

her guitar, and sung modern songs, which I am sorry to say had more music than sense in them. In the midst of one of these, we heard foot-steps. A man stood at the entrance of the arbour, and laid his hand on Mr. Forester's shoulder. He started, and turned round; then, taking the man by the arm, walked away. 'I wish,' said Mrs. Forester, impatiently, 'he had not interrupted us just as we were so happy.'

"Do you know him?" said I. 'No,' she replied, 'I can't say I do, and yet I remember seeing him soon after we were married. I believe,' added she, colouring and laughing, 'I never told you that ours was a runaway match. It has turned out so well, and our troubles have terminated so happily, that I am not afraid to confess my imprudence to you, I was an orphan, and lived with my grandmother, who was as different from me in her habits and opinions as old people usually are from young ones. She thought singing was bad for the lungs, that dancing would throw me into a fever, and the night air into consumption. I differed from her in all these opinions, and yet was obliged to conform. After I became acquainted with Mr. Forester, we differed still more. She said he was a stranger that nobody knew; I said I knew him perfectly. In short, she told me if I intended to marry him, she would forbid the bans. I thought it best to save her the trouble, and so I tied up a little bundle, and walked off with my husband that is now.

"The good old lady lived to see him well established in business as a lawyer, and became quite reconciled, I loved her sincerely; and now that I was independent, willingly accommodated myself to her habits. She died soon after the birth of my first child, Ellen, who was named for her. She left me five thousand dollars, which is now invested in this farm, and I trust will be the inheritance of my children.'

"May I ask," said I, 'why you left your native place?' 'I hardly know,' said she; 'my husband thought the air did not agree with him. He grew melancholy and abstracted, and then I began to dislike it too, and was quite ready to quit it. We removed to B——. My husband carried his reputation and talents with him, and was again successful in the practice of law. In the course of a few months, his complaints returned, and he then thought it was country air he wanted, and an entire change of life. The event has proved so. We quitted the languid and enervating climate of the south, and travelled north. We gave up all our former associations, and to make the change more complete, my husband took the name of an uncle who brought him up, and relinquished his own. It is now three years since we have resided here, and I don't know that he has had any return of ill health, or nervous affections since.'

"At that moment Mr. Forester returned, accompanied by the stranger. He approached his wife, and said, 'here is an old acquaintance, Mary; you must make him welcome.' There was an expression in the countenance of the guest that appalled us. It seemed to communicate its baleful influence to the whole circle. Mr. Forester looked pale and anxious; the gaiety was gone; nobody sung or laughed; we scarcely spoke. All was changed. The stranger seemed to have had a blighting effect on the master of the house; for from this time his health and spirits gradually forsook him. Signs of poverty appeared, and he announced to his wife that he must move elsewhere. She was thunderstruck. The legacy of her aunt had been invested in the purchase of the farm. To give up that, was relinquishing the inheritance of her children. She remonstrated, but without effect; he declined all explanation. With deep regret I saw them quit the village.

"Mrs. Forester had promised to write me when they were again fixed in any permanent situation. It was nearly two years before I received a letter. That letter I have now in my pocket-book. It has remained there since I first received it. Here it is."

I knew too well his exact habits to be surprised at the perfect state of preservation in which I saw it. It was as follows:—

"I rejoice that I can give you cheerful accounts, my much respected friend, of my husband and myself. After we left you, we removed to a remote town in the west, and here we are. We have given up farming, and my husband has opened an office. As he is the only lawyer in the place, he has made his way extremely well. I wish I could say I am as happy as you once saw me; but this mode of life is not to my taste, nor do I think it agrees with my husband. I have never seen him so tranquil as the three short years we passed at N——. There is something in the life of a farmer peculiarly soothing. The sun never rose so bright to me as at that period. I do not think Eve was as happy in her paradise as I was in mine; for her fruits grew spontaneously, but mine were produced by the united effort of head and hands, and gave exercise to all my powers. My children are well. My husband's health is not very good; this plodding life does not agree with him, he is subject to low spirits. I sometimes have sad forebodings of the future; if I could only get back to N——, I think all would go well."

This was the purport of the letter. I returned it to my friend, and he resumed his narrative.

"About a year from the time I received the letter, I took a journey to Montreal to visit a sister who was settled there. In passing one of the streets, I recognised Mr. Forester; but he was so altered in his appearance, that I doubted if it could be he. He held out his hand, and I found, upon inquiring, that they had made another remove to Montreal. He was emaciated in his person, and there was a nervous agitation in his manner that alarmed me. I begged him to conduct me to his wife. 'With all my heart,' said he, 'but you will be surprised at our *menage*.' I accompanied him to a low dilapidated building, in which every thing bespoke poverty. Mrs. Forester gave me a mournful welcome. She, too, was greatly changed; but her children were still blooming and healthy, and appeared unconscious of the cloud that hung over their parents.

"My visit was short; I perceived it was an embarrassing one; but in taking leave, I said, 'If you have any commands to your old friends at N——, here is my address.' I had not been home long, before William Forester brought me a note from his mother, requesting to see me. I immediately returned with him, and found her alone. She was free and undisguised in her communication; said there was some dreadful mystery hung over them, and that whatever it was, it was hurrying her husband to the grave. 'I should not have spoken,' added she, 'had not this conviction made all scruples weigh light in the balance. I think it possible he may reveal to you what he will not to me. At least see him before you quit Montreal. If we could once more return to N——, we might yet be happy.

"I again called to see him. Never was there a human being more changed. He was dull, abstracted and silent, and I began to think his mind was impaired. I used every argument in my power to persuade him to return to N——, and tried to convince him it was a duty he owed his wife and children. He only replied that it would do no good; neither they nor he would be happier; that there was nothing I could say to him with regard to himself that his own mind had not suggested. He acknowledged that he had a secret source of calamity, but said it was beyond human power to mitigate it; that the kindest part would be to let him alone; that he had never intruded his sorrows on others, and he asked no participation; that, happily, there was a termination to all things here, and his sufferings could not last forever. I told him that if he was alone in the world, he might reason justly; but he must feel that there was one human being at least, that was doomed to partici-