

she wish to claim for her child that protection from her family for which she was too proud to sue for herself! and it was not without many a struggle with her pride that she had appealed to their sympathy. This appeal had been unanswered; for the relatives to whom it had been addressed, found it still more prudent to decline an intercourse with an ill-provided widow, than it had formerly been to renew one with the happy wife of a meritorious officer, likely to arrive at distinction in his profession. Mrs. Lester retired from the busy world, and fixed her residence in a small neat cottage at Dawlish, determined to devote her whole time to the education of her child. This spot had been endeared to her by her having spent some of the happiest days of her life there, with Colonel Lester, soon after her marriage; and she found a melancholy pleasure in tracing their former haunts in its neighbourhood, when, leaning on his arm, and supported by his affection, the future offered only bright prospects. All the love that she had felt for her husband was now centered in his child; and the youthful Mary grew, beneath a mother's tender and fostering care, all that the fondest parent could desire—lovely in person and pure in mind. She had only reached her sixteenth year, when, in the summer of 1827, the young Lord Mordaunt came to Dawlish to try the benefit of a change of air in a complaint which threatened to terminate in consumption. The cottage next to Mrs. Lester's was taken for the invalid: and his physician having occasion to refer to that lady for the character of a female servant, an acquaintance was formed that led to an introduction to his patient, who found the society of the mother and daughter so much to his taste, that no day passed that did not find him a visitor at Woodbine Cottage. He would spend whole hours by the drawing or work-table of Mary, correcting her sketches, reading aloud to her, or giving descriptions of the different foreign countries he had visited.

Lord Mordaunt was a young man so attractive in person and manners, that it would have been difficult for a much more fastidious judge than Mary Lester not to have been captivated by his attentions; and his delicate health served still more to excite a strong interest for him, while it banished all thoughts of alarm, even from the breast of the prudent mother, who looked on him with sorrow, as one foredoomed to an early grave. It is perhaps one of the most amiable proofs of the tenderness of womens' hearts, that ill-health and sorrow

have a power of attracting their sympathy and affection, which health and gaiety might fail to produce. This power was exemplified in the conduct of Mary Lester; for when, in their daily walks, in which Lord Mordaunt now attended them, his pale cheek assumed a hectic hue, from the exertion, and his eyes beamed with more than their usual lustre, those of Mary would fill with tears as she marked the fearful precursors of decay. With trembling anxiety she would urge him to repose himself on some rustic bench; and when he yielded to her entreaties, would hang over him with feelings of whose source and extent her innocence kept her in ignorance, or led her to attribute solely to pity.

Days passed away, each one increasing the attachment of the young people, and confirming the fears of Lord Mordaunt's physician, while he alone appeared unconscious of his danger. His passion seemed to bind him by new ties to life; and when pain and lassitude reminded him that he was ill, he looked on the blooming cheek and beaming eye of Mary, and asked himself, if one, who felt for her the love that quickened the pulsations of his throbbing heart, could be indeed approaching the cold and cheerless grave; and he clung with renewed hope to existence, now that it had become so valuable.

At this period a sprained ankle confined Mrs. Lester to the house, and she confided Mary every day to the care of Dr. Erskine and his patient to pursue their accustomed walk. The doctor was skilled in botany and geology, and the neighbourhood of Dawlish presented many specimens in both sciences capable of arresting his attention; hence the lovers were frequently left alone in their rambles, while he collected treasures for his *hortus siccus*, or cabinet; and the conversation which, under the eye of the dignified matron or gravedoctor, had always been confined to general topics, now became purely personal. When young people begin to talk of themselves, sentiment soon colours the conversation; and from sentimental conversation to love, how quick is the transition! When Lord Mordaunt first avowed his passion, the pure and artless Mary's innocent reply was, "O, how happy dear mamma will be!" But a cloud that passed over the brow of her lover shewed that he anticipated not the same effect on Mrs. Lester.

"Do not, dearest, if you value my peace, said he, "inform your mother of our attachment. My family would oppose it so strongly, that she would think herself obliged to re-