

(ORIGINAL.)

## THE WIDOW.

No profession, perhaps, affords better opportunities of observing the human character than that of medicine; and I think it is among the lowest orders we find the picture truly represented. There the ungoverned passions, if they prevail, are allowed their full sway, unchecked either by the reasonings of interest or the force of religion. There the heart is untutored in that web of deceit we meet with, I blush to say, in the higher walks of life, and there the affections, feelings, and virtues, which enhance the character, and give a true lustre to our nature, are met with in their greatest excellence.

In the course of attendance on the poor, I have witnessed many scenes of wretchedness, little dreamed of by the world; many instances of vice and abandoned wickedness, too dreadful to dwell on; and much, very much, of that excellence, which, existing as it does in the sphere of life I have described, proves that there is one foundation on which the building can never totter, let the storms of life rage as they will. Among the most pleasant reminiscences of that period of my professional ordeal, were the fine traits of character I occasionally met with, and I remember one of my patients particularly, in whom, for the time at least, I felt very much interested.

I was requested to attend her in her confinement. She was young, and but lately bereaved of her husband. During his lifetime, they could not be said to be in poverty, "for each day brought its own." Misfortunes, however, seldom come unattended, and at her husband's death, when the support which her hands before had but partly contributed to, now devolved altogether upon them, she was thrown out of employment, on account of her absence from work, during his last illness.

To support herself by the sale of such articles of furniture as her little apartment afforded, or her wants could best dispense with, was now the necessary and only immediate resource.

In this way she had lived for some time, assisted occasionally, perhaps, by some kind neighbour, for all of them respected and admired her. "Poor body!" said an old woman, at the foot of the stairs, as I was coming down one day; "its little she's able to do for herself, and the mair's the pity, for she's a real honest creature." A rude, but sincere eulogium, thought I, and very unlike the sickening flattery of courtly phrase, or the emptiness of fashionable compliment.

Such, then, were her miserable fortunes at the time I speak of; and yet, when I entered her little apartment, and had taken a hasty inspection of it, by which to form some idea of the character, as well as the circumstances of the individual, I could detect no signs of poverty, much less of the want to

which she was really reduced. The eye felt gratified by every object on which it fell. The scrupulously clean white boarded floor; the solitary deal table, from which the most fastidious might have eaten his bread and cheese, without caring for a more elaborate dinner service; the little shelf in the corner, suited to accommodate far more perhaps than at present adorned its rows, still arranged with care and neatness; and the bed, occupying the farther end of the room, without curtains, but possessing, even in its dismantled state, the same air of neatness and order. Nothing, in short, betrayed the want of its mistress, reduced, as I afterwards ascertained she had been for three days previous to my visit, to absolute starvation. It is no boast to say that I relieved her immediate wants, and procured from one of the many public charities which distinguish the Scottish metropolis, such assistance as they are enabled to afford the poor, with some other little aids.

I recollect paying her my last visit; her room was on the top floor of a common stair, the building being situated in the neighbourhood of Stockbridge, and the whole of it occupied by the poorer classes. A half open door here and there on my way up, showed the crowded state of the inmates, while the discordance of their tongues, and the clatter of their various occupations, contrasted strikingly with the solitary and noiseless apartment of my patient and her little one.

Knowing that she was still confined to her bed, and that no officious attendant was there to usher me in with all the due observances, I gently opened the door, and apparently with so little noise, that it did not immediately awake her. She slept with her face turned towards her little infant, while one arm carefully encircled it; thus extending to it, as it were, even in her sleep, that solicitude and affection so peculiarly characteristic of her sex. A writer, whose name I forget, says, truly: "What tie so holy, as that which binds the lonely child to its more lonely parent?" None. And yet they were not alone. No; the beneficent Being who had given her this stimulus to life, without which it had scarce been supportable, this new tie to existence, just as the last was broken, I felt was there, and in that lonely chamber of poverty, so still so cheerless, and apparently so deserted, I acknowledge I felt His presence. Yes, the Almighty Framer of the universe—that God, of whose greatness we can have no conception, was there—the Father and the Husband—the Stay—the Support—the Guardian. Her calm, resigned countenance spoke it; and I read there the peace that reigned within. J. D. M'D.

## POPULAR AUTHORS.

AUTHORS who write much, put down their ideas as they arise in their mind, without selection; as, in most states, rulers follow by order of succession, not by choice.