

Mrs. Vining's lawyer, who had assured him that the youngest daughter would have a double portion on her marriage, as well as another portion by no means inconsiderable at her mother's death. Their astonishment might also have been lessened, had they known that the spruce gentleman was simply in search of a wife, whose dowry might assist him in some speculations he was about to make; and that, had Isabel been from home, or indisposed, or otherwise unable to see him precisely at that time, he was not unprovided with other names on his list of eligible connexions.

It happened, perhaps unfortunately for her, that she was in better health and spirits than usual, and that the mother was looking older, and altogether more like breaking-up than Mr. Ainsworth had expected, when he made his formal visit, the purport of which, for the present, was explained to the mother alone.

Mrs. Vining had long been solicitous for her daughter's settlement in life. She knew that her own health was failing, and that Isabel must soon be left alone. Money, of itself, she was aware would not secure to her favourite that solicitude and tender care to which she had been accustomed; and consequently, she was the more anxious to commit her happiness to the keeping of one who would feel a personal interest in preserving it. Mr. Ainsworth was not all she could have wished, but in some respects he was preferable to a younger man. He had the advantage of having been tried in the married state, and was said to have been an excellent husband. He had daughters too, who were extremely active, and fond of domestic affairs, so that all such burdens would be taken off the hands of the young wife; and no doubt, if they were at all kind-hearted, they would esteem it a privilege to nurse her, and care for her, as she had been accustomed to be nursed and cared for beneath her mother's roof. At all events, Mr. Ainsworth assured her they would. From his account, they were the cleverest girls in the world, able to make all manner of good things; and he told with triumph of their jellies, and their cakes, their nostroums, and their cordials, until the mother's ears tingled with the tidings of what was in store for her beloved child.

Nothing, however, could induce this "child," who had now arrived at the age of eight and twenty without having once been thwarted in her will, to leave her mother's roof, or, in other words, to exchange a certain, for an uncertain good; and so much time was lost by the anxious lover in gaining favour with the mother alone, that he began to think how, in the meridian of this favour, he could make an honourable retreat—when the death of Mrs. Vining suddenly changed the whole aspect of affairs, plunging the unhappy daughter into a state of distress too absorbing for any one to share, or perhaps to wish to share with her.

Days and weeks—nay, even months—passed over, and Isabel found no consolation except in the attention of a favourite servant, to whose care her mother had committed her, and who knew but too well how to administer restoratives to her sinking frame.

At last however, the mourner began to be weary of her own grief, to wish for some change, and to think it rather odd that no one came to comfort her. She had no person in particular to blame, for her brothers and sisters wrote her kind letters, and paid her periodical visits; but she had actually gone so far as to succeed at last in persuading herself that the whole world was ungenerous to take so little notice of her grief, when one day, as she looked with a listless dreamy gaze from the window of her parlour, she saw the figure of Mr. Ainsworth, more brisk and spruce than ever, stepping across the street to the door of her house.

Unconsciously, Isabel actually ran up stairs to her own room, a thing she had never been known to do since the days of her childhood—looked in the glass, adjusted her hair, and wondered whether mourning was as becoming to her as colours.

It is scarcely necessary to say more as to the result of Mr. Ainsworth's visit. Loneliness, loss of personal kindness and the recent rupture of the bonds of kindred and affection, go farther than all personal attractions, to recommend the suitor who arrives under the auspicious influence of such circumstances. The consequences therefore, were that after the expiration of the usual term allotted for filial grief, Isabel Vining was led to the altar as a bride.

Mr. Ainsworth was an active, healthy, fair complexioned man, who looked much younger than he really was. He had small regular features, rather pretty than handsome, with quick, serviceable-looking eyes, that seemed to be constantly employed in finding out how much every thing they took note of would fetch in the market. Even on his wedding tour, which as usual made the circuit of the lakes, he had so many wordy battles with innkeepers and postillions, that Isabel began at last to wish she was at the end of her journey, in order to be released from this perpetual conflict. She did not then know that her bridegroom was far more in his element when obtaining anything he wanted at less than its real value, than in listening to her sentimental remarks, as they sauntered by the side of some grassy lake. This was nothing but child's play to Mr. Ainsworth—that was doing business.

The honey-moon came at last to its conclusion, and the bridal party reached their residence in town. The aspect of Mr. Ainsworth's house was respectable, and somewhat imposing; and the bride felt well pleased to think that here she would find a home. The season was late in the autumn and it was long after the close of day that she was first ushered into her husband's drawing-room. The impression was most favourable. Two well-dressed daughters received her with the utmost propriety; a handsome tea-equipage stood upon the table, and there were sundry preparations for something like a supper, in case the travellers should have dined early, or not have dined at all.

"I am sure I shall like all this extremely," said Isabel to herself, as she looked around upon her new home. "Draw round that sofa to the fire, give me a novel I have never read, and I shall be as happy as a queen."

Nor were the preparations in her chamber, or her dressing-room, less complete. Every thing in short, had been arranged in a style of modern elegance, far superior to that of her mother's ancient, but comfortable home. There wanted nothing but a larger fire in her dressing-room. Her favourite servant, who of course, had accompanied her, declared she could have held the whole between her finger and thumb. All else, however, was well, and Isabel went to sleep with a pleasant picture floating before her mental vision, of the handsome drawing-room the carpets, the curtains, the tea-equipage, and all the discoveries she hoped to make on the morrow, of treasures undiscovered, of which she could not but suppose a wealthier mine was yet behind the scenes.

On the following morning, the bride having breakfasted, as she always did, in her own room, descended at a late hour to join, as she supposed, the family circle; when, what was her astonishment on opening the door of the drawing-room, to find it unoccupied, and without a fire. The aspect of things too, was so entirely changed, that it was difficult to believe it to be the same apartment. Of the moveable ornaments, none were left; covers were drawn over the damask chairs and sofas; while calico sheets had been pinned up to protect the curtains, and one of larger dimensions spread upon the carpet on the floor.

Never did the silent fall of fresh deep snow look colder to the traveller on first peeping out of his inn-window, than did the aspect of this apartment to the wondering bride. She turned away from the door, but knew not where to go when her own maid appeared in time to relieve her difficulty.

There had been a meaning smile on the lips of this Abi-