

MILDRED ROSIER.*

A TALE OF THE RUINED CITY.

BY MRS. MOODIE.

CHAPTER IV.

Ou! for a soul magnanimous to know
 Poor world, thy littleness, and let thee go—
 Not with a gloomy, proud, ascetic mind,
 That loves thee still—and only hates mankind.

JANE TAYLOR.

B—LONGE, the residence of Colonel Stainer and his family, was a large modern house, which stood alone upon a little eminence that commanded the desolate prospect of Westleton heath; and in fact was the only habitation upon which the eye of the traveller could rest for many weary miles, whilst journeying along that lonely and unfrequented road. Far in the distance, the wide extent of marsh and heathy moorland was bounded by the ocean. A screen of dark hearse-like pines separated the lodge from the London road, and the few groves of beech and oak, which had been planted to protect it from the stormy assaults of the north-east winds, were yet in their infancy. The prospect was bleak and comfortless in the extreme; and, during the gloomy seasons of the year, was enough to fill the hearts of the owners of this wealthy but cheerless domain with desponding, melancholy thoughts.

It had often been asked why a man of Colonel Stainer's wealth and standing in the country, had built an expensive and handsome dwelling in such a desolate spot? The man was a heavy phlegmatic personage, with no perception of the beautiful, or taste for the picturesque. He looked upon the world as a very wicked place; and fearful lest he should be again lured into society, he thought the best way to avoid temptation was to shut out every object which might charm the senses, or create the least interest in his heart, for the earthly happiness or prosperity of his fellow men. He had not always been so indifferent a spectator of human actions; but had in early and to middle life strove hard to gratify all the animal propensities of his nature. His wealth had been prodigally lavished in catering to his passions. He had been a deep drinker, a luxurious feeder, and an unprincipled libertine. Two young

and beautiful wives had lived with him long enough to descend to the grave broken-hearted. The first, a young, proud girl, of fine talents and high family, left him, at the early age of twenty-two, to take care of her three orphan infant sons. One of these, the youngest and the best-beloved of his mother, soon followed her to the tomb. His brothers survived. One was a captain in the army, and had lately been ordered to accompany his regiment to Spain; while William, the younger, a lad of fine person and excellent accomplishments, was pursuing his studies as a barrister in London. Charlotte, the only child of the next Mrs. Stainer, a gentle, dove-like creature, who loved her selfish, stern lord, in spite of his cold, repulsive disposition, and for sixteen years was an exemplary mother and friend to his orphan sons. While Maria Stainer retained the first bloom of youth, the colonel treated her with as much tenderness as it was possible for him to feel for any woman, however nearly connected by the most sacred ties; but when those charms began to wane, and she became a neglected cipher in her own house, it was more than her gentle spirit could endure. She breathed no sigh, uttered no complaint, but yielded silently to her fate, and the cold-hearted colonel again found himself at liberty to choose another mate.

So deeply did both of her step-sons lament the loss of their sweet mother, that they left home in disgust, and had never visited it since her funeral.

Charlotte had just completed her fifteenth year at the period of her mother's death, and receiving little notice or affection from her father, her warm and affectionate heart sustained a shock, from which it had never been able to recover. For some months after this melancholy event she appeared to live entirely in the past. Her departed friend and parent was never absent from her mind. She loved to sit for hours in the chair in which her mother died; to read from the same books, and to repeat over to herself her parting words, recalling every look and action, and dwelling with tearful earnestness upon every expres-

* Continued from page 119.