

Marianne Johnson

Elizabeth White

THE

NOVA-SCOTIA MAGAZINE

FOR JULY, 1791.

THE ATONEMENTS OF SENSIBILITY. A NOVEL.

[From the Universal Magazine.]

CHAPTER I.

The injuries we receive are the best remembrancers of those we have done to others.

IT was during the intense frost of the year 1789, when Courland, driven from his home by the restless agitations of a wounded mind, was roving distractedly across the fields in the environs of the metropolis. His countenance bore all the marks of affliction, and the hurried impatience of his disordered pace indicated that he was endeavouring to fly from that anguish whose envenomed hook, alas! was fastened in his vitals.

When the mind is thus bewildered, and reflection is lost in its own perturbations, the slightest circumstance will sometimes recall the fugitive faculties of reason, and awaken the powers of painful meditation.

It happened, at this time, that a lame and ragged old man was limping by, at no great distance, with a cheerful countenance, and caroling a tune so cheerfully as to seize forcibly the attention of the unhappy sufferer.

'Alas!' said he to himself, 'how falsely do mankind estimate the felicity and distresses of their fellow-creatures! How often are the sighs of pity and of envy misapplied!

'Who that beheld yon half-clothed beggar, limping, almost barefoot, over the snow, would not feel the throb of commiseration; and viewing me thus fenced against the inclement season could suppress a murmur at the unequal distribution of earthly blessings?

'Yet the object of *compassion* is contented and gay; while I, the envied child of affluence—

'But this happy mendicant, by long familiarity with wretchedness, is grown callous to bodily suffering. Continued suffering has deadened corporeal sensation. Alas! that the continuance of mental anguish should not also benumb the nerve of sensibility.

'My wife! my plague! my infamy! Had nature not been thwarted; had not a haughty parent torn me, in my youth, from the arms of my dear Maria, I had not now (after eighteen years of painful attention to a woman I could never love) been branded with shame—been dishonoured by my groom.

'Death! is this the reward of filial duty?

'Duty? It was no duty. The generous confidence of my Maria had rendered every thing criminal that could injure her peace and honour.

'It is just! It is just! This disgrace is but a slight retaliation for my inhuman desertion of the most amiable of her sex.

'But with my groom!—Maria would not have served me thus.

'No, dear injured innocence! Though thy birth was humble; though a stranger to the delicate refinements of modern pride, yet the native dignity of rational honour—the generous fondness that betrayed, and the fine sensibility of thy soul, would have preserved thy Courland from these pangs of shame.

'Inhuman parent! behold if thy afflicted spirit can behold, for what thy pride compelled me to exchange innocence, truth, and happiness.

'But what avails the throb of sensibility?

'Better the sense of honour had never glowed in this heart, than thus to be tor-