

CHAPTER X.

our industry, the miserable means of bare subsistence.

'Pardon my digression, Sir; I will return immediately to the objects of your enquiry.

Through the precariousness of their employment, and a long indisposition of the mother, she became unable to discharge her rent, and was dragged to this prison. In this distressful situation, the tender Anna would not be separated from the fond protector of her infant years. She took up her lodging with her parent, and, going out to work, brought constantly to this miserable home the scanty earnings of her industry. But having treated with becoming resentment a customer who made attempts on her innocence, she was discharged about three weeks ago by her unprincipled employer.

'This new misfortune she concealed from her mother, and in vain endeavoured to procure another engagement. She continued, however, to go out regularly, under pretence of going to work; but, in reality, to dispose of such articles, from time to time, as decency would permit her to spare from her dress.

'Dear charming tenderness!—I too contributed my mite. But every resource was at length exhausted.

'For three days the generous Anna scarcely tasted a morsel. The produce of her last resource she entirely dedicated to support the languishing existence of her mother; whom she, with pious fraud, deluded into an opinion, that the kindness of her employer had otherwise provided for her own sustenance,

'A few days ago I had hopes their sufferings were at an end; for a stranger, whose generous heart could feel for suffering virtue, and employ the bounties heaven had favoured him with in a manner that proved him worthy of its most partial smiles, relieved the distresses of the poor dear girl with a most ample donation. But the nice scruples of the virtuous pair would not, upon reflection, permit them to appropriate the benevolent gift; they, therefore, have made every possible enquiry after the donor and his family, and with the utmost difficulty have been persuaded to use a small part, sufficient to preserve them from absolute famine.'

They who have ever known the pleasure of doing in secret a generous action, and of listening unknown to the unsolicited applause which crowned their benevolence, need not be told with what sensations our hero heard the warm panegyric of the servant Mason, whose applause was equally unsought and unexpected.

*Those who trust to others the discharge of those kind offices, which justice or benevolence require at their own hands, must often expect to discover, when it is too late, that they have scattered their useless bounty to the winds.*

'This, Sir,' continued the youth, 'is all the information I can give you.

'Suffer me to conduct you to the wretched lodging; to a scene where tender affection unites with hopeless distress, to melt the heart to pity. And may the power who rewards benevolence open your heart to exemplary generosity:—though the liberal hand that makes my Anna a stranger within these gloomy walls, excludes the last ray of consolation from the hopeless Mason, and closes the dark curtains of despair round the couch of his wretchedness!'

'Mason! Mason!' echoed Courland, looking steadily at him; 'you much resemble, in every thing but years, one of that name in whom I, several years ago, placed implicit confidence.

'Was your father's name James?'

'It was, Sir; he was steward to the honourable Mr. Courland.'

'But went, some years ago, to the East-Indies?'

'He did, Sir, and never returned. Though his son, I must speak the truth. Heaven, I believe, in just vengeance against his crimes, doomed him to an untimely fate.'

'What do you mean?' demands Courland.

'Sir,' replied young Mason, 'before his young master, Mr. Courland, married, he sent by the hands of my father, a letter to a young female in the country, with whom he had formed a tender connection. This letter my father had the curiosity to open, and found that it contained bank notes to the amount of fifteen hundred pounds.

'My father, it seems, though he had passed unsuspected, had never been very conscientious in the discharge of his stewardship: and this was a temptation far beyond his share of virtue to resist. He therefore forged another letter, in which he enclosed a twenty pound note, entreating the total forbearance of all further correspondence, as the engagements into which he (speaking in the person of young Mr. Courland) was going to enter would make any appearance of intercourse indecent on his part, and injurious, on hers, to that reputation which, with prudence, she might yet in some degree preserve.

'My God!' exclaimed the agitated Courland, 'this then was the cause of his pretended