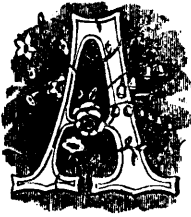


TRIFLES FROM THE BURTHEN OF A LIFE*.

BY MRS. MOODIE.



ABOUT midnight she awoke. A profound stillness reigned in the cabin; but seated on the ground in front of her berth, she discovered Mrs. Dalton wrapped in a loose dressing gown and engaged in reading a letter. She sighed deeply, as she folded and slipped it into her bosom; and, for some minutes, appeared in deep thought! All her accustomed gaiety had fled, and her face looked more interesting from the sad expression which had stolen over it. Her eye caught the earnest glance with which Rachel regarded her.

"I thought no one was awake but myself," she said, "I am a bad sleeper. If you are the same, get up, and let us have a little chat."

Surprised at this invitation from a woman towards whom she felt none of that mysterious attraction which marked her brief intercourse with Miss Leigh; she rather coldly replied,—

"I fear our conversation would not suit each other."

"That is as much as to say, that you don't like me, and that you conclude from that circumstance that I don't like you."

"You are right."

"Well, that is candid; when I first saw you, I thought you a very common looking person, and judged by your dress, that you held an inferior rank in society. I was wrong."

"I fancy that you overheard my observations to the Major."

"I did."

"Then I forgive you for disliking me. You think me a vain, foolish woman."

Rachel nodded her head.

"Oh, you may speak out, I don't like you the worse for speaking the truth. But I am a strange creature, subject, at times, to the most dreadful depression of spirits, and it is only by excessive gaiety that I hinder myself from falling into a state of hopeless despondency."

"This state of mind is not natural. There must be some cause for these fits of depression."

"Yes, many, I am not quite the heartless co-

quette I seem. I was an only child and greatly indulged by both my parents. This circumstance made me irritable and volatile; I expected that every body would yield to me and let me have my own way as my parents had done; hence I was exposed to constant mortification and disappointment. I left school at sixteen, and was introduced to my husband, a worthy kind man, but old enough to be my father. I was easily persuaded to marry him, for it was a good match, and I, who had never been in love, thought it was such a fine thing to be married at sixteen. Our union has been one of esteem, and I have never swerved from the path of rectitude, but, oh Madam, I have been severely tried. My own sex speak slightly of me; but I do not deserve their ill-natured censures. These women, I learn from Ceasar, have made a thousand malicious remarks about me, and you and Miss Leigh alone spared me."

"My conduct was perfectly negative. I said nothing either in praise or blame, I may have injured you by thinking hardly of you."

"I thank you for your forbearance in keeping your thoughts to yourself. The conversation that Ceasar repeated to me, greatly annoyed me. It has brought on one of my fits of gloom. If I did flirt with Major F——, it was more to provoke that ill-natured old maid, and his proud, pompous wife, than from any wish to attract his attention."

"It is better," said Rachel, her heart softening towards her companion, "to avoid all appearance of evil; superficial observers only judge by what they see, and your conduct must have appeared strange to a jealous woman."

"She was jealous of me, then?" said the volatile woman, clapping her hands. "Oh, I am glad I annoyed her."

Rachel could hardly help laughing at the vivacity with which Mrs. Dalton spoke. She turned the conversation into a different channel; and they began to talk of the state of the slaves in the West Indies.

"Ah, I perceive that you know nothing about it," said Mrs. Dalton, "you are infected with the bigotry and prejudices of the anti-slavery advocates. Negroes are an inferior race, they were made to work for civilized men, in climates where