

possessed of a timid, shy and extremely modest disposition. She was a *blonde*, with a slight, nervous frame, a great wealth of golden hair and dark eyes that shone with a deep and lustrous glow. It is a singular thing to notice how character is moulded by the locality and advantages of society where one may dwell. Our Bob of the country, whose sole occupation consists in tending cows and following the plough over a furrowed field, with few thoughts or fancies to occupy his mind, becomes quite a different individual when the attractions of city life allure him from his home, and when society has placed him within the bounds of her magic circle. Though education early acquired may modify much of the awkwardness and *distract* manner peculiar to many who have long lived in solitude, a certain leaven of the old nature will constantly reveal itself, and which constant intercourse with society only can remove. It was strangely to be observed of Venetia how her seclusion from society, and absence of all social intercourse had developed those qualities which her own sex despise, but which men generally commend and admire. I believe it to be true, despite what the votaries of fashion may say, that a too close contact with society tends to weaken and deteriorate character. Venetia had lived at Norwich from her earliest childhood, and, with the exception of a few years spent at a celebrated academy, had been but seldom away from home. She took the greatest delight in wandering through the beautiful groves of the village, or sailing, with a few friends over the placid waters of the river. Sometimes she would wander away with book in hand and seat herself down beside some limpid stream and read till sunset burned itself away, and the changing hues grew dark in the western sky.

To Norwich, Markham had been a frequent visitor in the earlier part of his life, when the associations of youth threw a golden halo across his path. It was here he first became acquainted with Venetia, and a kind of childlike and sisterly affection had grown up between them, but the extreme modesty and bashful sensitiveness of the one had prevented their acquaintance from ripening into feeling of confidence and love.

The youth had early become an acknowledged favourite with Mr. Gibson, who loved him for his quiet, studious manner; and many were the long evenings he spent at the cottage, in winter, when his poor father was alive, discussing the old classic authors he loved when a boy, or singing with Venetia, some pretty favourite German air. After the death of Markham's father, he was called away from his studies, and the associations of his youth, to enter upon new duties, and, during an interval of many years, he became quite a stranger to the inmates of the cottage at Norwich. The earnestness and application he manifested in the pursuits of business, together with its cares and anxieties, had all a tendency to allure his mind from the memory of the past, but, for all

that, he had not forgotten the delicate beauty of the gentle Venetia. Mr. Gibson, too, loved to speak of him to his friends in the city, and rejoiced to hear of the esteem and confidence he enjoyed among business men.

For many years, John Markham was steadily advancing in the race to wealth and eminence; visions of domestic peace and contentment began to flit across his mind at times, in the solitude of his bachelor chambers, of a fair form he could fold tenderly in his burly arms, and eyes that could look softly and confiding in his own. But all this was not to be, the bright hopes he had cherished, and the dreams he expected would soon be realized, were all dispelled like the dew before an August sun, when the dismal fact stared him in the face, that the wealth of many years had become a prey to the raging sea. His heart sank when he looked upon the past on the morning of that day which brought him the fatal tidings. Memory, invariably recurs to the backward events of life, when the heart is smote with affliction and distress; we dare not, nor have we the strength, to look into the future; the heart seeks for consolation in the sympathies of friends, or in the peaceful shades of solitude. This was the first dark hour in John Markham's life, and gloomy were the reflections which crossed his mind, as he sat this evening in his bachelor chamber; but the note which he had just read, revived his drooping spirits, and brought the recollections of the past again to mind. He thought of his father's friend Gibson, and the lonely drives to the cottage; the pic-nics he attended in summer, when the groves were merry with the voices of children; his long journeys on snow-shoes in winter, when the snow was deep, and the skating on the river with Venetia moving gracefully by his side. All these scenes came back upon his mind with a vividness that quite banished the present, and made him dwell a little longer in on fancy than he was wont to do—on the old family circle at Norwich. It seems, thought he, as though this misfortune I have met with, is a just chastisement inflicted on me for my selfishness and neglect of those who have never ceased to take an interest in my affairs. How shall I meet my old friend and my father's friend too, after so long an absence? I hardly know in fact how to thank him for his kindness and consideration. Well, well,—to-morrow will either see me strong in hope or mournful, by feelings which I cannot even shake off now. I shall go to the News Room and glance at the papers. He threw on his heavy coat, for the night was cold and stormy, and immediately left the room.

The principal talk during the day amongst business men was the loss of a fine new vessel, with a valuable cargo, bound for the West Indies. John Markham was the owner of this vessel, and in it he had staked his earnings of many years. But when the news came it completely prostrated him, and he felt incompetent to perform the duties of his office, and on the