

me, my poor mother was shortly after taken ill, when in procuring medical attendance and other necessities our small funds were soon exhausted: it became a matter of serious consideration how we were to subsist, when an idea suggested itself that I might make something by my drawings. I immediately commenced my labours, and after finishing a few specimens, went out to offer them at the bazaars and fancy shops for sale. Some professed to admire them, but did not wish to purchase, others rejected them with contempt saying they were not good enough for *their* establishment; at length, exhausted with fatigue, and half distracted at my disappointed efforts, I turned towards my miserable home; fortunately, however, I made one more attempt, and entered Ackerman's repository; in trembling agitation I opened my port-folio and presented my drawings to the proprietor, who happened to be in his shop: with silent but minute attention he examined them, and then enquired how soon I could finish him half a dozen pairs of hand-screens in the same style! Perhaps I never felt joy so exquisite as at that instant. "I will do them immediately, sir," I rapturously exclaimed, while the tears of grateful pleasure chased each other down my cheek—which did not escape the observation of the humane tradesman, who rightly judged the cause of such emotion, for he delicately offered to supply me with the materials for commencing my work, and then said, he would advance part of the payment if I pleased; the latter favour I gratefully declined, and hastened to convey to my dear mother the intelligence of my success. At the appointed time my work was finished, and with payment, received the additional gratification of an encomium from my employer, with the promise of constant employment. My mother's health now became my chief anxiety; debility had taken such entire possession of her frame that she required my whole attention, and for some weeks previous to her death I found it impossible to pursue the occupation from which we had of late principally derived our subsistence: happily for my dear parent, Heaven in its mercy snatched her from a state of intense poverty, which in its train of evils must ultimately have brought both to utter starvation!—and you, my benevolent friends, in the hands of Providence, have rescued me from all impending evils!" Maria's spirits were exhausted by the recital, and she sank almost senseless on the sofa, until tears came to her relief.

"Your sufferings, my dear girl," said Mr. Raymond, "have indeed been of no ordinary nature; but I trust they are at an end. Confide in the friendship of Elvira, with whom I will now leave you, while I proceed to witness that proper attention has been paid to my orders about the funeral, for it is my intention that my family shall pay the last tribute of respect towards your departed mother, by wearing the ordinary mourning."

Maria thanked her benefactor, and begged to be allowed to pass the remainder of the day alone in her chamber.

To this very proper request her friends acceded, hoping that after the first impulse of intense feelings had subsided, they might be able to contribute more materially to her happiness. Most fervently did they unite their prayers for the future felicity of the sorrowing orphan. And, as fervently did they return humble thanks to that great Disposer of events who had so wonderfully enabled them to rescue her from her late miserable condition.

While so engaged, the door suddenly opened and the cause of their meditation entered in great agitation, and presented to each a sealed letter. She had opened the box given by her mother at her approaching death, and within which, she doubtless expected to find some sacred relic of maternal love; but how great was her disappointment when she found only two letters, one addressed to Mr. Raymond and the other to Elvira, with a single line to herself, desiring that she would, under any possible difficulty, deliver the letters with her own hand. As she presented them, her grief-worn countenance expressed the contending emotions of her heart, and seating herself on the sofa, she wept most bitterly.

Mr. Raymond hastily broke the seal of his communication. What pen can describe the expression of his features while reading the following words! "Forgive, dear sir, the penitent criminal, who thus throws herself on your mercy! Forgive the unhappy woman who from vanity has dared to impose on you, and rob you of your child! The supposed Elvira whom you have so fondly nourished, is not your offspring; she is my child, and I,—I blush to say it;—I am her unnatural mother! Vanity, that treacherous deluder! induced me from the great beauty of your Elvira, to impose upon my husband, who, being absent at the birth of my child, I presented him your infant as his own. The death of your wife enabled me to continue the deception, and on your return to England, I resigned to you my own Maria, in lieu of your daughter, whom you had never seen; you can no longer doubt the truth of my dying assertion, when you gaze upon the features of your own child, and witness her perfect resemblance to her mother! I now assure you, in regaining your Elvira, you recover an invaluable treasure, her mind is even more angelic than her features. Although I cannot now palliate my offence, I solemnly declare that I have loved your child with all the parental fondness; and I pray that my crime may not diminish your regard for my unoffending Maria." During the perusal of this letter Elvira had been endeavouring to soothe the new grief of her friend, and consequently had not read her own epistle. But observing the agitated countenance of her father, she became alarmed, and affect-