

had so stingily bestowed that she was seemingly already an aged creature. Her sister looked no younger, even although, as Mrs Soorocks often said, she had two years less of sin and misery to answer for.

Originally there had been three sisters ; but the eldest, during the life of their father, made what he called an imprudent marriage, at which he was irreconcilably indignant, because it did not suit the state of his means to give his daughter any dowry, an expedient not singular on similar occasions. Captain Chandos, the husband, an English officer of family and good prospects, was on his part no less offended at being so undervalued ; and in disgust carried his bride into Warwickshire, declaring his determination never to hold any communication or intercourse with her relations. Thus it happened that, when the old gentleman died, the two spinsters succeeded to the house and heritage—of course there was no money ; but the estate was entailed, and Mrs Chandos, as the first-born, was the heiress. Her sisters, however, never deemed it expedient to make any inquiry respecting her ; at the same time, they held and gathered as if they hourly expected she would revisit them as an avenger. This apprehension was accepted by their consciences for the enjoyment they derived from the indulgence of their natural avarice.

When they had been some four or five years in possession, a rumour reached the neighbour-