mistaken. This was no other than Thomas Craig, to whose malignity and cunning all her misfortunes were imputable.

She was at first uncertain what use to make of this discovery. She followed him instinctively, and saw him at length enter the Indian Queen Tavern. Here she stopped. She entertained a confused conception that some beneficial consequences might be extracted from this event. In the present hurry of her thoughts she could form no satisfactory conclusion; but it instantly occurred to her that it would at least be proper to ascertain the place of his abode. She stept into the inn, and made the suitable inquiries. She was informed that the gentleman had come from Baltimore a month before, and had since resided at that house. How soon he meant to leave the city her informant was unable to tell.

Having gained this intelligence, she returned home, and once more shut herself in her chamber to meditate on this new posture of affairs.

CHAPTER X.

Craig was indebted to her father. He had defrauded him by the most atrocious and illicit arts. On either account he was liable to prosecution; but her heart rejected the thought of being the author of injury to any man. The dread of punishment, however, might induce him to refund, uncoercively, the whole or some part of the stolen property. Money was at this moment necessary to existence, and she conceived herself justly entitled to that of which her father had been perfidiously despoiled.

But the law was formal and circuitous. Money itself was necessary to purchase its assistance. Besides, it could not act with unseen virtue and instantaneous celerity. The co-operation of advocates and officers was required. They must be visited, and harangued, and importuned. Was she adequate to the task? Would the energy of her mind supply the place of experience, and with a sort of miraculous efficacy, afford her the knowledge of official processes and dues? As little on this occasion could be expected from her father as from her. He was infirm and blind. The spirit that animated his former days was flown. His heart's blood was chilled by the rigours of his fortune. He had discarded his indignation and his enmities, and together with them, hope itself had perished in his bosom. He waited in tranquil despair, for that stroke which would deliver him from life, and all the woes that it inherits.

But these considerations were superfluous. It was enough that justice must be bought, and that she had not the equivalent. Legal proceedings are encumbered with delay, and her necessities were urgent. Succour, if withheld till the morrow, would be useless. Hunger and cold would not be trifled with. What resource was there left in this her uttermost distress? Must she yield, in imitation of her father, to the cowardly suggestions of despair?

Craig might be rich: his coffers might be stuffed with thousands. All that he had, according to the principles of social equity, was hers; yet he, to whom nothing belonged, rioted in superfluity, while she, the rightful claimant, was driven to the point of utmost need. The proper instrument of her restoration was law, but its arm was powerless, for she had not the means of bribing it into activity. But was law the only instrument?

Craig perhaps was accessible. Might she not, with propriety, demand an interview, and lay before him the consequences of his baseness? He was not divested of the last remains of humanity. It was impossible that he should not relent at the picture of those distresses of which he was the author. Menaces of legal prosecution she meant not to use, because she was unalterably resolved against that remedy. She confided in the efficacy of her pleadings to awaken his justice. This interview she was determined immediately to seek. She was aware that by some accident her purpose might be frustrated. Access to his person might, for the present, be impossible, or might be denied. It was proper, therefore to write him a letter, which might be substituted in place of an interview. It behoved her to be expeditious, for the light was failing, and her strength was nearly exhausted by the hurry of her spirits. Her fingers likewise were benumbed with the cold. She performed her task, under these disadvantages, with much difficulty. This was the purport of her letter:—

"THOMAS CRAIG,

"An hour ago I was in Second Street, and saw you. I followed you till you entered the Indian Queen Tavern. Knowing where you are, I am now preparing to demand an interview. I may he disappointed in this hope, and therefore write you this.

"I do not come to upbraid you, to call you to a legal, or any other account for your actions. I presume not to weigh your merits. The God of equity be your judge. May he be as merciful in the hour of retribution as I am disposed to be!

"It is only to inform you that my father is on the point of perishing with want. You know who it was that reduced him to this condition. I persuade myself I shall not appeal to your justice in vain. Learn of this justice to afford him instant succour.

"You know who it was that took you in, an houseless wanderer, protected and fostered your youth, and shared with you his confidence and his fortune. It is he who now, blind and indigent, is threatened by an inexorable landlord to be thrust into the street, and who is, at this moment without fire and without bread.

"He once did you some little service; now he looks to be compensated. All the retribution he asks is to be saved from perishing. Surely you will not spurn at his claims. Thomas Craig has done nothing that shows him deaf to the cries of distress. He would relieve a dog from such sufferings.

"Forget that you have known my father in any character but that of a supplicant for bread. I promise you that on this condition I also will forget it. If you are so far just, you have nothing to fear. Your property and reputation shall both be safe. My father knows not of your being in this city. His enmities are extinct, and if you comply with this request, he shall know you only as a benefactor.

"C. DUDLEY."

Having finished and folded this epistle, she once more returned to the tavern. A waiter informed her that Craig had lately been in, and was now gone out to spend the evening. "Whither had he gone?" she asked.

"How was he to know where gentlemen eat their suppers? Did she take him for a witch? What, in God's name, did she want with him at that hour? Could she not wait, at least, till he had done his supper? He warranted her pretty face would bring him home time enough."

Constantia was not disconcerted at the address. She knew that females are subjected, through their own ignorance and cowardice, to a thousand mortifications. She set its true value on base and low-minded treatment. She disdained to notice this ribaldry, but turned away from the servant to meditate on this disappointment.

A few moments after, a young fellow smartly dressed entered the apartment. He was immediately addressed by the other, who said to him, "Well, Tom, where's your master: there's a lady wants him," (pointing to Constantia, and laying a grinning emphasis on the word "lady".) She turned to the new-comer: "Friend, are you Mr. Craig's servant?"

The fellow seemed somewhat irritated at the bluntness of her interrogatory. The appellation of servant sat uneasily, perhaps, on his pride, especially as coming from a person of her appearance. He put on an air of familiar ridicule, and surveyed her in silence. She resumed, in an authoritative tone:—"Where does Mr. Craig spend this evening? I have business with him of the highest importance, and that will not bear delay. I must see him this night." He seemed preparing to make some impertinent answer, but she anticipated it: "You had better answer me with decency. If you do not, your master shall hear of it."

This menace was not ineffectual. He began in perceive himself in the wrong, and surlily muttered, "Why, if you must know, he is gone to Mr. Ormond's." And where lived Mr. Ormond? In Arch Street; he mentioned the number on her questioning him to that effect.

Being furnished with this information, she left them. Her project was not to be thwarted by slight impediments, and she forthwith proceeded to Ormond's dwelling. "Who was this Ormond?" she inquired of herself as she went along: "whence originated and of what nature is the connection between him and Craig? Are they united by unison of designs and sympathy of character, or is this stranger a new subject on whom Craig is practising his arts? The last supposition is not

impossible. Is it not my duty to disconcert his machinations and save a new victim from his treachery? But I ought to be sure before I act. He may now be honest, or tending to honesty, and my interference may cast him backward, or impede his progress."

The house to which she had been directed was spacious and magnificent. She was answered by a servant, whose uniform was extremely singular and fanciful, whose features and accents bespoke him to be English, with a politeness to which she knew that the simplicity of her dress gave her no title. Craig, he told her, was in the drawing-room above stairs. He offered to carry him any message, and ushered her, meanwhile, into a parlour. She was surprised at the splendour of the room. The ceiling was painted with a gay design, the walls stuccoed in relief, and the floor covered with a Persian carpet, with suitable accompaniments of mirrors, tables, and sofas.

Craig had been seated at the window above. His suspicions were ever on the watch. He suddenly espied a figure and face on the opposite side of the street, which an alteration of garb and the improvements of time could not conceal from his knowledge. He was startled at this incident, without knowing the extent of its consequences. He saw her cross the way opposite this house, and immediately after heard the bell ring. Still he was not aware that he himself was the object of this visit, and waited with some degree of impatience for the issue of this adventure.

Presently he was summoned to a person below, who wished to see him. The servant shut the door as soon as he had delivered the message and retired.

Craig was thrown into considerable perplexity. It was seldom that he was wanting in presence of mind and dexterity, but the unexpectedness of this incident made him pause. He had not forgotten the awful charms of his summoner. He shrunk at the imagination of her rebukes. What purpose could be answered by admitting her? It was undoubtedly safest to keep at a distance; but what excuse should be given for refusing this interview? He was roused from his reverie by a second and more urgent summons. The person could not conveniently wait; her business was of the utmost moment, and would detain him but a few minutes.

The anxiety which was thus expressed to see him only augmented his solicitude to remain invisible. He had papers before him, which he had been employed in examining. This suggested an excuse—"Tell her that I am engaged just now, and cannot possibly attend to her. Let her leave her business. If she has any message, you may bring it to me."

It was plain to Constantia that Craig suspected the purpose of her visit. This might have come to his knowledge by means impossible for her to divine. She now perceived the wisdom of the precaution she had taken. She gave her letter to the servant with this message:—"Tell him I shall wait here for an answer, and continue to wait till I receive one."

Her mind was powerfully affected by the criticalness of her situation. She had gone thus far, and saw the necessity of persisting to the end. The goal was within view, and she formed a sort of desperate determination not to relinquish the pursuit. She could not overlook the possibility that he might return no answer, or return an unsatisfactory one. In either case, she was resolved to remain in the house till driven from it by violence. What other resolution could she form? To return to her desolate home, pennyless, was an idea not to be endured.

The letter was received, and perused. His conscience was touched, but compunction was a guest whose importunities he had acquired a peculiar facility of eluding. Here was a liberal offer. A price was set upon his impunity. A small sum, perhaps, would secure him from all future molestation.—"She spoke, to-be-sure, in a damned high tone. 'Twas a pity that the old man should be hungry before supper-time. Blind too! Harder still, when he cannot find his way to his mouth. Rent unpaid, and a flinty-hearted landlord. A pretty pickle, to-be-sure. Instant payment, she says. Won't part without it. Must come down with the stuff. I know this girl. When her heart is once set upon a thing, all the devils will not turn her out of her way. She promises silence. I can't pretend to bargain with her. I'd as lief be ducked, as meet her face to face. I know she'll do what she promises: that was always her grand failing. How the little witch talks! Just the dreamer she ever was! Justice! Compassion! Stupid fool! One would think she'd learned something of the world by this time."

He took out his pocket-book. Among the notes it contained the lowest was fifty dollars. This was too much, yet there was no alternative; something must be given. She had detected his abode, and he knew it was in the power of the Dudleys to ruin his reputation, and obstruct his present schemes. It was probable that, if they should exert themselves, their cause would find advocates and patrons. Still the gratuitous gift of fifty dollars sat uneasily upon his avarice. One idea occurred to reconcile him to the gift. There was a method he conceived of procuring the repayment of it with interest: he enclosed the note in a blank piece of paper, and sent it to her.

She received the paper, and opened it with trembling fingers: when she saw what were its contents, her feelings amounted to rapture. A sum like this was affluence to her in her present condition; at least it would purchase present comfort and security. Her heart glowed with exultation, and she seemed to tread with the lightness of air as she hied homeward. The languor of a long fast, the numbness of the cold, were forgotten. It is worthy of remark how much of human accommodation was comprised within this small compass; and how sudden was this transition from the verge of destruction to the summit of security.

Her first business was to call upon her landlord, and pay him his demand. On her return she discharged the little debts she had been obliged to contract, and purchased what was immediately necessary. Wood she could borrow from her next neighbour, and this she was willing

to do, now that she had the prospect of repaying it.

END OF VOL. I.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ORMOND; OR, THE SECRET WITNESS. VOLUME 1 (OF 3) ***

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