

and fresh butter, composed the repast, with very weak tea, for fear of affecting the nerves; sugar was not allowed: the mistress of the house having taken a vow never to use any produce from the West Indies until the abolition of the slave-trade, which question first began to be agitated by Clarkson and Wilberforce, those immortal champions of the rights of man.

The master of the house, who presided at the lower end of the table, was a man of large stature, with strongly marked features, a high, narrow forehead, and sallow complexion. The straight, lank, black hair, was partially worn away from his temples, and the large, heavy, dark eyes, appeared stationary, from their fixed and almost immovable expression. He seldom spoke, and his voice was deep and husky; in short, his whole appearance and manners were sullen and forbidding.

At his right was placed a raw, bony-looking Yorkshireman, with a broad, red face, flat nose, wide, good-tempered looking mouth, small, twinkling grey eyes, and deep red hair. Could this man, with his sly, sidelong glance, and look of covert humour, be a man of God? He was a Baptist minister, an excellent preacher, and discharged his duties with more zeal than many, who, from their superior personal and mental endowments, promised more. He was what an Italian would have called "an ugly servant of God."

This was Mr. Ebenezer Strong, who had been the chief instrument in the conversion of Mrs. Stainer, and who now regarded the two young ladies with a smiling countenance, and addressed them with a frankness which made Mildred almost forget his homely, vulgar exterior.

Mr. Death, a slender young gentleman, with a most benign placidity of countenance, was seated between the young ladies. A dwarf in stature, he was eulogised by Mrs. Stainer as a giant in prayer. Mildred thought; as she contemplated this diminutive Goliath, that he looked as if he had lain for three weeks in the fishy prison, from which his celebrated namesake was, fortunately for himself, ejected in three days—so wondrously spare, and pale, and lank, did Mr. Jonas Death appear. Then, what a name! It seemed like the annihilation of living hope. How could he ask a lady to bear such? Death!—it seemed enough to frighten away a whole legion of Cupids.

"I once knew a doctor of your name, Sir," said Mrs. Rosier, addressing the solemn young gentleman.

"Oh, yes, mamma!" said Mildred. "What a handsome, agreeable young man he was! and so full of wit and humour. How he used to laugh at his brother, the undertaker, and tell him that

he made work for him! Don't you remember Miss Roberts?—how pleased she was with the doctor! She told her sister that if death came in such an agreeable shape, she would like to die every day!"

"What profane people you have known!" groined forth Mr. Jonas. "Death is not a subject to be lightly spoken of; my name should give rise to serious thoughts. Death is the gate through which the soul must take its final flight to heaven or hell!"

"You must not be too hard upon the young lady, brother Death," said Mr. Strong, helping himself to a huge slice of bread and butter. "You should have compassion upon those who are without the camp. They cannot see with our eyes, or hear with our ears."

"Nor can we expect in our turn," said Mildred with a smile, "to charm with worldly eloquence, 'the dull cold ear of Death!'"

"Young lady," said the minister, "Nature has endowed you with a very dangerous weapon. The sooner you sheathe it forever, the better. The wounds which it inflicts are apt to recoil upon the possessor."

"I was wrong," said Mildred, blushing deeply. "I will endeavour not to offend in this way again."

"Young lady," said Mr. Strong, rising, and shaking Mildred warmly by the hand; "I like your candid spirit. The heart that can frankly own itself in the wrong is not far from right. Keep your heart, my daughter, for out of it are the issues of life."

"We shall be friends," said Mildred, "though I will own that I did not like you at first."

"Very probable. You think more of the beauty of the perishing body than of the graces of the soul. I was not handsome enough to please you."

"Perhaps not," said Mildred.

"And you have a natural horror of methodists and dissenters?"

"I was born and brought up in the faith of the established church," returned Mildred.

"And you look upon all who differ from you in opinion as vulgar hypocrites?"

"Nay, you must not question me too closely," said Mildred, looking archly up into her tormentor's face, "or I may happen to tell the truth."

"I would wish you always to tell the truth," said Mr. Strong; "neither am I the least annoyed or offended with you. But beware of my friend Death. He is too grave a person to trifle with."

"I will keep as far from him as possible," said Mildred. "I would rather ensure a strong friend against the darts of the enemy."