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LUME 25. ERIE, SATURDAY, JULY 22, 1854. NUMBER 10.

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Select Poetry.

THE HOPE OF THE HEART.

BY LORD BYRON.

"No nobler theme ever engaged the pen of the poet. It is the soul-elevated idea, that no man can consider himself entitled to complain of fate, while in his adversity he still retains the unwavering love of woman."—*Edgar A. Poe.*

Though the day of my destiny's over,
And the star of my fate hath declined,
Thy soft heart refused to discover
The faults which so many could find;
Though thy soul with my grief was acquainted,
It shrunk not to share it with me;
And the love which my spirit had painted,
It never had found but in thee.

Then, when nature around me is smiling,
The last smile which answers to mine,
I do not believe it beguiling,
Because it reminds me of thine;
And when winds are at war with the ocean,
As the breasts I believed in with me,
If the billows excite an emotion,
It is that they bear me from thee.

Though the rock of my last hope is shivered,
And its fragments are sunk in the wave,
Though I feel that my soul is delivered
To pain—it shall not be a slave:
There is many a pang to pursue me,
They may crush, but they shall not condemn,
They may torture, but shall not subdue me—
'Tis of thee that I think, not of them.

Though human, thou didst not deceive me,
Though woman, thou didst not forsake,
Though loved, thou didst not forsake,
Though slandered, thou never couldst shake,
Though trusted, thou didst not disclaim me,
Though parted, it was not to fly,
Though watchful, it was not to defame me,
Nor minute that the world might belie

Yet I blame not the world, nor despise it
Nor the war of the many with one—
If my soul was not fitted to prize it
'Twas folly not sooner to shun,
And if dearly that error hath cost me,
And more than I once could foresee,
I have found that whatever it cost me
It could not deprive me of thee.

From the wreck of the past which hath perished,
Thus much I at least may recall,
It hath taught me that which I most cherished,
Deserved to be most of all
In the desert a fount is springing,
In the wide waste there still is a tree,
And a bird in the forest is singing
Which speaks to my spirit of thee.

Choice Miscellany.

NOAH COTTON.

BY MRS. MOODIE,

Author of "Life in the Clearings," "Roughing it in the Bush," &c.

THE GHOST.

A short time after this conversation took place by the sick bed of Dorothy Grimshawe, a report got abroad that the road between the town of ——— and C——— churchyard was haunted by the ghost of old Mason, the apparition of that worthy having been seen and spoken to by several of his old friends and associates, who had frequented the "Brig's Foot" during his occupation of it, and to whom his person was well known. The progress of the stage coach had been several times stopped by the said ghost, the horses frightened, the vehicle overturned, and several of the passengers seriously injured. Those who retained their senses boldly affirmed that they had seen the spectre—that it was old Mason, and no mistake—a man so remarkable for his big looks in life that even in death they could not be forgotten. These tales, whether true or false, were generally believed among the lower classes, and were the means of bringing a great influx of guests to the "Brig's Foot." All the idlers in the town flocked hither after the night had closed in, to ask questions, and repeat what they had heard during the day about the ghost.

Martha Mason looked sourly on her new customers, and answered all their questions regarding her departed husband with an abrupt, "What concern is it of yours what the man was like?—He is dead. I know nothing about him now;—nor do I want to know. I don't believe one word of your foolish lies."

One circumstance struck Mary very singular: young Mason was always absent of an evening, and seldom returned before day-break, particularly on those nights when the coach from N——— was expected to pass that road, which was only twice during the week. This was the more remarkable, as he had always been the foremost in the scenes of riot and misrule that were constantly enacted beneath that roof. When he did make his appearance, he was usually sober, and repeated all the pranks performed by the ghost as an excellent joke, mimicking his looks and actions amid loud bursts of indecent laughter, to the no small horror of his superstitious guests.

"What do the ghost look like, Bob?" asked Joshua Spilman, an honest laborer, who had stepped in to drink his pint of ale and hear the news; and having tarried later than his wont, was afraid to return home. "I never seed a ghost in all my born days."

"Why, man, ghosts like owls, only come abroad of a night, and you have little chance of having your curiosity gratified during the day.—But if you are very anxious to see one, and are not afraid of leaving the chimney corner, and stepping out into the dark, just go with me to the mouth of the Gipsy lane, and look for yourself. It was there the old 'un appeared last night, and there most likely he'll be to night again."

"The Lord ha' mercy upon us. Do you think Bob, I'd put myself in the way of the ghost? I would not go there by myself for all the world."

"It would not hurt you."

"Not hurt I? Sure it broke the leg of Dick Simmons, when it skeared the horses, and overturned the coach last Monday night. I'd rather keep myself in a whole skin. But when you seed it, Bob, won't you mortal feared?"

"Not I."

"An did you speak to 'un?"

"Ah, to be sure. Do you think I'd run away from my own dad? 'Old boy,' says I, 'is that you? How are you getting on below?' He shakes his head, and glowers at me, 'an his one eye looked like a burning coal."

"You'll know one day says he.

"That's pleasant news,' says I. 'You'll be sure to give me a warm welcome at any rate.—There's nothing like having a friend at headquarters.' When he saw that I was not afraid of him, he gave a loud screech and vanished, leaving behind him a most infernal stench of brimstone, which I smelt all the way from the cross-road as far as the bridge. He had got his answer, and I saw no more of him for that night."

Josh thrust his chair back to the wall, and drawing a long breath, gazed upon the reprobate with a strange mixture of awe and terror in his bewildered countenance.

"Why, man, an' my feather had said sic like words to me, I should have gone stark, staring mad with fear and shame."

"The shame would all be on his side then," quoth the incorrigible Bob. "I did not make him the bad man he was, though he made me. He was always an ugly fellow, and the scorching he has got down there (and he pointed significantly to the ground) has not improved his looks. But mother would know him in a minute."

"I never want to see your father again, Robert," said Martha, doggedly; "so you need not address any such impertinent remarks to me. I had enough of his company here. I don't know why he should leave his grave to haunt me after his death."

"For the love he bore you while on earth," said the dutiful son, glancing round the group with a knowing look. "Dad is sure of a kind reception from you, mother."

"The day he was buried," said Martha, "was the only happy one I had known for twenty years, and you know it well. One of his last acts was to make me a cripple for life."

"How did he come by his death, mother Mason?" asked a young sailor, Tom Weston by name.

"He was killed in a row with the smugglers," said Bob. "He had helped them to land some brandy, and they wanted to cheat him out of his pay. Father had lots of pluck. He had lost an eye once before in such a frolic. He attacked the whold band single handed and got knocked on the head in the scuffle. The smugglers ran away, and left mother to bury the dead."

"He only got what he deserved," muttered Martha. "It is a pity he did not get it twenty years before. But he has gone to his place, and I am determined to keep mine. A ghost has no legal claim to the property of the living, and he shall never get possession of this house, living or dead, again."

"But suppose, Martha, he should take it into his head to haunt it, and make it too hot to hold you," said Tom Weston, "what would you do then?"

"I think I know a secret or two that would lay the ghost," returned Martha; and hobbling across the kitchen on her crutch, she lifted down and old horse-pistol that was suspended to one of the low cross-beams, and wiping the dust from it with her apron, she carefully examined the lock.

"This should speak my welcome to all such unwelcome intruders. It has released more than one troublesome spirit from its clay tenement, and I have no doubt that it would be found equally efficacious in quieting others—that is if they have the audacity to try their strength against me;" and she glanced disdainfully at her son from beneath her bushy, lowering brows. "This brown dog is old, but he can still bark and bite?"

"How vicious mother looks!" said Bob, with a loud laugh. "It would require a ghost with some pluck to face her."

"What time did the spectre appear last night?" said Tom Weston, who saw that mischief was brewing, and was anxious to turn the subject into another channel. "I should like amazingly to see it."

"That's all bosh!" said Bob. "You would soon cut and run. But if you are in earnest, come with me to the cross-road, and I promise to introduce you to the old gentleman. The clock has just struck eleven; he will be taking his rounds by the time we get there."

The young man drew back. "Not in your company, Mason. It would be enough to raise the devil."

"Well, please yourself. I knew you would funk out. I shall go, however. I want to have a few minutes' conversation with the ghost before he appears in public. Perhaps he will show me where to find a hidden treasure. Good-bye, mother; shall I give your compliments to the gentleman? Love, I know, is out of the question. You had none to spare for him when he was alive."

"Away with you for a blasphemous reprobate that you are!" cried the angry old woman, shaking her crutch at him.

"Mammy's own darling son!" cried the disgusting wretch, as, with a loud oath, he sprang through the open door and vanished into the dark night.

The men looked significantly at each other, and a little tailor rose cautiously and shut the door.

"Why do you do that?" said Tom Weston.

"To keep out bad company."

"It is stifling hot!" cried Tom, kicking it open with his foot. "I shall die without a whiff of fresh air."

"But the ghost?" and the little tailor shook his head mysteriously.

"Does not belong to any of us," rejoined Tom. "My relations are all sound sleepers; good, honest people, who are sure to rest in their graves. There is a storm brewing," he continued, walking to the open door; "that thunder-cloud will burst over our heads in a few minutes, and Master Bob will get a good drenching."

"Its awsome to hear him talk as he do of his feather's spirit," said honest Josh. "It makes my flesh creep upon my bones."

"Provided there's any truth in his statements," said a carpenter, who had been smoking his pipe by the table, and silently listening to the conversation—"which I much doubt. For my own part I would be more afraid of meeting Robert Mason alone in that dark lane, than any visitant from another world. I don't believe in ghosts. I never saw one, and I never met with any person, on whose word you could attach much credit, that could satisfactorily prove to you that he had: when you pushed him hard, it always came out that he was not the person who had seen it; but some one else who had related the tale to him, and he had every reason to believe it true. The farther you searched into the matter, the more indistinct and improbable the story became."

"Ay, Bill Corbett; but you heard Bob declare that he has both seen and spoken to it, and the lad must know his own father."

"I don't take for gospel what I hear Bob say; I don't believe one word of the story—no, not if he was to swear to the truth of it upon the Bible," said the carpenter, waxing warm. Before Tom Weston could reply, a loud peal of thunder burst suddenly over their heads, and the room was so vividly lighted up by the electric flash that preceded it, that Mary, who was intently listening to the conversation, rose from her seat with a loud scream.

"By the living Jingo! what's that?" cried the laborer, startling to his feet, while the pipe he was smoking fell from his nerveless grasp and shivered to atoms on the hearth.

"Pshaw!" said Tom Weston, recovering from the sudden tremor which had seized him, "'tis only the poor dummy. I thought the gal had been deaf as well as dumb."

"Why, man, the dead in their graves might have heard that!" said the terror stricken Josh.

He had scarcely ceased speaking, when Sophy Grimshawe sprang into the room—her eyes fixed and staring, and her usually rosy cheeks livid with fear. "The thunder," she gasped, "the dreadful thunder!" and would have fallen to the ground, had not Tom Weston caught her in his arms. The unexpected sight of such a beautiful apparition, seemed to restore the young man's presence of mind. He placed her in a chair, while the little tailor bustled up to get a glass of cold water, with which he copiously bathed her face and hands. In a few minutes her lids ceased to tremble, and opening her eyes, she glanced timidly round her. The first object that encountered her gaze, was the scornful, fiendlike face of Mrs. Mason, scowling upon her.

"So," she said, bitterly, "you make the thunder a pretext for throwing your painted doll's face to the fellows here. Your mother would do well to keep you at home."

"Mother was asleep, and she is not afraid of thunder like me. When that dreadful flash of lightning came, I dared not stay alone in the house."

"Are you a bit safer, think you, here?" sneered the witch-like woman. "It was monstrous kind of you to leave your poor old mother exposed to danger, while you ran away from it like a coward! A bad excuse, however, I've heard, is better than none. In your case I think it worse."

"I did not think of that," said Sophy, with unaffected simplicity, rising to go. "Mother never cares for it, but it makes me tremble from head to foot, and almost drives me beside myself. I can't tell why, but it has always been so with me since I was a little child."

As she finished speaking, another long protracted peal of thunder rolled through the heavens and shook the house, and Sophy sank down gasping in the chair. The handsome young sailor was at her side with a glass of ale.

"Never mind that cross old woman, my dear; she scolds and rules us all. Take a sup of this—it will bring the roses back to your cheeks.—Why, you are as pale as the ghost we were talking of when you came in."

"Oh, I'm such a coward!" sobbed Sophy. "Ah, there it comes again—the lightening will blind me!"—and she shrieked and threw her apron over her head, as another terrific peal burst solemnly above them. "I would rather see twenty ghosts than hear the like of that again. Did not you feel the earth shake?"

"Now for the rain!" cried the little tailor, as a few heavy drops first splashed upon the door-sill; then there was a rush and roar of a hurricane, and the water burst from the skies in torrents, streaming over the door-sill, and beating through the chinks in the ill-glazed windows.

"Shut the door, man! can't you?" vociferated Tom Weston to the tailor. "The rain pours in like a flood, and it will give the young lady cold."

"Poor, delicate creature!" said Martha; "as if a few drops of rain could hurt the like o' her!"

As the tailor rose to shut the door, two men, bearing a heavy burthen between them, filled up the vacant space. All eyes were turned upon the strangers, as through the howling wind and rushing rain, they bore into the room and placed upon the back floor a man in a fit of epilepsy.

"Well, measter, how is it with 'un?" said the foremost, who was a stout, rosy fellow from the laboring class.

No answer was returned to the inquiry made in a kindly tone. The person thus addressed still continued writhing in convulsions, and perfectly unconscious of his own identity, or of that of any person around him.

"Put a tablespoonful of salt into his mouth, man," said Corbett, the carpenter; "that will bring him to, if anything will."

The simple, but powerful remedy was promptly administered by Mary, and after some minutes, the paroxysms of the disorder grew less violent, and the sick man, with a heavy groan, unclosed his large, dark eyes, and gazed vacantly round him—his teeth still chattering, and his muscular limbs trembling like one in an ague fit.

"Courage, measter," said the laborer, giving him a friendly slap on the shoulder. "There's nought that can hurt thee here. See, the fire burns cheerfully, and 'tis human creturs an' friends that are about thee."

"It is gone," groaned the prostrate form, closing his eyes, as if to shut out some frightful apparition—"gone for ever!"

"Ay, vanished clean away into the black night."

"What did he see?" cried a chorus of eager voices; and every one in the room crowded round the fallen man.

"He seed old Mason's ghost on the bridge," said the larorer, "an' I seed it too. An ugsome-looking cretur it wor, an' I wor mortal skeared; howdsomever, when measter screeched an' fell, I forgot to look on 'un agin, I wor so skeared about 'un. This good man com'd along, as luck wud ha' it, and helped me to carry 'un in here. For my part, I thought as how Measter Noah was dead; an' as he owed me four pounds an' three seillins for my harvestin' with 'un, an' I had no writin' to show for it, I thought it wud be a bad job for me an' the fam'ly."

"True; neibor," said the other bearer, sententiously; "the sight of the ghost wor nothin' to that."

"And did the ghost speak to you?" said the little tailor.

"No, no, I b'leeve that them gentry from the other world are sworn over by Satan to hold their tongues, an' never speak unless spoken to. Howdsomever, this ghost never said a word; it stood by centre arch o' bridge, wrapped up in a winding sheet, that flickered all over like moonlight; an' it shook ter heed, an glowered on us with two fiery eyes as big as saucers, an' then sunk down an' vanished."

"Oh, it was him—him!" again groaned forth the terror-stricken man, rising to a sitting posture. "He looked just as he did, that night—that night we found him murdered!"

"Of whom do you speak, Master Cotton?" said the little tailor.

"Of Squire Carlos."

"Squire Carlos!" Did the ghost resemble him? He has been dead long enough to sleep in peace in his grave. It is more than twenty years agone since he was murdered by that worthless scamp Bill Martin. I was but a slip of a lad then. I walked all the way from ——— to Ipswich, to see him hang. How came you to think of him."

"It was him, or some demon in his shape," said Noah Cotton—for it was the hero of my tale—now able to rise and take the chair that the gossiping little tailor offered him. "If ever I saw Mr. Carlos in life, I saw his apparation on the bridge to-night."

"A man should know his own father," mused the tailor; "and yet here is Bob Mason takes the same appearance for the ghostly resemblance of his own *respectable* progenitor. There is some strange trickery in all this."

"What the dickens should bring the ghost of Squire Carlos so far from his own parish? He was shot in his own preserves by Bill Martin. I mind the circumstance quite well. A good man wor the old Squire, but over-particular about his game. If I mistake not, you be Measter Noah Cotton, whose mother lived up to the porter's lodge?"

Noah nodded assent, but he didn't seem to relish these questions and reminiscences of the honest laborer, while Josh, delighted to hear his tongue run, continued—

"I kind o' 'spect you've forgotten me, Mister Cotton. I used to work in them days at Farmer Humphrey's, up Wood-lane. You have grow'd an old-looking man since I seed you last. You were young and spry enough then. I didna' b'leeve the tales that volk did tell of 'un—that you were the Squire's own son. But you be as loike him now as two peas. The neebors wor right, arter all."

The stranger winced, and turned pale.

"They say as you've grow'd a rich man yourself since that time. Is the old 'uncen, your mother, livin' still?"

"She is dead," said Noah, turning his back abruptly on the interrogator, and addressing himself to the mistress of the house.

"Mrs. Mason, I have been very ill. I feel better, but the fit has left me weak and exhausted. Can you give me a bed and a room to myself, where I could sleep the effects of it quietly off?"

"My beds are engaged," was the curt reply of the surly dame. "Pray how long have you been subject to these fits?"

"For several years. Ever since I had the typhus fever. And now the least mental anxiety brings them on."

"So it appears. Particularly the sight of an old friend when least expected. This is strange," and she smiled significantly; "for he was, both living and dead, a kind friend to you."

"He was, indeed," sighed the stranger. "It was not until after I lost him, that I knew how much I was indebted to him." Then suddenly turning from her, he looked steadfastly towards the open door. "It rains cats and dogs, mother; you surely cannot refuse me a bed on such a night?"

"I have already told you, I have no bed to spare. To speak the plain truth," she added, with a grim smile, "I don't like your hang-dog face, and want none of your company. If you're afraid of a shadow, you are either a great coward or a big fool. I despise both characters. If not you are a designing rogue, and enough of such folks come here every night."

"I will pay you well for the accommodation," urged Noah, without noticing or resenting Martha's malignant speech.

"Mother, he be as rich as a Jew," whispered Josh, in her ear.

The hint, disregarded by Mrs. Mason, was not unheeded by Sophy Grimshawe, who, gliding across the room, said, in a soft, persuasive voice: "Mr. Cotton, if you will step into the next house, I will give you my bed for the night."

"The bold hussy!" muttered Martha.

"Is it far to go?" and Noah shuddered, as he glanced into the black night.

"Only a step; just out one door into the other. If you be afraid," she continued, looking up into his gloomy but handsome face with an arch smile, "I will protect you. I am afraid of thunder, but not of ghosts. Come along; depend upon it, we shall not see anything worse than ourselves."

"There's many a true word spoken at random," said Martha, glancing after the twain, as the door closed upon them. "I'll bet all I'm worth in the world that that fellow is not afraid of nothing; he's troubled with a bad conscience.—He's a hateful, unlucky-looking wretch! I'm glad that bold girl relieved me of his company."

"Martha," said Josh, "your're far wrong this time. Noah Cotton do bear an excellent character; an' then he has lots o' cash." This circumstance, apparently, gave him great importance in the poor man's eyes. "That Squire Carlos, who wor murdered by Bill Martin, left in his will o' money to Noah Cotton. People dew say that he wor his son."

"A likely story, that!" cried the woman, tossing up her head.

"He is very like the Squire, at any rate," said the little tailor. "I knew him for several years, and always found him a decent, quite fellow—rather proud, and fond of dressing above his rank, perhaps: but then, he always paid his tailor's bill like a gentleman. Indeed, many that I make for, who call themselves gentlemen, might take pattern by him. He was a very handsome young fellow in those days—tall, straight, and exceedingly well made; as elastic and supple as an eel, and was the best cricket-player in the county. I don't know what can have come across Noah, that he looks so gaunt and thin, and is such an old man before his time. He has been given to those terrible fits ever since he made one of the party that found the body of Mr. Carlos. It's no wonder; for he loved the Squire, and the Squire was mortal fond of him. He became very religious after he got that shock, and has been a very strict Methodist ever since."

"He's not a bit the better for that," said Martha. "The greatest sinners stand in need of the longest prayers. I thought he had been a Methodist parson, by the cut of his jib. Where, my lads," turning to the two men who had brought him in, "did you pick the fellow up?"

"Why do you see, mistress, that I've been a harvesting with 'un, an' he tuk me in the taxed cart with an 'un to the bank, to get change to pay me my wages. Going into town this morning, the hoss got plump in the eye, an' cut it so shocking bad, that measter left 'un with the hoss doctor, and proposed for us to walk home in the cool o' the evening, as the distance is only eight miles or thereabouts. Before we starts home, he takes me to the Crown Inn, and treats me to a pot of ale, an' while there he meets with some old acquaintance, who was telling him how he knew his father, old Noah, in 'Mericky; an' how he had died very rich, an' left him money to a wife he had there, that he never married. An, I thought as how measter didn't much like the news, as his father, it seems, had left him nothing—not even his blessing. Well, 'twas nigh upon twelve o'clock when we started. 'You'd better stay all night, measter,' says I; 'tis nigh upon morning.' 'Sam Smith,' says he, 'I cannot sleep out o' my own bed;' and off we sets.—On the bridge we heerd the first big clap o' thunder; the next minute we sor the ghost, and my measter gives a screech which might have roused old Squire Carlos from the dead, and straight fell down in a fit. The ghost vanished in the twinkling of an eye; and I met this good man, who helped me to bring Noah up here. He's a kind measter, Noah Cotton, but a wonderful tiresome man. I've heerd him, when we've been at work in the fields, start at the shivering of an aspen leaf, and cry out, 'Sam! what's that?'"

"Did not Noah say summat about having lost his yellow canvas bag with his money?" asked the other man; "and that the ghost laid hold on him with a hand as cold as ice?"

"What, did a'?" and Sam Smith opened his large, round eyes, and distended his wide, good-natured mouth, with a look of blank astonishment.

"If the ghost robbed Noah Cotton of his canvas bag, that was what no living man could do!" cried Bob Mason, bursting into the room, and cutting sundry mad capers round the floor. "Hurrah for the ghost!"

THE PROPOSAL

We will now step into the widow Grimshawe's cottage, and see how Sophy disposed of her guest.

The lower room was in profound darkness, and the little sempstress bade her companion stay at the door while she procured a light from the rush-candle that always burned in her mother's chamber above.

"Do not leave me in the dark!" he cried, in a voice of childish terror, and clutching at her garments. "I dare not be alone!"

"Nonsense! There are no ghosts here. I will not be gone an instant."

"Let me go with you."

"What to my sick mother's bed-room? That cannot be. Perhaps," she continued, not a little astonished at his extreme timidity, "the ashes may still be alive in the grate. I think I perceive a faint glimmer: but you had better allow me to fetch a light from mother's room!"

"Oh no! not for the world. I beseech you to stay where you are."

Sophy knelt down by the hearth, and raking among the ashes, succeeded at last in finding a live coal, which she blew into a blaze, and lighting a candle she had left on the table, placed it before him.

Her strange guest had sunk down into a large wooden arm-chair beside it, his head bent upon his clasped hands, his eyes shut, and traces of tears upon his death-pale cheeks; his lips were firmly compressed, and his countenance immovable and rigid.

Sophy gazed long and silently upon him. The sympathy of woman, be she good or bad, is always touched by the sight of a man's tears. Sophy was selfish and vain—all her faults might be comprised under those two heads; but she could not bear to witness sorrow and suffering without trying to alleviate it, unless it demanded a sacrifice of some personal gratification that she wanted strength of mind to relinquish.

The stranger had awakened her sympathy, which the knowledge that he was comparatively rich did not tend to diminish; and she examined his countenance with a degree of interest and attention which hitherto had been foreign to her nature, who had never seen anything to love or admire beyond herself.

For a person in his station, Noah Cotton was a remarkable man. His features were high and regular, his air and demeanor that of a gentleman, than with the class to which his dress indicated him to belong. His age exceeded forty. His raven hair, that curled in close masses round his high temples, was thickly sprinkled with grey; his sallow brow deeply furrowed, but the lines were not those produced by sorrow, but care.—He looked ill and unhappy; and though his dress was of a coarse manufacture generally adapted by the small yeoman or farmer, his linen was fine and scrupulously clean; in short; he was vastly superior to any of the men that frequented the "Brig's Foot."

"You are ill," said Sophy, laying her hand upon his shoulder, and speaking in a soft, gentle voice. "Let me get you something to eat. It can give you some new bread, and a bowl of fresh milk."

"Thank you, my kind girl," he replied, unclosing his large, dark, melancholy eyes, and regarding her neat little figure, and fair, girlish face, with fixed attention; "I am not hungry."

"Oh, do take a little." And Sophy placed the simple contents of the cupboard on the table before him. "It would give me real pleasure to see you eat."

"Then I will try to please you."

But, after taking a draught of the milk, Noah pushed the bowl from him, and turning gloomily to the fire, which was now brightening into a ruddy glow, throwing cheerful red gleams to every distant corner of the room.

"And did you really see the ghost?" asked Sophy, who was dying with curiosity to hear the tale from his own mouth. And she drew a low bench beside him, and gazed earnestly up into his face. "I thought the stories about it were all humbug—a trick played off upon the public by that worthless scamp, Bob Mason."

The man started from his abstracted fit.

"Don't speak of it now, my pretty maid. Let you and I talk of something else."

"But I should like so to know all about it.—You said, when you were coming to, out of that frightful fit, that it was the ghost of a Mr. Carlos."

"Then I was a fool!" muttered Noah; but, recovering himself, he said, "I was one of the band of men who found the body of Squire Carlos, on the night he was murdered in his own plantation, by Bill Martin, a notorious smuggler and poacher. I was very young at the time; the Squire had been a kind friend to me and my mother, and the horrid sight made such a powerful impression on my mind that it almost deprived me of my senses, and it has haunted me ever since. I see him at all hours of the day, but most generally the vision comes before me at night, and produces these terrible fits. The doctors call it disease—I think it fate."

"How dreadful!" and Sophy recoiled involuntarily a few paces from her guest.

There was a long silence. Sophy tried to shake off the chill that had fallen upon her heart, by vigorously poking the fire. At length she ventured a glance at her silent companion. He was looking down intently at her."

"You seem pretty old," she said, with that bluntness so common to uneducated people, and from which those above them wince in disgust—"are you married?"

"No my dear; a bachelor, at your service."

"If you had a wife and children, they would cure you of these strange fancies."

"Do you really think so?"

"I am sure of it."

There was another long silence.

Her companion heaved a deep melancholy sigh, and his thoughts seemed to break out into words, without any intention on the part of their owner.

"I have plenty to keep both wife and children, and I would gladly marry to-morrow, if I thought any good woman would have me."

Sophy smiled, and looked down into her lap. She twisted the strings of her checked apron round her fingers, the apron itself into every possible shape. At length she started from her seat.

"Where are you going?" cried the stranger, in a tone of alarm.

"To make you up a bed."

"I would rather remain by the fire all night, if you will promise to stay with me."

"But my mother would wonder what had become of me. I must leave you and go to bed."

Noah caught her little hand as she glided past him, and pulled her violently back—

"I will not part with you—you must stay."

"Bless me, how timid you are! How you shake and tremble! I cannot understand this fear in a big man like you."

"I should grow courageous if you were always by my side."

"Perhaps you would soon be as much afraid of me as of the ghost," said Sophy, looking up into his sad eyes with a playful smile.

"The ghost again! But tell me, my pretty maid, have you a sweetheart?"

"What girl of eighteen, who is not positively ugly, has not?" returned Sophy, evasively.

"But one whom you prefer to all others?"

"I have never yet seen that fortunate individual!"

"And is there no one for whom you feel a particular liking?"

"None, I assure you."

"Good," said Noah, musingly. "Have you a father?"

"He was drowned in a heavy gale, during the fishing season, some years ago."

"A mother?"

"Yes; but she has been bed-ridden with the palsy ever since father died. Grief for his sudden loss brought it on. There are no hopes of her ever regaining the use of her limbs now."

"Any brothers or sisters?"

"One sister, the hunch-backed girl you saw in the next house; the rest are all dead. I lost a young sister about six weeks ago. She was only sixteen years of age, and as good as she was beautiful. Every body loved and respected Charlotte, and she died so happily. It was well for her. I have often envied her since she left us. I never knew what an angel she was until after we lost her."

Noah sighed again, and was silent for some minutes. At length he said—

"Is it only good people that die in peace?"

"I don't know," said Sophy. "Charlotte was the only person I ever saw die; and her last words to us I shall never forget. 'Dear ones,' she said, while a smile from heaven rested upon her lips, 'do not weep for me. These last moments of my life are the most joyful, the happiest I have ever known. I can now fully realize that peace which our blessed Redeemer promised to all His faithful followers—a peace which surpasseth human understanding. May that His peace and blessing rest upon you all.'"

Again Noah sighed, and covered his face with his hands, and remained so long in that attitude, that Sophy imagined he had fallen asleep. At length he raised his head, and said—

"Your father is dead, your mother infirm and old, your only sister sickly and deformed, and yourself so young and pretty, with no brothers to protect or work for you—how do you contrive dear girl to maintain yourself and them.

"Alas! we are very poor," said Sophy, bursting into tears. "I do all I can to supply the wants of the family. I have to work day and night, and Mary too, who has a cruel mistress, in order to earn our bread, yet we are often on the point of starvation, both of us are tasked beyond our strength—and I for one am heartily weary of my life."

"Dear child," and Noah wound his arm about her waist, and kissed away the tears from her bright blue eyes—"if you could love and cherish an old man—old at any rate to you, although barely turned of forty, I could give both you and your afflicted mother and sister a comfortable home. I have a pleasant cottage at F——, and fifty acres of good arable land, a horse and gig, six fine milch cows, and plenty of pigs and poultry, an income of two hundred per annum in the bank, which is increasing every year, simply because I have enough to supply my household without touching either capital or interest. The property I will settle upon you at my death, if you will become my wife."

Sophy's hand trembled in his. A bright crimson suffused her cheek, her heart leapt wildly within her breast; but she could not find a word of answer.

"I have been a bachelor all my life," continued Noah, "and a dull, careless life it has been to me. I had a mother to take care of in her old age, and I loved her too well to place a wife over her, who had been so long the mistress of my home. She is only lately dead, and I feel lonely and sad without her. I have often thought that I could love a wife very much. I am sure I could love you. What say you to it, my girl? Is it to be a match?"

Sophy thought of the horse and gig, and the six cows, of the pigs and poultry, of the comfortable home; and above all this, she hugged closely to her heart the £200 per annum that was to be hers, besides all the rest of the worldly goods and chattels at his death. She looked down upon her faded, shabby calico dress, and round upon the scantily furnished room, and thought of the cold, dark winter nights that were coming, and how ill-prepared they were to meet them. She remembered the days of toil, the nights of waking, watching beside the feverish bed of a querulous old woman, and she knew how fretful and impatient she was, and how her soul abhorred the task; and she turned her bright eyes to the face of her melancholy lover, and placed her small hand in his, and said in a low, soft voice, that was music to his heart—

"I will try to love you, and will be your wife, if you will only be kind to mother and Mary, and take us from this hateful place."

Transported with joy, he promised all that she asked.

All night they sat by the fire, hand in hand, talking over their future prospects; and the next morning Sophia introduced Noah Cotton to her mother and sister, as her future husband, and bade them rejoice in their altered fortunes. Human nature is full of strange contradictions, and it so happened that the mother and sister did not rejoice; and instead of approving of the match, they remonstrated vehemently against it.

Sophy thought them foolish and ungrateful.—She grew angry, and remained obstinately fixed to her purpose, and the affair ended in a family rupture.

Mrs. Grimshawe refused to live with Sophy, if she married Noah Cotton; and Mary could not leave her mother. Mary, who was a