

now far down in the vale of years, and could not expect to be long without feeling some of the penalties of old age, although I was still a hail¹ and sound man. It behoved me, therefore, to look in time for a helpmate to tend me in my approaching infirmities.

Upon this important concern I reflected, as I may say, in the watches of the night. Considering the circumstances of my situation, I saw it would not do for me to look out for an overly young woman, nor yet would it do for one of my ways to take an elderly maiden, ladies of that sort being liable to possess strong-set particularities. I therefore resolved that my choice should lie among widows of a discreet age. I had a glimmer in my mind of speaking to Mrs Malcolm; but, when I reflected on the saintly steadiness of her character, I was satisfied it would be of no use to think of her. Accordingly, I bent my brows, and looked towards Irville, which is an abundant trone² for widows and other single women; and I fixed my purpose on Mrs Nugent, the relict of a professor in the university of Glasgow, both because she was a well-bred woman, without any children to plea about the interest of my own two, and, likewise, because she was held in great estimation, by all who knew her, as a lady of a Christian principle.

It was some time in the summer, however, before I made up my mind to speak to her on the

¹ *Hail.* Hale.

² *Trone.* Market-place.