

said: "I go hence, Mildred, tomorrow. I would spend my last evening in the home of my childhood alone. God bless you, dear friend; good night."

Mildred felt inexpressibly sad, and she did not sleep that night until her pillow was wet with her tears. The family always met at six o'clock in the chapel for prayers. Mildred had watched the cold grey morning dawn along the coast before sleep weighed down her weary eyes, and wrapped her troubled spirit in repose. Between sleeping and waking, an apparition of Charlotte glided into her chamber, and stooping over her, kissed her brow. A large tear drop fell upon her face. She started up, in the bed and held up her arms to enfold her friend, but the vision had vanished. Unable to sleep, she rose from her bed and dressed herself, and kneeling down by the open window, bowed her head upon her clasped hands, and for the first time in her life, prayed long and fervently. She found such unexpected comfort and peace in this blessed employment, that the chapel bell had twice rung for prayers before she rose from her knees.

On entering the place consecrated to religious duties, she perceived an air of consternation and uneasiness on all present.

"Have you seen Miss Stainer? Do you know anything of Charlotte?" was demanded by several voices.

"No. Good God! is anything the matter?"

"She is missing, her room is empty, her bed untouched. No one has seen her; no one knows anything about her," were the hurried answers she received to her questions.

"Do not be uneasy," said William, with a sneer. "You will find her at B—— Hall, the happy wife of Lewis Chatworth."

"It is possible," said the Colonel, with a sigh.

Wilson, the footman, now came forward. "Please you, Sir," said he, addressing his master, "I was dusting the furniture in the hall this morning at five o'clock, when Miss Stainer came through it. She was wrapped up in her large travelling cloak. I was surprised to see her up so early, but as she often walks in the grove before prayers, I did not speak to her. She took down her garden hat from the peg and went out."

"Does not this confirm my opinion?" said William. "She has run off with her paramour."

Mildred hoped it was so. She ran to Charlotte's room. It was arranged with scrupulous neatness. The bed had not been slept in. The blinds were down, and a candle, by the light of which she had been reading, was still burning. A strange awe stole over the mind of Mildred, as she drew near the table. The Bible lay open before her. Its pages were blotted with tears.

She felt that she was in the presence of the dead, as if a voice spoke to her from the grave, as she leant over the sacred volume, and read the texts which Charlotte had marked with her pencil. They were in Job, the two last verses of the seventh chapter.* "I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men? Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am a burden to myself. And why dost thou not pardon my transgression and take away mine iniquity? for now shall I sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning and I shall not be."

"She is dead," exclaimed Mildred, snatching up the book and rejoining the group in the chapel.

Her alarmed looks, the trembling hand with which she pointed to the open volume, paled every cheek. Mr. Strong took the Bible from her convulsive grasp, and read aloud the fatal words. They were echoed by a deep hollow groan. The Colonel had sunk down in a fit; for in the pathetic lamentation of the inspired writer, he heard the death knell of his child.

While Mrs. Stainer hurried to render assistance to the inexorable father, repentant too late, the servants fled in different directions in search of their young mistress. Hardly knowing what she did or whither she went, Mildred took a wild tangled path that led from the shrubbery through a grove of hazel and alder trees. A shallow cut from the river, crossed by a pretty rural bridge, divided this grove from a lowland meadow, and to this spot she directed her steps; and there, in that shallow water, she discovered the object of their search. So resolutely determined upon destruction had this poor victim of fanaticism been, that she had drawn the hood of her cloak over her face, and laid herself down in the pool that had depth barely sufficient to ensure self destruction. Mildred's scream of agony brought Wilson to her side.

"Oh! my poor young lady! Oh! God have mercy upon my poor young lady!" exclaimed the man, bursting into tears. It was the man whose solemn aspect had always drawn upon him the ridicule of the thoughtless Mildred; who, in this instance, perceived that he did indeed possess a feeling heart.

He sprang into the water and lifted up the poor girl in his arms. The large hood fell back from the pale fair face, and all her dark glittering tresses flowed loosely over his breast. Mil-

* This melancholy part of my tale is no fiction. The circumstances recorded here are well known to all in that neighbourhood. The family are all gone, and the lodge has passed into other hands.