

and probable or improbable history of the mysterious lady ; but I must confess that, after my brother's misadventure, I once or twice raised the cup to my lips, and put it down again without daring to taste the contents, lest I should injure my dignity by a similar explosion.

The next day, my mother and Rose hastened to pay their compliments to the fair recluse ; and came back but little wiser than they went ; though my mother declared she did not regret the journey, for if she had not gained much good, she flattered herself she had imparted some, and that was better : she had given some useful advice, which, she hoped, would not be thrown away ; for Mrs Graham, though she said little to any purpose, and appeared somewhat self-opinionated, seemed not incapable of reflection—though she did not know where she had been all her life, poor thing, for she betrayed a lamentable ignorance on certain points, and had not even the sense to be ashamed of it.

“ On what points, mother ? ” asked I.

“ On household matters, and all the little niceties of cookery, and such things, that every lady ought to be familiar with, whether she be required to make a practical use of her knowledge or not. I gave her some useful pieces of information, however, and several excellent receipts, the value of which she evidently could not appreciate, for she begged I would not trouble myself, as she lived in such a plain, quiet way, that she was sure she should never make use of them. ‘ No matter, my dear,’ said I ; ‘ it is what every respectable female ought to know ;—and besides, though you are alone now, you will not be always so ; you have been married, and probably—I might say almost certainly—will be again.’ ‘ You are mistaken there, ma’am,’ said she, almost haughtily ; ‘ I am certain I never shall.’—But I told her I knew better.”

“ Some romantic young widow, I suppose,” said I, “ come there to end her days in solitude, and mourn in secret for the dear departed—but it won't last long.”