

cumstances, and I may have become less acute in my feelings than I was then, but never, while I remember any thing, shall I forget the manner in which that simple question was then asked of me by the bed side of that dying woman. Talk of the eloquence of a Demosthenes, or a Cicero ; of the liquid melody of this language, or the strength and precision of that ; of great occasions when the existence of an Empire hangs on the decision of a question, and that decision on the lip of the orator ;—talk, of a Siddons, or a Kemble, or any of the movers of human passion on the stage, and you speak of what I can partially appreciate ; but there was something in the tone, the look, the expression of the face, and the whole figure of Margaret Lindsay, when for the second time, she uttered these simple words, “Is there no hope,” that gave me more insight into the powers of the human voice, and the affections of the human heart than years of acting and hours of eloquent declamation could possibly have done. I was at a loss what answer to return to the question, for, to say the truth, I was not satisfied in my own mind as to what would be the issue of the illness—I had seen from the first that the patient was very weak, and was fearful that the shock occasioned by the violent conduct of her husband would be attended with very injurious consequences. As soon, therefore, as I could reply, I said, with the intention of withdrawing her attention :

“You surely would not think me a very wise physician if I told you to abandon all hope. I certainly trust she may recover ; but tell me, how long has she been thus ill ?”

“My poor mother was always delicate and weakly, but it is only within the last six months that she began to be seriously ill. We think her illness was partially occasioned by exposure and damp when we first moved into this unfinished house. Indeed,” she added, as she repressed an involuntary shudder as she glanced round the large and naked apartment, “she was never accustomed to endure exposure, and I fear the trial may prove too much for her.”

“And for you too,” said I mentally, for there was that in her countenance which plainly spoke of over exertion and fatigue. Unwilling to prolong the conversation, I rose and threw some wood on the fire, and then urged the necessity of her taking repose, saying that I would willingly watch till morning, “and then,” added I, “you can relieve me, for you need rest, and, trust me, I shall not prove a faithless sentinel.”

“We are deeply grateful for your kindness,” she replied, “but I am not very much fatigued ; thank God, my poor mother rests so quietly.”

The flush which for an instant flitted over her face, passed away as speedily as it came, and she became pale and apparently faint ; at that moment there was a motion made by the patient, and she was immediately at the bed-side, anxiously bending over

the still unconscious sleeper, who merely gave a moan and then sunk again into her former quiet. When Margaret had again seated herself, I could not forbear laying my finger upon her arm, which supported her head as she leaned on the narrow table which was between us. The pulse was flying at a fearful rate. “Let me use the authority of a physician,” said I, without withdrawing my finger, “and insist on you, taking rest. Will you not promise to be an obedient patient ?”

“Heaven forbid ! You have too many patients in this house already. God only knows what will become of us, if father should be confined, and my feeble strength should fail.” A tear fell as she spoke.

“Do not then, I beg of you, refuse to take repose ; I am sure you need it, and I have nothing to call me away ; for,” added I in as cheerful a voice as I could assume, “your mother is my first patient since I arrived in——, and I can spare as much time here as I choose, without injury to my patients. I don’t intend to keep her confined a very long time for the sake of my reputation.”

“I will remain a few minutes longer,” she said, “and if mother does not wake again, I will retire ;” she added with a smile, “you need not be afraid of watching very long, for I am accustomed to wake on the slightest noise.”

I did not urge her more ; but sat in silence, listening to the wind that was sweeping in gusts through the unfinished rooms over head, and occasionally swaying the fire that blazed and crackled on the hearth. I thought of the common prejudice against physicians, as hard and unfeeling men, caring no more for their patients than for the body beneath the dissecting knife ; and began to wonder if ever I should become thus callous and unfeeling, careful only of fees, and of reputation, and steeled against the emotions which the last few hours had not failed to excite. I thought then of my patient, and what treatment I must adopt in the morning, and how the father would receive me, and whether it would be best to demand an explanation or apology. And then my thoughts returned to the fair creature at my elbow ; would her delicate overtasked frame endure the fatigues of continued watching, and the cares of the family, which alone were too severe for her strength. ? I turned round, as if I had expected to receive an answer from her own lips. She had fallen asleep. Her head leaned partly on her hand, and partly against the back of the elbow chair in which she was seated ; her long dark hair fell in ringlets over her shoulders, partly shading the graceful neck which bent swan-like as she reclined in her uneasy posture. The light of her dark eye was shaded, and her brow was white and pale as marble. She breathed as does the gentle fawn in the thick forest shade, when it reclines half asleep by the clear stream, and there was such an air of repose thrown around her delicate form that