

me and the most perfect of God's creatures. He has selected one (doubtless worthy of him) with whom to tread virtue's "ways of pleasantness, and paths of peace," while I, linked in a dull bond with one whom I nor loved nor hated, must pursue the weary round of an existence without aim, or duty or affection. I was but nineteen, and happiness was over—hope, the life of life, was dead; and the future, the imagination's wide domain, nothing but one dim and desolate expanse.

Lord E— made the most ostentatious preparations for our approaching union, which he took care should be publicly known, so that I was congratulated upon it by my acquaintance, & among the rest Trevor himself. But the more I reflected, the more I loathed the thought of marrying Lord E—. He could not be blind to my reluctance; but his avarice and vanity were both interested in the fulfilment of my promise. To a man, who had desired my love, my unwillingness to fulfil the contract would have been a sufficient cause for dissolving it; but Lord E— had wooed my wealth, and I had promised it to him—how then could I retract? Gladly, indeed, would I have given half my fortune in ransom of my rash pledge, but such a barter was impossible, and I saw no means of escaping the toils which my own folly had woven around me.

One day while I was revolving these bitter thoughts, and awaiting the infliction of a visit from Lord E—, a letter, in a strange hand, was delivered to me. It ran thus. —

"My dear Augusta—Did you ever hear of s wild youth, your brother, who was supposed to have been lost at sea, when you were a baby? I am that brother: I fear I dare no longer say, that youth. I have passed through as many adventures as would rig out ten modern novels, but which would be out of place in this little brotherly epistle. At last, however, I was seized with a strange fit of home sickness, and coming to England to recover, I find my pretty little sister a wit, a beauty, and heiress of my heritage. I understand, and you are doubtless also aware, that my father never gave up all hope of my return, & that by his will I am entitled to his property, except a paltry portion of ten thousand pounds for you. But I have seen you, my dear little girl, and like you vastly, so that you may be sure that I shall not limit your portion as my father did. I candidly confess that I doubt whether I may be able legally to prove my title, though my old nurse, who lives with you, and with whom I have had an interview, recognised me easily. I shall visit you how-

ever, and I am sure when you compare me with my father's portrait, you will acknowledge me to be your loving brother,

"HENRY HOWARD."

I was well aware of the clause in my father's will to which the writer alluded; but it had always seemed to me, and to my guardians, a mere dead letter. Some time before I might have grieved at the prospect of losing my wealth; now it filled me with joy, as affording a hope of release from Lord E—. I flew to the nurse, and found her ready to swear to the stranger's identity with the lost Henry Howard. I seized my pen joyfully, and addressed to him a few hasty lines.

"My dear Brother—if you be indeed my brother—you shall only need to prove your title to my own heart. My sense of justice, and not the mandate of the law, shall restore your inheritance to you. As to my portion, I shall accept of nothing but that which is legally mine, until I know whether I shall require it, or whether I can love you well enough to be your debtor."

I had scarcely despatched this billet, when Lord E— was announced. I received him with unwonted gaiety, for I was charmed to be the first from whom he should hear of my altered circumstances. I longed to take his sordid spirit by surprise, and break triumphantly and at once from his abhorred thralldom. He was delighted with my unusual affability, and was more than ever prodigal of his "Adorable Augusta," &c.—more than ever ardent in his vow of unchangeable love. I maliciously drew him on, asking with a soft Lydia-Languish air, whether he could still love me, should any mischance deprive me of my fortune? O what a question? He could imagine no happier lot than to live with me in a cottage upon dry bread, and love, and sighs and roses. I professed my satisfaction and, congratulating him on such a brilliant opportunity of proving his disinterestedness, related what had occurred. To me it was most amusing to witness, first his incredulity, then his blank dismay, and lastly, his languid professions of constancy, ludicrously mingled with stammering complaints of his own embarrassed circumstances, which would prevent his obeying the dictates of affection, by urging his immediate union. A short postponement would now be necessary, &c. &c. At last, raising his looks to mine, he met my mocking and derisive smile, and saw the joy that danced in my eyes. He thereupon thought proper to