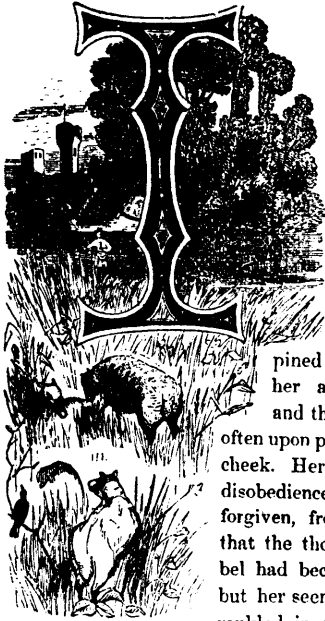


# NOAH COTTON:

## A TALE OF CONSCIENCE.

BY SUSANNA MOODIE.

THE DISCLOSURE.



**T**WO months passed away, & the young bride had never once been home to visit her old friends. Her mother, more infirm and feeble every day, pined sadly after her absent child, and the tears were often upon patient Mary's cheek. Her act of wilful disobedience had been forgiven, from the hour that the thoughtless rebel had become a wife; but her seeming neglect rankled in the heart of

both mother and sister.

"She has forgotten us quite," said the ailing old woman; "the distance is not so far, she might come, especially as her husband keeps a horse and chaise. And what are ten miles after all?—In my young days I have often walked it before breakfast to see a friend, much more a mother and sister. Well, I shall not be here long; I feel that, and the day of my release will be a welcome one to me; but she will be sorry when I am gone that she neglected to come and see me."

Now, though Mrs. Grimshawe, in her querulous, nervous state, grumbled over the absence of her daughter, she was never so dear to the heart of that faulty child as at the very time she complained of her neglect. Sophy, like many other young people, never knew the real value of a mother, until she felt upon her own shoulders the cares of a house. She longed intensely to see her, as the nice presents of butter, ham and eggs, that she was constantly sending to Mrs. Grimshawe might have testified for her, but there

were painful reasons which made a meeting with her parent and sister everything but desirable to the young wife. She was changed since they parted, and as her marriage had been contrary to their wishes, she did not like that they should witness that change; and if she did not come over to S—— in the chaise, she went nowhere else—never did the most loving bride keep more closely at home.

Once Mrs. Grimshawe asked of her daughter's messenger—a rough clodhopper whom she had summoned to her bedside, in order to gratify her curiosity—the reason of her daughter's long absence—"Was she well?"

"Yes, but she had lost her rosy cheeks, and was not so blithe as when she first came to the porched house."

"Did Noah treat her ill?"

"Na', na', he petted her like a spoilt child, yet she never seemed contented like."

"What made her unhappy then?"

"He could na' just tell—women were such queer creatures. Mayhap, it was being an old man's wife, and that was only natural, seeing that a pretty young thing like her might have married a young un, which for sartain would have been more to her taste."

"Was she likely to have any family?"

"No signs o' the like. It had not pleased the Lord to multiply Noah's seed upon the earth."

"Was he stingy?"

"Na', na', they had always plenty to eat. He was a kind master and good pay. There was only their two selves, and Mrs. Cotton was dressed like a lady, and had everything brave and new about her; but she looked mortal pale and thin. He thought that she was in the consumption."

The man went his way, and the old woman talked about her daughter to Mary half the night.

"She was always discontented with her lot," she said, "when she was single. Change of circumstances seldom changed the nature of people. Perhaps it was Sophy's own fault that she was not happy."

Mary thought that her mother was right; but she felt so anxious about Sophy, that she determined to leave her mother to the care of a neigh-