

prided herself, come to our aid in the nick of time, and by bringing us into the same room (a thing which had never occurred before, and of itself threw me into a fever) combined with fortune to aid my hopes.

This privilege—so Mrs. D—— invariably styled it—was the solemn gathering of the household on one Sunday in each month to listen to a discourse which, her husband sitting meekly by, she read to us from the works of some Independent divine. On these occasions she delivered herself so sonorously and with so much gusto, that I do not doubt she found compensation in them for the tedium of the sermon on Passive Obedience, or on the fate of the Amalekite, to which, in compliance with the laws against Dissent, she had perforce listened earlier in the day. The master and mistress and the servant sat on one side of the room, I with the boys on the other; and hitherto I am unable to say which of us had suffered more under the infliction. But the appearance of my sweet martyr—so, when Madam's voice rang shrillest and most angrily over the soapsuds, I had come to think of her—in a place behind her master and mistress (being the same in which the old servant had nodded and granted every sermon evening since my coming), put a new complexion on the matter. For her, she entered, as if unconscious of my presence, and took her seat with downcast eyes and hands folded, and that dull look on her face which, when she chose, veiled three-fourths of its beauty. But my ears flamed, and the blood surged to my head; and I thought that all must read my secret in my face.

With Mrs. D——, however, this was the one hour in the month when the suspicions natural in one of her carping temper, slept, and she tasted a pleasure comparatively pure. Majestically arrayed in a huge pair of spectacles—which on this occasion, and in the character of the family priest, her vanity permitted and even incited her to wear—and provided with a couple of tall tallow