

twice, even before Mary's acquaintance with Rupert, urged his suit to Ebenezer; but as the least hint of such a circumstance to Mary seemed to occasion her a pang which went to the really kind heart of the old man, and as he was fond of her society, and had not yet held those conferences with Zacharias which ended in the alliance of their interests,—the proposal seemed to Mr. Warner like a lawsuit to the Lord Chancellor, something rather to be talked about than to be decided. Unfortunately, about the very same time in which Mary's purposed escape had drawn upon her the paternal indignation, Zacharias had made a convert of his son; James took advantage of his opportunity, worked upon his father's anger, grief, mercantile love of lucre, and saint-like affection to sect, and obtained from Ebenezer a promise to enforce the marriage—backed up his recoiling scruples, preserved his courage through the scenes with his weeping and wretched daughter, and, in spite of every lingering sentiment of tenderness and pity, saw the very day fixed which was to leave his sister helpless for ever.

It is painful to go through that series of inhuman persecutions, so common in domestic records; that system which, like all grounded upon injustice, is as foolish as tyrannical, and which always ends in misery, as it begins in oppression. Mary was too gentle to resist; her prayers became stilled; her tears ceased to flow; she sat alone in her "helpless, hopeless, brokenness of heart," in that deep despair which, like the incubus of an evil dream, weighs upon the bosom, a burden and a torture from which there is no escape nor relief. She managed at last, within three days of that fixed for her union, to write to Rupert, and get her letter conveyed to the post.

"Save me," it said in conclusion,—"*I ask not by what means, I care not for what end,—save me, I implore you, my guardian angel. I shall not trouble you long—I write to you no romantic appeal:—God knows that I have little thought for romance, but I feel that I shall soon die, only let me die unseparated from you—you, who first taught me to live, be near to me, teach me to die, take away from me the bitterness of death. Of all the terrors of the fate to which they compel me, nothing appears so dreadful as the idea that I may then no longer think of you and love you. My hand is so cold that I can scarcely hold my pen, but my head is on fire. I think I could go mad if I would—but I will not, for then you could no longer love me. I hear my father's step—oh, Rupert!—on Friday next—remember—save me, save me!*"

But the day, the fatal Friday arrived, and Rupert came not. They arrayed her in the bridal garb, and her father came up stairs to summon her to the room, in which the few guests invited were already assembled. He kissed her cheek; it was so deathly pale, that his heart smote him, and he spoke to her

in the language of other days. She turned towards him, her lips moved, but she spoke not. "My child, my child!" said the old man, "have you not one word for your father!"—"It is too late?" she said; "can you not preserve me yet?" There was relenting in the father's eye, but at the moment James stood before them. His keen mind saw the danger; he frowned at his father—the opportunity was past. "God forgive you!" said Mary, and cold, and trembling, and scarcely alive, she descended to the small and dark room, which was nevertheless the state chamber of the house. At a small table of black mahogany, prime and stately, starched and whaleboned within and without, withered and fossilized at heart by the bigotry and selfishness, and ice of sixty years, sat two maiden aunts: they came forward, kissed the unshrinking cheek of the bride, and then, with one word of blessing, returned to their former seats and resumed their former postures. There was so little appearance of life in the persons caressing and caressed, that you would have started as if at something ghastly and supernatural—as if you had witnessed the salute of the grave. The bridegroom sat at one corner of the dim fireplace, arrayed in more gaudy attire than was usual with the sect, and which gave a grotesque and unnatural gaiety to his lengthy and solemn aspect. As the bride entered the room, there was a faint smirk on his lip, and a twinkle in his half-shut and crossing eyes, and a hasty shuffle in his unwieldy limbs, as he slowly rose, pulled down his yellow waistcoat, made a stately genuflexion, and regained his seat. Opposite to him sat a little lank-haired boy, about twelve years old, mumbling a piece of cake, and looking with a subdued and spiritless glance over the whole group, till at length his attention rivetted on a large dull-coloured cat sleeping on the hearth, and whom he durst not awaken even by a murmured ejaculation of "puss!"

On the window-seat, at the farther end of the room, there sat, with folded arms, and abstracted air, a tall military-looking figure, apparently about forty. He rose, bowed low to Mary, gazed at her for some moments with a look of deep interest, sighed, muttered something to himself, and remained motionless, with eyes fixed upon the ground, and leaning against the dark wainscot. This was Monkton, the husband of the woman who had allured Rupert to T —, and from whom he had heard so threatening an account of her liege lord. Monkton had long known Zacharias, and always inclined to a serious turn of mind, he had lately endeavoured to derive consolation from the doctrines of that enthusiast. On hearing from Zacharias, for the saint had no false notions of delicacy, that he was going to bring into the pale of matrimony a lamb which had almost fallen a prey to the same wolf that had invaded his own fold, Monkton had expressed so