

"It is of the utmost importance to one whom I am mistaken if she loves not more than her own life."

"It must then relate to the boy whom she calls Jemmy.—She has, poor thing, during long delirious nights—sometimes accusing him of deserting her, and again thanking God that he was safe. Know you ought of him, young sir? The question was accompanied with a quick, enquiring glance, which assured Bushe that the old lady was not unacquainted with Annesley's history.

"It is on his account that I wish to see Mary Weedon—our interview should take place at once."

"It shall, sir; but you must come alone—she is not in a state to admit the presence of strangers."

"Our conference should have witnesses, lady, and for that purpose I have brought these gentlemen."

"I cannot consent to it, sir, it would kill her—my evidence will suffice to corroborate your statement of what may pass. May I ask whether your name is Bushe?"

"It is, madam."

"Well, sir, we will go together to Mrs. Weedon's,—meanwhile tell me if all is well with Jemmy?"

The question was embarrassing, but Bushe saw that it was put with anything but hostile motives; he, however, parried for the time, answering merely—

"I trust it may be, madam."

The old lady's keen eye had been intently fixed on the student, as if endeavoring to anticipate his answer, which she heard with a disappointed sigh, and turning to his companions said—

"I presume, gentlemen, that I need not apologise at leaving you for an hour to amuse yourselves—we shall scarcely be detained longer. Come, Mr. Bushe."

The good lady's dress was that of a house-keeper, or lady's companion in a noble's family; but there was that in her demeanor which convinced Bushe that if such in reality were her situation, she had sought to shelter age in a very different sphere from that in which she was brought up. In her expressions of interest in Annesley and Mary Weedon, he felt that unhesitating confidence which is the freemasonry of honorable minds. Thanking his stars, therefore, for such a fortunate alliance, he followed her towards the gate in the moss-grown wall, whence she had first issued—it led to an old garden, kept in the fashion so much in vogue a century ago: the hedges and standards cut into grotesque shapes, and the walks of raised velvet turf; a show of flowers at that season of the year was, of course, impossible, but the neatly trimmed beds with their mat-covered shrubs and plants, shewed that the gardener did not neglect his duty. In passing through, they