

Henry looked again, and thought he had mistaken the word *we*; for he felt assured that he had no knowledge of the person to whom he spoke.

But she knew him, and, after a pause, cried—  
“ Ah! Mr. Henry, you are welcome back. I am heartily glad to see you—and my poor sister Rebecca will go out of her wits with joy.”

“ Is Rebecca living, and will be glad to see me?” he eagerly asked, while tears of rapture trickled down his face. “ Father,” he continued in his ecstasy, “ we are now come home to be completely happy; and I feel as if all the years I have been away were but a short week; and as if all the dangers I have passed had been light as air. But is it possible,” he cried, to his kind informer, “ that you are one of Rebecca’s sisters?”

Well might he ask; for, instead of the blooming woman of seven-and-twenty he had left her, her colour was gone, her teeth impaired, her voice broken. She was near fifty.

“ Yes, I am one of Mr. Rymer’s daughters,” she replied.

“ But which?” said Henry.

“ The eldest, and once called the prettiest,” she returned: “ though now people tell me I am altered; yet I cannot say I see it myself.”

“ And are you all living?” Henry inquired.

“ All but one: she married and died. The other three, on my father’s death, agreed to live together, and knit or spin for our support. So we took that small cottage, and furnished it with some of the parsonage furniture, as you shall see; and kindly welcome I am sure you will be to all it affords, though that is but little.”

As she was saying this, she led him through the clover field towards the cottage. His heart re-