

HALIFAX PEARL,

A VOLUME DEVOTED TO POLITE LITERATURE, SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Published every Friday evening, at Fifteen Shillings per Annum, in advance.

VOLUME TWO.

FRIDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 19, 1838.

NUMBER FORTY TWO.

From the Lady's Book.

THE SUGGLER'S DAUGHTER.

BY J. S. HOUGHTON.

The lamp burned dim in the student's chamber. A solitary ember lay smoking and crackling upon the hearth; and the shadowy images of the scanty furniture which graced the apartment, gave to the walls a dark and sepulchral appearance. The student sat at a low table, with his head resting upon his hand, absorbed in meditation. Occasionally, when a bright spark from the dying embers flashed upon the darkness, he raised his eyes, and gazed for several minutes upon the spot from whence it sprung, as if lost in thought. The village clock struck—it was past midnight. The student raised his head, and the dim light fell upon his handsome features, now glowing with the flush of exciting thought. His dark locks fell carelessly over his high fair forehead, his keen penetrating eyes were fixed intensely upon a book that lay open before him, and his lips were firmly compressed together. He arose! his form was manly and noble. "No!" exclaimed he, clasping his hands together and pacing the apartment, "No! I cannot endure it—I cannot pursue my studies, while the image of that bright angel flits before my sight, and the story of her wrongs lies thus heavy upon my heart. And yet what a fool I am to think of her! I cannot assist her, for she is carefully watched. I may not love her, for she is an affianced bride—and I do not! Still, her history works strongly upon my feelings. Would that I could sleep!" He threw himself upon his disordered couch, and buried his face in his hands. An hour passed away, and again the deep tones of the village clock came pealing upon the heavy night air. The student sprang to his feet—"Yet sleep comes not," he exclaimed; "I am resolved! I will once more see Francesca—I will save her from the hated Spaniard. If her father casts her off, I will be her protector, her guide, and her friend!"

This resolution appeared to calm the tumultuous emotions that agitated the breast of the student. He returned to his couch, and in a few moments sunk into a deep, but uneasy repose.

The name of the student whom we have thus introduced to the reader, was Frederick De Vere. He was an orphan child, cast upon the world, without fortune or friends. By his own unaided efforts, and the natural force of his genius, he had sustained himself honourably through his academical studies, and had nearly finished his collegiate course. He stood high as a scholar, he was respected by the faculty, and beloved by his classmates. During the late vacation he spent a few days on the New Jersey shore, for exercise and sea-bathing. Returning one evening from a fowling excursion, he stopped to inquire his way at a singular looking dwelling situated under the brow of a hill. It was built in the Venetian style, with a balcony that overlooked the distant ocean. The columns and lattice-work of the portico were covered with a luxuriant vine; the little plats of ground in front and on either side of the house were strewn with a variety of flowers and ornamental shrubs, and tokens of refined taste, neglect, and wild extravagance were every where visible. The student approached the door and gapped. A beautiful young lady, attired in a dress that vied in rich elegance with the costly robes of an eastern princess, appeared, and with averted eyes awaited his commands. De Vere could not have been more astonished, had an angel or a daughter of the sea answered his call. After a moment's pause he inquired the direct road to the next village. The lady answered that she was little acquainted with the situation of the country, but would call her servant, who could probably give him the desired information. And pointing to a seat on a rich ottoman that stood near, she disappeared. De Vere was sadly puzzled at the sight of this palace in the desert. He was actually disposed to question the reality of the scene, and began to suspect that he was wrapped in a dream, or had fallen into the hands of the fairies. The mysterious lady soon returned, with her servant, a brisk, pert miss, who answered Frederick's questions respecting the roads, with great freedom and accuracy. During this conversation with the servant, he noticed that the mistress frequently fixed her eyes upon him, with a wistful pensive look, as if she wished to speak with him—to unburthen a load of sorrow—or, as he flattered himself, as if she wished, with the gentle Desdemona, "that Heaven had made her such a man."

De Vere's curiosity was excited. He determined not to leave the house without learning something further concerning its mysterious inmates. He felt ripe for adventure. With this view he addressed a casual remark to the mistress, to which she replied with evident pleasure. This was followed by another, with the same result, and De Vere took all the advantage of this good

success that a good stock of words, a lively imagination, and ready wit would allow. It would have been difficult to decide which was most pleased with the interview. The lady's eyes certainly spoke volumes, and Frederick's heart was full of gushing emotions. So interested had they become in each other, that they had not noticed the absence of the servant, who now returned to inform her mistress that tea was waiting. De Vere could not resist an invitation to join them at tea, although he was conscious it was hardly proper. But he felt an irresistible power within urging him forward, and while in his heart he refused, he followed the mysterious lady into the next apartment.

The furniture here was elegant beyond description. A rich carpet covered the floor, the tables, sofas, and mirrors, were of the most costly materials and beautiful fashion. The rich drapery hung in ample folds, and the whole apartment literally glistened with brilliant gems and costly ornaments. A massive chandelier covered with diamonds, hung from the centre of the ceiling, and shed its pure light upon the table below, which, like every thing about it, was loaded with rich furniture, and a profusion of all that was rare and valuable. The food, however, was simple, and with the exception of a few preserves, was such as might be found upon the table of any citizen, in good circumstances, in the vicinity.

The ceremonies of the table were soon finished. Indeed, neither party appeared desirous of prolonging them. When they rose, Frederick felt inspired with new confidence, and taking a seat on a sofa with the mysterious lady, again engaged her in conversation. The evening wore away, and Frederick still kept his seat, forgetful of the distance he would have to travel that night to reach the place of his destination. The conversation every moment grew more interesting, and the later the hour the less he appeared inclined to leave. By questions ingeniously contrived, he managed to learn the name and history of his beautiful hostess; and this assured him that there could be no danger in remaining a little longer in a place that had so much of romance about it, and with a person for whom he already began to feel the deepest sympathy.

The name of the mysterious lady, he learned, was Francesca. She was the daughter of a West Indian smuggler, named Marlow. Her mother was an English lady of noble birth, disinherited and banished for marrying beneath her. She died when Francesca was only three years of age, of a broken heart. Her father then went into the contraband trade, which he followed sixteen years, with distinguished success, and collecting the mass of his fortunes together, embarked for America. He had been in this country about two years, and although he did not follow his hazardous occupation in person, he derived a handsome revenue from his connection with the smugglers, who transacted much of their business under cover of his name. Francesca was his only child, and on her he lavished all the attentions of a devoted father, and all the luxuries that unbounded wealth could procure. The lovely creature revealed this story with a sigh. Amidst all the splendour with which she was surrounded, she was the most unhappy being in existence. Possessing a strong natural taste for study, and the accomplishments of refined societies, she was deprived, by the peculiar nature of her case, even the means of a common education. Mute books were offered, and heaped to the very walls, but the fearful pledges by which her father was bound to exclude all but the most devoted confidants of either sex from her apartments, precluded the possibility of admitting other and more capable teachers.

The person who ruled her father with such despotic and fearful power, was one Antonio Ricardo, to whom he was indebted for his very existence, and who held his written pledge of constant obedience, sealed with his own blood. To this man, or rather fiend in human shape, he had also betrothed his beautiful daughter, under the most dreadful penalties, in case he failed to assist the union with all the influence in his power. It was this fearful truth, which had recently been revealed to Francesca, that made her situation doubly miserable, shutting out for ever the cheering light of hope. The thought of such an union was almost distracting to her sensitive and delicate mind. Ricardo was one of the most abandoned of his class—a tall, swarthy, grizzly Spaniard; a man that hesitated not to imbrue his hands in the blood of innocent victims, upon the slightest pretext; a man whose heart was shut against the principles of right and justice, and whose soul was never moved by the common and softer emotions of human nature. Francesca, on the contrary, was emphatically the child of nature—lovely, imaginative, and sympathising. She was all innocence, purity, and truth; confined at home from her earliest

childhood, under the care of a single domestic, she had learned little of the great world around her. Her principal knowledge was derived from books; the Bible, and a few pious volumes, dedicated to her and commended by her departed mother, had been her constant companions and her dearest friends. The precepts and instructions contained in their pages had been deeply impressed upon her heart, and were constantly in her mind, and upon her tongue. Her disposition, naturally mild and well-tempered, was rendered more perfect by the salutary influence of good principles, and her loveliness of person was enhanced by the moral beauty of her character, and the purity of her virtue. She had a tear for all that wept, and the story of others' wrongs affected her heart in a most sensible manner. And yet she was doomed to a union with Ricardo, a grim monster in human form, a leader of outlaws, and offender against the laws of God and man, a criminal of the deepest dye. No wonder, then, that this fragile flower was crushed in the rude grasp of the hand that was stretched forth to pluck it—no wonder that it drooped and faded in such an unnatural embrace.

Frederick listened to this story with breathless attention. He learned further, that Francesca's father and Ricardo were then on a voyage to the Mexican gulf, and probably be absent several days. Business of a peculiar nature called them away. This was the first time she had been left alone since her arrival in America. There was little danger of their sudden return; and under the circumstances, with the weight of her frightful situation pressing upon her mind, and perhaps, with a desperate hope of escape, she had seized this opportunity to entertain a stranger, and almost unconsciously revealed her history. But when it was finished, and she reflected what she had done, she was frightened, and bathed in tears, she seized Frederick with frantic energy, and begged him to pardon her folly, and if he could not assist her, at least to keep the secret she had revealed buried in the deepest recesses of his heart. Frederick, choking with emotion, solemnly promised to remain true to her request. The young woman who waited upon Francesca, alarmed at the frantic cries of her mistress, entered the apartment. She pitied Francesca, and would have assisted her, notwithstanding the threats of Ricardo, had she known how. She was disposed to make the most of the present opportunity. Francesca raised her head and motioned her away. She left the room. Frederick took the hand that was extended towards him, and in a soothing voice endeavoured to comfort the afflicted girl, with such consoling reflections as his mind suggested. For a time she refused all consolation, and the violence of her grief appeared to increase rather than abate. Frederick assured her again and again that he would not betray her; that he would be her friend, and that he would do all in his power to rescue her from the fate which she dreaded and loathed from her inmost soul. She gradually recovered her self-possession, and endeavoured to assume her usual quiet and cheerful manner. The gray mists of morn appeared in the east, before Frederick rose to take his leave, and it was only on his renewing the promises he had made, and also pledging himself to return the next evening, and if possible, to devise some plan to save her from the fate that awaited her, that she consented to let him return to his lodgings at the neighbouring village.

Frederick possessed an ardent and adventurous spirit; he felt deeply interested in the fate of the lovely and devoted being with whose strange history he had been entrusted; a sense of duty and justice, and the motives of common humanity compelled him to seek her deliverance from the power of the Spaniard. But how could this be accomplished? He was a poor orphan student, without means or influence, and scarcely able to sustain himself with credit in college. Should he succeed in conveying Francesca from her father's roof, where should he place her? Would not the spies of the hated Spaniard seek her out, even in the remotest corner of the country? In her father's house she enjoyed the comforts and luxuries of life; could he furnish even the articles necessary to existence, or could she obtain the means to procure them? Should he complain to the civil authorities, what right would they have to interfere with the private affairs of a family? Had he evidence against Bozaris sufficient to convict him of infamous crimes? He had not. If he attempted to save her, then he must surely fail in his project, and the vengeance of the Spaniard would follow him to the grave. He spent the day in his chamber musing upon the circumstances of the case, unable to determine what course it was best to pursue.

As the shades of evening darkened the neighbouring hills he was again on his way to the sea-shore. The full bright moon soon began to peer above the horizon, gilding hill and dale, ocean