

"Ah! poor Jane!"

"No one followed me into the house—all kept aloof—I stood alone in the room. A figure wrapped in a winding sheet, and stretched upon a rude bier, was before me. A dark presentiment led me on. With desperate energy I advanced and attempted to raise the sheet that covered the face of the dead—but my hand refused its office—my heart with terrible fidelity portrayed, but too vividly, the features that lurked beneath. Without seeing, I knew, by that mysterious warning in my soul, that I stood beside the body of Armynd Redgrave. Yes! it was even so. With a strong effort I withdrew the cloth, and gazed upon the corrupted mass that lay beneath. Recollection and sanity returned—I felt that I was a widow—and the certainty brought tears—tears, which had never moistened my eyes since the horrible moment when we parted—tears, which are the offspring of reason, and purify the source from whence they flow.

"The body had lain in the water many months, and was in a dreadful state of decomposition. The dress alone identified the person to whom it once belonged; but though every trace of beauty was gone, and death triumphed in his most ghastly and appalling form, had there been no other evidence of the fact but the voice in my own heart, I should have recognized my husband.

"My soul was softened and subdued whilst surveying that melancholy spectacle, and tracing the fearful progress of decay; and words like those arose in my mind, though they found no utterance from my lips.

"Must I, too, come to this? Must I shortly lie down in the dark and noisome grave, and say to the worm, Thou art my sister, and to Corruption thou art my brother? Husband and child! ye are both gone; the curse of mortality is already passed upon you, and the hungry earth opens her mouth to receive her dead!"

"The fiery passions that had scathed my frame—the tearless agony, that, like the shock of an earthquake, had poured the lava flames of desolation over my bursting heart, and levelled my boasted reason with the dust—were hushed into silence. The punishment of my crime was upon me, and I felt that it was just, and was enabled, in that awful hour of visitation, to exclaim:

"Oh, God! Thy will be done."

"I followed the remains of my unfortunate husband to the grave. I knelt beside the spot which contained his mouldering ashes, and my spirit rose to heaven in deep and silent prayer. While my head was still bowed to the dust—while the tears still blinded my eyes—a voice

came through the solemn stillness around me—a voice, unheard by human ears, but audible in the depths of my own soul,—it spoke of pardon and reconciliation with God; of sins blotted out by a Saviour's blood; of regeneration through the influence of the Holy Spirit; of future happiness and eternal life. Oh! blessed hour—oh! holy and sanctifying sorrow! Had I never been tried in the fierce furnace of affliction, I never should have felt that sacred peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

"When I arose from that grave all things wore for me a different aspect. The sky above, the earth beneath, the deep stream and the shady forest, yea! all the idols in which my heart once delighted, bore the impress of mortality, and reminded me of my own inevitable fate. I saw death stamped upon the perishing leaf—I heard the requiem of Time in every moaning blast; and the voice of Ocean, with its thousand waves, made the same mournful response—'We, too, must die!' the stupendous frame of Nature must decay; and wilt thou cleave to perishing things, and fix thy affections upon objects, that, at the longest date, can only survive thee for a few years? I turned my thoughts to a better world, and more perfect state of existence; and the fierce strivings of agony were suspended, and my soul found rest."

Jane Redgrave paused, and looked up with eyes swimming in tears; but a smile rested upon her lips—a smile of heavenly sweetness and resignation, and Rose gazed upon that meek, pale face, with feelings amounting to devotional tenderness, as her aunt, with a low sigh, continued:

"Much of my heavy tale is still untold. The most distressing portion of my narrative is yet to come. I did not explain to you the manner in which my husband's body was found. Some men cutting down timber in the wood had discovered something at the bottom of a large pond; having succeeded in dragging the object to land, the poacher, who was one of the party, instantly recognized the dress and figure of Armynd Redgrave. The news soon spread through the village that the body of Jane Woodley's husband had been found in the pond in the wood; and the crowd I have described, was soon gathered to the spot.

"Some thought that he had destroyed himself; others that he had been murdered; but for my own part, I felt convinced that his death was purely accidental; that when he went into the wood, on pretence of calling up the chaise; (for my brother ascertained that no chaise was hired by him at the town,) but doubtless to fetch some implement which he had secreted there in order to murder me, he lost his way in the dark, and