

cup of human woe. When my uncle was absent, or abstracted in business, I could sit by her side, and pour into her attentive and maternal ear, the beautiful and shadowy reminiscences of my early days; I could describe to her the garden in which I played, and the scenes which I visited, in company with my departed parents. I could dwell with delight on my mother's tenderness, when at night she kissed me and put me to bed—the earnest manner in which she used to direct my thoughts and prayers to God, and endeavour to impress upon my soul the importance of divine truth. “Ah!” I exclaimed one evening, whilst sitting at my aunt's feet, “why did my dear mamma die? other little boys have mothers, why was mine taken from me—why did her rosy cheeks turn pale, and her hand stiffen and become cold?—ah, so cold! I could not bear to touch them. I kissed her lips that used to be so red, but they did not kiss me again. I never kissed mamma without her giving me two kisses for one, but her eyes were closed, she did not even look at Geoffrey. But they told me the dead could neither hear, nor see, nor speak, and my nurse said, mamma was in heaven. But is heaven the dark, narrow pit, into which I saw those ugly men put my mamma? why did she go away, and leave me alone in the world, with nobody to play with me, or love me, to nurse me when I am sick, or to comfort me when I am tired? Dear aunt, I wish you would be mamma.”

Mrs. Moncton's plain, but benevolent countenance, was bathed in tears; she pressed me in her arms, and told me that I should never want a mother whilst she was living—and well, and conscientiously, did she fulfil her promise. She has long been dead; but time has not effaced from my mind, a grateful remembrance of her kindness. Since I arrived at man's estate, I have knelt beside her grave, and moistened the turf which enfolded her warm kind heart with my tears.

She had one son, a boy of my own age, an ill favoured, cross, unmanageable child, who in addition to the cold selfish propensities of the father, was jealous, proud, and satirical, ready on all occasions to give and take offence at any word, look, or sign, which he fancied derogated from his consequence. Theophilus Moncton considered that my dependent situation gave him a lawful right to demand my services, and had I been a bondman in the house of his father, he could not have treated me more like a slave.

I will pass over my childhood—I have heard it reckoned a happy season, but to me it had no joys; it was a gloomy period of mental suffering, and bodily fatigue, of unnatural restraint, and painful probation. The cold, arbitrary, authoritative manner of Mr. Moncton, and the insolence, and presumption of his son, goaded a free and irascible spirit like mine almost to madness, and my desperate struggles to emancipate myself tightened the

chain, and forced the iron into my soul. My complaints were unheeded, my indignation was laughed at, and I was daily and hourly reminded of the domestic calamities which had made me dependent upon the cold, extorted charity, of a cruel master. I was reproached with my want of gratitude, in not being thankful to those who endeavoured to make me a slave, till the obligations thus forced upon me became insupportable, and my heart withered beneath the pressure of the accumulating debt which deprived my nights of rest, and my days of hope. When the morning came, and I took my station at the accursed desk, I wished the day gone; and when night released me from my abhorrent task, I felt grateful that I was a few hours nearer to a change in my situation, and I fondly imagined that any change must be for the better.

CHAPTER II.

RESIDING in the centre of the metropolis, and at an age when the heart sighs for a social communion with its fellow men, and imagines, with the confiding sincerity of youth, a friend in every agreeable companion, I was immured among old parchments, and dusty records, morning, noon, and night, and never permitted to mingle with the guests that frequented my uncle's house, without my services were required in a professional manner. No one suspected the shabbily dressed, silent youth, who obeyed Mr. Moncton's imperious mandates, of being his nephew, the only son of his elder brother. I was treated with indifference by his male visitors, and scarcely noticed by the ladies.

Once I remember hearing a Miss Beaumont whisper to her sister, “Is that handsome, intelligent looking young man, Mr. Moncton's clerk? I wonder who and what he is!”

“A person of no consequence,” was the reply; “you may be certain of that, by his unfashionable appearance.”

“He looks like a gentleman?”

“Yes, he owes that to his peculiar line of features, and fine form, not to his manners or carriage, which are decidedly awkward and bad.”

In spite of these mortifying rejoinders, the words of the first speaker tingled in my ears for months. Miss Beaumont was a plain girl; but her good opinion of me blinded my eyes to her personal defects, and I not only thought her as beautiful as an angel, but several times found myself scribbling her name all over my desk, and covering every scrap of waste paper with indifferent rhymes in her praise. This confession may call up a smile on the lip of my reader, and I am content that he should accuse me of vanity; but this was the first word of commendation that had ever reached my ears, and though I have since laughed heartily at the deep impression