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WOODLAND MANOR; OR, THE DISPUTED TITLE.

BY E. M. M.

Continued from our last Number.

Captain Sidney Forester had a friend in the same regiment with himself, a Major Stapleton, who was several years his senior, and who had unfortunately been his intimate associate since the day he joined. We say unfortunately, because Major Stapleton was a man of unrestrained habits, without one ray of religion to guide him—yet his sins being concealed from the world under the most specious and gentlemanlike manners, his society was courted by those, who, looking not beyond the outward man, beheld in him only the agreeable and amusing companion—he attached himself to Forester, who he soon discovered was weak and easily led, and he quickly acquired a powerful influence over him. The previous education of Forester had not been such as to prove the basis of strong and good principles—his father was an excellent soldier, but this, in his opinion, comprised all that was necessary, and except the army list, no book was ever seen in his hands. From his mother, Forester could gain nothing that was improving, since she was vain, silly, violent, and most supremely selfish—thus were those years in which a Christian parent endeavours to sow the good seed while the soil is tender, suffered to lay waste, producing no fruit. What wonder then, when he was launched at the age of seventeen, his own master, on the busy sea of life, without rudder or compass, that he should steer unheedingly among shoals and rocks, since no friendly beacon light warned him from their dangers, or guided him in the way he should go—and is not the case of Forester that of thousands. How mournful it is to a feeling heart which has learnt the deep importance of divine knowledge, to behold the reckless career of those, who, had religion been early instilled into their minds, might have pursued a long and happy course on earth, ending in immortal joys, wasting their days in riot and dissipation, ruining their healths and forfeiting their best hopes. Alas, and for what!—let them look through the vista of time, and behold, and surely they will own that the misguided and wicked Jews who cried, “not Jesus, but Barabbas,” were scarcely more culpable, more madly ignorant of their eternal weal than they—for

in the spirit of the letter do they not make this awful choice, each time that, to gratify some sinful indulgence, they close their hearts to the voice of conscience, which is that of the Holy Spirit of God, and thus crucify their Saviour afresh.

It was to this friend that Forester confided his attachment for Rosetta, and its hopelessness, and from him received such advice as might have been expected, and which he was but too ready to follow. He urged him to write to Rosetta in the most powerful language, expressing the unhappy state of his mind, and the fatal consequences that would ensue if she would not see him.

“You need not tell her how you console yourself,” added Major Stapleton, laughing; “but you must really take some pains to win this fair girl and her money, which, of the two, you require the most, as your father refuses to honour any more of your bills. I will help you with my counsels; they have been useful to you on more than one occasion.”

The letter was accordingly written, and intrusted to Lumley, who promised to convey it to her young lady, and advocate the cause of the unhappy innamorato. Many were the tears that Rosetta shed over the affecting account of his sufferings, which she most firmly believed were beyond even what he expressed. Her first impulse was to show the letter to her mother, and implore her to take pity on them both—but fear withheld her. The emotions its perusal called forth were entirely new, and she felt at the moment that she could brave any misery, any privation, rather than forsake him. Hers was a highly romantic mind, and though Lady Neville had endeavoured to sober this down by a healthful course of reading, and a solid education, still she could not wholly succeed in reining her imagination within the bounds of reason and reality. Rosetta viewed all things as she wished, rather than as they were—she would study her Bible, or any other good book, which her mother placed in her hands, to please her; but they engaged not her heart, and she would lay them down again with a feeling of gladness that the task was over. She could not understand the nature of that happiness which her cousin