

the surrounding fields ; while all, from day to day, was becoming darker and darker within the Manse of Cross-Meikle. Worn to a shadow—pale as ashes—feeble as a child—the dying mother had, for many weeks, been unable to quit her chamber ; and the long-hoping husband at last felt his spirit faint within him ; for even he perceived that the hour of separation could not much farther be deferred—he prayed by her bed-side—he strove even yet to smile and to speak of hope, but his lips trembled as he spake ; and neither he nor his wife were deceived, for their thoughts were the same, and years of love had taught them too well all the secrets of each other's looks as well as hearts.

Nobody witnessed their last parting. The room was darkened, and no one was within it but themselves and their child, who sat by the bed-side, weeping in silence she knew not wherefore—for of death she knew little, except the terrible name ; and her father had as yet been, if not brave enough to shed no tears, at least strong enough to conceal them.—Silently and gently was the pure spirit released from its clay ; but manly groans were, for the first time, heard above the sobs and wailings of the infant ; and the listening household shrunk back from the door, for they knew that the blow had been stricken ; and the voice of humble sympathy feared to make itself be heard in the sanctuary of such affliction. The village doctor arrived just at that moment ; he listened for a few seconds, and, being satisfied that all was over, he also turned away. His horse had been fastened to the hook by the Manse door ; he drew out the bridle, and led the animal softly over the turf, but did not mount again until he had far passed the outskirts of the green.

Perhaps an hour might have elapsed before Mr Blair opened the window of the room in which his wife had died. His footstep had been heard for some time hurriedly traversing and retraversing the floor ; but at last he stopped where the nearly fastened shutters of the window admitted but one broken line of light into the