

"No; I and my dog live together."

"But," returned I, "do you not feel solitary times, so far away from any human being?"

"Young man," he replied, "'tis for such as you, with youth and pleasure in your path, to read the lone wilderness; but to those whose life is like a blasted tree, *the whole earth is a solitude*. Yet think not all communers withheld even in this wild. Is there no voice in the rustling of leaves, or the roar of the mighty wind?—what music so sweet as the morning song of birds, or the tumultuous rush of waters? None! none!—I am an old man. That world of yours is fair but full of crime; here, in the womb of nature, man comes not to debase—to slay. Once 'twas not so,' and his eye shot a sudden gleam. 'Though I am not always alone—in the winter nights I have many companions, and they sit where you are now. Yes, those that died long ago; yet still I say they visit me, more frequently when game is scarce, for then I am almost starved, and they come to cheer me—those early friends—for they speak and laugh as they used in old times; and *she* is ever near. In the calm summer evenings we converse together for hours; her sweet, sad face, is in the brook when I look into its glassy depths, and when I gaze upon the sky she is there—look!' and he rose from the block of wood upon which he was sitting, and drawing aside the screen from the picture overhead, disclosed a portrait of exceeding loveliness.

"It was that of a young girl, upon whose tender, intellectual face, and soft dark eye a melancholy, which rendered it far more beautiful than mere perfection of outline, seemed to rest. The long lash drooped with Madonna sweetness, beneath the calm, pale brow; and the full round lips were slightly parted in an innocent, happy smile. We gazed as if spell-bound, upon the fair vision; and what a contrast the haggard countenance of the old man afforded. The one with the delicate hue of a flower upon the smooth cheek, a being of youth and affection; the other worn and furrowed by time and a darkened reason, who appeared to have outlived all feelings save the one deep, engrossing sentiment which seemed to link so strongly those two together—unalterable love. His aged frame trembled with excitement, and his features worked as though the memories of other days were awakened by that glance, as, dropping the covering, he hurried out of the cabin. With that picture then was associated the cause of his seclusion, and I could have wept as the thought arose of the many long

years that faithful heart must have mourned over its sorrow, with that cherished relic the sole witness of his throes. A clue to his story was discovered.

"Finding that our host did not return, after a short time spent in conversing about the peculiar circumstances which chance had made us acquainted with, and expressing our sincerest pity for the ruin of such a mind, we wrapped ourselves in the skins with which the place was so well provided, and each sought that refreshment in sleep which the exhausted state of our limbs rendered desirable.

"But I could not rest; what I had seen and heard operated so strongly upon my mind, in addition to the excessive heat, that I in vain courted the luxury of repose. Giving up the useless attempt at last, I rose and went out to breathe the fresh air, when I observed the old man sitting where we had first seen him, with his head resting upon his hands, and at his feet lay the constant companion of his fortunes.—I watched him for some time, but not the slightest motion showed that ought possessing life was there. After awhile I approached quietly and laid my hand upon his arm; he started wildly at first, but soon seemed to recollect himself, for he asked me why I did not prepare myself by sleep for the morrow's journey. I replied that I could not sleep, and had come to converse with him, for he seemed dejected.

"'I believe I am' ever so,' said he, 'but it matters not, no one is concerned in the humours of an old man; I can but bear my burden a few years longer, the grave is a sincere friend to such as I am.'

"'You do injustice to my feelings,' I rejoined, 'I deeply commiserate your apparent suffering, and would willingly do aught that could lighten the grief which seems to weigh so heavily upon you.'

"The recluse appeared touched by my interest in his condition, and after muttering to himself for some minutes, as if unconscious of the presence of another, a habit which doubtless he had acquired in his long estrangement from his fellow creatures, at length said—

"'Listen unto me. This face is worn with care which scared up every feeling of the heart deeper than the channels of this rough cheek. I am one whose footsteps upon earth have wandered without home or hope, save of rest, which I never found. I was a dreamer, and seemed to have lost my way, I was so strange and unearthly; I believe at times I must have been mad, for there are blanks in memory which I cannot fill up—pages in the book of