

hade all farther interference. It was not a time or a place to apply to her for information; and all I could gather from the domestics was, that Mr. Somerville had that day appeared to be in his usual health. That after dinner, he and his daughter had been for some time in the library together, when they heard a frightful shriek, and hastening into the room, beheld their master leaning back in his chair, his countenance slightly distorted, and his whole appearance bearing every mark of approaching death. Medical assistance was immediately obtained; and, though the circumstances of the case afforded little ground for hope, a hint had been thrown out, that if in a few hours the vital spark should not become extinct, a favourable change might probably take place.

In such a situation, Miss Somerville could not be deserted by her friends; and my brother, with his accustomed kindness, remained at the Hall, while I returned to inform my sister, as far as I was able, of all which had occurred.

On the following morning I was early on my way to Somerville Hall; and, musing as I went upon the many circumstances under which I had traced that path, I happened to turn my attention towards the large building called by the country people "Ferguson's Factory." At the same moment I was struck with the fact, that it was not as usual pouring fourth its thick volume of smoke, to darken and pollute the air. My attention was afterwards attracted by groups of work-people in the village through which I passed, collected into little companies, and evidently talking over some momentous affair of general and individual interest.

Concluding it was the alarming illness of a common friend and benefactor, which very reasonably excited so universal a sensation, I passed on, without any inquiry, from one party to another, until stopped by an old woman whom I knew to have been dependant upon the bounty of Miss Somerville, and who now eagerly inquired of me, if I thought they knew at the Hall what had happened.

"What do you mean?" said I. "They must know it—they know it too well."

"What! that he is off out of the country, and all the works stopped, and nobody left to pay?"

A new idea now flashed upon me. It was but too probable, and but too true. I hastened on to find my brother, and desiring to speak with him alone, told him all I had heard and seen.

"Villain!" he exclaimed, as the whole truth by degrees presented itself. "We might have foreseen this; a child might have foreseen it. And yet none of us could step forward and rescue this old man from ruin."

A letter which Miss Somerville was able in the course of a few days to write to my sister, will throw farther light on this subject. It began with a description of her own situation, in her father's chamber at midnight, where he slumbered still insensible to all that was transpiring around him.

"I owe it," said the writer, "to his memory if he dies, to his character if he lives, to vindicate him from the charge which many will be too ready to bring against him—that of having been the victim of mere animal excitement. In the sight of God, I have no apology to offer; but; in that of man, it may surely be some extenuation of his fault, to say that he was goaded on to ruin by causes which he ceased at last to have sufficient moral power to resist."

"His connexion with Mr. Ferguson was, from its commencement, most disastrous. Some of money seemed to escape from his possession, without his being aware of their amount, and every new scheme increased, instead of redeeming, his past losses. Besides which, he never was calculated for business. It harrassed his mind, and destroyed his natural rest. He became irritable and apprehensive; while the false stimulus to which he had recourse served to give him nerve for the moment, and even inspired him with energy for new enterprise; so that he became at such times a pliant and willing instrument in the hands of a man who needed my father's credit and capital to prosecute his own schemes."

"It is difficult to understand how my father's honourable feeling should have been so far overcome by one who was altogether unworthy of his confidence, except that he always attached so much importance to ingenuity and enterprise, that they covered from his sight a multitude of sins. And as to my own influence, I had shown my deep-rooted dislike to this individual in a manner too decided and illjudged for my father to attribute it to anything

but prejudice. His ear was therefore closed against all I might have to say.

"In this manner his affairs went on, until they became almost too desperate for hope. One thing after another had failed; none prospered with him. But still he had credit, and, upon that, fresh schemes were undertaken; while his debts were increasing on every hand. By mere chance, I had myself become acquainted with these appalling facts, and you may be sure that I reasoned with him—that I pleaded and prayed he would make an honourable stand against the encroachment of fallacious hope, and, by giving up the remainder of his property, that he would leave us our integrity, at least, for the solace of old age. But unfortunately for my cause, the tempter was over at hand, and my father was growing imbecile; while his moral feeling was failing even faster than his bodily strength. I grew desperate at last, and threatened to expose our situation to the world, rather than we should go on deceiving every one around us, and many to their own loss. It was then, in an evil hour, they finally overcame me—my father, by his tears; while they bound me by a solemn vow, never, without his sanction, to communicate to any human being the real state of his affairs."

"You have often asked me why I did not marry. Here, then, you read the cause. I can, however, say with truth, that never have I been tempted but once to adopt this means of escape from the gathering storm which seemed threatening to overwhelm me. Once, I confess, I did, for a moment, allow myself to dream of the happiness of escaping to a foreign land, until the blast should have blown over. But, knowing that my reputed fortune was an object of consideration, I could not bear the idea that any man—especially the one who interested me most—should awake from his visions of wealth, to find he had married a poor and portionless wife."

"The darkest page of my history is yet to come. May reason last me to the end. I have not lived to my present age, and seen and felt what I have done, without having had many serious thoughts on the subject of religion; more especially, since I have seen that in my father's case, it was the only thing that could save him. Still I was dark—miserably dark on that subject myself; yet, as every thing earthly seemed to be receding from me, as one hold after another gave way, and friendship, all but yours, began to fail, I felt more than ever in my life, an awful and imperative call, to look into my real position with regard to time and eternity."

"I will not attempt to describe to you the state of mind which followed. I saw but too clearly what I might have been to my poor father. I felt what I was! Something, however, I imagined might yet be done. I carefully watched my opportunity—and, on that awful day, I had followed him into his study, for the purpose of appealing to his better feelings, and inducing him to render justice to others, and thus, if possible, obtain peace for his own mind, to which he had long been a stranger. I cannot repeat to you my words. But, if ever I spoke reasonably—if ever I spoke forcibly in my whole life—it was on that solemn occasion. For some time my father made no reply. His silence filled my mind with the dread of having offended him beyond forgiveness. I burst into tears, for it is a bitter thing for a daughter to reprove a father whom she loves. He was not insensible to my anguish; and, raising his eyes, I saw that a flood of light, like sunshine over a landscape, was diffusing its benign influence over every feature of his face. It was the welcome of a father's love; and, as he opened his arms to receive me, I fell upon his bosom, too happy to be sensible of any thing, but an unexpected thrill of gratitude and joy."

"My child," said he, in tones of the gentlest tenderness, "do with me what you will. From this hour we will begin a new life. You shall be to me my good angel. My affairs are in your hands. Render justice, if it be possible, to all."

"I closed my eyes, and remaining still folded in my father's arms, I silently offered thanks to the Father of mercies, for thus awakening us both to a new existence, which I solemnly resolved should be devoted to his service."

"While occupied with these reflections, I thought I felt my father's hold relax; and raising my head I saw that his own was drooping, while his hand dropped lifeless by his side. I scarcely know what followed. My cries brought in the domestics. Medical assistance was happily at hand, and the next thing I recollect was, that your husband and your brother, with their wonted kindness, came to my aid. Mr. Langton will tell you all the arrangements we have made together; for I consider the words