

"How much is the young creature indebted to you?" mildly inquired Mr. Raymond.

"Forty-five shillings; but I shall never get it."

Upon this remark he drew out his purse and presented the amount to the woman, asking at the same time if she had any further demands.

"No sir," was the reply, with a wonderful transition of countenance from the "harsh to the mild," and repeated expressions of thanks.

"Will you then allow me to make some further inquiries respecting the young person in question," continued Raymond:

"With pleasure,—will you please to walk into the parlour?" and the woman led the way into a little back dark room, honoured by the appellation of parlour.

"Has the young person been long your inmate?" said Elvira.

"It is about four months since she came here with her mother and hired my first floor—and mighty genteel people I then took them to be,—to be sure I have nothing now to say against them, only that they are very poor; yet I believe they are honest, and have strove very hard for a living,—and as I say, have seen better days, for the young woman has supported herself and her sick mother by selling her own drawings and paintings to the bazaars and fancy shops, and little enough, I dare say, she gets for them now-a-days."

"And is her mother still an invalid?" inquired Elvira. "O no, Miss, it is all over now; the poor creature died last night in the arms of her daughter, who I understand has not a shilling left, having paid her last, to purchase a fowl to make broth for her mother,—but it's now of no use, so my husband is gone to see if he can get the parish to bury the corpse!"

Elvira had listened to the recital with emotion, she could no longer conceal; but leaning on her father's shoulder, gave vent to feelings that did honor to her heart; nor could Raymond suppress the big tears which rolled down his manly cheek; he had been accustomed to sympathise with the afflicted, but he had never felt commiseration so deeply as at this moment!

As Elvira regained her self-possession, she said: "Dear papa, by thus indulging my own feelings, I am, I fear, prolonging the misery of the poor sufferer, who so much needs consolation and assistance; let me lose not a moment in conveying to her an assurance of immediate relief, and afford her the power of performing the last sad duty due to her departed parent."

"Yes, dearest Elvira," said Mr. Raymond, regarding the streaming eyes of his daughter, "Such acts are indeed worthy of you; they add a brilliancy to your character which renders you valuable indeed! Here is my purse, my child; go, do justice to the feelings of your heart!"

"I think," said the amiable girl, "it may be better that I enclose it to her, and say with her permission we will call upon her tomorrow."

Mr. Raymond acceded to the suggestion, and in a few minutes the woman was despatched with an appropriate note and a liberal enclosure to the young person, whose name Elvira now inquired, of a little girl who entered the room.

"I am not quite sure what the lady's name is ma'am," replied the child. "I think it is Wilmot,—her mother used to call her Maria!"

Mr. Raymond and his daughter regarded each other with intense enquiry; at length the latter said: "O, no papa, it cannot be my Maria!" At that instant, they heard an exclamation of "O, God! where is she my Elvira, my guardian angel!" In an instant the door flew open and the two friends were encircled in each other's arms!

We will in silence draw a veil over the heart-rending scene that ensued, added to the astonishment occasioned by so unexpected a meeting under circumstances so distressing.

In the emaciated though beautiful countenance of Maria, Raymond thought he beheld a perfect semblance of her whom he so deeply mourned;—and it was with great effort he could suppress the emotion which the appearance of this young creature occasioned: but as soon as he could recover himself, he said:

"My dear Miss Wilmot, Elvira and I equally rejoice that Providence has directed us to your wretched abode. We will not part again, and I trust our united endeavours will tend to restore you to comfort and happiness."

Though still filled with tears, Maria's eyes spoke the grateful sensibility of an overflowing heart; but her lips were incapable of giving utterance to her feelings.

As Mr. Raymond requested that the carriage which had been waiting might be summoned to the door, Maria entreated that she might be allowed to continue in her present lodgings until the remains of her dear mother were removed for interment. But her friends dissuaded her from the purpose, assuring her, that a proper person should be appointed to remain with the corpse, and that the funeral should be conducted with every possible respect.

To a proposal so replete with kindness and consideration Maria could not object; but, accompanied by her benefactors, she repaired to the mournful chamber, to bid a final adieu to a parent whom she had most tenderly loved, and for the last time she pressed her burning lips on the cold forehead of the lifeless corpse.

Mr. Raymond saw the feelings with which she was contending, and with all decent diligence hurried her from the dreary scene, requesting that she would take only such relics as she might hold sacred! Alas! these were very few—dire necessity had obliged her