

insult us by flattery.' Ah! Cousin Walbrook! those are the people to wind round your finger; to praise beyond the paltry deserts of earth, to extol by silent adulation, and play the servile listener to, until your unspoken admiration carries them up to the third heaven of self-idolatry."

"Hold! Marianne, go no farther; there is too much truth in your bitter mockery," cried Arthur. "It is the task of a demon to unveil and deride the miseries, the weaknesses, the crimes of humanity;—the act of a God, to pity, to soften, to reform, and forgive. Where, where did you obtain your fatal knowledge of evil?"

"In the school where all best learn it—my own heart," said Marianne. "In that rich soil, that hot-bed of the passions, flowers do occasionally spring up, but weeds of larger growth, luxuriate and overtop them, leaving their companions few and far between. Your hearts are too well cultivated, your passions too much under control, to acknowledge such an abundance of poisonous plants in your domain. I feel their baneful influence, and, judging by the effects they produce upon my own actions, I learn, pretty accurately, how deeply they poison the minds of others."

"And is there no remedy provided for this evil, Marianne?" said Arthur, fixing his mild eyes searchingly upon her face.

"None that I could ever discover. Good resolutions are vain, for they are broken as soon as made. Conscience, which points out the fault, and maddens the perpetrator with its loud and ceaseless reproaches, preaches self-improvement, but never points out the way to obtain it."

"Then has the Bible been written in vain," said Arthur; "and the blood of Him who died upon the tree, was uselessly poured forth. Conscience, it is true, awakens man to a sense of guilt, but religion alone can lead him to the great physician of souls, and effect mental regeneration. Yet, I rejoice to hear you speak of conscience as a reprover, Marianne. Far gone in guilt are they to whom the great monitor has ceased to speak. It tells of a deadness of the soul, a moral corruption that must end in everlasting destruction."

Marianne did not answer. She looked grave, as some sad thought passed rapidly through her mind, and clouded her fine features. Her wilfulness did not spring from ignorance of the truth, but from a studied infidelity, that feared, while it wished to believe it false. After a few minutes of painful silence, she said in a lively tone:

"Rosamond, we have forgotten to call on Mrs. Maurice, the lady who left her card for you, while we were out the other morning."

"I did not see the card," said Rosamond; "I heard nothing about it."

"Dear me, how remiss of me not to tell you," returned Marianne, drawing a card from her reticule. "See, here it is. 'Mrs. L. Maurice, 14 Woburn Place,' and at the back, 'Aunt to Miss Sternfield.' Your grandmamma was anxious that you should return this call as soon as possible, as she thinks this lady must be a sister of your mother's."

Rosamond took the card, and read it attentively; but she turned very pale, and trembled exceedingly. Of her mother's friends she knew nothing. That mother was to her a mysterious, shadowy, ghost-like relation, always connected in her mind, with the horror of Jane Redgrave's awful dream; and the thought of being so near a sister of her mother's—of being suddenly introduced into her presence, filled her naturally timid mind with anxiety.

"I cannot go to-day," she said. "I have not courage."

"Nonsense," returned Marianne. "You will rally during your ride thither. Tomorrow will be just as bad as to-day; besides I am dying with curiosity to see this same aunt of yours. I hope an acquaintance with her will give us an opportunity of seeing a little more of the world. Coachman, drive to number 14 Woburn Place, and let Roach enquire, if Mrs. Maurice is at home. It is cruel of my aunt," she continued, resuming her conversation with Rosamond, "to shut me up at my age, like a nun in a convent, depriving me, as I have no fortune, of the chance of settling in life. You, Rosamond, do not feel this sacrifice of youth and beauty. You are four years younger than I am, and moreover are the heiress of a large fortune. Your day has scarcely arrived; but mine is passing away. You, who are certain of receiving the adulation of the world, cannot sympathize in my loss of time, and worse, far worse, the diminution of my personal charms."

Rosamond could not help laughing at the earnestness with which her cousin spoke.

"Is marriage the first great object in life?" she asked.

"Yes, certainly, if wealthy and advantageous; but ye Gods! if poor and uninfluential, you had better be in your grave, snugly provided with a warm shroud, and a good substantial coffin. Imagine the domestic felicity of a large family, and limited means,—a cross, anxious husband, half-starved, squalling children, impertinent, lazy servants, and a host of daily duns. Purgatory were a paradise to such a state."

"But there is no necessity, cousin of mine, to