

as it released me at once from an unpleasant alarm, and as there appeared to be no hope of the baptism. However, Miss Brereton, having been much struck and affected with what I had said about it, went up to her sister-in-law's chamber, without previously mentioning her intention, and returned after no long absence, with the joyful intelligence that Mrs. Brereton would be most happy to see me to-morrow, to pray with her, and that in the meantime she would reflect upon the other important subject. Upon this I departed, expressing my fervent hope that it might not be too late. The morrow came, and I was punctual to the hour, which they had told me would be most suitable. I was delighted too to hear that my patient, though not better, was prepared to receive me, and even anxious for my arrival. I expected, however, a very affecting scene, and with difficulty stilled the trepidation which had begun; and I told Mr. Brereton, that if I found the baptism possible and advisable, I should perform it at once, on my own responsibility, without any reference to the Bishop of the Diocese, whose permission and directions, required by the Rubric, were utterly in this emergency beyond our power to obtain.

Having now been introduced into the sick chamber, I was obliged to go round the bed, to the further side, to see the poor sufferer. I could readily conceive that it was with great difficulty she found a posture of momentary comparative ease; for I had already heard, that almost every bone had pierced the skin, and that the slightest pressure occasioned a new wound. She was lying with her emaciated body doubled down from the top to the middle of the bed, where the pillows were placed to support her head and back; and her countenance was thus nearly full towards me. Not a tinge of its former bloom remained; it was pale as death, and shrunken. Before I could speak, she was seized with a coughing fit, but it brought no colour into her face. Her husband and her sister, whom I had not seen before, flew to her assistance; and, after a short interval, being reinstated in her position, she became quiet and tranquil. I could perceive the drops of sweat standing thick on her brow. Every eye was upon her, full of anxious concern. At length she raised her own, now collected and composed in her thoughts, although her respiration was short and difficult. Her look betrayed no aberration of intellect, but betokened an entire possession of it, and a superior endowment; as if God had graciously enlarged it in this her terrible extremity.

Her eyes having met mine, I immediately spoke, and said, "I am come, my dear Madam, to pray with you; and I accuse myself for not having been with you much sooner. Indeed, I was entirely ignorant of your sickness, or I should have hastened long ago to offer you the comforts and consolations of our holy religion." Her countenance thanked me, and she moved her lips; but I caught no sounds.