

THE  
LITERARY GAZETTE  
AND  
BRITISH NORTH AMERICAN MAGAZINE.

VOL. IX.

NOVEMBER, 1851.

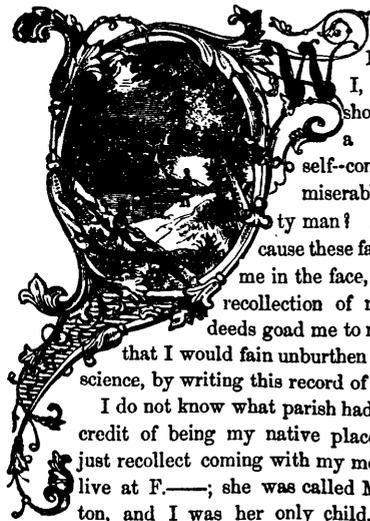
NO. 11

NOAH COTTON:

A TALE OF CONSCIENCE.

BY SUSANNA MOODIE.

THE MURDERER'S TALE.



THAT am I, that I should write a book, a self-condemned, miserable, guilty man? It is because these facts stare me in the face, and the recollection of my past deeds goad me to madness, that I would fain unburthen my conscience, by writing this record of myself: I do not know what parish had the discredit of being my native place; I can just recollect coming with my mother to live at F.—; she was called Mrs. Cotton, and I was her only child. Whether she had ever been married is extremely doubtful. At that period, this important fact was a matter to me of perfect indifference. I was a strong, active, healthy boy for my age, quite able to take my own part, and beat any other urchin who had dared to ask impertinent questions. The great man of the village, Squire Carlos, as he was called, lived in a grand house, surrounded by a stately park. His plantations and game preserves extended for several miles along the public road, and my mother kept the first porter's lodge nearest to the village. The Squire had been married, but his wife had been dead for some years. He was a very handsome man in

middle life, and bore the character of having been a very gay man in his youth. It was said by the village gossips, that these indiscretions had shortened the days of his lady, who died before she had reached her twenty-seventh year. She left him no family, and he never married again. The Squire often came to our house—so often, that he seldom passed through the gate on his way to the hall, without stepping in to chat with my mother. This was when he was alone, when accompanied by strangers, he took no notice of us whatever, and my mother generally sent me to open the gate. The gentlemen used to call me a pretty curly-headed boy, and I got many a shilling and sixpence from them on hunting days. I remember one day, when the aforesaid remark had been made, that another gentleman said: "Oh, yes, he is a very pretty boy, the picture of his father." And the Squire laughed, and they all laughed; and when I went home, I said:

"Mother, who was my father?"

"Mr. Cotton, of course," she replied; "but why do you ask?"

"Because I want to know something about him."

But my mother did not choose to answer impertinent questions; and though greatly addicted to telling long histories, she seemed to know very little about the private memoirs of Mr. Cotton. She informed me, however, that he died a few months before I was born—that he had been a fellow servant with her in the Squire's employ—that out of respect for his services, Mr. Carlos had placed her in her present comfortable situation. That I was called Noah, after my father, and that

• Continued from page 395.—Conclusion.