

persons who are afflicted with relatives so sorely visited by heaven, the circumstance was overlooked, and though it might seem mysterious, it did not seem of sufficient magnitude to impeach Colonel T.'s character for veracity or kindness.

The winter months were wearing away tediously to those who, accustomed to large towns and gay society, found the snow-drifts and solitude of *our Village* irksome in the extreme. So long accustomed to the warm climate of the glowing East, Colonel T. could ill bear the comparative rigour of ours, and from exposure to cold he was confined to the house for several weeks with a severe rheumatic attack. Several miles intervening between their residence and those of the majority of their friends, but few visits were paid them during the inclement season, and little was heard of them, creditable or otherwise. Occasionally, however, some of the villagers who associated with the servants belonging to the Colonel's establishment, gathered tales of cruelty and wrong, perpetrated upon the unoffending person of the poor deranged lady—how that she was confined in a small room, so small as to admit only of a bed and a few scanty articles of furniture—that her food was deficient and badly prepared—that so small was the supply that they only marvelled how nature could exist upon such a portion—that she rarely if ever had fire even on the coldest days of an unusually severe winter—that her door now was continually kept locked—that Mrs. T. alone visited and attended to her—that the Colonel never entered her room or spoke of her in the hearing of any one—that on one occasion the whole family left the house and spent two days and nights with a friend, leaving the lone lady's apartment locked, during which time she had neither food nor fire, so far as the knowledge of any of the servants extended—that they had repeatedly seen frozen food taken into her room, and that her only alternative was to eat it or remain without food altogether. Such cruelty in a christian country, perpetrated by persons who mingled with their fellow men as one with them in humanity and charity, was incredible, and the assertion was indignantly spurned by all willing to attribute to others the justice and feeling that regulated their own conduct. Yet the servants persisted in the truth of their statements, and challenged contradiction. Between doubt and fear the minds of all who knew them were agitated, at the horrible account which was given of the crime and brutality of those whom they had looked upon as models of benevolence and kindness, when a fresh rumour arose which, if true, gave confirmation to the tale of cruelty. It was at first hinted and then gradually spread with confident assertion, that the lady who experienced so much wrong from the hands of her keepers, was in reality the true and lawful wife of Colonel T.—that the woman to whom they had extended the courtesy and hospitality her position warranted, was no other than a base and vicious usurper of another's right, and that Colonel T. was a wilful, hardened impostor, as far as character and morality were concerned. Such an announcement gained but little credence when first circulated among those to whom