

THE LAST HOURS OF AN OLD MAID.

IN THREE PARTS.

PART I.

"Season your admiration for awhile
With an attent ear—till I may deliver,
Upon the witness of these gentlemen,
This marvel to you."

HAMLET.

THE village clock struck five,—five, P. M.,—and in a small apartment of that village, sat a Lady, who soliloquized thus:—

This day makes me thirty-nine, thirty-nine years of age,—and I am that despised of all, that suspected by every body, that confided in by no body, that withered branch—*an Old Maid!* Why do I utter the harsh words! they would be bitterness—"the gall of bitterness"—from another; and yet, while others refrain from exposing the truth, I feel it myself more painfully. I have long striven against the convictions of my mind, but I will conceal those convictions no longer. I, Cynthia Amelia Wrainsborough, am thirty-nine years of age—remember, thirty-nine,—no less;—and every morn—every sunny morn, that revives the hopes, and freshens the beauty of the lovely girl of fifteen,—every morn, that brings an accession of bliss and satisfaction to the wedded of my sex,—every such morn shall be an accumulation of my disappointment and misery, as I repeat to myself—"I am thirty-nine years of age." Each day will add to my age,—and on each day will I, in audible language, remind myself of it, even though my heart should burst in giving the sentiment an existence in words. To-morrow I will say—"I am thirty-nine and a day—in my fortieth year." Ay—it may be a satanic employment, but it is a satisfaction—a satisfaction.

Was I not formed to love—could I not love—was I not loved? In childhood I was called pretty—was admired and caressed. Ah! yes! I was then loved. Let me repeat the words—they cause a glow in my heart—a struggling, sti-

fling, sensation. I—was—then—loved—loved! O, would that each one of those tears bore away in its course an item of existence—I would weep till the last tear had left the fountain of life, and the source of hope and fear and anguish had ceased to be. Poor Barnaby! in our childhood we loved, and we were loved,—perhaps he would have wedded me—I think he would. But why do I call up his name or his memory, as though there were hope connected with them—as though I awaited the arrival of one, who for many a long year has been unheard of? As children, we fondled each other—in maturer years we were separated. I cannot lament unrequited affection, though that would be an alleviation: but I can dwell in thought on those years of infancy—years of happiness, of tenderness, like the traveller in the wilds of America, thinking, as he is overwhelmed by the snow-drift, of some grassy spot on which he had but recently basked in the sunbeams.

Am I the envious thing the world call us? Do I view with hatred that happiness in others which I desire—do I sow the seeds of discord between those who enjoy it? Such is our character with men—and why should I contradict it? No, I will take no pains to undeceive them—let the remorse of having scorned and ill-treated us, make them writhe, when it is too late to retrieve their error—let them undergo the double anguish of having deprived themselves of as much happiness as they have caused us misery. Yes—I have wished for happiness: but I have not—I repeat it, I have never coveted that happiness. I have longed to be situated in similar circumstances, but have not sought to lessen theirs. And because my wishes were vain, and my longings remain unsatisfied, still would I feel no delight in depriving them of the smallest pleasure, though it enhanced my own. Every day do I see those,