

history. After she had concluded her relation, the old lady sat for some time in deep thought. Unwilling to intrude upon her reflections, her companion unlocked a drawer, and placed in her hand the documents contained in the little pocket-book found upon the person of Mrs. Sternfield. These the old lady eagerly examined, and every doubt as to their authenticity vanished from her mind.

"She is Armyn's daughter, and the legal heir to the estate," she said. "Her grandmother may not willingly receive her, for she hated the father of the child; but the law will force her to acknowledge her rights. Excellent woman!" she continued, turning to Jane, "what do we not owe to your benevolent attention to this poor deserted child? What have you not suffered through the crimes of this unhappy man? How can I repay you for all that you have sacrificed for a cruel and worthless deceiver? And yet, like you, Jane, I cannot but love and pity him."

"I was not faultless," said Jane, in a tremulous voice, "and must bear the punishment of sin. But had I known that my lover was a married man, I never would have fallen into such an abyss of infamy."

"I believe you," said the old lady, "and pity you the more. Armyn was not without his good points, too; and had the amiable qualities of his mind been fostered and strengthened, and the bad ones kept under by judicious management, he would have realized our fondest hopes. But his mother—his mother was a fickle, vain idiot, and her injustice, and disgusting system of favoritism, made him what he was. And like most bad mothers, she hated him for the evils of her own creation. But I must tell you something of his early history in order to explain myself.

"The Sternfields are a very old family, in the county of —, and the possessors of a very large property, and although untitled themselves, are very nearly connected with many noble families. My two brothers and myself were the last of our name and race. I was the elder by many years, and was already married to a Captain Dunstanville, and the mistress of a handsome establishment, when by brothers were born.

"Although I had long been regarded as the heiress of the family, I was so proud of our old house, that I rejoiced as much as my father did at the birth of these boys, for whom I successfully answered as godmother at the altar.

"Having no family of my own, I doated upon my young brothers, who regarded me in the light of a second mother. As the lads grew up, I felt the keenest interest in their welfare,

and they consulted sister Rosamond about everything. The youngest early went into the army, and rose to the rank of a general officer in India. His whole life was spent abroad; and we never met from the hour he left England, a lad of eighteen. My eldest brother and I maintained a strict friendship, until he married a daughter of Sir George Morton; the pretty, silly, weak woman, before alluded to, by whom he had two sons, Edward and Armyn. Like most weak, capricious women, Mrs. Sternfield preferred her eldest son, because he was the eldest son, and neglected Armyn. Her husband and I, as if to make amends to the poor child for his mother's unjust preference, treated him with marked affection, which awakened a jealous and vindictive feeling against him in the mind of the petted brother; so that between us, both stood a fair chance of becoming selfish, violent men.

"I was a very frequent visitor at my brother's; having lost a beloved husband, and my time hanging heavily upon my hands. Although Mrs. Sternfield felt no friendship for me, and was very suspicious of the love which her husband entertained for me, she tolerated my company, because she expected that the fine property left me by Captain Dunstanville, would ultimately belong to her sons. But interested as she was, it was with great difficulty that she concealed her dislike.

"I was so passionately fond of children, that both the boys loved me; and if I preferred Armyn, it was more on account of the coldness of his mother towards him, than from any superiority he really possessed over his brother. Never were two boys more systematically spoiled, or their interests more permanently divided—the mother and her eldest son, against the father and aunt, and the youngest. As long as my brother lived, Mrs. Sternfield's preference could not be attended with any flagrant acts of injustice or cruelty; but, unfortunately for Armyn, he lost his father while yet in his infancy—and then, commenced a series of petty tyrannies over the friendless boy, which laid the foundation of all the crimes and sorrows of his future life. While every indulgence was allowed to Edward, he was beat and ill-used for the slightest offence.

"The servants, willing to ingratiate themselves with their weak mistress, took every opportunity of exalting and praising the favorite child, at the expense of the other; and Edward would have been an angel indeed, if he had remained uninfluenced by the bad example of the rest.

"Early taught to consider himself as superior to his brother, in personal and mental qualifications, he treated him as vastly inferior, which was ill brooked by the proud and high spirited