

it a dream, but the train of carriages passed on, their grating aroused me from my insensibility, and rushing from the hedge towards one, who for forty years had been a servant in our house—

Robert! Robert! I exclaimed, 'whose funeral is this?'

Alack! Master Edward! he cried, 'is it you? It is the funeral of my good lady—your mother!'

The earth swam round with me—the funeral procession, with a sailing motion, seemed to circle me—and I fell with my face upon the ground.

Dejected, way-worn as I was, I accompanied the body of my mother to its last resting place: I wept over her grave, and returned with the chief mourners to the house of my birth—and there I was all but denied admission. I heard the will read, and in it my name was not once mentioned: I rushed from the house—I knew not, and I cared not where I ran—misery was before, behind, and around me. I thought of my Catherine and my child—and groaned with the tortures of a lost spirit.

But, as I best could, I returned to London, to fling myself at the feet of my wife, to confess my sins and my follies, to beg her forgiveness, yea, to labour for her with my hands.—I approached my own door as a criminal. I shrank from the very gaze of the servant that ushered me in, and I imagined that he looked on me with contempt. But now, Lewis, I come to the last act of my drama, and my hand trembles that it cannot write—my soul is convulsed within me. I thought my Catherine pure, sinless as a spirit of heaven—you thought so—all who beheld her must have thought as I did. But, oh! friend of my youth! mark what follows. I entered it—silently I entered it, as one who has guilt following his footsteps. And there, the first object that met my sight—that blasted it—was the man I hated, my former rival, he who held my fortunes in his hand—Sir Peter Blakely! My wife, my Catherine, my spotless Catherine, held him by the arm. O! Heaven! I heard him say—'Dear Catherine!' and she answered him, 'Stay!—stay my best, my only friend—do not leave me!'

Lewis! I could see, I could hear more.

'Wretch!—villain I exclaimed. The started at my voice. My sword that had done service in other lands, I still carried with me.

'Draw! miscreant!' I cried almost unconscious of what I said or what I did. I spoke to me, but I heard him not. I sprang upon him, and plunged my sword into his body. My wife rushed towards me. She screamed. I heard the words—'Dear Edward!' but I dashed her from me as an unclean thing, and fled from the house.

Every tie that had bound me to existence was severed asunder. Catharine had been with me in twain the last cord that linked me with happiness. I sought the solitude of the wilderness, and there shouted her name, and now blessed her, and again—but I will go no farther. I long wandered a beggar throughout the land, and at length perceiving an apartment in a rock, the base of which Tweed washes with its waters, in it I resolved to bury myself from the world: and still am, and mankind fear me."

Here abruptly ended the manuscript of the Solitary.

A few years after the manuscript had been found, a party, consisting of three gentlemen, a lady, and two children, came to visit King's Cove, and to them the individuals who had found the papers related the story of the hermit.

"But your manuscript is imperfect," said one of them, "and I shall supply its defects"—the Solitary mentions having found Sir Peter Blakely in the presence of his wife, and he speaks of words that passed between them—but you shall hear all:

The wife of Edward Fleming was sitting weeping for his absence, when Sir Peter Blakely was announced. He shook and staggered. She started as she beheld him. She bent her head to conceal her tears, and sorrowfully extended her hand to welcome him.

'Catherine,' said he; and he paused, though he would have called her by the name of her husband; 'I have come to speak to you respecting your father's estate. I was brought up upon it, and there is not a tree, a bush, or a brae within miles, but to me is a tale of happiness and langsyne printed in it, in the heart's own alphabet. But now—'