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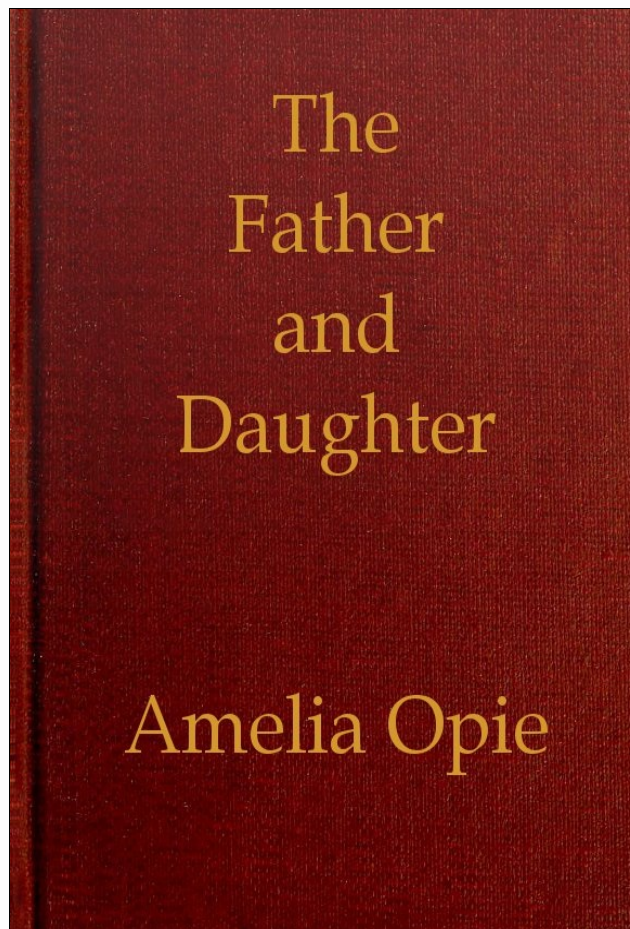
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE FATHER AND DAUGHTER:
A TALE, IN PROSE ***



THE FATHER AND DAUGHTER,

A Tale, in Prose.

BY MRS. OPIE.

Thy sweet reviving smiles might cheer despair,
On the pale lips detain the parting breath,
And bid hope blossom in the shades of death.

MRS. BARBAULD.

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1824.

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"—she saw that he had drawn the shape of a coffin and was then writing on the lid the name of Agnes."—

DEDICATION.

TO

DR. ALDERSON OF NORWICH.

DEAR SIR,

In dedicating this Publication to you, I follow in some measure the example of those nations who devoted to their gods the first fruits of the genial seasons which they derived from their bounty.

To you I owe whatever of cultivation my mind has received; and the first fruits of that mind to you I dedicate.

Besides, having endeavoured in "THE FATHER AND DAUGHTER" to exhibit a picture of the most perfect parental affection, to whom could I dedicate it with so much propriety as to you, since, in describing a good father, I had only to delineate my own?

Allow me to add, full of gratitude for years of tenderness and indulgence on your part, but feebly repaid even by every possible sentiment of filial regard on mine, that the satisfaction I shall experience if my Publication be favourably received by the world, will not proceed from the mere gratification of my self-love, but from the conviction I shall feel that my success as an Author is productive of pleasure to you.

AMELIA OPIE.

Berners Street,
1800.

THE FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

BY MRS. OPIE.

TO THE READER.

It is not without considerable apprehension that I offer myself as an avowed Author at the bar of public opinion,—and that apprehension is heightened by its being the general custom to give indiscriminately the name of NOVEL to every thing in Prose that comes in the shape of a Story, however simple it be in its construction, and humble in its pretensions.

By this means, the following Publication is in danger of being tried by a standard according to which it was never intended to be made, and to be criticized for wanting those merits which it was never meant to possess.

I therefore beg leave to say, in justice to myself, that I know "THE FATHER AND DAUGHTER" is wholly devoid of those attempts at strong character, comic situation, bustle, and variety of incident, which constitute a NOVEL, and that its highest pretensions are, to be a SIMPLE, MORAL TALE.

THE FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

A TALE.

The night was dark,—the wind blew keenly over the frozen and rugged heath, when Agnes, pressing her moaning child to her bosom, was travelling on foot to her father's habitation.

"Would to God I had never left it!" she exclaimed, as home and all its enjoyments rose in fancy to her view:—and I think my readers will be ready to join in the exclamation, when they hear the poor wanderer's history.

Agnes Fitzhenry was the only child of a respectable merchant in a country town, who, having lost his wife when his daughter was very young, resolved for her sake to form no second connection. To the steady, manly affection of a father, Fitzhenry joined the fond anxieties and endearing attentions of a mother; and his parental care was amply repaid by the love and amiable qualities of Agnes. He was not rich; yet the profits of his trade were such as to enable him to bestow every possible expense on his daughter's education, and to lay up a considerable sum yearly for her future support: whatever else he could spare from his own absolute wants, he expended in procuring comforts and pleasures for her.—"What an excellent father that man is!" was the frequent exclamation among his acquaintance—"And what an excellent child he has! well may he be proud of her!" was as commonly the answer to it.

Nor was this to be wondered at:—Agnes united to extreme beauty of face and person every accomplishment that belongs to her own sex, and a great degree of that strength of mind and capacity for acquiring knowledge supposed to belong exclusively to the other.

For this combination of rare qualities Agnes was admired;—for her sweetness of temper, her willingness to oblige, her seeming unconsciousness of her own merits, and her readiness to commend the merits of others,—for these still rarer qualities, Agnes was beloved: and she seldom formed an acquaintance without at the same time securing a friend.

Her father thought he loved her (and perhaps he was right) as never father loved a child before; and Agnes thought she loved him as child never before loved father.—"I will not marry, but live single for my father's sake," she often said;—but she altered her determination when her heart, hitherto unmoved by the addresses of the other sex, was assailed by an officer in the guards who came to recruit in the town in which she resided.

Clifford, as I shall call him, had not only a fine figure and graceful address, but talents rare and various, and powers of conversation so fascinating, that the woman he had betrayed forgot her wrongs in his presence, and the creditor, who came to dun him for the payment of debts already incurred, went away eager to oblige him by letting him incur still more.

Fatal perversion of uncommon abilities! This man, who might have taught a nation to look up to him as its best pride in prosperity and its best hope in adversity, made no other use of his talents than to betray the unwary of both sexes, the one to shame, the other to pecuniary difficulties; and he whose mind was capacious enough to have imagined schemes to aggrandize his native country, the slave of sordid selfishness, never looked beyond his own temporary and petty benefit, and sat down contented with the achievements of the day, if he had overreached a credulous tradesman, or beguiled an unsuspecting woman.

But, to accomplish even these paltry triumphs, great knowledge of the human heart was necessary,—a power of discovering the prevailing foible in those on whom he had designs, and of converting their imagined security into their real danger. He soon discovered that Agnes, who was rather inclined to doubt her possessing in an uncommon degree the good qualities which she really had, valued herself, with not unusual blindness, on those which she had not. She thought herself endowed with great power to read

the characters of those with whom she associated, when she had even not discrimination enough to understand her own: and, while she imagined that it was not in the power of others to deceive her, she was constantly in the habit of deceiving herself.

Clifford was not slow to avail himself of this weakness in his intended victim; and, while he taught her to believe that none of his faults had escaped her observation, with hers he had made himself thoroughly acquainted.—But not content with making her faults subservient to his views, he pressed her virtues also into his service; and her affection for her father, that strong hold, secure in which Agnes would have defied the most violent assaults of temptation, he contrived should be the means of her defeat.

I have been thus minute in detailing the various and seducing powers which Clifford possessed, not because he will be a principal figure in my narrative,—for, on the contrary, the chief characters in it are the Father and Daughter,—but in order to excuse as much as possible the strong attachment which he excited in Agnes.

"Love," says Mrs. Inchbald, whose knowledge of human nature can be equalled only by the humour with which she describes its follies, and the unrivalled pathos with which she exhibits its distresses—"Love, however rated by many as the chief passion of the heart, is but a poor dependent, a retainer on the other passions—admiration, gratitude, respect, esteem, pride in the object; divest the boasted sensation of these, and it is no more than the impression of a twelvemonth, by courtesy, or vulgar error, called love^[1]."—And of all these ingredients was the passion of Agnes composed. For the graceful person and manner of Clifford she felt admiration; and her gratitude was excited by her observing that, while he was an object of attention to every one wherever he appeared, his attentions were exclusively directed to herself; and that he who, from his rank and accomplishments, might have laid claim to the hearts even of the brightest daughters of fashion in the gayest scenes of the metropolis, seemed to have no higher ambition than to appear amiable in the eyes of Agnes, the humble toast of an obscure country town. While his superiority of understanding, and brilliancy of talents, called forth her respect, and his apparent virtues her esteem; and when to this high idea of the qualities of the man was added a knowledge of his high birth and great expectations, it is no wonder that she also felt the last-mentioned, and often perhaps the greatest, excitement to love, "pride in the object."

[1] Nature and Art, vol. i. p. 142.

When Clifford began to pay those marked attentions to Agnes, which ought always on due encouragement from the woman to whom they are addressed to be followed by an offer of marriage, he contrived to make himself as much disliked by the father as admired by the daughter: yet his management was so artful, that Fitzhenry could not give a sufficient reason for his dislike; he could only declare its existence; and for the first time in her life Agnes learned to think her father unjust and capricious.

Thus, while Clifford ensured an acceptance of his addresses from Agnes, he at the same time secured a rejection of them from Fitzhenry; and this was the object of his wishes, as he had a decided aversion to marriage, and knew besides that marrying Agnes would disappoint all his ambitious prospects in life, and bring on him the eternal displeasure of his father.

At length, after playing for some time with her hopes and fears, Clifford requested Fitzhenry to sanction with his approbation his addresses to his daughter; and Fitzhenry, as he expected, coldly and firmly declined the honour of his alliance. But when Clifford mentioned, as if unguardedly, that he hoped to prevail on his father to approve the marriage after it had taken place, if not before, Fitzhenry proudly told him that he thought his daughter much too good to be smuggled into the family of any one; while Clifford, piqued in his turn at the warmth of Fitzhenry's expressions, and the dignity

of his manner, left him, exulting secretly in the consciousness that he had his revenge,—for he knew that the heart of Agnes was irrecoverably his.

Agnes heard from her lover that his suit was rejected, with agonies as violent as he appeared to feel.—"What!" exclaimed she, "can that affectionate father, who has till now anticipated my wishes, disappoint me in the wish nearest to my heart?" In the midst of her first agitation her father entered the room, and, with "a countenance more in sorrow than in anger" began to expostulate with her on the impropriety of the connection which she was desirous of forming. He represented to her the very slender income which Clifford possessed; the inconvenience to which an officer's wife is exposed; and the little chance which there is for a man's making a constant and domestic husband who has been brought up in an idle profession, and accustomed to habits of intemperance, expense, and irregularity:—

"But above all," said he, "how is it possible that you could ever condescend to accept the addresses of a man whose father, he himself owns, will never sanction them with his approbation?"

Alas! Agnes could plead no excuse but that she was in love, and she had too much sense to urge such a plea to her father.

"Believe me," he continued, "I speak thus from the most disinterested consideration of your interest; for, painful as the idea of parting with you must be to me, I am certain I should not shrink from the bitter trial, whenever my misery would be your happiness (Here his voice faltered); but, in this case, I am certain that by refusing my consent to your wishes I ensure your future comfort; and in a cooler moment you will be of the same opinion."

Agnes shook her head, and turned away in tears.

"Nay, hear me, my child," resumed Fitzhenry, "you know that I am no tyrant; and if, after time and absence have been tried in order to conquer your unhappy passion, it remain unchanged, then, in defiance of my judgement, I will consent to your marriage with Mr. Clifford, provided his father consent likewise:—for, unless he do, I never will:—and if you have not pride and resolution enough to be the guardian of your own dignity, I must guard it for you; but I am sure there will be no need of my interference: and Agnes Fitzhenry would scorn to be clandestinely the wife of any man."

Agnes thought so too,—and Fitzhenry spoke this in so mild and affectionate a manner, and in a tone so expressive of suppressed wretchedness, which the bare idea of parting with her had occasioned him, that, for the moment, she forgot every thing but her father, and the vast debt of love and gratitude which she owed him; and throwing herself into his arms she protested her entire, nay cheerful, acquiescence in his determination.

"Promise me, then," replied Fitzhenry, "that you will never see Mr. Clifford more, if you can avoid it: he has the tongue of Belial, and if——"

Here Agnes indignantly interrupted him with reproaches for supposing her so weak as to be in danger of being seduced into a violation of her duty; and so strong were the terms in which she expressed herself, that her father entreated her pardon for having thought such a promise necessary.

The next day Clifford did not venture to call at the house, but he watched the door till he saw Agnes come out alone. Having then joined her, he obtained from her a full account of the conversation which she had had with Fitzhenry; when, to her great surprise, he drew conclusions from it which she had never imagined possible.

He saw, or pretended to see, in Fitzhenry's rejection of his offers, not

merely a dislike of her marrying him, but a design to prevent her marrying at all; and as a design like this was selfish in the last degree, and ought to be frustrated, he thought it would be kinder in her to disobey her father then, and marry the man of her heart, than, by indulging his unreasonable wishes on this subject once, to make him expect that she would do so again, and continue to lead a single life;—because, in that case, the day of her marrying, when it came at last, would burst on him with tenfold horrors.

The result of this specious reasoning, enforced by tears, caresses and protestations, was, that she had better go off to Scotland immediately with him, and trust to time, necessity, and their parents' affection, to secure their forgiveness.

Agnes the first time heard these arguments, and this proposal, with the disdain which they merited; but, alas! she did not resolve to avoid all opportunity of hearing them a second time: but, vain of the resolution she had shown on this first trial, she was not averse to stand another, delighted to find that she had not overrated her strength, when she reproached Fitzhenry for his want of confidence in it.

The consequence is obvious:—again and again she heard Clifford argue in favour of an elopement; and, though she still retained virtue sufficient to withhold her consent, she every day saw fresh reason to believe he argued on good grounds, and to think that that parent whose whole study, till now, had been her gratification, was, in this instance at least, the slave of unwarrantable selfishness.—

At last, finding that neither time, reflection, nor even a temporary absence, had the slightest effect on her attachment, but that it gained new force every day, she owned that nothing but the dread of making her father unhappy withheld her from listening to Clifford's proposal:—'Twas true, she said, pride forbade it; but the woman who could listen to the dictates of pride, knew nothing of love but the name.

This was the moment for Clifford to urge more strongly than ever that the elopement was the most effectual means of securing her father's happiness, as well as her own; till at last her judgement became the dupe of her wishes; and, fancying that she was following the dictates of filial affection, when she was in reality the helpless victim of passion, she yielded to the persuasions of a villain; and set off with him for Scotland.

When Fitzhenry first heard of her flight, he sat for hours absorbed in a sort of dumb anguish, far more eloquent than words. At length he burst into exclamations against her ingratitude for all the love and care that he had bestowed on her; and the next moment he exclaimed with tears of tenderness, "Poor girl! she is not used to commit faults; how miserable she will be when she comes to reflect! and how she will long for my forgiveness! and, O yes! I am sure I shall long as ardently to forgive her!"—Then his arms were folded in fancy round his child, whom he pictured to himself confessing her marriage to him, and upon her knees imploring his pardon.

But day after day came, and no letter from the fugitives, acknowledging their error, and begging his blessing on their union,—for no union had taken place.

When Clifford and Agnes had been conveyed as fast as four horses could carry them one hundred miles towards Gretna-green, and had ordered fresh horses, Clifford started as he looked at his pocket-book, and, with well-dissembled consternation, exclaimed, "What can we do? I have brought the wrong pocket-book, and have not money enough to carry us above a hundred and odd miles further on the North road!"—Agnes was overwhelmed with grief and apprehension at this information, but did not for an instant suspect that the fact was otherwise than as Clifford stated it to be.

As I before observed, Agnes piqued herself on her knowledge of characters, and she judged of them frequently by the rules of physiognomy; she had studied voices too, as well as countenances:—was it possible, then, that Agnes, who had from Clifford's voice and countenance pronounced him all that was ingenuous, honourable, and manly, could suspect him capable of artifice? could she, retracting her pretensions to penetration, believe she had put herself in the power of a designing libertine? No;—vanity and self-love forbade this salutary suspicion to enter her imagination; and, without one scruple, or one reproach, she acceded to the plan which Clifford proposed, as the only one likely to obviate their difficulties, and procure them most speedily an opportunity of solemnizing their marriage.

Deluded Agnes! You might have known that the honourable lover is as fearful to commit the honour of his mistress, even in appearance, as she herself can be; that his care and anxiety to screen her even from the breath of suspicion are ever on the watch; and that therefore, had Clifford's designs been such as virtue would approve, he would have put it out of the power of accident to prevent your immediate marriage, and expose your fair fame to the whisper of calumny.

To London they set forward, and were driven to an hotel in the Adelphi, whence Clifford went out in search of lodgings; and, having met with convenient apartments at the west end of the town, he conducted to them the pensive and already repentant Agnes.—"Under what name and title," said Agnes, "am I to be introduced to the woman of the house?"—"As my intended wife," cried her lover, pressing her to his bosom;—"and in a few days,—though to me they will appear ages,—you will give me a right to call you by that tender name."—"In a few days!" exclaimed Agnes, withdrawing from his embrace; "cannot the marriage take place to-morrow?" "Impossible!" replied Clifford; "you are not of age,—I can't procure a license;—but I have taken these lodgings for a month,—we will have the banns published, and be married at the parish-church."

To this arrangement, against which her delicacy and every feeling revolted, Agnes would fain have objected in the strongest manner: but, unable to urge any reasons for her objection, except such as seemed to imply distrust of her own virtue, she submitted, in mournful silence, to the plan: with a heart then for the first time tortured with a sense of degradation, she took possession of her apartment; and Clifford returned to his hotel, meditating with savage delight on the success of his plans, and on the triumph which, he fancied, awaited him.

Agnes passed the night in sleepless agitation, now forming and now rejecting schemes to obviate the danger which must accrue to her character, if not to her honour, by remaining for a whole month exposed to the seductions of a man whom she had but too fatally convinced of his power over her heart; and the result of her reflections was, that she should insist on his leaving town, and not returning till he came to lead her to the altar. Happy would it have been for Agnes, had she adhered to this resolution; but vanity and self-confidence again interfered:—"What have I to fear?" said Agnes to herself;—"am I so fallen in my own esteem that I dare not expose myself even to a shadow of temptation?—No;—I will not think so meanly of my virtue:—the woman that is afraid of being dishonoured is half overcome already; and I will meet with boldness the trials which I cannot avoid."

O Vanity! thou hast much to answer for!—I am convinced that, were we to trace up to their source all the most painful and degrading events of our lives, we should find most of them to have their origin in the gratified suggestions of vanity.

It is not my intention to follow Agnes through the succession of mortifications, embarrassments, and contending feelings, which preceded her undoing (for, secure as she thought herself in her own strength, and the honour of her lover, she became at last a prey to her seducer); it is

sufficient that I explain the circumstances which led to her being in a cold winter's night, houseless and unprotected, a melancholy wanderer towards the house of her father.

Before the expiration of the month, Clifford had triumphed over the virtue of Agnes; and soon after he received orders to join his regiment, as it was going to be sent on immediate service.—"But you will return to me before you embark, in order to make me your wife?" said the half-distracted Agnes; "you will not leave me to shame as well as misery?" Clifford promised every thing she wished; and Agnes tried to lose the pangs of parting, in anticipation of the joy of his return. But on the very day when she expected him, she received a letter from him, saying that he was under sailing orders, and to see her again before the embarkation was impossible.

To do Clifford justice, he in this instance told truth; and, as he really loved Agnes as well as a libertine can love, he felt the agitation and distress which his letter expressed; though, had he returned to her, he had an excuse ready prepared for delaying the marriage.

Words can but ill describe the situation of Agnes on the receipt of this letter.—The return of Clifford was not to be expected for months at least; and perhaps he might never return!—The thought of his danger was madness:—but, when she reflected that she should in all probability be a mother before she became a wife, in a transport of frantic anguish she implored heaven in mercy to put an end to her existence.—"O my dear, injured father!" she exclaimed, "I, who was once your pride, am now your disgrace!—and that child whose first delight it was to look up in your face, and see your eyes beaming with fondness on her, can now never dare to meet their glance again."

But, though Agnes dared not presume to write to her father till she could sign herself the wife of Clifford, she could not exist without making some secret inquiries concerning his health and spirits; and, before he left her, Clifford recommended a trusty messenger to her for the purpose.—The first account which she received was, that Fitzhenry was well; the next, that he was dejected; the three following, that his spirits were growing better,—and the last account was, that he was married.—

"Married!" cried Agnes rushing into her chamber, and shutting the door after her, in a manner sufficiently indicative to the messenger of the anguish she hastened from him to conceal;—"Married!—Clifford abroad,—perhaps at this moment a corpse,—and my father married!—What, then, am I? A wretch forlorn! an outcast from society!—no one to love, no one to protect and cherish me! Great God! wilt thou not pardon me if I seek a refuge from my suffering in the grave?"

Here nature suddenly and powerfully impressed on her recollection that she was about to become a parent; and, falling on her knees, she sobbed out, "What am I, did I ask?—I am a mother, and earth still holds me by a tie too sacred to be broken!"

Then by degrees she became calmer, and rejoiced, fervently rejoiced, in her father's second marriage, though she felt it as too convincing a proof how completely he had thrown her from his affections. She knew that the fear of a second family's diminishing the strong affection which he bore to her was his reason for not marrying again, and now it was plain that he married in hopes of losing his affection for her. Still this information removed a load from her mind, by showing her that Fitzhenry felt himself capable of receiving happiness from other hands than hers; and she resolved, if she heard that he was happy in his change of situation, never to recall to his memory the daughter whom it was so much his interest to forget.

The time of Agnes's confinement now drew near,—a time which fills with apprehension even the wife, who is soothed and supported by the tender attentions of an anxious husband, and the assiduities of affectionate

relations and friends, and who knows that the child with which she is about to present them will at once gratify their affections and their pride. What then must have been the sensations of Agnes at a moment so awful and dangerous as this!—Agnes, who had no husband to soothe her by his anxious inquiries, no relations or friends to cheer her drooping soul by the expressions of sympathy, and whose child, instead of being welcomed by an exulting family, must be, perhaps, a stranger even to its nearest relations!

But in proportion to her trials seemed to be Agnes's power of rising superior to them; and, after enduring her sufferings with a degree of fortitude and calmness that astonished the mistress of the house, whom compassion had induced to attend on her, she gave birth to a lovely boy.—From that moment, though she rarely smiled, and never saw any one but her kind landlady, her mind was no longer oppressed by the deep gloom under which she had before laboured; and when she had heard from Clifford, or of her father's being happy, and clasped her babe to her bosom, Agnes might almost be pronounced cheerful.

After she had been six months a mother, Clifford returned; and, in the transport of seeing him safe, Agnes forgot for a moment that she had been anxious and unhappy. Now again was the subject of the marriage resumed; but just as the wedding day was fixed, Clifford was summoned away to attend his expiring father, and Agnes was once more doomed to the tortures of suspense.

After a month's absence Clifford came back, but appeared to labour under a dejection of spirits which he seemed studious to conceal from her. Alarmed and terrified at an appearance so unusual, she demanded an explanation, which the consummate deceiver gave at length, after many entreaties on her part, and feigned reluctance on his. He told her that his father's illness was occasioned by his having been informed that he was privately married to her; that he had sent for him to inquire into the truth of the report; and, being convinced by his solemn assurance that no marriage had taken place, he had commanded him, unless he wished to kill him, to take a solemn oath never to marry Agnes Fitzhenry without his consent.

"And did you take the oath?" cried Agnes, her whole frame trembling with agitation.—"What could I do?" replied he; "my father's life in evident danger if I refused; besides the dreadful certainty that he would put his threats in execution of cursing me with his dying breath;—and, cruel as he is, Agnes, I could not help feeling that he was my father."—"Barbarian!" exclaimed she, "I sacrificed my father to you!—An oath! O God! have you then taken an oath never to be mine?" and, saying this, she fell into a long and deep swoon.

When she recovered, but before she was able to speak, she found Clifford kneeling by her; and, while she was too weak to interrupt him, he convinced her that he did not at all despair of his father's consent to his making her his wife, else, he should have been less willing to give so ready a consent to take the oath imposed on him, even although his father's life depended on it. "Oh! no," replied Agnes, with a bitter smile; "you wrong yourself; you are too good a son to have been capable of hesitating a moment;—there are few children so bad, so very bad as I am!"—and, bursting into an agony of grief, it was long before the affectionate language and tender caresses of Clifford could restore her to tranquillity.

Another six months elapsed, during which time Clifford kept her hopes alive, by telling her that he every day saw fresh signs of his father's relenting in her favour.—At these times she would say, "Lead me to him; let him hear the tale of my wretchedness; let me say to him, For your son's sake I have left the best of fathers, the happiest of homes, and have become an outcast from society!—then would I bid him look at this pale cheek, this emaciated form, proofs of the anguish that is undermining my constitution; and tell him to beware how, by forcing you to withhold from me my right,

he made you guilty of murdering the poor deluded wretch, who, till she knew you, never lay down without a father's blessing, nor rose but to be welcomed by his smile!"

Clifford had feeling, but it was of that transient sort which never outlived the disappearance of the object that occasioned it. To these pathetic entreaties he always returned affectionate answers, and was often forced to leave the room in order to avoid being too much softened by them; but, by the time he had reached the end of the street, always alive to the impressions of the present moment, the sight of some new beauty, or some old companion, dried up the starting tear, and restored to him the power of coolly considering how he should continue to deceive his miserable victim.

But the time at length arrived when the mask that hid his villany from her eyes fell off, never to be replaced. As Agnes fully expected to be the wife of Clifford, she was particularly careful to lead a retired life, and not to seem unmindful of her shame by exhibiting herself at places of public amusement. In vain did Clifford paint the charms of the Play, the Opera, and other places of fashionable resort. "Retirement, with books, music, work, and your society," she used to reply, "are better suited to my taste and situation; and never, but as your wife, will I presume to meet the public eye."

Clifford, though he wished to exhibit his lovely conquest to the world, was obliged to submit to her will in this instance. Sometimes, indeed, Agnes was prevailed on to admit to her table those young men of Clifford's acquaintance who were the most distinguished for their talents and decorum of manners; but this was the only departure that he had ever yet prevailed on her to make, from the plan of retirement which she had adopted.

One evening, however, Clifford was so unusually urgent with her to accompany him to Drury-lane to see a favourite tragedy, (alleging, as an additional motive for her obliging him, that he was going to leave her on the following Monday, in order to attend his father into the country, where he should be forced to remain some time,) that Agnes, unwilling to refuse what he called his parting request, at length complied; Clifford having prevailed on Mrs. Askew, her kind landlady, to accompany them, and having assured Agnes, that, as they should sit in the upper boxes, she might, if she chose it, wear her veil down.—Agnes, in spite of herself, was delighted with the representation,—but, as

"—hearts refin'd the sadden'd tint retain,
The sigh is pleasure, and the jest is pain,"

she was desirous of leaving the house before the farce began; yet, as Clifford saw a gentleman in the lower boxes with whom he had business, she consented to stay till he had spoken to him. Soon after she saw Clifford enter the lower box opposite to her; and those who know what it is to love, will not be surprised to hear that Agnes had more pleasure in looking at her lover, and drawing favourable comparisons between him and the gentlemen who surrounded him, than in attending to the farce.

She had been some moments absorbed in this pleasing employment, when two gentlemen entered the box where she was, and seated themselves behind her.

"Who is that elegant, fashionable-looking man, my lord, in the lower box just opposite to us?" said one of the gentlemen to the other.—"I mean, he who is speaking to captain Mowbray."—"It is George Clifford, of the guards," replied his lordship, "and one of the cleverest fellows in England, colonel."

Agnes, who had not missed one word of this conversation, now became still more attentive.

"Oh! I have heard a great deal of him," returned the colonel, "and as much against him as for him."—"Most likely," said his lordship; "I dare say that fellow has ruined more young men, and seduced more young women, than any man of his age (which is only four-and-thirty) in the kingdom."

Agnes sighed deeply, and felt herself attacked by a sort of faint sickness.

"But it is to be hoped that he will reform now," observed the colonel: "I hear he is going to be married to miss Sandford, the great city heiress."—"So he is,—and Monday is the day fixed for the wedding."

Agnes started:—Clifford himself had told her he must leave her on Monday for some weeks;—and in breathless expectation she listened to what followed.

—"But what then?" continued his lordship: "He marries for money merely. The truth is, his father is lately come to a long disputed barony, and with scarcely an acre of land to support the dignity of it: so his son has consented to marry an heiress, in order to make the family rich, as well as noble. You must know, I have my information from the fountain-head;—Clifford's mother is my relation, and the good woman thought proper to acquaint me in form with the *advantageous* alliance which her hopeful son was about to make."

This *confirmation* of the truth of a story, which she till now hoped might be mere report, was more than Agnes could well bear; but, made courageous by desperation, she resolved to listen while they continued to talk on this subject. Mrs. Askew, in the mean while, was leaning over the box, too much engrossed by the farce to attend to what was passing behind her. Just as his lordship concluded the last sentence, Agnes saw Clifford go out with his friend; and she who had but the minute before gazed on him with looks of admiring fondness, now wished, in the bitterness of her soul, that she might never behold him again!

"I never wish," said the colonel, "a match of interest to be a happy one."—"Nor will this be so, depend on it," answered his lordship; "for, besides that miss Sandford is ugly and disagreeable, she has a formidable rival."—"Indeed!" cried the other;—"a favourite mistress, I suppose?"

Here the breath of Agnes grew shorter and shorter; she suspected that they were going to talk of her; and, under other circumstances, her nice sense of honour would have prevented her attending to a conversation which she was certain was not meant for her ear: but so great was the importance of the present discourse to her future peace and well-being, that it annihilated all sense of impropriety in listening to it.

"Yes, he has a favourite mistress," answered his lordship,— "a girl who was worthy of a better fate."—"You know her then?" asked the colonel.—"No," replied he,— "by name only; but when I was in the neighbourhood of the town where she lived, I heard continually of her beauty and accomplishments: her name is Agnes Fitz—Fitz—"—"Fitzhenry, I suppose," said the other.—"Yes, that is the name," said his lordship: "How came you to guess it?"—"Because Agnes Fitzhenry is a name which I have often heard toasted: she sings well, does she not?"—"She does every thing well," rejoined the other; "and was once the pride of her father, and of the town in which she lived."

Agnes could scarcely forbear groaning aloud at this faithful picture of what she once was.

"Poor thing!" resumed his lordship;—"that ever she should be the victim of a villain! It seems he seduced her from her father's house, under pretence of carrying her to Gretna-green; but, on some infernal plea or other, he took her to London."

Here the agitation of Agnes became so visible as to attract Mrs. Askew's

notice; but as she assured her that she should be well presently, Mrs. Askew again gave herself up to the illusion of the scene. Little did his lordship think how severely he was wounding the peace of one for whom he felt such compassion.

"You seem much interested about this unhappy girl," said the colonel.—"I am so," replied the other, "and full of the subject too; for Clifford's factotum, Wilson, has been with me this morning, and I learned from him some of his master's tricks, which made me still more anxious about his victim.—It seems she is very fond of her father, though she was prevailed on to desert him, and has never known a happy moment since her elopement; nor could she be easy without making frequent but secret inquiries concerning his health."—"Strange inconsistency!" muttered the colonel.—"This anxiety gave Clifford room to fear that she might at some future moment, if discontented with him, return to her afflicted parent before he was tired of her:—so what do you think he did?"

At this moment Agnes, far more eager to hear what followed than the colonel, turned round, and, fixing her eyes on her unknown friend with wild anxiety, could scarcely help saying, What did Clifford do, my lord?

—"He got his factotum, the man I mentioned, to personate a messenger, and to pretend that he had been to her native town, and then he gave her such accounts as were best calculated to calm her anxiety: but the master-stroke which secured her remaining with him was, his telling the pretended messenger to inform her that her father was *married again*,—though it is more likely, poor unhappy man, that he is dead, than that he is married."

At the mention of this horrible probability, Agnes lost all self-command, and, screaming aloud, fell back on the knees of the astonished narrator, reiterating her cries with all the alarming helplessness of phrensy.

"Turn her out! turn her out!" echoed through the theatre,—for the audience supposed that the noise proceeded from some intoxicated and abandoned woman; and a man in the next box struck Agnes a blow on the shoulder, and, calling her by a name too gross to repeat, desired her to leave the house, and act her drunken freaks elsewhere.

Agnes, whom the gentlemen behind were supporting with great kindness and compassion, heard nothing of this speech save the injurious epithet applied to herself; and alive only to what she thought the justice of it, "Did you hear that?" she exclaimed, starting up with the look and tone of phrensy—"Did you hear that?—O God! my brain is on fire!"—Then, springing over the seat, she rushed out of the box, followed by the trembling and astonished Mrs. Askew, who in vain tried to keep pace with the desperate speed of Agnes.

Before Agnes, with all her haste, could reach the bottom of the stairs, the farce ended and the lobbies began to fill. Agnes pressed forward, when amongst the crowd she saw a tradesman who lived near her father's house.—No longer sensible of shame, for anguish had annihilated it, she rushed towards him, and, seizing his arm, exclaimed, "For the love of God, tell me how my father is!" The tradesman, terrified and astonished at the pallid wildness of her look, so unlike the countenance of successful and contented vice that he would have expected to see her wear, replied—"He is well, poor soul! but——"—"But unhappy, I suppose?" interrupted Agnes:—"Thank God he is well:—but is he married?"—"Married! dear me, no! he is——"—"Do you think he would forgive me?" eagerly rejoined Agnes.—"Forgive you!" answered the man—"How you talk! Belike he might forgive you, if——"—"I know what you would say," interrupted Agnes again, "if I would return—Enough,—enough:—God bless you! you have saved me from distraction."

So saying, she ran out of the house; Mrs. Askew having overtaken her, followed by the nobleman and the colonel, who with the greatest consternation had found, from an exclamation of Mrs. Askew's, that the object of their compassion was miss Fitzhenry herself.

But before Agnes had proceeded many steps down the street Clifford met her, on his return from a neighbouring coffee-house with his companion; and, spite of her struggles and reproaches, which astonished and alarmed him, he, with Mrs. Askew's assistance, forced her into a hackney-coach, and ordered the man to drive home.—No explanation took place during the ride. To all the caresses and questions of Clifford she returned nothing but passionate exclamations against his perfidy and cruelty. Mrs. Askew thought her insane; Clifford wished to think her so; but his conscience told him that, if by accident his conduct had been discovered to her, there was reason enough for the frantic sorrow which he witnessed.

At length they reached their lodgings, which were in Suffolk-street, Charing-cross; and Agnes, having at length obtained some composure, in a few words as possible related the conversation which she had overheard. Clifford, as might be expected, denied the truth of what his lordship had advanced; but it was no longer in his power to deceive the awakened penetration of Agnes.—Under his assumed unconcern, she clearly saw the confusion of detected guilt: and giving utterance in very strong language to the contempt and indignation which she felt, while contemplating such complete depravity, she provoked Clifford, who was more than half intoxicated, boldly to avow what he was at first eager to deny; and Agnes, who before shuddered at his hypocrisy, was now shocked at his unprincipled daring.

"But what right have you to complain?" added he: "the cheat that I put upon you relative to your father was certainly meant in kindness; and though miss Sandford will have my hand, you alone will ever possess my heart; therefore it was my design to keep you in ignorance of my marriage, and retain you as the greatest of all my worldly treasures.—Plague on this prating lord! he has destroyed the prettiest arrangement ever made. However, I hope we shall part good friends."

"Great God!" cried Agnes, raising her tearless eyes to heaven,— "and have I then forsaken the best of parents for a wretch like this!—But think not, sir," she added, turning with a commanding air towards Clifford, whose temper, naturally warm, the term 'wretch' had not soothed, "think not, fallen as I am, that I will ever condescend to receive protection and support, either for myself or child, from a man whom I know to be a consummate villain. You have made me criminal, but you have not obliterated my horror for crime and my veneration for virtue,—and, in the fulness of my contempt, I inform you, sir, that we shall meet no more."

"Not till to-morrow," said Clifford:—"this is our first quarrel, Agnes; and the quarrels of lovers are only the renewal of love, you know: therefore leaving the 'bitter, piercing air' to guard my treasure for me till to-morrow, I take my leave, and hope in the morning to find you in a better humour."

So saying he departed, secure, from the inclemency of the weather and darkness of the night, that Agnes would not venture to go away before the morning, and resolved to return very early in order to prevent her departure, if her threatened resolution were any thing more than the frantic expressions of a disappointed woman. Besides, he knew that at that time she was scantily supplied with money, and that Mrs. Askew dared not furnish her with any for the purpose of leaving him.

But he left not Agnes, as he supposed, to vent her sense of injury in idle grief and inactive lamentation; but to think, to decide, and to act.—What was the rigour of the night to a woman whose heart was torn by all the pangs which convictions, such as those which she had lately received, could give? She hastily therefore wrapped up her sleeping boy in a périsse, of which in a calmer moment she would have felt the want herself, and took him in her arms: then, throwing a shawl over her shoulders, she softly unbarred the hall door, and before the noise could have summoned any of the family she was already out of sight.

So severe was the weather, that even those accustomed to brave in

ragged garments the pelting of the pitiless storm shuddered, as the freezing wind whistled around them, and crept with trembling knees to the wretched hovel that awaited them. But the winter's wind blew unfelt by Agnes: she was alive to nothing but the joy of having escaped from a villain, and the faint hope that she was hastening to obtain, perhaps, a father's forgiveness.

"Thank Heaven!" she exclaimed, as she found herself at the rails along the Green Park,—*"the air which I breathe here is uncontaminated by his breath!"* when, as the watchman called half-past eleven o'clock, the recollection that she had no place of shelter for the night occurred to her, and at the same instant she remembered that a coach set off at twelve from Piccadilly, which went within twelve miles of her native place. She therefore immediately resolved to hasten thither, and, either in the inside or on the outside, to proceed on her journey as far as her finances would admit of, intending to walk the rest of the way. She arrived at the inn just as the coach was setting off, and found, to her great satisfaction, one inside place vacant.

Nothing worth mentioning occurred on the journey. Agnes, with her veil drawn over her face, and holding her slumbering boy in her arms, while the incessant shaking of her knee and the piteous manner in which she sighed gave evident marks of the agitation of her mind, might excite in some degree the curiosity of her fellow-travellers, but gave no promise of that curiosity being satisfied, and she was suffered to remain unquestioned and undisturbed.

At noon the next day the coach stopped, for the travellers to dine, and stay a few hours to recruit themselves after their labours past, and to fortify themselves against those yet to come. Here Agnes, who as she approached nearer home became afraid of meeting some acquaintance, resolved to change her dress, and to equip herself in such a manner as should, while it screened her from the inclemency of the weather, at the same time prevent her being recognised by any one. Accordingly she exchanged her *périsse*, shawl, and a few other things, for a man's great coat, a red cloth cloak with a hood to it, a pair of thick shoes, and some yards of flannel in which she wrapped up her little Edward; and, having tied her straw bonnet under her chin with her veil, she would have looked like a country-woman drest for market, could she have divested herself of a certain delicacy of appearance and gracefulness of manner, the yet uninjured beauties of former days.

When they set off again she became an outside passenger, as she could not afford to continue an inside one; and covering her child up in the red cloak which she wore over her coat, she took her station on the top of the coach with seeming firmness, but a breaking heart.

Agnes expected to arrive within twelve miles of her native place long before it was dark, and reach the place of her destination before bed-time, unknown and unseen: but she was mistaken in her expectations: for the roads had been rendered so rugged by the frost, that it was late in the evening when the coach reached the spot whence she was to commence her walk; and by the time she had eaten her slight repast, and furnished herself with some necessaries to enable her to resist the severity of the weather, she found that it was impossible for her to reach her long-forsaken home before day-break.

Still she was resolved to go on:—to pass another day in suspense concerning her father, and her future hopes of his pardon, was more formidable to her than the terrors of undertaking a lonely and painful walk. Perhaps too, Agnes was not sorry to have a tale of hardship to narrate on her arrival at the house of her nurse, whom she meant to employ as mediator between her and her offended parent.

His child, his penitent child, whom he had brought up with the utmost tenderness, and screened with unremitting care from the ills of life, returning, to implore his pity and forgiveness, on foot, and unprotected,

through all the dangers of lonely paths, and through the horrors of a winter's night, must, she flattered herself, be a picture too affecting for Fitzhenry to think upon without some commiseration; and she hoped he would in time bestow on her his *forgiveness*;—to be admitted to his presence, was a favour which she dared not presume either to ask or expect.

But, in spite of the soothing expectation which she tried to encourage, a dread of she knew not what took possession of her mind.—Every moment she looked fearfully around her, and, as she beheld the wintry waste spreading on every side, she felt awe-struck at the desolateness of her situation. The sound of a human voice would, she thought, have been rapture to her ear; but the next minute she believed that it would have made her sink in terror to the ground.—"Alas!" she mournfully exclaimed, "I was not always timid and irritable as I now feel;—but then I was not always guilty:—O my child! would I were once more innocent like thee!" So saying, in a paroxysm of grief she bounded forward on her way, as if hoping to escape by speed from the misery of recollection.

Agnes was now arrived at the beginning of a forest, about two miles in length, and within three of her native place. Even in her happiest days she never entered its solemn shade without feeling a sensation of fearful awe; but now that she entered it, leafless as it was, a wandering wretched outcast, a mother without the sacred name of wife, and bearing in her arms the pledge of her infamy, her knees smote each other, and, shuddering as if danger were before her, she audibly implored the protection of Heaven.

At this instant she heard a noise, and, casting a startled glance into the obscurity before her, she thought she saw something like a human form running across the road. For a few moments she was motionless with terror; but, judging from the swiftness with which the object disappeared that she had inspired as much terror as she felt, she ventured to pursue her course. She had not gone far when she again beheld the cause of her fear; but hearing, as it moved, a noise like the clanking of a chain, she concluded that it was some poor animal which had been turned out to graze.

Still, as she gained on the object before her, she was convinced it was a man that she beheld; and, as she heard the noise no longer, she concluded that it had been the result of fancy only: but that, with every other idea, was wholly absorbed in terror when she saw the figure standing still, as if waiting for her approach.—"Yet why should I fear?" she inwardly observed: "it may be a poor wanderer like myself, who is desirous of a companion;—if so, I shall rejoice in such a rencontre."

As this reflection passed her mind, she hastened towards the stranger, when she saw him look hastily around him, start, as if he beheld at a distance some object that alarmed him, and then, without taking any notice of her, run on as fast as before. But what can express the horror of Agnes when she again heard the clanking of a chain, and discovered that it hung to the ankle of the stranger!—"Surely he must be a felon," murmured Agnes:—"O my poor boy! perhaps we shall both be murdered!—This suspense is not to be borne: I will follow him, and meet my fate at once."—Then, summoning all her remaining strength, she followed the alarming fugitive.

After she had walked nearly a mile further, and, as she did not overtake him, had flattered herself that he had gone in a contrary direction, she saw him seated on the ground, and, as before, turning his head back with a sort of convulsive quickness; but as it was turned from her, she was convinced that she was not the object which he was seeking. Of her he took no notice; and her resolution of accosting him failing when she approached, she walked hastily past, in hopes that she might escape him entirely.

As she passed, she heard him talking and laughing to himself, and thence concluded that he was not a felon, but a *lunatic* escaped from confinement. Horrible as this idea was, her fear was so far overcome by pity, that she

had a wish to return, and offer him some of the refreshment which she had procured for herself and child, when she heard him following her very fast, and was convinced by the sound, the dreadful sound of his chain, that he was coming up to her.

The clanking of a fetter, when one knows that it is fastened round the limbs of a fellow-creature, always calls forth in the soul, of sensibility a sensation of horror: what then, at this moment, must have been its effect on Agnes, who was trembling for her life, for that of her child, and looking in vain for a protector around the still, solemn waste! Breathless with apprehension, she stopped as the maniac gained upon her, and, motionless and speechless, awaited the consequence of his approach.

"Woman!" said he in a hoarse, hollow tone,—"Woman! do you see them? Do you see them?"—"Sir! pray what did you say, sir?" cried Agnes in a tone of respect, and curtsying as she spoke,—for what is so respectful as fear?—"I can't see them," resumed he, not attending to her, "I have escaped them! Rascals! cowards! I have escaped them!" and then he jumped and clapped his hands for joy.

Agnes, relieved in some measure from her fears, and eager to gain the poor wretch's favour, told him that she rejoiced at his escape from the rascals, and hoped that they would not overtake him: but while she spoke he seemed wholly inattentive, and, jumping as he walked, made his fetter clank in horrid exultation.

The noise at length awoke the child, who, seeing a strange and indistinct object before him, and hearing a sound so unusual, screamed violently, and hid his face in his mother's bosom.

"Take it away! take it away!" exclaimed the maniac,—"I do not like children."—Agnes, terrified at the thought of what might happen, tried to sooth the trembling boy to rest, but in vain; the child still screamed, and the angry agitation of the maniac increased.—"Strangle it! strangle it!" he cried—"do it this moment, or——"

Agnes, almost frantic with terror, conjured the unconscious boy, if he valued his life, to cease his cries; and then the next moment she conjured the wretched man to spare her child: but, alas! she spoke to those incapable of understanding her,—a child and a madman!—The terrified boy still shrieked, the lunatic still threatened; and, clenching his fist, seized the left arm of Agnes, who with the other attempted to defend her infant from his fury; when, at the very moment that his fate seemed inevitable, a sudden gale of wind shook the leafless branches of the surrounding trees; and the madman, fancying that the noise proceeded from his pursuers, ran off with his former rapidity.

Immediately the child, relieved from the sight and the sound which alarmed it, and exhausted by the violence of its cries, sunk into a sound sleep on the throbbing bosom of its mother. But, alas! Agnes knew that this was but a temporary escape:—the maniac might return, and again the child might wake in terrors:—and scarcely had the thought passed her mind when she saw him coming back; but, as he walked slowly, the noise was not so great as before.

"I hate to hear children cry," said he as he approached.—"Mine is quiet now," replied Agnes: then, recollecting that she had some food in her pocket, she offered some to the stranger, in order to divert his attention from the child. He snatched it from her hand instantly, and devoured it with terrible voraciousness; but again he exclaimed, "I do not like children;—if you trust them they will betray you:" and Agnes offered him food again, as if to bribe him to spare her helpless boy.—"I had a child once,—but she is dead, poor soul!" continued he, taking Agnes by the arm, and leading her gently forward.—"And you loved her very tenderly, I suppose?" said Agnes, thinking that the loss of his child had occasioned his malady; but, instead of answering her, he went on:—"They said that she ran away from me with a

lover,—but I knew they lied; she was good, and would not have deserted the father who doted on her.—Besides, I saw her funeral myself.—Liars, rascals, as they are!—Do not tell any one: I got away from them last night, and am now going to visit her grave."

A death-like sickness, an apprehension so horrible as to deprive her almost of sense, took possession of the soul of Agnes. She eagerly tried to obtain a sight of the stranger's face, the features of which the darkness had hitherto prevented her from distinguishing: she however tried in vain, as his hat was pulled over his forehead, and his chin rested on his bosom. But they had now nearly gained the end of the forest, and day was just breaking; and Agnes, as soon as they entered the open plain, seized the arm of the madman to force him to look towards her,—for speak to him she could not. He felt, and perhaps resented the importunate pressure of her hand—for he turned hastily round—when, dreadful confirmation of her fears, Agnes beheld her father!!!

It was indeed Fitzhenry, driven to madness by his daughter's desertion and disgrace!!

After the elopement of Agnes, Fitzhenry entirely neglected his business, and thought and talked of nothing but the misery which he experienced. In vain did his friends represent to him the necessity of his making amends, by increased diligence, for some alarming losses in trade which he had lately sustained. She, for whom alone he toiled, had deserted him—and ruin had no terrors for him.—"I was too proud of her," he used mournfully to repeat,—"and Heaven has humbled me even in her by whom I offended."

Month after month elapsed, and no intelligence of Agnes.—Fitzhenry's dejection increased, and his affairs became more and more involved: at length, absolute and irretrievable bankruptcy was become his portion, when he learned, from authority not to be doubted, that Agnes was living with Clifford as his acknowledged mistress.—This was the death-stroke to his reason: and the only way in which his friends (relations he had none, or only distant ones) could be of any further service to him was, by procuring him admission into a private madhouse in the neighbourhood.

Of his recovery little hope was entertained.—The constant theme of his ravings was his daughter;—sometimes he bewailed her as dead; at other times he complained of her as ungrateful:—but so complete was the overthrow which his reason had received, that he knew no one, and took no notice of those whom friendship or curiosity led to his cell: yet he was always meditating his escape; and, though ironed in consequence of it, the night he met Agnes, he had, after incredible difficulty and danger, effected his purpose.

But to return to Agnes, who, when she beheld in her insane companion her injured father, the victim probably of her guilt, let fall her sleeping child, and, sinking on the ground, extended her arms towards Fitzhenry, articulating in a faint voice, "O God! My father!" then prostrating herself at his feet, she clasped his knees in an agony too great for utterance.

At the name of 'father,' the poor maniac started, and gazed on her earnestly, with savage wildness, while his whole frame became convulsed; then, rudely disengaging himself from her embrace, he ran from her a few paces, and dashed himself on the ground in all the violence of phrensy. He raved; he tore his hair; he screamed, and uttered the most dreadful execrations; and, with his teeth shut and his hands clenched, he repeated the word 'father,' and said the name was mockery to him.

Agnes, in mute and tearless despair, beheld the dreadful scene: in vain did her affrighted child cling to her gown, and in its half-formed accents entreat to be taken to her arms again: she saw, she heeded nothing but her father; she was alive to nothing but her own guilt and its consequences; and she awaited with horrid composure the cessation of Fitzhenry's phrensy, or the direction of its fury towards her child.

At last, she saw him fall down exhausted and motionless, and tried to hasten to him; but she was unable to move, and reason and life seemed at once forsaking her, when Fitzhenry suddenly started up, and approached her.—Uncertain as to his purpose, Agnes caught her child to her bosom, and, falling again on her knees, turned on him her almost closing eyes; but his countenance was mild,—and gently patting her forehead, on which hung the damps of approaching insensibility, "Poor thing!" he cried, in a tone of the utmost tenderness and compassion, "Poor thing!" and then gazed on her with such inquiring and mournful looks, that tears once more found their way and relieved her bursting brain, while seizing her father's hand she pressed it with frantic emotion to her lips.

Fitzhenry looked at her with great kindness, and suffered her to hold his hand;—then exclaimed, "Poor thing!—don't cry,—don't cry;—I can't cry,—I have not cried for many years,—not since my child died.—For she is dead, is she not?" looking earnestly at Agnes, who could only answer by her tears.—"Come," said he, "come," taking hold of her arm, then laughing wildly, "Poor thing! you will not leave me, will you?"—"Leave you!" she replied: "Never:—I will live with you—die with you."—"True, true," cried he, "she is dead, and we will go visit her grave."—So saying, he dragged Agnes forward with great velocity; but as it was along the path leading to the town, she made no resistance.

Indeed it was such a pleasure to her to see that though he knew her not, the sight of her was welcome to her unhappy parent, that she sought to avoid thinking of the future, and to be alive only to the present: she tried also to forget that it was to his not knowing her that she owed the looks of tenderness and pity which he bestowed on her, and that the hand which now kindly held hers, would, if recollection returned, throw her from him with just indignation.

But she was soon awakened to redoubled anguish, by hearing Fitzhenry, as he looked behind him, exclaim, "They are coming! they are coming!" and as he said this, he ran with frantic haste across the common. Agnes, immediately looking behind her, saw three men pursuing her father at full speed, and concluded that they were the keepers of the bedlam whence he had escaped. Soon after, she saw the poor lunatic coming towards her, and had scarcely time to lay her child gently on the ground, before Fitzhenry threw himself in her arms, and implored her to save him from his pursuers.

In an agony that mocks description, Agnes clasped him to her heart, and awaited in trembling agitation the approach of the keepers.—"Hear me! hear me!" she cried; "I conjure you to leave him to my care: He is my father, and you may safely trust him with me."—"Your father!" replied one of the men; "and what then, child? You could do nothing for him, and you should be thankful to us, young woman, for taking him off your hands.—So come along, master, come along," he continued, seizing Fitzhenry, who could with difficulty be separated from Agnes,—while another of the keepers, laughing as he beheld her wild anguish, said, "We shall have the daughter as well as the father soon, I see, for I do not believe there is a pin to choose between them."

But severe as the sufferings of Agnes were already, a still greater pang awaited her. The keepers finding it a very difficult task to confine Fitzhenry, threw him down, and tried by blows to terrify him into acquiescence. At this outrage Agnes became frantic indeed, and followed them with shrieks, entreaties, and reproaches; while the struggling victim called on her to protect him, as they bore him by violence along, till, exhausted with anguish and fatigue, she fell insensible on the ground, and lost in a deep swoon the consciousness of her misery.

When she recovered her senses all was still around her, and she missed her child. Then hastily rising, and looking round with renewed phrensy, she saw it lying at some distance from her, and on taking it up she found that it was in a deep sleep. The horrid apprehension immediately rushed on her

mind, that such a sleep in the midst of cold so severe was the sure forerunner of death.

"Monster!" she exclaimed, "destroyer of thy child, as well as father!—But perhaps it is not yet too late, and my curse is not completed."—So saying, she ran, or rather flew, along the road; and seeing a house at a distance she made towards it, and, bursting open the door, beheld a cottager and his family at breakfast:—then, sinking on her knees, and holding out to the woman of the house her sleeping boy, "For the love of God," she cried, "look here! look here! Save him! O save him!"

A mother appealing to the heart of a mother is rarely unsuccessful in her appeal.—The cottager's wife was as eager to begin the recovery of the child of Agnes as Agnes herself, and in a moment the whole family was employed in its service; nor was it long before they were rewarded for their humanity by its complete restoration.

The joy of Agnes was frantic as her grief had been.—She embraced them all by turns, in a loud voice invoked blessings on their heads, and promised, if she was ever rich, to make their fortune:—lastly, she caught the still languid boy to her heart, and almost drowned it in her tears.

In the cottager and his family a scene like this excited wonder as well as emotion. He and his wife were good parents; they loved their children,—would have been anxious during their illness, and would have sorrowed for their loss: but to these violent expressions and actions, the result of cultivated sensibility, they were wholly unaccustomed, and could scarcely help imputing them to insanity,—an idea which the pale cheek and wild look of Agnes strongly confirmed; nor did it lose strength when Agnes, who in terror at her child's danger and joy for his safety had forgotten even her father and his situation, suddenly recollecting herself, exclaimed, "Have I dared to rejoice?—Wretch that I am! Oh! no;—there is no joy for me!" The cottager and his wife, on hearing these words, looked significantly at each other.

Agnes soon after started up, and, clasping her hands, cried out, "O my father! my dear, dear father! thou art past cure; and despair must be my portion."

"Oh! you are unhappy because your father is ill," observed the cottager's wife; "but do not be so sorrowful on that account, he may get better perhaps."

"Never, never," replied Agnes;—"yet who knows?"

"Aye; who knows indeed?" resumed the good woman. "But if not, you nurse him yourself, I suppose; and it will be a comfort to you to know he has every thing done for him that can be done."

Agnes sighed deeply.

"I lost my own father," continued she, "last winter, and a hard trial it was, to be sure; but then it consoled me to think I made his end comfortable. Besides, my conscience told me that, except here and there, I had always done my duty by him, to the best of my knowledge."

Agnes started from her seat, and walked rapidly round the room.

"He smiled on me," resumed her kind hostess, wiping her eyes, "to the last moment; and just before the breath left him, he said, 'Good child! good child!' O! it must be a terrible thing to lose one's parents when one has not done one's duty to them!"

At these words Agnes, contrasting her conduct and feelings with those of this artless and innocent woman, was overcome with despair, and seizing a knife that lay by her endeavoured to put an end to her existence; but the cottager caught her hand in time to prevent the blow, and his wife easily

disarmed her, as her violence instantly changed into a sort of stupor: then throwing herself back on the bed on which she was sitting, she lay with her eyes fixt, and incapable of moving.

The cottager and his wife now broke forth into expressions of wonder and horror at the crime which she was going to commit, and the latter taking little Edward from the lap of her daughter, held it towards Agnes:—"See," cried she, as the child stretched forth its little arms to embrace her,—"unnatural mother! would you forsake your child?"

These words, assisted by the caresses of the child himself, roused Agnes from her stupor.—"Forsake him! Never, never!" she faltered out: then, snatching him to her bosom, she threw herself back on a pillow which the good woman had placed under her head; and soon, to the great joy of the compassionate family, both mother and child fell into a sound sleep. The cottager then repaired to his daily labour, and his wife and children began their household tasks; but ever and anon they cast a watchful glance on their unhappy guest, dreading lest she should make a second attempt on her life.

The sleep of both Agnes and her child was so long and heavy, that night was closing in when the little boy awoke, and by his cries for food broke the rest of his unhappy mother.

But consciousness returned not with returning sense;—Agnes looked around her, astonished at her situation. At length, by slow degrees, the dreadful scenes of the preceding night and her own rash attempt burst on her recollection; she shuddered at the retrospect, and, clasping her hands, together, remained for some moments in speechless prayer:—then she arose; and, smiling mournfully at sight of her little Edward eating voraciously the milk and bread that was set before him, she seated herself at the table, and tried to partake of the coarse but wholesome food provided for her. As she approached, she saw the cottager's wife remove the knives. This circumstance forcibly recalled her rash action, and drove away her returning appetite.—"You may trust me now," she said; "I shrink with horror from my wicked attempt on my life, and swear, in the face of Heaven, never to repeat it: no,—my only wish now is, to live and to suffer."

Soon after, the cottager's wife made an excuse for bringing back a knife to the table, to prove to Agnes her confidence in her word; but this well-meant attention was lost on her,—she sat leaning on her elbow, and wholly absorbed in her own meditations.

When it was completely night, Agnes arose to depart.—"My kind friends," said she, "who have so hospitably received and entertained a wretched wanderer, believe me I shall never forget the obligations which I owe you, though I can never hope to repay them; but accept this (taking her last half-guinea from her pocket) as a pledge of my inclination to reward your kindness. If I am ever rich you shall—" Here her voice failed her, and she burst into tears.

This hesitation gave the virtuous people whom she addressed an opportunity of rejecting her offers.—"What we did, we did because we could not help it," said the cottager.—"You would not have had me see a fellow-creature going to kill soul and body too, and not prevent it, would you?"—"And as to saving the child," cried the wife, "am I not a mother myself, and can I help feeling for a mother? Poor little thing! it looked so piteous too, and felt so cold!"

Agnes could not speak; but still, by signs she tendered the money to their acceptance.—"No, no," resumed the cottager, "keep it for those who may not be willing to do you a service for nothing:"—and Agnes reluctantly replaced the half-guinea. But then a fresh source of altercation began; the cottager insisted on seeing Agnes to the town, and she insisted on going by herself: at last she agreed that he should go with her as far as the street where her friends lived, wait for her at the end of it, and if they were not

living, or were removed, she was to return, and sleep at the cottage.

Then, with a beating heart and dejected countenance, Agnes took her child in her arms, and, leaning on her companion, with slow and unsteady steps she began to walk to her native place, once the scene of her happiness and her glory, but now about to be the witness of her misery and her shame.

As they drew near the town, Agnes saw on one side of the road a new building, and instantly hurried from it as fast as her trembling limbs could carry her.—"Did you hear them?" asked the cottager.—"Hear whom?" said Agnes.—"The poor creatures," returned her companion, "who are confined there. That is the new bedlam, and—Hark! what a loud scream that was!"

Agnes, unable to support herself, staggered to a bench that projected from the court surrounding the building, while the cottager, unconscious why she stopped, observed it was strange that she should like to stay and hear the poor creatures—For his part, he thought it shocking to hear them shriek, and still more so to hear them laugh—"for it is so piteous," said he, "to hear those laugh who have so much reason to cry."

Agnes had not power to interrupt him, and he went on:—"This house was built by subscription; and it was begun by a kind gentleman of the name of Fitzhenry, who afterwards, poor soul, being made low in the world by losses in trade, and by having his brain turned by a good-for-nothing daughter, was one of the first patients in it himself."—Here Agnes, to whom this recollection had but too forcibly occurred already, groaned aloud. "What, tired so soon?" said her companion: "I doubt you have not been used to stir about—you have been too tenderly brought up. Ah! tender parents often spoil children, and they never thank them for it when they grow up neither, and often come to no good besides."

Agnes was going to make some observations wrung from her by the poignancy of self-upbraiding, when she heard a loud cry as of one in agony: fancying it her father's voice, she started up, and stopping her ears, ran towards the town so fast that it was with difficulty that the cottager could overtake her. When he did so, he was surprised at the agitation of her manner.—"What, I suppose you thought they were coming after you?" said he. "But there was no danger—I dare say it was only an unruly one whom they were beating."—Agnes, on hearing this, absolutely screamed with agony: and seizing the cottager's arm, "Let us hasten to the town," said she in a hollow and broken voice, "while I have strength enough left to carry me thither." At length they entered its walls, and the cottager said, "Here we are at last.—A welcome home to you, young woman."—"Welcome! and home to me!" cried Agnes wildly—"I have no home now—I can expect no welcome! Once indeed—" Here, overcome with recollections almost too painful to be endured, she turned from him and sobbed aloud, while the kind-hearted man could scarcely forbear shedding tears at sight of such mysterious, yet evidently real, distress.

In happier days, when Agnes used to leave home on visits to her distant friends, anticipation of the welcome she should receive on her return was, perhaps, the greatest pleasure that she enjoyed during her absence. As the adventurer to India, while toiling for wealth, never loses sight of the hope that he shall spend his fortune in his native land,—so Agnes, whatever company she saw, whatever amusements she partook of, looked eagerly forward to the hour when she should give her expecting father and her affectionate companions a recital of all that she had heard and seen. For, though she had been absent a few weeks only, "her presence made a little holiday," and she was received by Fitzhenry with delight too deep to be expressed; while, even earlier than decorum warranted, her friends were thronging to her door to welcome home the heightener of their pleasures, and the gentle soother of their sorrows; (for Agnes "loved and felt for all:" she had a smile ready to greet the child of prosperity, and a tear for the child of adversity)—As she was thus honoured, thus beloved, no wonder the

thoughts of home, and of returning home, were wont to suffuse the eyes of Agnes with tears of exquisite pleasure; and that, when her native town appeared in view, a group of expecting and joyful faces used to swim before her sight, while, hastening forward to have the first glance of her, fancy used to picture her father!—Now, dread reverse! after a *long* absence, an absence of years, she was returning to the same place, inhabited by the same friends: but the voices that used to be loud in pronouncing her welcome, would now be loud in proclaiming indignation at her sight; the eyes that used to beam with gladness at her presence, would now be turned from her with disgust; and the fond father, who used to be counting the moments till she arrived, was now—I shall not go on—suffice, that Agnes felt, to "her heart's core," all the bitterness of the contrast.

When they arrived near the place of her destination, Agnes stopped, and told the cottager that they must part.—"So much the worse," said the good man: "I do now know how it is, but you are so sorrowful, yet so kind and gentle, somehow, that both my wife and I have taken a liking to you:—you must not be angry, but we cannot help thinking you are not one of us, but a lady, though you are so disguised and so humble;—but misfortune spares no one, you know."

Agnes, affected and gratified by these artless expressions of good will, replied, "I have, indeed, known better days...."—"And will again, I hope with all my heart and soul," interrupted the cottager with great warmth.—"I fear, not," replied Agnes, "my dear worthy friend."—"Nay, young lady," rejoined he, "my wife and I are proper to be your servants, not friends."—"You are my friends, perhaps my only friends," returned Agnes mournfully: "perhaps there is not, at this moment, another hand in the universe that would not reject mine, or another tongue that would not upbraid me."—"They must be hard-hearted wretches, indeed, who could upbraid a poor woman for her misfortunes," cried the cottager: "however, you shall never want a friend while I live. You know I saved your life; and somehow, I feel therefore as if you belonged to me. I once saved one of my pigeons from a hawk, and I believe, were I starving, I could not now bear to kill the little creature; it would seem like eating my own flesh and blood—so I am sure I could never desert you."—"You have not yet heard my story," replied Agnes: "but you shall know who I am soon; and then, if you still feel disposed to offer me your friendship, I shall be proud to accept it."

The house to which Agnes was hastening was that of her nurse, from whom she had always experienced the affection of a mother, and hoped now to receive a temporary asylum; but she might not be living—and, with a beating heart, Agnes knocked at the door. It was opened by Fanny, her nurse's daughter, the play-fellow of Agnes's childhood.—"Thank Heaven!" said Agnes, as she hastened back to the cottager, "I hope I have, at least, one friend left;" and telling him he might go home again, as she was almost certain of shelter for the night, the poor man shook her heartily by the hand, prayed God to bless her, and departed.

Agnes then returned to Fanny, who was still standing by the door, wondering who had knocked at so late an hour, and displeased at being kept so long in the cold.—"Will you admit me, Fanny, and give me shelter for the night?" said Agnes in a faint and broken voice.—"Gracious Heaven! who are you?" cried Fanny, starting back. "Do you not know me?" she replied, looking earnestly in her face.—Fanny again started; then, bursting into tears, as she drew Agnes forward, and closed the door—"O God! it is my dear young lady!"—"And are you sorry to see me?" replied Agnes.—"Sorry!" answered the other—"Oh, no! but to see you thus!—O! my dear lady, what you must have suffered! Thank Heaven my poor mother is not alive to see this day!"

"And is she dead?" cried Agnes, turning very faint, and catching hold of a chair to keep her from falling. "Then is the measure of my affliction full: I have lost my oldest and best friend!"—"I am not dead," said Fanny respectfully.—"Excellent, kind creature!" continued Agnes, "I hoped so

much alleviation of my misery from her affection."—"Do you hope none from mine?" rejoined Fanny in a tone of reproach:—"Indeed, my dear young lady, I love you as well as my mother did, and will do as much for you as she would have done. Do I not owe all I have to you? and now that you are in trouble, perhaps in want too—But no, that cannot and shall not be," wringing her hands and pacing the room with frantic violence: "I can't bear to think of such a thing. That ever I should live to see my dear young lady in want of the help which she was always so ready to give!"

Agnes tried to comfort her: but the sight of her distress notwithstanding was soothing to her, as it convinced her that she was still dear to one pure and affectionate heart.

During this time little Edward remained covered up so closely that Fanny did not know what the bundle was that Agnes held in her lap: but when she lifted up the cloak that concealed him, Fanny was in an instant kneeling by his side, and gazing on him with admiration. "Is it—is it—" said Fanny with hesitation—"It is my child," replied Agnes, sighing; and Fanny lavished on the unconscious boy the caresses which respect forbade her to bestow on the mother.

"Fanny," said Agnes, "you say nothing of your husband?"—"He is dead," replied Fanny with emotion.—"Have you any children?"—"None."—"Then will you promise me, if I die, to be a mother to this child?"—Fanny seized her hand, and, in a voice half choked by sobs, said, "I promise you."—"Enough," cried Agnes; then holding out her arms to her humble friend, Fanny's respect yielded to affection, and, falling on Agnes's neck, she sobbed aloud.

"My dear Fanny," said Agnes, "I have a question to ask, and I charge you to answer it truly."—"Do not ask me, do not ask me, for indeed I dare not answer you," replied Fanny in great agitation. Agnes guessed the cause, and hastened to tell her that the question was not concerning her father, as she was acquainted with his situation already, and proceeded to ask whether her elopement and ill conduct had at all hastened the death of her nurse, who was in ill health when she went away.—"Oh no," replied Fanny; "she never believed that you could be gone off willingly, but was sure you was spirited away; and she died expecting that you would some day return, and take the law of the villain: and no doubt she was right, (though nobody thinks so now but me,) for you were always too good to do wrong."

Agnes was too honourable to take to herself the merit which she did not deserve: she therefore owned that she was indeed guilty; "nor should I," she added, "have dared to intrude myself on you, or solicit you to let me remain under your roof, were I not severely punished for my crime, and resolved to pass the rest of my days in solitude and labour."—"You should not presume to intrude yourself on me!" replied Fanny—"Do not talk thus, if you do not mean to break my heart."—"Nay, Fanny," answered Agnes, "it would be presumption in any woman who has quitted the path of virtue to intrude herself, however high her rank might be, on the meanest of her acquaintance whose honour is spotless. Nor would I thus throw myself on your generosity were I not afraid that, if I were to be unsoothed by the presence of a sympathizing friend, I should sink beneath my sorrows, and want resolution to fulfill the hard task which my duty enjoins me."

I shall not attempt to describe the anguish of Fanny when she thought of her young lady, the pride of her heart, as she used to call her, being reduced so low in the world, nor the sudden bursts of joy to which she gave way the next moment when she reflected that Agnes was returned, never perhaps to leave her again.

Agnes wore away great part of the night in telling Fanny her mournful tale, and in hearing from her a full account of her father's sufferings, bankruptcy, and consequent madness. At day-break she retired to bed,—not to sleep, but to ruminate on the romantic yet in her eyes feasible plan which she had formed for the future;—while Fanny, wearied out by the

violent emotions which she had undergone, sobbed herself to sleep by her side.

The next morning Agnes did not rise till Fanny had been up some time; and when she seated herself at the breakfast-table, she was surprised to see it spread in a manner which ill accorded with her or Fanny's situation. On asking the reason, Fanny owned she could not bear that her dear young lady should fare as she did only, and had therefore provided a suitable breakfast for her.—"But you forget," said Agnes, "that if I remain with you, neither you nor I can afford such breakfasts as these."—"True," replied Fanny mournfully; "then you must consider this as only a welcome, madam."—"Aye," replied Agnes, "the prodigal is returned, and you have killed the fatted calf." Fanny burst into tears; while Agnes, shocked at having excited them by the turn which she unguardedly gave to her poor friend's attention, tried to sooth her into composure, and affected a gaiety which she was far from feeling.

"Now then to my first task," said Agnes, rising as soon as she had finished her breakfast: "I am going to call on Mr. Seymour; you say he lives where he formerly did."—"To call on Mr. Seymour!" exclaimed Fanny; "O my dear madam, do not go near him, I beseech you! He is a very severe man, and will affront you, depend upon it."—"No matter," rejoined Agnes; "I have deserved humiliation, and will not shrink from it: but his daughter Caroline, you know, was once my dearest friend, and she will not suffer him to trample on the fallen: besides, it is necessary that I should apply to him in order to succeed in my scheme."—"What scheme?" replied Fanny.—"You would not approve it, Fanny, therefore I shall not explain it to you at present; but, when I return, perhaps I shall tell you all."—"But you are not going so soon? not in day-light, surely?—If you should be insulted!"

Agnes started with horror at this proof which Fanny had unguardedly given, how hateful her guilt had made her in a place that used to echo with her praises;—but, recovering herself, she said that she should welcome insults as part of the expiation which she meant to perform. "But if you will not avoid them for your own sake, pray, pray do for mine," exclaimed Fanny. "If you were to be ill used, I am sure I should never survive it: so, if you must go to Mr. Seymour's, at least oblige me in not going before dark:"—and, affected by this fresh mark of her attachment, Agnes consented to stay.

At six o'clock in the evening, while the family was sitting round the fire, and Caroline Seymour was expecting the arrival of her lover, to whom she was to be united in a few days, Agnes knocked at Mr. Seymour's door, having positively forbidden Fanny to accompany her. Caroline, being on the watch for her intended bridegroom, started at the sound; and though the knock which Agnes gave did not much resemble that of an impatient lover, "still it might be he—he might mean to surprise her;" and, half opening the parlour door, she listened with a beating heart for the servant's answering knock.

By this means she distinctly heard Agnes ask whether Mr. Seymour was at home. The servant started, and stammered out that he believed his master was within,—while Caroline springing forward exclaimed, "I know that voice:—O yes! it must be she!"—But her father, seizing her arm, pushed her back into the parlour, saying, "I also know that voice, and I command you to stay where you are."—Then going up to Agnes, he desired her to leave his house directly, as it should be no harbour for abandoned women and unnatural children.

"But will you not allow it to shelter for one moment the wretched and the penitent?" she replied.—"Father, my dear, dear father!" cried Caroline, again coming forward, but was again driven back by Mr. Seymour, who, turning to Agnes, bade her claim shelter from the man for whom she had left the best of parents; and desiring the servant to shut the door in her face, he re-entered the parlour, whence Agnes distinctly heard the sobs of

the compassionate Caroline.

But the servant was kinder than the master, and could not obey the orders which he had received.—"O madam! Miss Fitzhenry, do you not know me?" said he. "I once lived with you; have you forgotten little William? I shall never forget you; you were the sweetest-tempered young lady—That ever I should see you thus!"

Before Agnes could reply, Mr. Seymour again angrily asked why his orders were not obeyed; and Agnes, checking her emotion, besought William to deliver a message to his master. "Tell him," said she, "all I ask of him is, that he will use his interest to get me the place of servant in the house, the bedlam I would say, where—he will know what I mean," she added, unable to utter the conclusion of the sentence:—and William, in a broken voice, delivered the message.

"O my poor Agnes!" cried Caroline passionately:—"A servant! she a servant and in such a place too!"—William adding in a low voice, "Ah! miss! and she looks so poor and wretched!"

Meanwhile Mr. Seymour was walking up and down the room hesitating how to act; but reflecting that it was easier to forbid any communication with Agnes than to check it if once begun, he again desired William to shut the door against her. "You must do it yourself, then," replied William, "for I am not hard-hearted enough;"—and Mr. Seymour, summoning up resolution, told Agnes that there were other governors to whom she might apply, and then locked the door against her himself;—while Agnes slowly and sorrowfully turned her steps towards the more hospitable roof of Fanny. She had not gone far, however, when she heard a light footstep behind her, and her name pronounced in a gentle, faltering voice. Turning round she beheld Caroline Seymour, who, seizing her hand, forced something into it, hastily pressed it to her lips, and, without saying one word, suddenly disappeared, leaving Agnes motionless as a statue, and, but for the parcel she held in her hand, disposed to think that she was dreaming.—Then, eager to see what it contained, she hastened back to Fanny, who heard with indignation the reception which she had met from Mr. Seymour, but on her knees invoked blessings on the head of Caroline; when on opening the parcel she found that it contained twenty guineas inclosed in a paper, on which was written, but almost effaced with tears, "For my still dear Agnes:—would I dare say more!"

This money the generous girl had taken from that allowed her for wedding-clothes, and felt more delight in relieving with it the wants even of a guilty fellow-creature, than purchasing the most splendid dress could have afforded her. And her present did more than she expected; it relieved the mind of Agnes: she had taught herself to meet without repining the assaults of poverty, but not to encounter with calmness the scorn of the friends whom she loved.

But Caroline and her kindness soon vanished again from her mind, and the idea of her father, and her scheme, took entire possession of it.—"But it might not succeed; no doubt Mr. Seymour would be her enemy;—still he had hinted that she might apply to the other governors:" and Fanny having learnt that they were all to meet at the bedlam on business the next day, she resolved to write a note, requesting to be allowed to appear before them.

This note, Fanny, who was not acquainted with its contents, undertook to deliver, and, to the great surprise of Agnes (as she expected that Mr. Seymour would oppose it), her request was instantly granted. Indeed it was he himself who urged the compliance.

There was not a kinder-hearted man in the world than Mr. Seymour; and in his severity towards Agnes he acted more from what he thought his duty, than from his inclination. He was the father of several daughters; and it was his opinion that a parent could not too forcibly inculcate on the minds

of young women the salutary truth, that loss of virtue must be to them the loss of friends. Besides, his eldest daughter Caroline was going to be married to the son of a very severe, rigid mother, then on a visit at the house; and he feared that, if he took any notice of the fallen Agnes, the old lady might conceive a prejudice against him and her daughter-in-law. Added to these reasons, Mr. Seymour was a very vain man, and never acted in any way without saying to himself, "What will the world say?" Hence, though his first impulses were frequently good, the determinations of his judgement were often contemptible.

But, however satisfied Mr. Seymour might be with his motives on this occasion, his feelings revolted at the consciousness of the anguish which he had occasioned Agnes. He wished, ardently wished, that he had dared to have been kinder: and when Caroline, who was incapable of the meanness of concealing any action which she thought it right to perform, told him of the gift which she had in person bestowed on Agnes, he could scarcely forbear commending her conduct; and while he forbade any future intercourse between them, he was forced to turn away his head to hide the tear of gratified sensibility, and the smile of parental exultation: nevertheless, he did not omit to bid her keep her own counsel, "for, if your conduct were known," added he, "what would the world say?"

No wonder then, that, softened as he was by Agnes's application (though he deemed the scheme wild and impracticable), and afraid that he had treated her unkindly, he was pleased to have an opportunity of obliging her, without injuring himself, and that her request to the governors was strengthened by his representations: nor is it extraordinary that, alive as he always was to the opinion of everyone, he should dread seeing Agnes, after the reception which he had given her, more than she dreaded to appear before the board.

Agnes, who had borrowed of Fanny the dress of a respectable maid-servant, when summoned to attend the governors, entered the room with modest but dignified composure, prepared to expect contumely, but resolved to endure it as became a contrite heart.—But no contumely awaited her.

In the hour of her prosperity she had borne her faculties so meekly, and had been so careful never to humble any one by showing a consciousness of superiority, that she had been beloved even more than she had been admired; and hard indeed must the heart of that man have been, who could have rejoiced that she herself was humbled.

A dead nay a solemn silence took place on her entrance. Every one present beheld with surprise, and with *stolen* looks of pity, the ravages which remorse and anguish had made in her form, and the striking change in her apparel: for every one had often followed with delight her graceful figure through the dance, and gazed with admiration on the tasteful varieties of her dress; every one had listened with pleasure to the winning sound of her voice, and envied Fitzhenry the possession of such a daughter. As they now beheld her, these recollections forcibly occurred to them:—they agonized—they overcame them.—They thought of their own daughters, and secretly prayed Heaven to keep them from the voice of the seducer:—away went all their resolutions to receive Agnes with that open disdain and detestation which her crime deserved; the sight of her disarmed them; and not one amongst them had, for some moments, firmness enough to speak. At last, "Pray sit down, Miss Fitzhenry," said the president in a voice hoarse with emotion: "Here is a chair," added another: and Mr. Seymour, bowing as he did it, placed a seat for her near the fire.

Agnes, who had made up her mind to bear expected indignity with composure, was not proof against unexpected kindness; and, hastily turning to the window, she gave vent to her sensations in an agony of tears. But, recollecting the importance of the business on which she came, she struggled with her feelings; and on being desired by the president to

explain to the board what she wanted, she began to address them in a faint and faltering voice: however, as she proceeded, she gained courage, remembering that it was her interest to affect her auditors, and make them enter warmly into her feelings and designs. She told her whole story, in as concise a manner as possible, from the time of her leaving Clifford to her rencontre with her father in the forest, and his being torn from her by the keepers; and when she was unable to go on, from the violence of her emotions, she had the satisfaction of seeing that the tears of her auditors kept pace with her own. When her narrative was ended, she proceeded thus:—

"I come now, gentlemen, to the reason why I have troubled you with this narration.—From the impression which the sight of me made on my father, I feel a certain conviction that, were I constantly with him, I might in time be able to restore him to that reason of which my guilt had deprived him. To effect this purpose, it is my wish to become a servant in this house: if I should not succeed in my endeavours; I am so sure he will have pleasure in seeing me, that I feel it my duty to be with him, even on that account; and, if there be any balm for a heart and conscience so wounded as mine, I must find it in devoting all my future days to alleviate, though I cannot cure, the misery which I have occasioned. And if," added she with affecting enthusiasm, "it should please Heaven to smile on my endeavours to restore him to reason, how exquisite will be my satisfaction in labouring to maintain him!"

To this plan, it is to be supposed, the governors saw more objection than Agnes did; but, though they rejected the idea of her being a servant in the house, they were not averse to giving her an opportunity of making the trial which she desired, if it were only to alleviate her evident wretchedness; and, having consulted the medical attendants belonging to the institution, they ordered that Agnes should be permitted two hours at a time, morning and evening, to see Fitzhenry. And she, who had not dared to flatter herself that she should obtain so much, was too full of emotion to show, otherwise than by incoherent expressions and broken sentences, her sense of the obligation.

"Our next care," observed the president, "must be, as friends of your poor father, to see what we can do for your future support."—"That, sir, I shall provide for myself," replied Agnes; "I will not eat the bread of idleness, as well as of shame and affliction, and shall even rejoice in being obliged to labour for my support, and that of my child,—happy, if, in fulfilling well the duties of a mother, I may make some atonement for having violated those of a daughter."

"But, Miss Fitzhenry," answered the president, "accept at least some assistance from us till you can find means of maintaining yourself."—"Never, never," cried Agnes: "I thank you for your kindness, but I will not accept it: nor do I need it. I have already accepted assistance from one kind friend, and merely because I should, under similar circumstances, have been hurt at having a gift of mine refused: but allow me to say that, from the wretchedness into which my guilt has plunged me, nothing henceforward but my industry shall relieve me."

So saying, she curtsied to the gentlemen, and hastily withdrew, leaving them all deeply affected by her narrative, and her proposed expiatory plan of life, and ready to grant her their admiration, should she have resolution to fulfill her good intentions, after the strong impression which the meeting with her father in the forest had made on her mind should have been weakened by time and occupation.

Agnes hastened from the governors' room to put in force the leave which she had obtained, and was immediately conducted to Fitzhenry's cell. She found him with his back to the door, drawing with a piece of coal on the wall. As he did not observe her entrance, she had an opportunity of looking over his shoulder, and she saw that he had drawn the shape of a coffin, and

was then writing on the lid the name of Agnes.

A groan which involuntarily escaped her made him turn round: at sight of her he started, and looked wildly as he had done in the forest: then shaking his head and sighing deeply, he resumed his employment, still occasionally looking back at Agnes; who, at length overcome by her feelings, threw herself on the bed beside him, and burst into tears.

Hearing her sobs, he immediately turned round again, and patting her cheek as he had done on their first meeting, said, "Poor thing! poor thing!" and fixing his eyes steadfastly on her face while Agnes turned towards him and pressed his hand to her lips, he gazed on her as before with a look of anxious curiosity; then, turning from her, muttered to himself, "She is dead, for all that."

Soon after, he asked her to take a walk with him; adding, in a whisper, "We will go find her grave;" and taking her under his arm, he led her to the garden, smiling on her from time to time, as if it gave him pleasure to see her; and sometimes laughing, as if at some secret satisfaction which he would not communicate. When they had made one turn round the garden, he suddenly stopped, and began singing—"Tears such as tender fathers shed," that affecting song of Handel's, which he used to delight to hear Agnes sing: "I can't go on," he observed, looking at Agnes; "can you?" as if there were in his mind some association between her and that song; and Agnes, with a bursting heart, took up the air where he left off.

Fitzhenry listened with restless agitation; and when she had finished, he desired her to sing it again. "But say the words first," he added: and Agnes repeated—

"Tears such as tender fathers shed
Warm from my aged eyes descend,
For joy, to think, when I am dead,
My son will have mankind his friend."

"No, no," cried Fitzhenry with quickness, "'for joy to think, when I am dead, Agnes will have mankind her friend.' I used to sing it so; and so did she when I bade her. Oh! she sung it so well!—But she can sing it no more now, for she is dead; and we will go look for her grave."

Then he walked hastily round the garden, while Agnes, whom the words of this song, by recalling painful recollections, had almost deprived of reason, sat down on a bench, nearly insensible, till he again came to her, and, taking her hand, said in a hurried manner, "You will not leave me, will you?" On her answering No, in a very earnest and passionate manner, he looked delighted; and saying "Poor thing!" again gazed on her intently; and again Agnes's hopes that he would in time know her returned.—"Very pale, very pale!" cried Fitzhenry the next moment, stroking her cheek; "and *she* had such a bloom!—Sing again: for the love of God, sing again:"—and in a hoarse, broken voice Agnes complied. "She sung better than you," rejoined he when she had done:—"so sweet, so clear it was!—But she is gone!" So saying, he relapsed into total indifference to Agnes, and every thing around him—and again her new-raised hopes vanished.

The keeper now told her it was time for her to depart; and she mournfully arose: but, first seizing her father's hand, she leaned for a moment her head on his arm; then, bidding God bless him, walked to the door with the keeper. But on seeing her about to leave him, Fitzhenry ran after her, as fast as his heavy irons would let him, wildly exclaiming, "You shall not go—you shall not go."

Agnes, overjoyed at this evident proof of the pleasure her presence gave him, looked at the keeper for permission to stay; but as he told her it would be against the rules, she thought it more prudent to submit; and before Fitzhenry could catch hold of her in order to detain her by force, she ran through the house, and the grated door was closed on her.

"And this," said Agnes to herself, turning round to survey the melancholy mansion which she had left, while mingled sounds of groans, shrieks, shouts, laughter, and the clanking of irons, burst upon her ears, "this is the abode of my father! and provided for him by me!—This is the recompense bestowed on him by the daughter whom he loved and trusted, in return for years of unparalleled fondness and indulgence!"

The idea was too horrible; and Agnes, calling up all the energy of her mind, remembered the uselessness of regret for the past, but thought with pleasure on the advantages of amendment for the present and the future: and by the time she reached Fanny's door, her mind had recovered its sad composure.

Her countenance, at her return, was very different to what it had been at her departure. Hope animated her sunk eye, and she seemed full of joyful though distant expectations: nay, so much was she absorbed in pleasing anticipations, that she feebly returned the caresses of her child, who climbed up her knees to express his joy at seeing her; and even while she kissed his ruddy cheek, her eye looked beyond it with the open gaze of absence.

"I have seen him again," she cried, turning to Fanny; "and he almost knew me! He will know me entirely, in time; and next, he will know every thing; and then I shall be happy!"

Fanny, to whom Agnes had given no clue to enable her to understand this language, was alarmed for her intellects, till she explained her plans and her hopes; which Fanny, though she could not share in them, was too humane to discourage.

"But now," continued Agnes, "let us consult on my future means of gaining a livelihood;" and finding that Fanny, besides keeping a day-school, took in shawl-work, a considerable shawl manufacture being carried on in the town, it was settled that she would procure the same employment for Agnes; and that a small back room in Fanny's little dwelling should be fitted up for her use.

In the mean while the governors of the bedlam had returned to their respective habitations, with feelings towards Agnes very different to those with which they had assembled. But too prudent to make even a penitent sinner the subject of praise in their own families, they gave short, evasive answers to the inquiries that were made there.

Mr. Seymour, on the contrary, thought it his duty to relieve the generous and affectionate heart of his daughter, by a minute detail of what had passed at the meeting; but he had no opportunity of doing this when he first returned home, as he found there a large party assembled to dinner. Caroline, however, watched his countenance and manner: and seeing on the first an expression of highly-awakened feelings, and in the latter a degree of absence, and aversion to talking, which it always displayed whenever his heart had been deeply interested, she flattered herself that Agnes was the cause of these appearances, and hoped to hear of something to her advantage.

During dinner, a lady asked Caroline which of her young friends would accompany her to church, in the capacity of bride-maid. Caroline started, and turned pale at the question—for melancholy were the reflections which it excited in her mind. It had always been an agreement between her and Agnes, that whichever of the two was married first should have the other for her bride-maid; and the question was repeated before Caroline could trust her voice to answer it. "I shall have no bride-maids, but my sisters," she replied at length with a quivering lip; "I cannot; indeed I wish to have no other now." Then, looking at her father, she saw that his eyes were filled with tears; and unable to suppress, but wishing to conceal, his emotion, he abruptly left the room.

There is scarcely any human being whose heart has not taught him that we are never so compassionate and benevolent towards others, as when our own wishes are completely gratified—we are never so humble as then. This was the case with Mr. Seymour: he was about to marry his eldest daughter in a manner even superior to his warmest expectations, and his paternal care, therefore, was amply rewarded. But his heart told him that his care and his affection had not exceeded, perhaps not equalled, that of Fitzhenry; nor had the promise of his daughter's youth, fair as it was, ever equalled that of the unhappy Agnes: yet Caroline was going to aggrandize her family, and Agnes had disgraced hers. She was happy—Agnes miserable. He was the possessor of a large fortune, and all the comforts of life; and Fitzhenry was in a madhouse.

This contrast between their situations was forcibly recalled to his mind by the question addressed to Caroline; and, already softened by the interview of the morning, he could not support his feelings, but was obliged to hasten to his chamber to vent in tears and thanksgivings the mingled sensations of humility and gratitude. Caroline soon followed him; and heard with emotions as violent, her father's description of Agnes's narration, and her conduct before the governors.

"But it is not sufficient," said she, "that you tell me this: you must tell it wherever you hear the poor penitent's name mentioned, and avow the change which it has made in your sentiments towards her; you must be her advocate."

"Her advocate! What would the world say?"

"Just what you wish it to say. Believe me, my dear father, the world is in many instances like a spoiled child, who treats with contempt the foolish parent that indulges his caprices, but behaves with respect to those, who, regardless of his clamours, give the law to him, instead of receiving it."

"You speak from the untaught enthusiasm and confidence of youth, Caroline; but experience will teach you that no one can with impunity run counter to the opinions of the world."

"My experience has taught me that already: but, in this case, you do not seem to do the world justice. The world would blame you, and justly too, if, while talking of the unhappy Agnes, you should make light of her guilt: but why not, while you acknowledge that to be enormous, descant with equal justice on the deep sense of it which she entertains, and on the excellence of her present intentions? To this what can the world say, but that you are a just judge? And even suppose they should think you too lenient a one, will not the approbation of your own conscience be an ample consolation for such a condemnation? O my dear father! were you not one of the best and most *unspoilable* of men, your anxious attention to what the world will say of your actions, must long ere this have made you one of the worst."

"Enough, enough," cried Mr. Seymour, wounded self-love contending in his bosom with parental pride, for he had some suspicion that Caroline was right, "what would the world say, if it were to hear you schooling your father?"

"When the world hears me trying to exalt my own wisdom by doubting my father's, I hope it will treat me with the severity which I shall deserve."

Mr. Seymour clasped her to his bosom as she said this, and involuntarily exclaimed, "Oh! poor Fitzhenry!"—"And poor Agnes too!"—retorted Caroline, throwing her arms round his neck: "it will be my parting request, when I leave my paternal roof, that you will do all the justice you can to my once-honoured friend—and let the world say what it pleases."—"Well, well, I will indulge you by granting your request," cried Mr. Seymour; "or rather I will indulge myself." And then, contented with each other, they returned to the company.

A few days after this conversation Caroline's marriage took place, and was celebrated by the ringing of bells and other rejoicings. "What are the bells ringing for to-day?" said Agnes to Fanny, as she was eating her breakfast with more appetite than usual. Fanny hesitated; and then, in a peevish tone, replied, that she supposed they rang for Miss Caroline Seymour, as she was married that morning:—adding, "Such a fuss, indeed! such preparations! one would think nobody was ever married before!"

Yet, spitefully as Fanny spoke this, she had no dislike to the amiable Caroline; her pettishness proceeded merely from her love for Agnes. Just such preparations, just such rejoicings, she had hoped to see one day for the marriage of her dear young lady;—and though Agnes had not perceived it, Fanny had for the last two days shed many a tear of regret and mortification, while news of the intended wedding reached her ear on every side; and she had not courage to tell Agnes what she heard, lest the feelings of Agnes on the occasion should resemble hers, but in a more painful degree. "Caroline Seymour married!" cried Agnes, rising from her unfinished meal: "well married, I hope?"—"O yes, very well indeed—Mr. Seymour is so proud of the connexion!" "Thank God!" said Agnes fervently:—"May she be as happy as her virtues deserve!"—and then with a hasty step she retired to her own apartment.

It is certain that Agnes had a mind above the meanness of envy, and that she did not repine at the happiness of her friend; yet, while with tears trickling down her cheek she faltered out the words "Happy Caroline!—Mr. Seymour proud! Well may he be so!" her feelings were as bitter as those which envy excites. "Oh! my poor father! I once hoped—" added she; but, overcome with the acuteness of regret and remorse, she threw herself on the bed in speechless anguish.

Then the image of Caroline, as she last saw her, weeping for her misfortunes, and administering to her wants, recurred to her mind, and, in a transport of affection and gratitude, she took the paper that contained the gift from her bosom, kissed the blotted scrawl on the back of it, and prayed fervently for her happiness.

"But surely," cried she, starting up, and running into the next room to Fanny, "I should write a few lines of congratulation to the bride?" Fanny did not answer; indeed she could not; for the affectionate creature was drowned in tears, which Agnes well understood, and was gratified, though pained, to behold. At length, still more ashamed of her own weakness when she saw it reflected in another, Agnes gently reproved Fanny, telling her it seemed as if she repined at Miss Seymour's happiness.

"No," replied Fanny, "I only repine at your misery. Dear me! she is a sweet young lady, to be sure, but no more to be compared to you—"—"Hush! Fanny: 'tis I who am now not to be compared to her:—remember, my misery is owing to my guilt."—"It is not the less to be repined at on that account," replied Fanny.

To this remark, unconsciously severe, Agnes with a sigh assented; and, unable to continue the conversation in this strain, she again asked whether Fanny did not think she ought to congratulate the generous Caroline. "By all means," replied Fanny: but before she answered, Agnes had determined that it would be kinder in her not to damp the joy of Caroline by calling to her mind the image of a wretched friend. "True," she observed, "it would gratify my feelings to express the love and gratitude I bear her, and my self-love would exult in being recollected by her with tenderness and regret, even in the hour of her bridal splendour; but the gratification would only be a selfish one, and therefore I will reject it."

Having formed this laudable resolution, Agnes, after trying to compose her agitated spirits by playing with her child, who was already idolized by the faithful Fanny, bent her steps as usual to the cell of her father. Unfortunately for Agnes, she was obliged to pass the house of Mr. Seymour, and at the door she saw the carriages waiting to convey the bride and her

train to the country seat of her mother-in-law. Agnes hurried on as fast as her trembling limbs could carry her; but, as she cast a hasty glance on the splendid liveries, and the crowd gazing on them, she saw Mr. Seymour bustling at the door, with all the pleased consequence of a happy parent in his countenance; and not daring to analyse her feelings, she rushed forward from the mirthful scene, and did not stop again till she found herself at the door of the bedlam.

But when there, and when, looking up at its grated windows, she contemplated it as the habitation of her father—so different to that of the father of Caroline—and beheld in fancy the woe-worn, sallow face of Fitzhenry, so unlike the healthy, satisfied look of Mr. Seymour—"I can't go in, I can't see him to-day," she faintly articulated, overcome with a sudden faintness—and, as soon as she could recover her strength, she returned home; and, shutting herself up in her own apartment, spent the rest of the day in that mournful and solitary meditation that "maketh the heart better."

It would no doubt have gratified the poor mourner to have known, that, surrounded by joyous and congratulating friends, Caroline sighed for the absent Agnes, and felt the want of her congratulations—"Surely she will write to me!" said she mentally, "I am sure she wishes me happy; and one of my greatest pangs at leaving my native place is, the consciousness that I leave her miserable."

The last words that Caroline uttered, as she bade adieu to the domestics, were, "Be sure to send after me any note or letter that may come." But no note or letter from Agnes arrived; and had Caroline known the reason, she would have loved her once happy friend the more.

The next day, earlier than usual, Agnes went in quest of her father. She did not absolutely flatter herself that he had missed her the day before, still she did not think it *impossible* that he *might*. She dared not, however, ask the question; but, luckily for her, the keeper told her, unasked, that Fitzhenry was observed to be restless, and looking out of the door of his cell frequently, both morning and evening, as if expecting somebody; and that at night, as he was going to bed, he asked whether the lady had not been there.

"Indeed!" cried Agnes, her eyes sparkling with pleasure—"Where is he?—Let me see him directly." But, after the first joyful emotion which he always showed at seeing her had subsided, she could not flatter herself that his symptoms were more favourable than before.

The keeper also informed her that he had been thrown into so violent a raving fit, by the agitation he felt at parting with her the last time she was there, that she must contrive to slip away unperceived whenever she came: and this visit having passed away without any thing material occurring, Agnes contrived to make her escape unseen.

On her return she repeated to Fanny several times, with a sort of pathetic pleasure, the question her father had asked—"He inquired whether the lady had not been there;—think of that, Fanny:" while so incoherent was her language and so absent were her looks, that Fanny again began to fear her afflictions had impaired her reason.

After staying a few days with the new-married couple, Mr. Seymour returned home, Caroline having, before he left her, again desired him to be the friend of the penitent Agnes whenever he heard her unpitifully attacked; and an opportunity soon offered of gratifying his daughter's benevolence, and his own.

Mr. Seymour was drinking tea in a large party, when a lady, to whose plain, awkward, uninteresting daughters the once beautiful, graceful and engaging Agnes had formerly been a powerful rival, said, with no small share of malignity, "So!—fine impudence indeed!—I hear that good for nothing minx, Fitzhenry's daughter, is come to town: I wonder for my part

she dares show her face here——But the assurance of these creatures is amazing."

"Aye, so it is," echoed from one lady to another. "But this girl must be a hardened wretch indeed," resumed Mrs. Macfiendy, the first speaker: "I suppose her fellow is tired of her, and she will be on the town soon——"

"In the church-yard rather," replied Mr. Seymour, whom a feeling of resentment at these vulgar expressions of female spite had hitherto kept silent:—"Miss Fitzhenry has lost all power of charming the eye of the libertine, and even the wish;—but she is an object whom the compassionate and humane cannot behold, or listen to, without the strongest emotion."

"No, to be sure," replied Mrs. Macfiendy bridling—"the girl had always a plausible tongue of her own—and as to her beauty, I never thought that was made for lasting.—What then you have seen her, Mr. Seymour? I wonder that you could condescend to *look* at such trash."

"Yes, madam, I have seen, and heard her too;—and if heart-felt misery, contrition, and true penitence, may hope to win favour in the sight of God, and expiate past offences, 'a ministering angel might this frail one be, though we lay howling.'"

"I lie howling, indeed!" screamed out Mrs. Macfiendy: "Speak for yourself, if you please, Mr. Seymour! for my part, I do not expect, when I go to another world, to keep such company as Miss Fitzhenry."

"If with the same measure you mete, it should be meted to you again, madam," replied Mr. Seymour, "I believe there is little chance in another world that you and Miss Fitzhenry will be visiting acquaintance." Then, bespeaking the attention of the company, he gave that account of Agnes, her present situation, and her intentions for the future, which she gave the governors; and all the company, save the outrageously virtuous mother and her daughters, heard it with as much emotion as he felt in relating it.—Exclamations of "Poor unfortunate girl! what a pity she should have been guilty!—But, fallen as she is, she is still Agnes Fitzhenry," resounded through the room.

Mrs. Macfiendy could not bear this in silence; but with a cheek pale, nay livid with malignity, and in a voice sharpened by passion, which at all times resembled the scream of a pea-hen, she exclaimed, "Well, for my part, some people may do any thing, yet be praised up to the skies; other people's daughters would not find such mercy. Before she went off, it was Miss Fitzhenry this, and Miss Fitzhenry that,—though other people's children could perhaps do as much, though they were not so fond of showing what they could do."

"No," cried one of the Miss Macfiendys, "Miss Fitzhenry had courage enough for any thing."

"True, child," resumed the mother; "and what did it end in? Why, in becoming a—what I do not choose to name."

"Fie, madam, fie!" cried Mr. Seymour: "Why thus exult over the fallen?"

"Oh! then you do allow her to be fallen?"

"She is fallen indeed, madam," said Mr. Seymour; "but, even in her proudest hour, Miss Fitzhenry never expressed herself towards her erring neighbours with unchristian severity;—but set you an example of forbearance, which you would do well to follow."

"She set *me* an example!" vociferated Mrs. Macfiendy—"she indeed! a creature!—I will not stay, nor shall my daughters, to hear such immoral talk. But 'tis as I said—some people may do any thing—for, wicked as she is, Miss Fitzhenry is still cried up as something extraordinary, and is even held up as an example to modest women."

So saying, she arose; but Mr. Seymour rose also, and said, "There is no necessity for *your* leaving the company, madam, as I will leave it: for I am tired of hearing myself so grossly misrepresented. No one abhors more than I do the crime of Miss Fitzhenry; and no one would more strongly object, for the sake of other young women, to her being again received into general company: but, at the same time, I will always be ready to encourage the penitent by the voice of just praise; and I feel delight in reflecting that, however the judges of this world may be fond of condemning her, she will one day appeal from them to a merciful and long-suffering judge."

Then, bowing respectfully to all but Mrs. Macfiendy, he withdrew, and gave her an opportunity of remarking that Mr. Seymour was mighty warm in the creature's defence. She did not know he was so interested about her; but she always thought him a *gay man*, and she supposed *Miss Fitzhenry*, as he called her, would be glad to take up with any thing *now*.

This speech, sorry am I to say, was received with a general and complaisant smile, though it was reckoned unjust; for there are few who have virtue and resolution enough to stand forward as champions for an absent and calumniated individual, if there be any thing ludicrous in the tale against him;—and the precise, careful, elderly Mr. Seymour, who was always shrinking from censure like a sensitive plant from the touch, accused by implication of being the private friend of the youthful Agnes, excited a degree of merry malice in the company not unpleasant to their feelings.

But, in spite of the efforts of calumny, the account Mr. Seymour had given of Agnes and her penitence became town talk; and, as it was confirmed by the other governors, every one, except the ferociously chaste, was eager to prevent Agnes from feeling pecuniary distress, by procuring her employment.

Still she was not supplied with work as fast as she executed it; for, except during the hours which she was allowed to spend with her father, she was constantly employed; and she even deprived herself of her accustomed portion of rest, and was never in bed before one, or after four.

In proportion as her business and profits increased, were her spirits elevated; but the more she gained, the more saving she became: she would scarcely allow herself sufficient food or clothing; and, to the astonishment of Fanny, the once generous Agnes appeared penurious, and a lover of money. "What does this change mean, my dear lady?" said Fanny to her one day.—"I have my reasons for it," replied Agnes coldly; then changed the subject: and Fanny respected her too much to urge an explanation.

But Agnes soon after began to wonder at an obvious change in Fanny. At first, when Agnes returned from visiting her father, Fanny used to examine her countenance: and she could learn from that, without asking a single question, whether Fitzhenry seemed to show any new symptoms of amendment, or whether his insanity still appeared incurable. If the former, Fanny, tenderly pressing her hand, would say, "Thank God!" and prepare their dinner or supper with more alacrity than usual: if the latter, Fanny would say nothing; but endeavour, by bringing little Edward to her, or by engaging her in conversation, to divert the gloom which she could not remove: and Agnes, though she took no notice of these artless proofs of affection, observed and felt them deeply; and as she drew near the house, she always anticipated them as one of the comforts of her home.

But, for some days past, Fanny had discontinued this mode of welcome so grateful to the feelings of Agnes, and seemed wholly absorbed in her own. She was silent, reserved, and evidently oppressed with some anxiety which she was studious to conceal. Once or twice, when Agnes came home rather sooner than usual, she found her in tears; and when she affectionately asked the reason of them, Fanny pleaded mere lowness of spirits as the cause.

But the eye of anxious affection is not easily blinded. Agnes was convinced that Fanny's misery had some more important origin; and, secretly fearing that it proceeded from her, she was on the watch for something to confirm her suspicions.

One day, as she passed through the room where Fanny kept her school, Agnes observed that the number of her scholars was considerably diminished; and when she asked Fanny where the children whom she missed were, there was a confusion and hesitation in her manner, while she made different excuses for their absence, which convinced Agnes that she concealed from her some unwelcome truth.

A very painful suspicion immediately darted across her mind, the truth of which was but too soon confirmed. A day or two after, while again passing through the school-room, she was attracted by the beauty of a little girl, who was saying her lesson; and, smoothing down her curling hair, she stooped to kiss her ruddy cheek: but the child, uttering a loud scream, sprang from her arms, and, sobbing violently, hid her face on Fanny's lap. Agnes, who was very fond of children, was much hurt by symptoms of a dislike so violent towards her, and urged the child to give a reason for such strange conduct: on which the artless girl owned that her mother had charged her never to touch or go near Miss Fitzhenry, because she was the most wicked woman that ever breathed.

Agnes heard this new consequence of her guilt with equal surprise and grief; but, on looking at Fanny, though she saw grief in her countenance, there was no surprise in it; and she instantly told her she was convinced that the loss of her scholars was occasioned by her having allowed her to reside with her. Fanny, bursting into tears, at last confessed that her suspicions were just; while to the shuddering Agnes she unfolded a series of persecutions which she had undergone from her employers, because she had declared her resolution of starving, rather than drive from her house her friend and benefactress.

Agnes was not long in forming her resolution; and the next morning, without saying a word to Fanny on the subject, she went out in search of a lodging for herself and child—as gratitude and justice forbade her to remain any longer with her persecuted companion.

But after having in vain tried to procure a lodging suitable to the low state of her finances, or rather to her saving plan, she hired a little cottage on the heath above the town, adjoining to that where she had been so hospitably received in the hour of her distress; and having gladdened the hearts of the friendly cottager and his wife by telling them that she was coming to be their neighbour, she went to break the unwelcome tidings to Fanny.

Passionate and vehement indeed was her distress at hearing that her young lady, as she still persisted to call her, was going to leave her: but her expostulations and tears were vain; and Agnes, after promising to see Fanny every day, took possession that very evening of her humble habitation.

But her intention in removing was frustrated by the honest indignation and indiscretion of Fanny. She loudly raved against the illiberality which had robbed her of the society of all that she held dear; and, as she told every one that Agnes left her by her own choice and not at her desire, those children who had been taken away because Agnes resided with her were not sent back to her on her removal. At last the number of her scholars became so small, that she gave up school-keeping, and employed herself in shawl-working only; while her leisure time was spent in visiting Agnes, or in inveighing, to those who would listen to her, against the cruelty that had driven her young lady from her house.

Fanny used to begin by relating the many obligations which her mother and she had received from Agnes and her father, and always ended with

saying, "Yet to this woman, who saved me and mine from a workhouse, they wanted me to refuse a home when she stood in need of one! They need not have been afraid of her being too happy! Such a mind as hers can never be happy under the consciousness of having been guilty; and could she ever forget her crime, one visit to her poor father would make her remember it again."

Thus did Fanny talk, as I said before, to those who would listen to her; and there was one auditor who could have listened to her for ever on this subject, and who thought Fanny looked more lovely while expressing her affection for her penitent mistress, and pleading her cause with a cheek flushed with virtuous indignation, and eyes suffused with the tears of artless sensibility, than when, attended by the then happy Agnes, she gave her hand in the bloom of youth and beauty to the man of her heart.

This auditor was a respectable tradesman who lived in Fanny's neighbourhood, to whom her faithful attachment to Agnes had for some time endeared her; while Fanny, in return, felt grateful to him for entering with such warmth into her feelings, and for listening so patiently to her complaints; and it was not long before he offered her his hand.

To so advantageous an offer, and to a man so amiable, Fanny could make no objection; especially as Agnes advised her accepting the proposal. But Fanny declared to her lover that she would not marry him, unless he would promise that Agnes and her child should, whenever they chose, have a home with her. To this condition he consented; telling Fanny he loved her the better for making it; and Agnes had soon the satisfaction of witnessing the union of this worthy couple.

But they tried in vain to persuade Agnes to take up her residence with them. She preferred living by herself. To her, solitude was a luxury; as, while the little Edward was playing on the heath with the cottager's children, Agnes delighted to brood in uninterrupted silence over the soothing hope, the fond idea, that alone stimulated her to exertion, and procured her tranquillity. All the energies of her mind and body were directed to one end; and while she kept her eye steadfastly fixed on the future, the past lost its power to torture, and the present had some portion of enjoyment.

But were not these soothing reveries sometimes disturbed by the pangs of ill-requited love? and could she, who had loved so fondly as to sacrifice to the indulgence of her passion every thing that she held most dear, rise superior to the power of tender recollection, and at once tear from her heart the image of her fascinating lover? It would be unnatural to suppose that Agnes could entirely forget the once honoured choice of her heart, and the father of her child; or that, although experience had convinced her of its unworthiness, she did not sometimes contemplate, with the sick feelings of disappointed tenderness, the idol which her imagination had decked in graces all its own.

But these remembrances were rare. She oftener beheld him as he appeared before the tribunal of her reason—a cold, selfish, profligate, hypocritical deceiver, as the unfeeling destroyer of her hopes and happiness, and as one who, as she had learned from his own lips, when he most invited confidence, was the most determined to betray. She saw him also as a wretch so devoid of the common feelings of nature and humanity, that, though she left her apartments in London in the dead of night, and in the depth of a severe winter, an almost helpless child in her arms, and no visible protector near, he had never made a single inquiry concerning her fate, or that of his offspring.

At times the sensations of Agnes bordered on phrensy, when in this heartless, unnatural wretch she beheld the being for whom she had resigned the matchless comforts of her home, and destroyed the happiness and reason of her father. At these moments, and these only, she used to rush wildly forth in search of company, that she might escape from herself:

but more frequently she directed her steps to the abode of the poor; to those who, in her happier hours, had been supported by her bounty, and who now were eager to meet her in her walks, to repay her past benefactions by a "God bless you, lady!" uttered in a tone of respectful pity.

When her return was first known to the objects of her benevolence, Agnes soon saw herself surrounded by them; and was, in her humble apparel and dejected state, followed by them with more blessings and more heart-felt respect than in the proudest hour of her prosperity.

"Thank God!" ejaculated Agnes, as she turned a glistening eye on her humble followers, "there are yet those whose eyes mine may meet with confidence. There are some beings in the world towards whom I have done my duty." But the next minute she recollected that the guilty flight which made her violate the duty which she owed her father, at the same time removed her from the power of fulfilling that which she owed the indigent; for it is certain that our duties are so closely linked together, that, as the breaking one pearl from a string of pearls hazards the loss of all, so the violation of one duty endangers the safety of every other.

"Alas!" exclaimed Agnes, as this melancholy truth occurred to her, "it is not for me to exult; for, even in the squalid, meagre countenances of these kind and grateful beings, I read evidences of my guilt—They looked up to me for aid, and I deserted them!"

In time, however, these acute feelings wore away; and Agnes, by entering again on the offices of benevolence and humanity towards the distressed, lost the consciousness of past neglect in that of present usefulness.

True, she could no longer feed the hungry or clothe the naked, but she could soften the pangs of sickness by expressing sympathy in its sufferings. She could make the nauseous medicine more welcome, if not more salutary, by administering it herself; for, though poor, she was still superior to the sufferers whom she attended: and it was soothing to them to see "such a lady" take so much trouble for those so much beneath her—and she could watch the live-long night by the bed of the dying, join in the consoling prayer offered by the lips of another, or, in her own eloquent and impassioned language, speak peace and hope to the departing soul.

These tender offices, these delicate attentions, so dear to the heart of every one, but so particularly welcome to the poor from their superiors, as they are acknowledgements of the relationship between them, and confessions that they are of the same species as themselves, and heirs of the same hopes, even those who bestow money with generous profusion do not often pay. But Agnes was never content to give relief unaccompanied by attendance: she had reflected deeply on the nature of the human heart, and knew that a participating smile, a sympathizing tear, a friendly pressure of the hand, the shifting of an uneasy pillow, and patient attention to an unconnected tale of twice-told symptoms, were, in the esteem of the indigent sufferer, of as great a value as pecuniary assistance.

Agnes, therefore, in her poverty, had the satisfaction of knowing that she was as consoling to the distressed, if not as useful, as she was in her prosperity; and, if there could be a moment when she felt the glow of exultation in her breast, it was when she left the habitation of indigence or sorrow, followed by the well-earned blessings of its inhabitants.

Had Agnes been capable of exulting in a consciousness of being revenged, another source of exultation might have been hers, provided she had ever deigned to inquire concerning her profligate seducer, whom she wrongfully accused of having neglected to make inquiries concerning her and her child. Agnes, two months after her return from London, saw in the paper an account of Clifford's marriage; and felt some curiosity to know what had so long retarded an union which, when she left town, was fixed for the Monday following; and Fanny observed an increased degree of gloom and abstraction in her appearance all that day. But, dismissing this

feeling from her mind as unworthy of it, from that moment she resolved, if possible, to recall Clifford to her imagination, as one who, towards her, had been guilty not of perfidy and deceit only, but of brutal and unnatural neglect.

In this last accusation, however, as I said before, she was unjust. When Clifford awoke the next morning after his last interview with Agnes, and the fumes of the wine he had drunk the night before were entirely dissipated, he recollected, with great uneasiness, the insulting manner in which he had justified his intended marriage, and the insight into the baseness of his character which his unguarded confessions had given to her penetration.

The idea of having incurred the contempt of Agnes was insupportable. Yet, when he recollected the cold, calm, and dignified manner in which she spoke and acted when he bade her adieu, he was convinced that he had taught her to despise him; and, knowing Agnes, he was also certain that she must soon cease to love the man whom she had once learned to despise.

"But I will go to her directly," exclaimed he to himself, ringing his bell violently; "and I will attribute my infernal folly to drunkenness." He then ordered his servant to call a coach, finding himself too languid, from his late intemperance, to walk; and was just going to step into it when he saw Mrs. Askew pale and trembling, and heard her, in a faltering voice, demand to see him in private for a few minutes.

I shall not attempt to describe his rage and astonishment when he heard of the elopement of Agnes. But these feelings were soon followed by those of terror for her safety and that of his child; and his agitation for some moments was so great as to deprive him of the power of considering how he should proceed, in order to hear some tidings of the fugitives, and endeavour to recall them.

It was evident that Agnes had escaped the night before, because a servant, sitting up for a gentleman who lodged in the house, was awakened from sleep by the noise which she made in opening the door; and, running into the hall, she saw the skirt of Agnes's gown as she shut it again; and looking to see who was gone out, she saw a lady, who she was almost certain was Miss Fitzhenry, running down the street with great speed. But to put its being Agnes beyond all doubt, she ran up to her room, and, finding the door open, went in, and could see neither her nor her child.

To this narration Clifford listened with some calmness; but when Mrs. Askew told him that Agnes had taken none of her clothes with her, he fell into an agony amounting to phrensy, and exclaiming, "Then it must be so—she has destroyed both herself and the child!" his senses failed him, and he dropped down insensible on the sofa. This horrible probability had occurred to Mrs. Askew; and she had sent servants different ways all night, in order to find her if she were still in existence, that she might spare Clifford, if possible, the pain of conceiving a suspicion like her own.

Clifford was not so fortunate as to remain long in a state of unconsciousness, but soon recovered to a sense of misery and unavailing remorse. At length he recollected that a coach set off that very night for her native place, from the White-horse Cellar, and that it was possible that she might have obtained a lodging the night before, where she meant to stay till the coach was ready to set off the following evening. He immediately went to Piccadilly, to see whether places for a lady and child had been taken,—but no such passengers were on the list. He then inquired whether a lady and child had gone from that inn the night before in the coach that went within a few miles of the town of ——. But, as Agnes had reached the inn just as the coach was setting off, no one belonging to it, but the coachman, knew that she was a passenger.

"Well, I flatter myself," said Clifford to Mrs. Askew, endeavouring to smile, "that she will make her appearance here at night, if she do not come to-day; and I will not stir from this spot till the coach set off, and will even

go in it some way, to see whether it do not stop to take her up on the road."

This resolution he punctually put in practice. All day Clifford was stationed at a window opposite to the inn, or in the book-keeper's office; but night came, the coach was ready to set off, and still no Agnes appeared. However, Clifford, having secured a place, got in with the other passengers, and went six miles or more before he gave up the hope of hearing the coachman ordered to stop, in the soft voice of Agnes.

At last, all expectation failed him; and, complaining of a violent headache, he desired to be set down, sprang out of the carriage, and relieved the other passengers from a very restless and disagreeable companion: and Clifford, in a violent attack of fever, was wandering on the road to London, in hopes of meeting Agnes, at the very time when his victim was on the road to her native place, in company with her unhappy father.

By the time Clifford reached London he was bordering on a state of delirium; but had recollection enough to desire his confidential servant to inform his father of the state in which he was, and then take the road to —, and ask at every inn on the road whether a lady and child (describing Agnes and little Edward) had been there. The servant obeyed; and the anxious father, who had been informed of the cause of his son's malady, soon received the following letter from Wilson, while he was attending at his bedside:

"My Lord,

"Sad news of Miss Fitzhenry and the child; and reason to fear they both perished with cold. For, being told at one of the inns on this road that a young woman and child had been found frozen to death last night, and carried to the next town to be owned, I set off for there directly: and while I was taking a drap of brandy to give me spirits to see the bodies, for a qualm came over me when I thought of what can't be helped, and how pretty and good-natured and happy she once was, a woman came down with a silk wrapper and a shawl that I knew belonged to the poor lady, and said the young woman found dead had those things on. This was proof positive, my lord,—and it turned me sick. Still it is better so than self-murder; so my master had best know it, I think; and humbly hoping your lordship will think so too, I remain your lordship's

"Most humble servant to command,
"J. WILSON.

"P.S. If I gain more particulars shall send them."

Dreadful as the supposed death of Agnes and her child appeared to the father of Clifford, he could not be sorry that so formidable a rival to his future daughter-in-law was no longer to be feared; and as Clifford, in the ravings of his fever, was continually talking of Agnes as self-murdered, and the murderer of her child, and of himself as the abandoned cause; and as that idea seemed to haunt and terrify his imagination, he thought with his son's servant that he had better take the first opportunity of telling Clifford the truth, melancholy as it was. And taking advantage of a proper opportunity, he had done so before he received this second letter from Wilson:

"My Lord,

"It was all fudge;—Miss Fitzhenry is alive, and alive like, at ——. She stopped at an inn on the road and parted with her silk coat and shawl for some things she wanted, and a hussey of a chambermaid stole them and went off in the night with them and her little by-blow:—but justice overtakes us sooner or later. I suppose his honour, my master, will be cheery at this;—but, as joy often distracts as much as grief, they say, though I never believed it, I take it you will not tell

him this good news hand-over-head,—and am

"Your Lordship's
"Most humble to command,
"J. WILSON.

"P.S. I have been to —, and have heard for certain Miss F. and her child are there."

His lordship was even more cautious than Wilson wished him to be; for he resolved not to communicate the glad tidings to Clifford, cautiously or incautiously, as he thought there would be no chance of his son's fulfilling his engagements with Miss Sandford, if he knew Agnes was living: especially as her flight and her supposed death had proved to Clifford how necessary she was to his happiness. Nay, he went still further; and resolved that Clifford should never know, if he could possibly help it, that the report of her death was false.

How to effect this was the difficulty; but wisely conceiving that Wilson was not inaccessible to a bribe, he offered him so much a-year, on condition of his suffering his master to remain convinced of the truth of the story that Agnes and her child had perished in the snow, and of intercepting all letters which he fancied came from Agnes; telling him at the same time, that if ever he found he had violated the conditions, the annuity should immediately cease.

To this Wilson consented; and, when Clifford recovered, he made his compliance with the terms more easy, by desiring Wilson, and the friends to whom his connection with Agnes had been known, never to mention her name in his presence again, if they valued his health and reason, as the safety of both depended on his forgetting a woman of whom he had never felt the value sufficiently till he had lost her for ever.

Soon after, he married;—and the disagreeable qualities of his wife made him recollect, with more painful regret, the charms and virtues of Agnes. The consequence was that he plunged deeper than ever into dissipation, and had recourse to intoxication in order to banish care and disagreeable recollections;—and, while year after year passed away in fruitless expectation of a child to inherit the estate and the long-disputed title, he remembered, with agonizing regrets, the beauty of his lost Edward; and reflected that, by refusing to perform his promises to the injured Agnes, he had deprived himself of the heir that he so much coveted, and of a wife who would have added dignity to the title which she bore, and been the delight and ornament of his family.

Such were the miserable feelings of Clifford,—such the corroding cares that robbed his mind of its energy, and his body of health and vigour. Though courted, caressed, flattered, and surrounded by affluence and splendour, he was disappointed and self-condemned. And while Agnes, for the first time condemning him unjustly, attributed his silence and neglect of her and her offspring to a degree of indifference and hard-heartedness at which human nature shudders, Clifford was feeling all the horrors of remorse, without the consolations of repentance.

I have before observed, that one idea engrossed the mind and prompted the exertions of Agnes;—and this was the probable restoration of her father to reason.—"Could I but once more hear him call me by my name, and bless me with his forgiveness, I should die in peace; and something within me tells me that my hopes will not be in vain: and who knows but we may pass a contented, if not a happy life together, yet?—So toil on, toil on, Agnes, and expect the fruit of thy labours."

These words she was in the habit of repeating not only to Fanny and her next-door neighbours (whom she had acquainted with her story), but to herself as she sat at work or traversed the heath. Even in the dead of night she would start from a troubled sleep, and repeating these words, they

would operate as a charm on her disturbed mind; and as she spoke the last sentence, she would fall into a quiet slumber, from which she awoke the next morning at day-break to pursue with increased alacrity the labours of the day.

Meanwhile Agnes and her exemplary industry continued to engage the attention and admiration of the candid and liberal in the town of —.

Mr. Seymour, who did not venture to inquire concerning her of Fanny while she lived at her house, now often called there to ask news of Agnes and her employments; and his curiosity was excited to know to what purpose she intended to devote the money earned with so much labour, and hoarded with such parsimonious care.

But Fanny was as ignorant on this subject as himself; and the only new information which she could give him was, that Agnes had begun to employ herself in fancy-works, in order to increase her gains; and that it was her intention soon to send little Edward (then four years old) to town to offer artificial flowers, painted needle-books, work-bags, &c. at the doors of the opulent and humane.

Nor was it long before this design was put in execution; and Mr. Seymour had the satisfaction of buying all the lovely boy's first cargo himself, for presents to his daughters. The little merchant returned to his anxious mother, bounding with delight, not at the good success of his first venture, for its importance he did not understand, but at the kindness of Mr. Seymour, who had met him on the road, conducted him to his house, helped his daughters to load his pockets with cakes, and put in his basket, in exchange for his merchandize, tongue, chicken, and other things to carry home to his mother.

Agnes heard the child's narration with more pleasure than she had for some time experienced.—"They do not despise me, then," said she; "they even respect me too much to offer me pecuniary aid, or presents of any kind but in a way that cannot wound my feelings."

But this pleasure was almost immediately checked by the recollection, that he whose wounded spirit would have been soothed by seeing her once more an object of delicate attention and respect, and for whose sake alone she could now ever be capable of enjoying them, was still unconscious of her claims to it, and knew not that they were so generally acknowledged. In the words of Jane de Montfort she could have said,

"He to whose ear my praise most welcome was,
Hears it no more!"

"But I will hope on," Agnes used to exclaim as these thoughts occurred to her; and again her countenance assumed the wild expression of a dissatisfied but still expecting spirit.

Three years had now elapsed since Agnes first returned to her native place. "The next year," said Agnes to Fanny with unusual animation, "cannot fail of bringing forth good to me. You know that, according to the rules of the new bedlam, a patient is to remain five years in the house: at the end of that time, if not cured, he is to be removed to the apartments appropriated to incurables, and kept there for life, his friends paying a certain annuity for his maintenance; or he is, on their application, to be returned to their care—"—"And what then?" said Fanny, wondering at the unusual joy that animated Agnes's countenance. "Why then," replied she, "as my father's time for being confined expires at the end of the next year, he will either be cured by that time, or he will be given up to my care; and then, who knows what the consequences may be!"—"What indeed!" returned Fanny, who foresaw great personal fatigue and anxiety, if not danger, to Agnes in such a plan, and was going to express her fears and objections; but Agnes, in a manner overpoweringly severe, desired her to be silent, and angrily withdrew.

Soon after, Agnes received a proof of being still dear to her friend Caroline; which gave her a degree of satisfaction amounting even to joy.

Mr. Seymour, in a letter to his daughter, had given her an account of all the proceedings of Agnes, and expressed his surprise at the eagerness with which she laboured to gain money, merely, as it seemed, for the sake of hoarding it, as she had then, and always would have, only herself and child to maintain; as it was certain that her father would be allowed to continue, free of all expenses, an inhabitant of an asylum which owed its erection chiefly to his benevolent exertions.

But Caroline, to whom the mind of Agnes was well known, and who had often contemplated with surprise and admiration her boldness in projecting, her promptness in deciding, and her ability in executing the projects which she had formed; and above all that sanguine temper which led her to believe probable, what others only conceived to be possible,—found a reason immediately for the passion of hoarding which seemed to have taken possession of her friend; and, following the instant impulse of friendship and compassion, she sent Agnes the following letter, in which was inclosed a bank note to a considerable amount.

"I have divined your secret, my dear Agnes. I know why you are so anxious to hoard what you gain with such exemplary industry. In another year your father will have been the allotted time under the care of the medical attendants in your part of the world; and you are hoarding that you may be able, when that time comes, to procure for him elsewhere the best possible advice and assistance. Yes, yes, I know I am right:—therefore, lest your own exertions should not, in the space of a twelvemonth, be crowned with sufficient success, I conjure you, by our long friendship, to appropriate the inclosed to the purport in question; and should the scheme which I impute to you be merely the creature of my own brain, as it is a good scheme, employ the money in executing it.

"To silence all your scruples, I assure you that my gift is sanctioned by my husband and my father, who join with me in approbation of your conduct, and in the most earnest wishes that you may receive the reward of it in the entire restoration of your afflicted parent. Already have the candid and enlightened paid you their tribute of recovered esteem.

"It is the *slang* of the present day, if I may be allowed this vulgar but forcible expression, to inveigh bitterly against society for excluding from its circle, with unrelenting rigour, the woman who has once transgressed the salutary laws of chastity; and some brilliant and persuasive, but in my opinion mistaken, writers of both sexes have endeavoured to prove that many an amiable woman has been for ever lost to virtue and the world, and become the victim of prostitution, merely because her first fault was treated with ill-judging and criminal severity.

"This assertion appears to me to be fraught with mischief; as it is calculated to deter the victim of seduction from penitence and amendment, by telling her that she would employ them in her favour in vain. And it is surely as false as it is dangerous. I know many instances, and it is fair to conclude that the experience of others is similar to mine, of women restored by perseverance in a life of expiatory amendment to that rank in society, which they had forfeited by one false step, while their fault has been forgotten in their exemplary conduct as wives and mothers.

"But it is not to be expected that society should open its arms to receive its prodigal children till they have undergone a long and painful probation, —till they have practised the virtues of self-denial, patience, fortitude, and industry. And she whose penitence is not the mere result of wounded pride and caprice, will be capable of exerting all these virtues, in order to regain some portion of the esteem which she has lost. What will difficulties and mortifications be to her? Keeping her eye steadily fixed on the end which she has in view, she will bound lightly over them all; nor will she seek the smiles of the world, till, instead of receiving them as a favour, she can

demand them as a right.

"Agnes, my dear Agnes, do you not know the original of the above picture? You, by a life of self-denial, patience, fortitude, and industry, have endeavoured to atone for the crime which you committed against Society; and I hear her voice saying, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee!' and ill befall the hand that would uplift the sacred pall which penitence and amendment have thrown over departed guilt!"

Such was the letter of Caroline:—a letter intended to speak peace and hope to the heart of Agnes; to reconcile the offender to herself, and light up her dim eye with the beams of self-approbation. Thus did she try to console her guilty and unhappy friend in the hour of her adversity and degradation. But Caroline had given a still *greater* proof of the sincerity of her friendship:—she had never wounded the feelings, or endeavoured to mortify the self-love of Agnes in the hour of her prosperity and acknowledged superiority: she had seen her attractions, and heard her praises, without envy; nor ever with seeming kindness but real malignity related to her, in the accents of pretended wonder and indignation, the censures which she had incurred, or the ridicule which she had excited,—but in every instance she had proved her friendship a memorable exception to what are sarcastically termed the friendships of women.

"Yes,—she has indeed divined my secret," said Agnes when she had perused the letter, while tears of tenderness trickled down her cheeks, "and she deserves to assist me in procuring means for my poor father's recovery—an indulgence which I should be jealous of granting to any one else, except you, Fanny," she added, seeing on Fanny's countenance an expression of jealousy of this richer friend; "and on the strength of this noble present," looking with a smile at her darned and pieced, though neat, apparel, "I will treat myself with a new gown."—"Not before it was wanted," said Fanny peevishly.—"Nay," replied Agnes with a forced smile, "surely I am well dressed enough for a runaway daughter. 'My father loved to see me fine,' as poor Clarissa says, and had I never left him, I should not have been forced to wear such a gown as this: but, Fanny, let me but see him once more capable of knowing me, and of loving me, if it be possible for him to forgive me," added she in a faltering voice, "and I will then, if he wishes it, be fine again, though I work all night to make myself so."

"My dear, dear lady," said Fanny sorrowfully, "I am sure I did not mean any thing by what I said; but you have such a way with you, and talk so sadly!—Yet, I can't bear, indeed I can't, to see such a lady in a gown not good enough for me; and then to see my young master no better dressed than the cottager's boys next door;—and then to hear them call master Edward little Fitzhenry, as if he was not their betters;—I can't bear it,—it does not signify talking, I can't bear to think of it."

"How, then," answered Agnes in a solemn tone, and grasping her hand as she spoke, "How can I bear to think of the guilt which has thus reduced so low both me and my child? O! would to God my boy could exchange situation with the children whom you think his inferiors! I have given him life, indeed, but not one legal claim to what is necessary to the support of life, except the scanty pittance which I might, by a public avowal of my shame, wring from his father."

"I would beg my bread with him through the streets before you should do that," hastily exclaimed Fanny; "and, for the love of God, say no more on this subject!—He is *my child*, as well as yours," she continued, snatching little Edward to her bosom, who was contentedly playing with his top at the door; and Agnes, in contemplating the blooming graces of the boy, forgot that he was an object of compassion.

The next year passed away as the former had done; and at the end of it, Fitzhenry being pronounced incurable, but perfectly quiet and harmless, Agnes desired, in spite of the advice and entreaties of the governors, that he might be delivered up to her, that she might put him under the care of

Luckily for Agnes, the assignees of her father recovered a debt of a hundred pounds, which had long been due to him; and this sum they generously presented to Agnes, in order to further the success of her last hope.

On the day fixed for Fitzhenry's release, Agnes purchased a complete suit of clothes for him, such as he used to wear in former days, and dressed herself in a manner suited to her birth, rather than her situation; then set out in a post-chaise, attended by the friendly cottager, as it was judged imprudent for her to travel with her father alone, to take up Fitzhenry at the bedlam, while Fanny was crying with joy to see her dear lady looking like herself again, and travelling like a *gentlewoman*.

But the poor, whom gratitude and affection made constantly observant of the actions of Agnes, were full of consternation, when some of them heard, and communicated to the others, that a post-chaise was standing at Miss Fitzhenry's door. "O dear! she is going to leave us again; what shall we do without her?" was the general exclamation; and when Agnes came out to enter her chaise, she found it surrounded by her humble friends lamenting and inquiring, though with cautious respect, whether she ever meant to come back again. "Fanny will tell you every thing," said Agnes, overcome with grateful emotion at observing the interest which she excited. Unable to say more, she waved her hand as a token of farewell to them, and the chaise drove off.

"Is miss Fitzhenry grown *rich* again?" was the general question addressed to Fanny; and I am sure it was a disinterested one, and that, at the moment, they asked it without a view to their profiting by her change of situation, and merely as anxious for her welfare;—and when Fanny told them whither and wherefore Agnes was gone, could prayers, good wishes and blessings have secured success to the hopes of Agnes, her father, even as soon as she stopped at the gate of the bedlam, would have recognised and received her with open arms. But when she arrived, she found Fitzhenry as irrational as ever, though delighted to hear that he was going to take a ride with "*the lady*" as he always called Agnes; and she had the pleasure of seeing him seat himself beside her with a look of uncommon satisfaction. Nothing worth relating happened on the road. Fitzhenry was very tractable, except at night, when the cottager, who slept in the same room with him, found it difficult to make him keep in bed, and was sometimes forced to call Agnes to his assistance: at sight of her he always became quiet, and obeyed her implicitly.

The skilful and celebrated man to whom she applied received her with sympathizing kindness, and heard her story with a degree of interest and sensibility peculiarly grateful to the afflicted heart. Agnes related with praiseworthy ingenuousness the whole of her sad history, judging it necessary that the doctor should know the cause of the malady for which he was to prescribe.

It was peculiarly the faculty of Agnes to interest in her welfare those with whom she conversed; and the doctor soon experienced a more than ordinary earnestness to cure a patient so interesting from his misfortunes, and recommended by so interesting a daughter. "Six months," said he, "will be a sufficient time of trial; and in the mean while you shall reside in a lodging near us." Fitzhenry then became an inmate of the doctor's house; Agnes took possession of apartments in the neighbourhood; and the cottager returned to —.

The ensuing six months were passed by Agnes in the soul-sickening feeling of hope deferred: and, while the air of the place agreed so well with her father that he became fat and healthy in his appearance, anxiety preyed on her delicate frame, and made the doctor fear that, when he should be forced to pronounce his patient beyond his power to cure, she would sink under the blow, unless the hope of being still serviceable to her father

should support her under its pressure. He resolved, therefore, to inform her, in as judicious and cautious a manner as possible, that he saw no prospect of curing the thoroughly-shattered intellect of Fitzhenry.

"I can do nothing for your father," said he to Agnes (when he had been under his care six months), laying great stress on the word *I*;—(Agnes, with a face of horror, started from her seat, and laid her hand on his arm)——"but *you* can do a great deal."

"Can I? can I?" exclaimed Agnes, sobbing convulsively.—"Blessed hearing! But the means—the means?"

"It is very certain," he replied, "that he experiences great delight when he sees you, and sees you too employed in his service;—and when he lives with you, and sees you again where he has been accustomed to see you——"

"You advise his living with me, then?" interrupted Agnes with eagerness.

"I do, most strenuously," replied the doctor.

"Blessings on you for those words!" answered Agnes: "they said you would oppose it. You are a wise and a kind-hearted man."

"My dear child," rejoined the doctor, "when an evil can't be cured, it should at least be alleviated."

"You think it can't be cured, then?" again interrupted Agnes.

"Not absolutely so:—I know not what a course of medicine, and living with you as much in your old way as possible, may do for him. Let him resume his usual habits, his usual walks, live as near your former habitation as you possibly can; let him hear his favourite songs, and be as much with him as you can contrive to be; and if you should not succeed in making him rational again, you will at least make him happy."

"Happy!—I make him happy, now!" exclaimed Agnes, pacing the room in an agony:—"I made him happy once!—but now!——"

"You must hire some one to sleep in the room with him," resumed the doctor.

"No, no," cried Agnes impatiently;—"no one shall wait on him but myself;—I will attend him day and night."

"And should your strength be worn out by such incessant watching, who would take care of him then?—Remember, you are but mortal."—Agnes shook her head, and was silent.—"Besides, the strength of a man may sometimes be necessary; and, for his sake as well as yours, I must insist on being obeyed."

"You shall be obeyed," said Agnes mournfully.

"Then now," rejoined he, "let me give you my advice relative to diet, medicine, and management."—This he did in detail, as he found Agnes had a mind capacious enough to understand his system; and promising to answer her letters immediately, whenever she wrote to him for advice, he took an affectionate farewell of her; and Agnes and her father, accompanied by a man whom the doctor had procured for the purpose, set off for ——.

Fanny was waiting at the cottage with little Edward to receive them,—but the dejected countenance of Agnes precluded all necessity of asking concerning the state of Fitzhenry. Scarcely could the caresses of her child, and the joy which he expressed at seeing her, call a smile to her lips; and as she pressed him to her bosom, tears of bitter disappointment mingled with those of tenderness.

In a day or two after, Agnes, in compliance with the doctor's desire, hired a small tenement very near the house in which they formerly lived; and in the garden of which, as it was then empty, they obtained leave to walk. She also procured a person to sleep in the room with her father, instead of the man who came with them; and he carried back a letter from her to the doctor, informing him that she had arranged every thing according to his directions.

It was a most painfully pleasing sight to behold the attention of Agnes to Fitzhenry. She knew that it was not in her power to repair the enormous injury which she had done him, and that all she could now do was but a poor amends; still it was affecting to see how anxiously she watched his steps whenever he chose to wander alone from home, and what pains she took to make him neat in his appearance, and cleanly in his person. Her child and herself were clothed in coarse apparel, but she bought for her father everything of the best materials; and, altered as he was, Fitzhenry still looked like a gentleman.

Sometimes he seemed in every respect so like himself, that Agnes, hurried away by her imagination, would, after gazing on him some minutes, start from her seat, seize his hand, and, breathless with hope, address him as if he were a rational being,—when a laugh of vacancy, or a speech full of the inconsistency of phrensy, would send her back on her chair again, with a pulse quickened, and a cheek flushed with the fever of disappointed expectation.

However, he certainly was pleased with her attentions,—but, alas! he knew not who was the bestower of them: he knew not that the child, whose ingratitude or whose death he still lamented in his ravings in the dead of night, was returned to succour, to soothe him, and to devote herself entirely to his service. He heard her, but he knew her not; he saw her, but in her he was not certain that he beheld his child: and this was the pang that preyed on the cheek and withered the frame of Agnes: but she persisted to hope, and patiently endured the pain of to-day, expecting the joy of to-morrow; nor did her hopes always appear ill-founded.

The first day that Agnes led him to the garden once his own, he ran through every walk with eager delight; but he seemed surprised and angry to see the long grass growing in the walks, and the few flowers that remained choked up with weeds,—and began to pluck up the weeds with hasty violence.

"It is time to go home," said Agnes to him just as the day began to close in; and Fitzhenry immediately walked to the door which led into the house, and, finding it locked, looked surprised: then, turning to Agnes, he asked her if she had not the key in her pocket; and on her telling him that that was not his home, he quitted the house evidently with great distress and reluctance, and was continually looking back at it, as if he did not know how to believe her.

On this little circumstance poor Agnes lay ruminating the whole night after, with joyful expectation; and she repaired to the garden at day-break, with a gardener whom she hired, to make the walks look as much as possible as they formerly did. But they had omitted to tie up some straggling flowers;—and when Agnes, Fanny and the cottager, accompanied Fitzhenry thither the next evening, though he seemed conscious of the improvement that had taken place, he was disturbed at seeing some gilliflowers trailing along the ground; and suddenly turning to Agnes he said, "Why do you not bind up these?"

To do these little offices in the garden, and keep the parterre in order, was formerly Agnes's employment. What delight, then, must these words of Fitzhenry, so evidently the result of an association in his mind between her and his daughter, have excited in Agnes! With a trembling hand and a glowing cheek she obeyed; and Fitzhenry, with manifest satisfaction, saw her tie up every straggling flower in the garden, while he eagerly followed

her and bent attentively over her.

At last, when she had gone the whole round of the flower-beds, he exclaimed, "Good girl! good girl!" and putting his arms round her waist, suddenly kissed her cheek.

Surprise, joy, and emotion difficult to be defined, overcame the irritable frame of Agnes, and she fell senseless to the ground. But the care of Fanny soon recovered her again;—and the first question that she asked was, how her father (whom she saw in great agitation running round the garden) behaved when he saw her fall.

"He raised you up," replied Fanny, "and seemed so distressed! he would hold the salts to your nose himself, and would scarcely suffer me to do anything for you: but, hearing you mutter 'Father! dear father!' as you began to come to yourself, he changed colour, and immediately began to run round the garden, as you now see him."

"Say no more, say no more, my dear friend," cried Agnes; "it is enough. I am happy, quite happy;—it is clear that he knew me;—and I have again received a father's embrace!—Then his anxiety too while I was ill!—Oh! there is no doubt now that he will be quite himself in time."

"Perhaps he may," replied Fanny;—"but——"

"But! and perhaps!" cried Agnes pettishly;—"I tell you he will, he certainly will recover; and those are not my friends who doubt it." So saying, she ran hastily forward to meet Fitzhenry, who was joyfully hastening towards her, leaving Fanny grieved and astonished at her petulance. But few are the tempers proof against continual anxiety and the souring influence of still renewed and still disappointed hope; and even Agnes, the once gentle Agnes, if contradicted on this one subject, became angry and unjust.

But she was never conscious of having given pain to the feelings of another, without bitter regret and an earnest desire of healing the wound which she had made; and when, leaning on Fitzhenry's arm, she returned towards Fanny, and saw her in tears, she felt a pang severer than that which she had inflicted, and said every thing that affection and gratitude could dictate, to restore her to tranquillity again. Her agitation alarmed Fitzhenry; and, exclaiming "Poor thing!" he held the smelling-bottle, almost by force, to her nose, and seemed terrified lest she was going to faint again.

"You see, you see!" said Agnes triumphantly to Fanny; and Fanny, made cautious by experience, declared the conviction that her young lady must know more of all matters than she did.

But month after month elapsed, and no circumstances of a similar nature occurred to give new strength to the hopes of Agnes; however, she had the pleasure to see that Fitzhenry not only seemed to be attached to her, but pleased with little Edward.

She had indeed taken pains to teach him to endeavour to amuse her father,—but sometimes she had the mortification of hearing, when fits of loud laughter from the child reached her ear, "Edward was only laughing at grandpapa's odd faces and actions, mamma:" and having at last taught him that it was wicked to laugh at such things, because his grandfather was not well when he distorted his face, her heart was nearly as much wrung by the pity which he expressed; for, whenever these occasional slight fits of phrensy attacked Fitzhenry, little Edward would exclaim, "Poor grandpapa! he is not well now;—I wish we could make him well, mamma!" But, on the whole, she had reason to be tolerably cheerful.

Every evening, when the weather was fine, Agnes, holding her father's arm, was seen taking her usual walk, her little boy gamboling before them; and never, in their most prosperous hours, were they met with curtsies

more low, or bows more respectful, than on these occasions; and many a one grasped with affectionate eagerness the meagre hand of Fitzhenry, and the feverish hand of Agnes; for even the most rigid hearts were softened in favour of Agnes, when they beheld the ravages which grief had made in her form, and gazed on her countenance, which spoke in forcible language the sadness yet resignation of her mind. She might, if she had chosen it, have been received at many houses where she had formerly been intimate; but she declined it, as visiting would have interfered with the necessary labours of the day, with her constant attention to her father, and with the education of her child. "But when my father recovers," said she to Fanny, "as he will be pleased to find that I am not deemed wholly unworthy of notice, I shall have great satisfaction in visiting with him."

To be brief:—Another year elapsed, and Agnes still hoped; and Fitzhenry continued the same to every eye but hers:—she every day fancied that his symptoms of returning reason increased, and no one of her friends dared to contradict her. But in order, if possible, to accelerate his recovery, she had resolved to carry him to London, to receive the best advice that the metropolis afforded, when Fitzhenry was attacked by an acute complaint which confined him to his bed. This event, instead of alarming Agnes, redoubled her hopes. She insisted that it was the crisis of his disorder, and expected that health and reason would return together. Not for one moment therefore would she leave his bedside; and she would allow herself neither food nor rest, while with earnest attention she gazed on the fast sinking eyes of Fitzhenry, eager to catch in them an expression of returning recognition.

One day, after he had been sleeping some time, and she, as usual, was attentively watching by him, Fitzhenry slowly and gradually awoke; and, at last, raising himself on his elbow, looked round him with an expression of surprise, and, seeing Agnes, exclaimed, "My child! are you there? Gracious God! is this possible?"

Let those who have for years been pining away life in fruitless expectation, and who see themselves at last possessed of the long-desired blessing, figure to themselves the rapture of Agnes—"He knows me! He is himself again!" burst from her quivering lips, unconscious that it was too probable that restored reason was here the forerunner of dissolution.

"O my father!" she cried, falling on her knees, but not daring to look up at him—"O my father, forgive me, if possible!—I have been guilty, but I am penitent."

Fitzhenry, as much affected as Agnes, faltered out, "Thou art restored to me,—and God knows how heartily I forgive thee!" Then raising her to his arms, Agnes, happy in the fulfilment of her utmost wishes, felt herself once more pressed to the bosom of the most affectionate of fathers.

"But surely you are not now come back?" asked Fitzhenry. "I have seen you before, and very lately?"—"Seen me! O yes!" replied Agnes with passionate rapidity;—"for these last five years I have seen you daily; and for the last two years you have lived with me, and I have worked to maintain you!"—"Indeed!" answered Fitzhenry:—"but how pale and thin you are! you have worked too much:—Had you no *friends*, my child?"

"O yes! and, guilty as I have been, they pity, nay, they respect me, and we may yet be happy! as Heaven restores you to my prayers!—True, I have suffered much; but this blessed moment repays me;—this is the only moment of true enjoyment which I have known since I left my home and you!"

Agnes was thus pouring out the hasty effusions of her joy, unconscious that Fitzhenry, overcome with affection, emotion, and, perhaps, sorrowful recollections, was struggling in vain for utterance;—at last,—"For so many years—and I knew you not!—worked for me;—attended me!—Bless, bless her, Heaven!" he faintly articulated; and worn out with illness, and choked

with contending emotions, he fell back on his pillow, and expired!

That blessing, the hope of obtaining which alone gave Agnes courage to endure contumely, poverty, fatigue, and sorrow, was for one moment her own, and then snatched from her for ever!—No wonder, then, that, when convinced her father was really dead, she fell into a state of stupefaction, from which she never recovered;—and, at the same time, were borne to the same grave, the Father and Daughter.

The day of their funeral was indeed a melancholy one:—They were attended to the grave by a numerous procession of respectable inhabitants of both sexes,—while the afflicted and lamenting poor followed mournfully at a distance. Even those who had distinguished themselves by their violence against Agnes at her return, dropped a tear as they saw her borne to her long home. Mrs. Macfiendy forgot her beauty and accomplishments in her misfortunes and early death; and the mother of the child who had fled from the touch of Agnes, felt sorry that she had ever called her the wickedest woman in the world.

But the most affecting part of the procession was little Edward as chief mourner, led by Fanny and her husband, in all the happy insensibility of childhood, unconscious that he was the pitiable hero of that show, which, by its novelty and parade, so much delighted him,—while his smiles, poor orphan! excited the tears of those around him.

Just before the procession began to move, a post-chariot and four, with white favours, drove into the yard of the largest inn in the town. It contained Lord and Lady Mountcarrol, who were married only the day before, and were then on their way to her ladyship's country seat.

His lordship, who seemed incapable of resting in one place for a minute together, did nothing but swear at the postillions for bringing them that road, and express an earnest desire to leave the town again as fast as possible.

While he was gone into the stable, for the third time, to see whether the horses were not sufficiently refreshed to go on, a waiter came in to ask Lady Mountcarrol's commands, and at that moment the funeral passed the window. The waiter (who was the very servant that at Mr. Seymour's had refused to shut the door against Agnes) instantly turned away his head, and burst into tears. This excited her ladyship's curiosity; and she drew from him a short but full account of Agnes and her father.

He had scarcely finished his story when Lord Mountcarrol came in, saying that the carriage was ready; and no sooner had his bride begun to relate to him the story which she had just heard, than he exclaimed in a voice of thunder, "It is as false as hell, madam! Miss Fitzhenry and her child both died years ago." Then rushing into the carriage, he left Lady Mountcarrol terrified and amazed at his manner. But when she was seating herself by his side, she could not help saying that it was impossible for a story to be false, which all the people in the inn averred to be true; and, as he did not offer to interrupt her, she went through the whole story of Agnes and her sufferings; but before she could proceed to comment on them, the procession, returning from church, crossed the road in which they were going, and obliged the postillions to stop.

Foremost came the little Edward, with all his mother's beauty in his face. "Poor little orphan!" said Lady Mountcarrol, giving a tear to the memory of Agnes: "See, my lord, what a lovely boy!" As she spoke, the extreme elegance of the carriage attracted Edward's attention: and springing from Fanny's hand, who in vain endeavoured to hold him back, he ran up to the

door to examine the figures on the pannel. At that instant Lord Mountcarrol opened the door, lifted the child into the chaise, and, throwing his card of address to the astonished mourners, ordered the servants to drive on as fast as possible.

They did so in despite of Mr. Seymour and others, for astonishment had at first deprived them of the power of moving; and the horses, before the witnesses of this sudden and strange event had recovered their recollection, had gone too far to allow themselves to be stopped.

The card with Lord Mountcarrol's name explained what at first had puzzled and confounded as well as alarmed them; and Fanny, who had fainted at sight of his lordship, because she knew him, altered as he was, to be Edward's father, and the bane of Agnes, now recovering herself, conjured Mr. Seymour to follow him immediately, and tell him that Edward was bequeathed to her care.

Mr. Seymour instantly ordered post horses, and in about an hour after set off in pursuit of the ravisher.

But the surprise and consternation of Fanny and the rest of the mourners, was not greater than that of Lady Mountcarrol at sight of her lord's strange conduct. "What does this outrage mean, my lord?" she exclaimed in a faltering voice; "and whose child is that?"—"It is *my child*, madam," replied he; "and I will never resign him but with life." Then pressing the astonished boy to his bosom, he for some minutes sobbed aloud,—while Lady Mountcarrol, though she could not help feeling compassion for the agony which the seducer of Agnes must experience at such a moment, was not a little displeased and shocked at finding herself the wife of that Clifford, whose name she had so lately heard coupled with that of villain.

But her attention was soon called from reflections so unpleasant by the cries of Edward, whose surprise at being seized and carried away by a stranger now yielded to terror, and who, bursting from Lord Mountcarrol, desired to go back to his mamma, Fanny, and Mr. Seymour.

"What! and leave your own father, Edward?" asked his agitated parent.—"Look at me,—I am your father;—but I suppose, your mother, as well she might, taught you to hate me?"—"My mamma told me it was wicked to hate any body: and I am sure I have no papa: I had a grandpapa, but he is gone to heaven along with my mamma, Fanny says, and she is my mamma now." And again screaming and stamping with impatience, he insisted on going back to her.

But at length, by promises of riding on a fine horse, and of sending for Fanny to ride with him, he was pacified. Then with artless readiness he related his mother's way of life, and the odd ways of his grandpapa: and thus, by acquainting Lord Mountcarrol with the sufferings and the virtuous exertions of Agnes, he increased his horror of his own conduct, and his regret at not having placed so noble-minded a woman at the head of his family. But whence arose the story of her death he had yet to learn.

In a few hours they reached the seat which he had acquired by his second marriage; and there too, in an hour after, arrived Mr. Seymour and the husband of Fanny.

Lord Mountcarrol expected this visit, and received them courteously; while Mr. Seymour was so surprised at seeing the once healthy and handsome Clifford changed to an emaciated valetudinarian, and carrying in his face the marks of habitual intemperance, that his indignation was for a moment lost in pity. But recovering himself, he told his lordship that he came to demand justice for the outrage which he had committed, and in the name of the friend to whom Miss Fitzhenry had, in case of her sudden death, bequeathed her child, to insist on his being restored to her.

"We will settle that point presently," replied Lord Mountcarrol; "but first I conjure you to tell me all that has happened since we parted, to her whose name I have not for years been able to repeat, and whom, as well as this child, I have also for years believed dead."

"I will, my lord," answered Mr. Seymour; "but I warn you, that if you have any feeling it will be tortured by the narration."

"If I have any feeling!" cried his lordship: "but go on, sir; from you, sir—from you, as—as *her friend*, I can bear any thing."

Words could not do justice to the agonies of Lord Mountcarrol, while Mr. Seymour, beginning with Agnes's midnight walk to —, went through a recital of her conduct and sufferings, and hopes and anxieties, and ended with the momentary recovery and death-scene of her father.

But when Lord Mountcarrol discovered that Agnes supposed his not making any inquiries concerning her or the child proceeded from brutal indifference concerning their fate, and that, considering him as a monster of inhumanity, she had regarded him not only with contempt, but abhorrence, and seemed to have dismissed him entirely from her remembrance, he beat his breast, he cast himself on the floor in frantic anguish, lamenting, in all the bitterness of fruitless regret, that Agnes died without knowing how much he loved her, and without suspecting that, while she was supposing him unnaturally forgetful of her and her child, he was struggling with illness, caused by her desertion, and with a dejection of spirits which he had never, at times, been able to overcome; execrating at the same time the memory of his father, and Wilson, whom he suspected of having intentionally deceived him.

To conclude—Pity for the misery and compunction of Lord Mountcarrol, and a sense of the advantages both in education and fortune that would accrue to little Edward from living with his father, prevailed on Mr. Seymour and the husband of Fanny to consent to his remaining where he was;—and from that day Edward was universally known as his lordship's son,—who immediately made a will bequeathing him a considerable fortune.

Lord Mountcarrol was then sinking fast into his grave, the victim of his vices, and worn to the bone by the corroding consciousness that Agnes had died in the persuasion of his having brutally neglected her.—That was the bitterest pang of all! She had thought him so vile, that she could not for a moment regret him!

His first wife he had despised because she was weak and illiterate, and hated because she had brought him no children. His second wife was too amiable to be disliked; but, though he survived his marriage with her two years, she also failed to produce an heir to the title. And while he contemplated in Edward the mind and person of his mother, he was almost frantic with regret that he was not legally his son; and he cursed the hour when with short-sighted cunning he sacrificed the honour of Agnes to his views of family aggrandizement.

But, selfish to the last moment of his existence, it was a consciousness of his own misery, not of that which he had inflicted, which prompted his expressions of misery and regret; and he grudged and envied Agnes the comfort of having been able to despise and forget him.

Peace to the memory of Agnes Fitzhenry!—and may the woman who, like her, has been the victim of artifice, self-confidence, and temptation, like her endeavour to regain the esteem of the world by patient suffering, and

virtuous exertion; and look forward to the attainment of it with confidence! —But may she whose innocence is yet secure, and whose virtues still boast the stamp of chastity, which can alone make them current in the world, tremble with horror at the idea of listening to the voice of the seducer, lest the image of a father, a mother, a brother, a sister, or some other fellow-being, whose peace of mind has been injured by her deviation from virtue, should haunt her path through life; and she who might, perhaps, have contemplated with fortitude the wreck of her own happiness, be doomed to pine with fruitless remorse at the consciousness of having destroyed that of another.—For where is the mortal who can venture to pronounce that his actions are of importance to no one, and that the consequences of his virtues or his vices will be confined to himself alone!

THE END.

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*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE FATHER AND DAUGHTER: A
TALE, IN PROSE ***

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