

described: Our traveller, too, every where had noted the 'improvements of the age,' and often mistaken his way by reason of new churches and new roads, or the non-existence of long known and well known landmarks. Truly, then, a survivor of stabler times, like this poor, solitary man, was happier, after all, in his seclusion; preserving thus a quiet mind, and avoiding the discontent and fermentation of a jealous, divided and restless parish.

Giving a sprightly leap, the traveller alighted from his vehicle, and secured his horse at one of the trees before the dwelling above mentioned. Pausing awhile, as if to recollect himself, he left his dog in charge, and at once entered the house, without manifesting the slightest distrust at its appearance. Nay, impressed with respect for age and commiseration for poverty he immediately acknowledged their claims by the kind civility of his address. 'I hope,' said he, observing the occupant had just on his entrance left stirring his evening mess at the fire—'I hope I have not intruded here, worth a friend, or come at an unseasonable time.'

'No—oh, no!—not at all, sir,' replied the old man in a treble negative, lest the introduction should seem half as singular as it really was.

'I have travelled far, and inquired much hereabout, with little success,' continued the gentleman, rapidly surveying the room,— 'I wish you would tell me among other things, before I go there, who resides in yonder white house upon the swell of land, this side of the district school? You have probably chronicled the town's history in your mind half a century back.'

'Oh,' exclaimed the Solitary, 'tis just half a century all the home I've had has been here. They call the owner of that place Ralph Spunge, whom, had it the right with the might, the town of B—— would soon drum out of its precincts. He is my landlord, sir, and will expel this old carcase from its pig sty residence the very next week if his rent is not id; as he hath himself this day sworn.'

The traveller seemed both startled and exasperated at the information so frankly communicated, and begged the venerable man to sit down, inquired when this sharper came into possession of the mansion alluded to, & what had become of the former owner. But to these queries, as if unwilling, or forbidden by some secret obligation, to reply more directly, an answer simply was given confessing how poorly he remembered, in general, the date of transactions. The anxious interrogator, however, impatiently observing his evasive manner, again asked when the white mansion changed proprietors, adding that he had a faint idea of purchasing it, if for sale.

'You may call it ten years,' answered the old man, who in spite of his caution overlooked the apparent knowledge the stranger had betrayed of the former owner, in his desire that the estate should change hands again, of which he now had the pleasing hope.

'An undoubted title would be given, if sold?' asked the stranger, looking full in the cottager's face.

'Why—to tell the truth—' hesitatingly replied the man of years: my landlord 'may not be the rightful owner as you're thinking; The place is called his—he lives on it—and wants to sell. I suppose, bating the warranty.'

There was something in the manner and meaning of the Solitary, which could not fail to fill his visitor with alarming, though vague, apprehensions. It was under their gloomy influence that the latter felt his anticipations to be as evanescent in their nature as that beautiful golden and purple light, which was now lingering in the west. For a moment a tear glistened in his intelligent eye, forced from that fountain within, ever pure and relieving—sympathy with nature. But he had tasted of another fountain—the bitter waters of adversity—enough to master such tender emotions by the most energetic self-control: and now he could imagine that he was cherishing feelings that were, or would prove to be, wholly groundless; so easily might the current of thought be directed.