

(ORIGINAL.)

AUNT MARY'S NOTE BOOK.

BY E. M. M.

Continued from our last Number.—(Conclusion.)

Captain Selby was sitting alone, apparently ruminating, with one of Annie's books in his hand, he started round on hearing the rustling of my silk dress. I could have been amused at the look of disappointment he cast, had it not been accompanied by the most profound melancholy. Annie entered immediately after—she was paler than usual—but I never beheld her appear more lovely, as she gave him her hand to lead her in to dinner.

"If my dear father were only here I should be perfectly happy again," said the amiable girl, when we had taken our places at the neatly spread table; "but his vacant chair makes a blank—which none but himself could fill—I think I could bear any thing better, than separation from those I love."

"Then how think you I have borne it, and must still bear it for ever," asked Captain Selby.

"Say not forever—it is too painful—you cannot mean to return here no more—oh, I am sure you cannot."

Annie asked this in a tone the most touching—her words and manner seemed to electrify him, as he looked intently on her for a moment; but my presence, and the servants in attendance, checked his reply, and he remained silent, and continued nearly so till the cloth was removed, and we were left to ourselves.

The weather had by this time become very tempestuous—dark clouds were driving along the heavens, and a loud peal of thunder reverberated in fearful echo directly over our heads.

"My father, my dear father, I trust he is not exposed to this," exclaimed Annie, as she flew in terror to the window. Captain Selby drew her away, for the lightning flashed vividly at short intervals.

"Your father will no doubt seek some shelter, my love," said I, endeavouring to alleviate her fears.

"Oh, I know him so well—he will hasten home—he ever thinks of my watching anxiously for him."

"Then he must soon arrive now, and his pony will carry him both swiftly and well—by the time we prepare tea we shall have him amongst us again."

Annie tried to rally her spirits, as I spoke thus confidently, but another fearful peal of thunder, followed by a perfect storm of wind and rain overcame her remaining courage, and she sunk on a sofa, covering her face with both hands. Captain Selby sat down by her and endeavoured to soothe her—he spoke reasonably, kindly, tenderly.

"Remember, Annie, *who rides the storm*," he said, in a deep low tone—"Your father is as safe under His protection, as if he were here. *He* is not frightened for means—where is your trust?"

Annie looked up—"I am wrong," she meekly murmured, "and I thank you for reminding me of my duty! I will seek for more strength alone." She would have left the room, but we both detained her.

"Remain with us at present, my dear child," I said, "you are too agitated." I drew her towards me, and held her in my arms. The tempest was indeed now most terrific, and it was quite dark. My own anxiety arose, though I strove to conceal it. I looked at Captain Selby—he immediately approached us—Annie's face was hid on my shoulder.

"Why you little trembler," said he, assuming a gaiety he did not feel, "you would make a poor sailor's wife—this is a mere breeze to what I have witnessed, and to convince you your fears are groundless, I am going forth to brave it, and to seek your father—on our return we will give you a good scolding."

"Oh, no, no, no, you shall not," exclaimed Annie, starting up, and laying her trembling hand with gentle force on his arm, "it is hard enough to bear now—think you I could sustain more. Leave me not, I beseech you—can you be so cruel as to leave me in such a moment—see I am quite calm, only stay with me."

Her countenance was perfectly agonized—he caught her for one instant in his arms, saying, "Most beautiful—most beloved—is it—can it be possible," and then rushed from the house.

I would have now led her to her chamber, and had succeeded in reaching the door, when a female