

The letter fell from my grasp—it was too dark to read. My disappointment was of short duration—Mrs. Hepburn entered, preceded by a servant bearing candles, and the most refreshing of all viands to an invalid, a delicious cup of tea.

The very smell was reviving, and whilst deliberately sipping the contents of a second cup, I requested Mrs. Hepburn, as a great favour, to read to me my good uncle's letter.

"Perhaps it may contain family secrets?" she said, smiling, whilst her hand rested rather tensively upon the closely written sheets.

"After what has past during the last few weeks, my dear madam," I replied; "I have no secrets to conceal from you. You are acquainted with my history—and I flatter myself, that neither you nor your amiable niece, are indifferent to my future welfare."

"You do us justice, dear Geoffrey," said the kind lady, affectionately bending over me, and re-adjusting my pillows; "I love you for your mother's sake, I prize you for your own, and I hope you will allow me to consider you in the light of that son, of whom heaven early deprived me."

"You make a rich man of me at once," I cried, respectfully kissing her hand; "how can I be poor, whilst I possess friends like you and Sir Alexander. This more than compensates for all my past sufferings—Robert Moncton, with all his wealth, is a beggar, when compared with the despised Geoffrey."

"Well, let us leave off complimenting one another," said Mrs. Hepburn, laughing; "and hear what your good uncle says."

"MY DEAR NEPHEW GEOFFREY,

"What the deuce man has happened to you, that we have received no tidings from you, nor of your locality? Have you and old Dinah eloped together on the back of a broomstick? The old hag's disappearance looks rather suspicious, and Margaret does little else but pine and fret for your return. I have a long tale to tell you, and scarcely know where to begin. Next to taking doctor's stuff, I detest the task of letter writing, and were you not a great favourite with your old uncle, the pens, ink and paper, might go to the bottom of the river, before I would trouble them to communicate a single thought. I had a very unpleasant journey up to London, which terminated in a very unpleasant visit to your wicked relative. It was with great repugnance I brought myself to enter the scoundrel's house, particularly when I reflected on the errand which brought me there.

"He received me with one of his most specious smiles, and enquired after my family, in a manner which would have led a stranger to imagine that he really felt an interest in our welfare. How I abhor this man's hypocrisy—bad as he is, it is the very worst feature in his character. I cut all his

compliments short, by informing him that the object of my visit was one of a very unpleasant nature, but that it required his immediate attention. He turned very pale.

"I anticipate your business, Sir Alexander—Geoffrey Moncton, I am informed, has found an asylum with you, and I suppose you are anxious to effect a reconciliation between us. But, I assure you, that if such be the purport of your visit, your journey must prove in vain. I never will forgive, or admit him into my presence.

"You have injured him too deeply, Robert," I replied calmly, 'for me to expect such a favour for poor Geoffrey at your hands—he does not wish it, and I should scorn to ask it in his name.' The man of law looked incredulous, whilst I continued: 'It was not of Geoffrey Moncton, the independent, warm-hearted orphan, I wished to speak, but of one who is a disgrace to his name and family—I mean your son, Theophilus.'

"Really, Sir Alexander, you take a great deal of trouble about matters which do not concern you,' replied Moncton, with a sarcastic sneer; 'my son is greatly indebted to you for such disinterested kindness.' His cool impudence provoked me beyond endurance. I felt a sort of wicked pleasure in retaliation, which God forgive me, was far from a Christian spirit—but I despised the wretch too much at that moment, to pity him.

"Do not give me credit, Mr. Moncton, for a generosity which I do not possess. Your son's unfortunate wife is dying upon my hands, and I wish to transfer so great a responsibility into your own. Pale, trembling, and convulsed with ill concealed passion, he demanded an explanation. It was given, in all its dreadful and revolting details—and then the torrent burst—the man became transformed into the demon—he stamped and raved, and tore his hair, and cursed with the most horrid and blasphemous imprecations, the son, who had followed so closely in his own steps. Oh, Geoffrey, if the wise man has said 'that virtue is its own reward,' with equal truth might he have added, that guilt was its own executioner. Such a scene I never before witnessed—such a spectacle of human depravity, may it never be my lot to behold again. In the midst of his incoherent ravings, he actually threatened, as the consummation of his indignation against his son, to make you his heir. Such is the contradiction inherent in our fallen nature, that he would exalt the man he hates (the most I believe on earth,) to revenge himself upon the one who has given a death blow to the selfish pride which has marked his crooked path through life. I left the man of sin in deep disgust, and after spending a couple of happy days with my old friend Manners, commenced my journey home. At a little village, about forty miles from London, I was overtaken by such a violent storm, that I was determined to stay at the small