

with ruffled temper, quick irregular steps, glowing cheeks, and eyes bent upon the ground, she took the oft frequented by her and the Captain, but solitary path, that led to L— wood.

For the first time during her long series of stolen visits thither, the narrow and thickly wooded lane, appeared desolate and lonely. The pitiful sighing of the autumnal blast, and the creaking of the lofty branches of the forest trees that met over-head and cast their broad shadows along the sylvan path startled her. The distant report of a gun made her creep closer to the hedge, and when a wounded hare bounded suddenly into the lane she so far yielded to her nervous fears as to utter an involuntary scream. The next moment some one called her by name.

She turned quickly and joyfully round, expecting to welcome her lover; but was greatly disappointed in beholding at her side—not Captain Ogilvie, but a tall fine looking old man, of that peculiar aspect and complexion which denotes a foreigner or one who has spent the greater part of his life abroad. Sophia had frequently met him in this lane, when walking with her lover, and he always regarded her with such a severe and scrutinizing glance that his presence always gave rise to the most unpleasant sensations of fear and self condemnation; for she felt convinced, after the first encounter, that their meetings were not accidental, but that whoever he was, (and she felt certain that he was a gentleman,) that he watched all her motions. Twice she observed to Captain Ogilvie—"Who is that strange man—and why does he always haunt our path?"

"Oh, never mind him," was the Captain's general reply; "he is a stranger to us. He looks like some travelling artist. It is probable that he is sketching the neighbouring scenery from the picturesque opening in this lane. I dare say he concerns himself just as much with our courtship, as the handsome spaniel does, which keeps so close at his heels." But this answer did not satisfy Sophia's doubts, and the sudden appearance of this mysterious stranger, when so much depended upon her meeting that evening with the Captain, made her turn pale, with secret dread and vexation.

"A fine evening young lady. You have chosen a beautiful spot for your rambles," said the old man, raising his hat, and displaying to his terrified companion a countenance dignified and prepossessing, even in old age. "Have you no brother or sister to share your solitary walks?"

Sophia looked very indignant, but returned no answer—and he, without apparently noticing her displeasure, continued: "Do you think it prudent, Miss Sophia Linhope, for a lovely young female to meet a gay young officer, night after night, in an unfrequented path like this? Permit me to see you home, for you cannot remain here without compromising your character; and drawing upon yourself

the ill-natured remarks of all the gossips in the neighbourhood."

"Sir!" said Sophia, drawing proudly back, and rejecting his proffered arm. "You are a stranger to me. Good evening."

She passed him, and walked rapidly forward. A sudden turning in the lane hid her tormentor from her sight. She quickened her pace; and soon reached the stile, where the path terminated in an entrance to the wood, overarched by a gigantic oak, under whose broad shade she and her lover were wont to wile away the evening hour. As she approached the trysting place, she heard the hall clock strike six—and all chance of seeing her lover that night was at an end. She leaned upon the stile, and wept bitterly. Her reveries were abruptly dispelled by the same warning voice, that had sounded so ominously in her path. "Return to your duty, misguided girl. The trifter you seek will not be here tonight. He has left his love-token on yonder thorn. That white glove that flutters in the breeze will tell you that the betrayer of innocence has kept his appointment."

Without regarding the unwelcome presence of the stranger, Sophia eagerly seized the white kid glove, and examined it with a critical eye. In the interior of it she found a card, on which was traced with a pencil, the following words. "Cruel Sophia, not to grant me a parting interview. I received orders this morning to join my regiment, without a moment's delay. When you read these lines, I shall be far on my road to London. Your devoted lover,
P. O."

Whilst the disappointed girl, read the Captain's hurried note, her heart beat violently, and the surrounding landscape undulated before her eyes, like the waves of the sea. She raised her clenched hand to her head, and was about to curse her evil destiny, when she once more encountered the eagle glance of the stranger. Thrusting the glove and billet hastily into her bosom, she turned proudly and sorrowfully away. The old gentleman again intercepted her path.

"Sophia Linhope," he said. "Let this disappointment serve as a warning to you for the future, and before we part, take with you an old man's advice. Never place any reliance on the flattering speeches of men, or carry on a criminal correspondence with a heartless man of pleasure, unknown to your family. You may not escape the snare so easily a second time."

"Sir!" said Sophia, suddenly stopping before her mysterious monitor, and fixing upon him her beautiful but at this moment tearful eyes, while the colour flushed her hitherto pale cheeks, with a glow which almost rivalled the roseate tints of the expiring day. "Who are you, who dare to intercept my path and question my conduct?"