

(ORIGINAL.)

## THE CONDEMNED.

BY E. M. M.

WINTER, what a dreary scene dost thou present: as the eye wanders over thy bleak waste, and looks in vain for the shrubs, the plants, the flowers, that so lately charmed our sight, the thought occurs how sad it would be if no divine hand were visible in the decay, if all were directed by chance, and we knew not whether another season would restore that which we now mourn as gone; but praise be to God, where He breaks He can again bind, where He lays low, He can again raise; the storm may rage, the winds may howl, but He who holds them in the hollow of His hand can say, "Peace, be still," and they obey him. Yes, another summer will recal the beauties which now lie hid beneath the white mantle of winter—again will the birds, the flowers, the trees gladden our view—again will the lakes and rivers flow on smooth and untroubled in their course—and the song of birds be heard amid the woods. But, alas, will it bring back the days that are gone, either of pleasure or of pain—the evil which in our blind haste we may have committed, or the time to repair that which we have omitted to do. My heart, answer *thou* the solemn question!

Such were the thoughts of Madame St. Claire, as she sat watching at the window of her neat though humble apartment, for the return of her beloved, her only son, Eugene. The evening was fast closing in, and as the hours stole by and still he came not, her anxiety could no longer be repressed; "what can detain your brother so long tonight Madeline?" she said, turning to her daughter; who stood near her, "he used not to be so tardy in returning home."

"Indeed, I know not, dearest mamma," replied Madeline, endeavouring to pierce through the gloom without; which was every moment increasing; "he has been late frequently during the past week; he tells me that he has more to do now."

"I hope that is really the case," returned Madame St. Claire; "may God preserve him from evil companions; there are many abroad, I fear," and again she leant her arm on the window, and strained her eyes in search of the object of her solicitude.

Madame St. Claire was a widow lady, residing at Beauharnois, in Lower Canada. She was of English parentage; but had been united to a French gentleman, with whom she lived a few years in happiness and independence—he had held an excellent situation

under government, and had always been considered a loyal subject, and a good man. In religion they unhappily differed, he being a Catholic—and Madame St. Claire a follower of the pure and blessed Protestant faith, which produced the erroneous agreement, that their sons should be educated in the religion of their father—their daughters in that of their mother, thus drawing a line of demarcation between them in their holiest, highest feelings—during this period of her life, her days fled past in harmony and peace; not a stone appeared to obstruct her onward path, not a wave ruffled the stream down which her bark was gliding; but alas, such unchanging prosperity cannot be permitted, for wise purposes, to continue too long, else should we cease to remember the source from whence they came, while our hearts would cling too fondly to this earth—God chastens us to teach us that here is not our abiding place, that we must look up to Him for those promised joys which eye hath not seen, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.

Madame St. Claire was taught this severe, yet salutary lesson in the death of her kind and excellent husband, a loss which so entirely absorbed her grief, that she felt not the reverse of fortune consequent upon it, until its first stunning effects were softened, when she gazed, in agony, on the two helpless orphans now committed to her sole care. How fervently did she then humble herself in prayer before God, and own with a contrite heart, that, surrounded as she had been by every blessing, she had begun to view them with indifference, and to suffer her whole time and thoughts to be occupied in the gaities and frivolities which were passing around her; she implored for mercy, for help, and for pardon; nor did she plead in vain—the flower bruised, but not broken, again lifted up its head, while the dark cloud that had hung like a pall over it, slowly passed away and permitted the sun to shine forth; in the blessings and supports of religion, through divine grace, Madame St. Claire found rest and comfort, for every trial—she retired to the small house she now occupied, and devoted her whole time to the education of her children, who, at the period our story opens, had attained the ages of nineteen and fifteen years. Both were gifted by nature in no common degree; but perhaps the heart of the widow clung more en-