

of grateful affection, and cordially accepting the one I offered him, took his leave.

Before retiring to my own room at night, I was sometimes induced by Belinda, to spend half an hour in hers; when she would talk over past happy days, and tell me stories connected with her grandmother or her uncle Harrington. We were sitting this night, as usual, by her fire side, where she had placed me in the old arm chair, when, in alluding to our pleasant walk, I said:

"Have I not discovered a little secret, dear Belinda?" She looked surprised.

"Indeed, I know not," she replied; "if you have, do tell it me."

"Can a companion and friend like Mr. Lindsay be so well known without creating a warm interest," I enquired smiling.

"He is one for whom I feel the highest respect, and esteem," she answered; "I have a right to value him, since I owe him more than I can ever repay."

"But is regard and esteem all you can afford to give him; I much question his being satisfied with such expressions, gratifying though they may be."

Belinda became agitated as I spoke; her cheek crimsoned, and then turned pale alternately, when suddenly bursting into a flood of tears, she threw herself on my bosom.

"My dear girl," I exclaimed, much distressed; "if I have pained you, believe me it was unintentional."

"I know it was, dear Mrs. Mary," she replied sobbing; "but, oh, you have indeed touched a tender chord; poor Lindsay, I have often tried to believe that he only felt for me as a brother, and yet a few words occasionally have shaken that belief. Worlds would I give were it in my power to return his affection as it deserves, and to be a parent to that dear little motherless girl; but it is impossible; it would be sinful."

I confess I gazed on her with astonishment—it seemed to me so inexplicable, that a being so superior, so gifted, as Mr. Lindsay, could not be loved.

"I see your surprise," continued Belinda; "nor can I wonder at it, but a few words will remove it; my affections are not now in my own power; they are given to another."

"Ah, that, indeed explains but too well, dear Belinda," I replied; "yet why this agitation, these tears; with your sentiments, I am convinced you could not bestow them on an unworthy object."

"Unworthy, certainly may not be applied to one of the most noble minded beings; yet, wanting as he is in the religion which constitutes my happiness, he can never be any thing more to me than he is at present. I do not mean to say that he is without religion," she continued on seeing me start; "but then it is only that of the nominal Christian; its

forms without its deep and fervent practice; therefore it has no life, no endurance."

"Dear Belinda, how you have excited my sympathy," I returned; "and how happy I should feel if you deemed me worthy of your confidence; since my arrival I have observed a depression in your spirits which I could scarcely attribute to the loss of your aged relative, since you must have been duly prepared for that event by her age—I fancied there must be another cause superadded, and, alas, my fears are but too correct. I have numbered more than double your years, I continued pressing her in my arms, yet can I enter into every feeling of your heart; aye, and tenderly too, fear me not, therefore, my dear child, my experience may help you, and my sympathy at least prove a solace. Will you trust me?"

"I have often wished to open my heart to you," replied Belinda, whose sweet face rested on my shoulder; "I have none here who could understand me, and if you will have the patience to listen, I will narrate all that preys on my mind, my spirit, and my health."

Gently did I soothe and encourage her, and after a pause, during which she seemed collecting her thoughts, she gave me the following brief history which I shall repeat in my own words:

From the period that Belinda went to reside with old Mrs. Harrington, she saw little of her own parents, beyond an annual visit, which they paid at St. Margerets, consequently her affections were much estranged from them, and placed on her grandmother, who was devotedly attached to her. Her mode of life was very retired, as the old lady cared not for society, but she enjoyed many innocent and healthful recreations, particularly when either of her uncles were at home, and great pains were taken that her education should be such as would strengthen her mind and lead her to place her chief happiness on things above. She gleaned much advantage from the cultivated society of her youngest uncle, Colonel Harrington, and became his constant companion, whenever he returned to St. Margerets. He was perfectly idolized by his mother, whose parental pride was gratified by the high estimation in which he was held by all his military friends, and her first heavy trial was this dear son's being ordered with his regiment to India. Their parting was a sad one, for she felt that her hopes of ever meeting him again on earth were slight. Five years after his departure the news of his death reached her, and the health of the old lady never recovered the shock. At this trying period, Belinda was a great treasure to her, and from the religious consolations of Mr. Lindsay, who had recently been appointed curate in the neighbourhood, she derived strength and resignation. He visited her daily, and his gentle sympathy soothed, and by degrees restored tranquillity. He spoke not as one who had felt no sorrow, for, except the little Gertrude, none near and dear were left to him; con-