

my profession, but that I am truly rejoiced to perceive I shall have to treat you rather for a mental care than for corporeal indisposition. Forget that I am a doctor; look upon me as your old friend, your father's old friend, and tell me what is weighing so heavily on your mind? Perhaps I may be able to lighten the burthen for you."

Mrs. Delaware.—"You are a kind friend, but you cannot restore me to sleep or appetite; I must bear my fate."

Doctor.—"Your fate, madam! (nothing puts me out like a *soupeon* of romance,) you ought to be continually grateful for so happy a fate. The adored wife of one of the most distinguished, handsomest, and best men of the day, possessing a large fortune, mother of the most promising boy in the three kingdoms."

Mrs. Delaware (interrupting me).—"And is it not a hard fate to break that noble husband's heart, to abandon my darling Cecil on the threshold of life?—O, merciful God, it is too cruel!"

At these words, I begin to fear my fair patient had listened too long to the honied words of some deceiver, who was striving to induce her to abandon her happy home, and all its virtuous joys, to embrace a life of misery and shame; but there was too much real anguish in her looks and voice at the idea of separation, that, though most sincerely grieved, I was not much alarmed.

Doctor (gravely but kindly).—"God will exact no such sacrifice from you. He demands no severing of such sacred ties; in the twenty-five years during which I have been engaged in soothing and healing my fellow-creatures, I have gained much experience, and with it some power to advise; nor have I been so unobservant of the ways of the fashionable world as not to have marked the perils to which youth and beauty are exposed, even when guarded by a husband's watchful care; but believe me—"

Mrs. Delaware (eagerly interrupting me).—"Stop, doctor; I blush for the mistake I have thoughtlessly led you into. To clear myself from the suspicion I have given rise to, I see I must confide to you the cause of my illness and depression; but before I do so, I must receive your solemn promise not to communicate what I may tell you to Col. Delaware, until after my death."

I readily gave the required promise,

which, indeed, cost me nothing; for I have invariably found, in all anxious and trying cases, husbands, and mothers prove very troublesome confidants. Mrs. Delaware then related the following circumstances:—

A month previously, she awoke rather earlier than usual; and, not wishing to rise immediately, passed an hour in reading *Lectures on Animal Magnetism*. She then laid the book aside, and fell asleep; she was aroused from her slumbers by her bed-room door opening, the clock on the mantel-piece striking ten at the same moment, and two men in black entering. Astonishment kept her silent as they advanced to the table in the centre of the room. One, an old man, kept his hat on, and leaning one hand (in which he held a rule and pencil) on the table, turned round to address his companion, who, hat in hand, appeared to be deferentially awaiting his orders, which consisted in minute directions respecting the making of a coffin—the length, breadth, thickness, lining, etc., being all accurately described.—When he ceased speaking, his subordinate inquired what the inscription was to be; the old man replied, speaking slowly and impressively, "Clara Delaware, aged twenty-two, deceased at midnight on the 10th of April, 1838." At these words, both, for the first time, looked earnestly at Clara, and slowly left the room. Shaking off in some degree the spell that had hitherto bound her, she rang her bell; and her maid immediately answering the summons, she found, to add to her consternation, that this maid had been sitting for the last three hours in the room through which these men must have passed. Finding, on further investigation, that no one in the house had seen her lugubrious visitors, she gave herself up to supernatural terrors; and, conceiving that she had received a warning that she was to die at midnight, on the 10th of April, she had lost appetite and sleep, and was, in fact, fast sinking under the impression that the hour indicated was fated to be her last.

At first I was quite rejoiced to find it was not worse; and, rubbing my hands with even more apparent glee than I really felt: I asked her how she could possibly have allowed an uneasy dream, engendered, no doubt, by the mystic nature of the book she had been reading, to disturb her so much, adding a few jesting observations; but the mournful