

that the sexton had properly kept them up, he took the path that led through the church lane.

"So my poor uncle Caleb is gone at last," he said, wiping his eyes with the corner of his black-silk cravat, as if ashamed of the unusual mist that dimmed his sight. But none of his gay mess-mates were near to laugh at his weakness, and the tribute to nature was freely paid.

"Amy has had a hard trial, it seems, but the task is ended, perhaps," and he glanced with secret satisfaction on the smart uniform, which set off to great advantage his manly figure. "The return of her old play-mate may dry her tears." He was now opposite the church, a low picturesque edifice, embosomed in fine old elm trees; its elevated burial ground divided from the lane by a high and neatly trimmed hawthorn hedge. It was a spirit-stirring evening and the blackbird was trilling his merry lay from a bower of May-blossoms, and green banks, on either side of the narrow road, were gemmed with flowers. Arnold felt his heart expand with many long forgotten emotions, as he ascended the rugged flight of wooden steps, which led to the church yard. He thought how many strange changes had taken place since he was last there. How many lands he had visited, and how many dangers he had dared, since he and his pretty cousin used to seek that spot, hand in hand, to look for the first violets. "Nature," he thought, "does not change like man. The church-yard wears the same aspect which it wore ten years ago. The primroses appear the same, and the blackbird speaks the welcome of an old friend. And shall I cast anchor here at last?" he continued, unconsciously aloud; "would it not be sweeter to sleep under this emerald sward, than to be tossed constantly to and fro by the turbulent waters of the ocean?"

His voice startled Amy. She looked up from her task, and the level beams of the setting sun glanced full upon her pale fair face. Prepared for this change in her personal charms, Arnold instantly recognised in the stranger, Amy Morris. The discovery was mutual. Amy flung her arms about his neck, and wept upon his bosom, returning, with sisterly affection, the fond kisses he imprinted on her cheek. Seating himself beside her on the turf, he listened with untired interest, while she recounted the events which had taken place during his absence.

When she had closed the sad tale of domestic misfortunes, Arnold urged his suit with all the earnestness of a genuine and long cherished passion. His declaration carried a pang to Amy's heart, and her answer, though it did not entirely annihilate hopes which had been so fondly nursed, threw a deep shade of gloom over the joyful feelings of return. The first wish of his heart, to find Amy unmarried, had been realised; but, during their conversation, she had alluded to a prior engage-

ment, and Arnold was lost in a thousand painful doubts and conjectures.

"Cousin Amy," he said, "I have loved you from a boy. I have worked hard, and ploughed the salt seas, in the hope of making you rich, and my poor uncle comfortable in his old age. I have so long considered you as my future wife, that it would break my heart to see you married to another."

"You will be spared that trial, Arnold; your rival is in heaven."

Something like a smile passed over Arnold's face. He was not sorry to find that his rival was dead, and that Amy was free from any living tie. Hope revived again in his breast, and brightened the expression of his dark and spirited eyes. "If you cannot love me, Amy, as you loved him, grant me your esteem and sympathy, and in the possession of these I will be happy. But is your heart so wholly buried in your lover's grave that it cannot receive a second attachment?"

"Arnold, I suffered too much for his sake, to transfer my affections lightly to another. The heart is incapable of feeling a second passion. The woman who has truly loved can never—no never—love again."

There was a very long pause; at length it was broken by Amy.

"Mine is a sad tale, cousin Arnold," she said, "but I need not blush to tell it, and I will tell it, for it will be a satisfaction to us both."

She passed her hand thoughtfully across her brow, looked sadly up in her cousin's face, and then commenced her simple narrative in a livelier tone.

"Four years after you went to sea, Arnold, my father was attacked with the typhus fever. I nursed him with the greatest care, and it pleased God to listen to my prayer, and prolong his life. The fever abated, and his senses returned; but he never more beheld the face of his child. I shall never forget that melancholy day, or the painful emotions which it occasioned. I had watched beside him during the night—the long night, whose solitary hours were alone marked by my own gloomy forebodings, and the delirious ravings of the poor sufferer. At length the day dawned. The sun rose brightly, and the birds were singing sweetly, in the little copse at the edge of the common. Nature rejoiced beneath the effulgence of her Maker's smile, and her wild tribes united their feeble voices in a universal burst of thanksgiving and praise. My father had fallen into a heavy stupor. I could scarcely call it sleep, but it was cessation from suffering; and when he recovered the fever was greatly abated, his mind was more tranquil, and for the first time for many days, he recognised my voice.

"'Amy,' he said, 'do the birds sing at midnight? Draw back the curtains—it is very dark.'

"I instantly complied with his request, and the