As one of the chroniclers of my parish, it behooves me to act like a faithful and impartial biographer, not merely regarding with interest the memoirs of the rich and great, but condescending to men and women of low estate. Uninfluenced by worldly motives, to put a restraint upon their feelings, the lower classes follow more implicitly the dictates of nature; and their thoughts, words, and actions, in consequence, flow more immediately from the heart. Their affections are stronger, because money, in nine cases out of ten, cannot direct them in their choice of a partner for life. They meet upon equal terms, both having to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow; and their courtships generally commence in the field, where necessity, the stern nurse of the hardy, may accidentally have thrown them together. Their friendships are few, and generally confined to those of their own kindred; but, they are sincere and lasting; and I have witnessed with emotion the generous sacrifices which they will make to assist each other, in seasons of distress and difficulty. The peasant's world is contained in the rude hut which shelters his aged parents, and his wife and little ones. And in this little circle he centers and concentrates all the affections and kindly feelings of the heart.

Woodville is a large parish, and it contains many poor families of this description, whose simple histories have often awakened in my bosom the deepest interest and commiseration. It is not exactly of one of these that I am about
to speak; for old Caleb Morris had seen better days, and
had been reduced by a train of agricultural calamities, to
receive wages for working on those lands which he once
called his own. I was but a child at the period to which I
allude; and my reminiscences of old Caleb are all confined
to the pleasant little cottage in which he lived, by the side
of the common, with its neat willow enclosures, and the
beautiful wallflowers and pinks, and cloves, which grew in
his pretty garden; not forgetting the tall sunflowers, that
lifted their broad yellow faces over the hedge, as though
they were ambitious to attract the observation of the foot
passenger, and tempt him by their gorgeous apparel, to
stop and ask for a nosegay. And then there was Caleb’s
pretty daughter Amy, who was the pet and darling of the
whole village; the best scholar, and the best sempstress in
the Sunday school; and her cousin, Arnold Wallace, a fine
rosy cheeked, curly headed, black eyed boy, the orphan son
of old Caleb’s sister, whom the good man had taken to his
fire side, and brought up as his own. Arnold, used to follow
Amy like her shadow — he carried her book bag to school
for her, and gallantly lifted his little cousin over all the
stiles and puddles in their way to the church. I used to call
Amy, Arnold’s little wife; but the high spirited lad early
bade adieu to his fair haired playmate, and went to sea. As
the cares of womanhood came on, and mellowed the sunny
expression of Amy’s brow, her heart received other impres-
sions, and the boy she had ever regarded as a brother, was
only remembered with that interest, which generally clings
through life, to those with whom we have passed our early
years, and who shared with us the hopes and the fears, and
the sports of childhood.

I will tell you Amy’s simple story as I heard her acci-
dentially relate it to her cousin Arnold. One fine spring
evening, I happened to be employed in taking a view of our
village church, and its picturesque burial ground. The
sketch was for a friend in India, who had been born at
Woodville; and he wished to refresh his eyes in that far
land, with a simple outline of the quiet secluded spot,
where the fathers of his native village slept. My seat was a
green bank covered with primroses. A high hawthorn hedge sheltered me behind from the fresh but chilling breezes which generally prevail near the sea at this season of the year; and a little rill, not half a foot wide, ran singing at my feet, discoursing sweet music to the flowers and grass, that crowded about its fairy margin. Enamoured with my employment, I scarcely noticed the entrance of a stranger, till the shadow of Amy Morris fell between me and the light, and I looked impatiently up from the paper. She did not see me, and moved slowly forward to the chancel end of the church, and kneeling down at the head of a high turfed, but stoneless grave, she began planting a young ash tree, which she seemed anxious should serve for a monument for the dead. Poor Amy! sorrow had pursued her hard for the last four years, and stolen the rose from her cheek, and the smile from her lip; and what was far worse, had robbed her of the gay, light heart, she once possessed. Caleb Morris had been dead about eighteen months, and the solitary mourner had been forced to quit their neat pretty cottage, and to gain her living by following the occupations of a clear starcher and mantua-maker. As I saw her approach the grave, I felt inclined to rise up and comfort her. But a feeling of respect for that grief which I might increase, but which I could not mitigate by common-place condolence, fixed me in my seat. Concealed from her observation, by a tall, square monument in front, I continued mechanically to delineate the outlines of the church; and was so much absorbed in my task that the entrance of Amy was forgotten, till a brisk step sounded along the gravelled path of the church-yard, and the poor weeper was joined by a fine young man, in a seaman's dress. Their meeting was of the most tender description. The young man seated himself beside Amy upon the grass; and pointing to the grave, for some time continued to talk to her, in a voice so low and faltering that only half sentences reached my ear. At length the sailor took her hand, and said something to his fair companion, that brought the long banished rose tint into her pale cheek. She rose up hastily from the grave. "Do not talk to me of love, Cousin
Arnold," she said. "My heart is broken. I shall never love again."

Her companion still held her hand, and regarded her with a tenderly reproachful glance. "My uncle has been dead, Amy, eighteen long months. Enough surely has been given to grief?"

"My sorrow is not measured by time," said Amy. "Its empire is in the heart; and I feel that the voice of hope will never gladden mine again. My poor father," she continued looking wistfully upon the grave, "blind — infirm — and old. I no longer weep for him, Arnold; it was not of him I spake."

Tears filled her eyes, and deep sobs convulsed her breast. Arnold Wallace led her gently to the broad, low steps of the church-yard stile. They sat down in silence, which was alone broken by the evening song of the blackbird, and the vainly suppressed sighs of Amy Morris. The young man, who tenderly supported her drooping figure in his arms, was tall and well made, and strikingly handsome. His age did not exceed eight and twenty, but long exposure to the suns of an eastern clime had bronzed, and given a foreign cast to his frank, generous, and truly prepossessing countenance. The spot occupied by the lovers looked down into a deep narrow lane, and was over-arched by the bending branches of a stately ash tree. The attitudes of the youthful pair, and the beautiful landscape which surrounded them, formed a delightful subject for the pencil, and leaving my architectural structure to build itself, I soon transferred the weeping Amy and her manly companion to my paper.

To render Amy's simple narrative more intelligible, I must give my reader a brief sketch of her.

Arnold Wallace had loved his cousin Amy from a boy; but he wanted courage to tell her so, and he went to sea with the important secret locked up in his own bosom; for Amy, accustomed to regard her rosy, dark-eyed playfellow, as her brother, never suspected one word of the matter. But Arnold never forgot his cousin Amy; and after a painful absence of ten years, he returned to his native village, with
a heavy purse and a faithful heart, to claim for his bride the object of his early affections; and to comfort and support his uncle through the dark winter of age. Not a little proud of his personal appearance, and improved fortunes, our young sailor bent his steps to the white cottage on the common, where Caleb Morris formerly resided. As he unclosed the gate, which separated the garden from the road, he was struck with the alteration in its once trim appearance. The little plot of ground was no longer conspicuous for its rich gilliflowers, pinks and hyacinths, but overgrown with weeds. The roses, which his own hand had trained over the rural porch, were unbound, and floated mournfully on every breeze! "Amy is not the neat girl she used to be," he said; "but she may have too many things to attend to now, to be able to take care of the garden. I wonder whether she will know me?" he continued, putting back the glossy black curls, which shaded his ample brow, "or the dear old soul who used to dandle me on his knees and call me his own boy?" A sudden chill came over him, and checked his pleasing reveries. "Time may have made sad changes — uncle may be dead; and Amy!" he stifled the sigh which rose to his lips, "and Amy may be married." He rapped at the cottage door with an unsteady hand. It was opened by a stranger. The state of the garden was already explained, and in a hurried manner he enquired for Caleb Morris? The woman answered that he was dead. "It was a great mercy," she said, "that it pleased the lord to take him. He had been a great sufferer, and lost his sight full six years before he died!"

Arnold, who had so warmly anticipated a meeting with his old uncle, thought it no mercy.

"Is his daughter still living?"

"Yes, poor girl, but she looks mortally ill; so thin and so pale, she is but the shadow of what she was. It's enough to make a body melancholy to look at her. But, well a day sir, she has suffered enough to break a young and tender heart!"

"Is she married," asked Arnold, with an air of affected indifference, which only rendered his emotion more apparent.
“Married! good lack! and never will be. It is an old prophecy in our village that Amy will die a maid.”

Arnold smiled to himself, and enquiring of the loquacious dame the way to Amy’s new place of abode, he pursued his walk towards the village. Wishing to visit the graves of his parents, to see 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 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 engagement, 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."

**The Sailor's Return**

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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 red beams of the newly risen sun flashed full upon his pale and emaciated face.

"'It is enough my child, I feel the warmth of his beams, but I shall never behold them in this world again.'

"He folded his hands together and bowed himself upon the bed, while his pale lips moved for some time, apparently in earnest prayer. He could not behold my tears, and I hid my grief from him, for I perceived that it would increase the weight of his calamity. He slowly recovered,
and his helplessness rendered him an object of tenfold interest, and strengthened the tender tie which bound him to my heart. He could no longer labour for his own support; and, roused by the imperious call of duty, I worked hard to procure for him the necessaries of life. My exertions far exceeded my strength, and I should have sunk under the complicated fatigues of mind and body, when it pleased the Almighty being, who had called me to endure these trials, to raise me up a friend, at the period when I most doubted the all-sufficiency of his protecting arm.

"Mr. Jones, our old neighbour, left his farm on the common, and a Mr. Ashford hired it of Squire Hurtlestone. He was a native of one of the midland counties. His family consisted of one son, and a daughter about my own age. I offered my services to the new comers, and assisted them to arrange and unpack their furniture. I could not wholly forget, whilst talking to Miss Ashford, that I had been a farmer's daughter myself, and though reduced by misfortunes, which could neither be foreseen nor avoided, to my present condition, I still enjoyed the benefits arising from a respectable education. My manners ill accorded with the meanness of my apparel. Mr. Ashford remarked this, and made himself acquainted with our history, and from that time I became a frequent visitor at his house; and my poor father wanted no comfort which his bounty could supply. The generous interest which this benevolent man took in our welfare was acknowledged by us with gratitude, which was more deeply felt than expressed in words.

"Emma and James Ashford were my constant companions, and a day seldom passed without some friendly intercourse between us. My father was as often led to his favourite seat, beneath the old maple tree in the garden, by the young Ashfords as he was by me; and James seemed to feel a peculiar pleasure in reading to his aged and sightless friend, when he returned at evening or noon from the labours of the field. The attention which was paid to me by this clever and amiable young man, did not escape my father's notice; and he mentioned the circumstance to me, with all the fond and excusable pride of a parent,
contemplating the future happiness of a beloved and only child. The discovery gave me great pain; for though on analyzing my feelings, I found them equally inclined to favour his suit, a sense of gratitude to the father, forbade me to encourage the addresses of the son. I avoided his society, went less frequently to Mr. Ashford's, and always contrived to be absent when James called at the cottage, which was daily, to enquire after my father's health. It was then, and not till then, that I became acquainted with the real state of my heart, and the impression which young Ashford's attentions had made upon it. These acts of self denial robbed my cheek of its bloom, and my bosom of peace. I was no longer the gay, happy Amy Morris, but a melancholy, hopeless creature, cherishing a passion, which I considered myself bound in duty to conceal. Emma remarked the great change which had taken place in my manners and appearance, and Mr. Ashford called at the cottage one morning to learn of my father the cause of my estrangement. They were shut up for some time together, and during their conference I felt a restless desire to know the meaning of Mr. Ashford's long visit. At length the door opened, and he came out to me. I was in the garden prettending to fasten up a branch of one of the rose-trees, which the wind had loosened from the wall; but, in reality, it was only an excuse to conceal my anxiety. Mr. Ashford called me to him, his benevolent face was irradiated by a smile of inward satisfaction. An unusual degree of timidity kept me aloof. He took my hand, and kissing my cheek, said:

“'How now, little trembler, have you learned to fear me?’

“My eyes were full of tears, I could make no reply; and I suffered him to lead me passively into the house. My dear father was sitting in his high-backed arm chair, his head bent upon the clasped hands that rested on the top of his stick; and standing beside him, with a face sparkling with joyful animation, I beheld James Ashford; his manly upright figure, and healthy complexion, forming a striking contrast to the white locks, and feeble drooping attitude of
age. My father raised his sightless eyes as I approached; but when I encountered the glance of my delighted lover, I coloured deeply, and drew involuntarily back. He sprang forward to meet me, and whispered in my ear: — 'Amy, you can make me so happy.'

"My hand trembled in his; a thick mist floated before my eyes, as Mr. Ashford, stepping forward, joined our hands and bade us be happy in each other's love. Seeing me about to speak, he playfully interrupted me. 'We will take no refusal, Amy; your worthy father and I have settled the business, and disposed of you as we think for the best. The only alternative now left to you, is to be a good and dutiful child, and anticipate our wishes.'

"Dear, generous Mr. Ashford,' I faltered out at last; 'you have indeed, anticipated mine.'

"James looked his thanks, as he led me to my father. The dear old man blessed us with tears in his eyes; and in spite of his poverty and many infirmities, he declared that moment to be the happiest in his life. From that blissful hour, I considered James Ashford as my future husband; and we loved each other, Arnold, with a tenderness and confidence which can only be felt once. The heart cannot receive such a faithful and lasting impression a second time. We took sweet counsel together, and enjoyed that communication of spirit which can only exist between kindred minds." Arnold sighed deeply as Amy continued.

"Every preparation was made for our approaching marriage. Mr. Ashford agreed to resign his farm to his son, that we might begin the world under fair auspices. The current of our happiness had hitherto run so smoothly that it appeared almost impossible that we should experience an alloy. But the storm was even then at hand, which burst suddenly upon us, and overthrew all our highly raised expectations. A large county bank, in which Mr. Ashford's property was principally vested, unexpectedly failed; and reduced this worthy man from a state in which though humble, he enjoyed all the comforts of life, to one of comparative poverty. The bills which he had contracted with various tradesmen, in the village, when he took and stocked
the farm, were still unpaid, and nearly half a year's rent was
due to his landlord. This the squire generously forgave,
and with his usual benevolence, enclosed with his letter, a
draft on his banker for twenty pounds to supply Mr.
Ashford's immediate wants. After the crops in the ground,
and the stock upon the farm, were sold, and the creditors
faithfully discharged, Mr. Ashford and his family were cast
penniless upon the world.

"Alas, this was no time for marrying or being given in
marriage; and whenever James and I met, it was only to talk
over our blighted hopes, and form fresh plans for the
future. Whilst Mr. Ashford's affairs were at this desperate
crisis, a brother, who had settled some years before in
Upper Canada, wrote to him, inviting him to come out
with his family, and he would put them into a good grant of
land, and render them all the assistance he could. This
offer was too advantageous to be refused, and the Ashfords,
grateful to Providence for this interposition in their favour,
prepared to bid adieu to their native land. I contemplated
the departure of my friends, with feelings of regret which
almost amounted to despair. James, on the contrary, was
full of hope; and urged me continually to fulfil my engage-
ment, and accompany them across the Atlantic. My heart
for one selfish moment yielded to his solicitations; but
when I turned to my father, my dear, infirm, blind, old
father, I instantly abandoned the unworthy thought. Could
I leave him in his old age to the care of strangers, or suffe-
r him to terminate his virtuous life in a work-house? But he,
only alive to my happiness, in the most pathetic manner
urged me to accept young Ashford's offer, assuring me that
even in the work-house, he should die contented in the
thought that his child was the happy wife of the man she
loved, and beyond the reach of poverty's heart-withering
gripe. James, at length, yielded to my reasoning, and press-
ing me to his generous heart, told me to keep up my spirits
and to be good and cheerful; and as soon as they were com-
fortably settled in Canada, he would return and take me
out as his wife.

"The day of their final departure came too soon, for
those who apprehended that the friends whom they then saw, they should behold no more. The Ashfords were to take the coach for London, at the end of this lane. I accompanied them thither. My father tottered to the garden gate, and held up his hands as long as we could distinguish his venerable figure in token of farewell. Mr. Ashford was calm; he even chided me gently for my want of confidence in the wise dispensations of an over-ruuling Providence. James was silent, but his silence was more eloquent than words. Emma had left us some days before, and was waiting in town, at the house of a friend, the arrival of her father and brother, so that my heart was spared at that moment, an additional pang.

"Yes, Arnold," continued Amy, with increasing agitation, "it was on this very spot — beneath the shadow of this very tree that we parted. When we arrived in front of the church, the coach was not yet in sight. It was a fine evening in June. The sun had sunk beneath a canopy of crimson and golden clouds; and the low, gothic windows of the church, were illuminated with the reflection of the splendid light. The gorgeous sunset seemed to mock the darkness of my mind. Mr. Ashford sat down on the step of the stile beneath this beautiful ash tree. He was cheerful, and tried to render our separation less painful, by the liveliness of his conversation. But his tenderness failed to produce the desired effect. My heart was bursting, and the tears flowed incessantly from my eyes. Mr. Ashford took off his hat and looked from my pale and agitated face, up to the glaring heavens, as if to implore the father of lights to comfort and restore peace to his afflicted child. The breeze lifted his grey hair from his temples, and the most beautiful and resigned expression pervaded his countenance. He did not speak, but his thoughts were easily read; his face, like a mirror, reflected the objects which were passing through his mind. At length he drew me towards him, and said: 'My child, we must part — perhaps for ever. This is the last time we may be permitted to admire this glorious scene together.'

"I sunk weeping into his arms, he folded me to his
heart, and our tears were mingled in deep and silent sorrow. The rapid approach of the mail tore us apart. 'Amy,' he said, 'If we meet no more here we shall meet again in that country where the voice of sorrow is unknown, and where there will be no more sighing and tears. May God bless and protect my child.'

"I was encircled in the arms of my betrothed husband; I felt his tears upon my cheek, and his lips trembled upon mine, as he murmured in accents scarcely audible. 'Amy — my own Amy. Farewell!' We parted. But, it was not till the last sound of the wheels died away, that I found myself completely alone. I looked at the stile — but the seat was vacant. I looked up to the heavens — but the glorious light had faded away. I have never seen my dear friends since. I shall never see them again. But I love to frequent this spot, for I never look at the stile or the weeping ash, but I fancy I still see them there. Mr. Ashford's last words ring in my ear. I turn away, with a quick step, and a beating heart. It is too true that my adopted father and sister, and my betrothed husband, have filled the same watery grave."

Here poor Amy concealed her face with her hands and sighed as though her heart would break. It was, however, but a momentary pang, inflicted by a too tenacious memory, and she continued: "The ship was lost in her passage out, and all hands on board perished. The fatal news reached our village too soon; and for some months after, the world was to me a blank, and the flight of time unheeded. They tell me, Arnold, that I was mad — but I cannot remember anything, but the grief I felt for the loss of my friends, during that calamitous period. When I awoke from this horrible stupor, and the memory of the past returned, the increasing debility of my poor father demanded my constant care, and urged upon me the necessity of moderating my grief. My father did not long survive the wreck of his daughter's peace. He died in my arms. We buried him here, and I was left alone in the world, without a comforter. Ah, dear friends, why do I continue to mourn for you as one without hope? Why do my tears flow unceasingly? Dear James and Emma! Ye went from among us in the
season of youth, while life was in its first lovely bloom
Your hearts felt but one bitter pang, and death was swallowed up in victory. Why do I mourn for you?"

Amy rose up, and walked hastily away! Arnold respected her sorrow too much to follow her.

"And did Amy Morris marry her cousin?"

Yes, gentle reader, she did. Only two years after this interview, which I witnessed in the church-yard, I passed a beautiful young matron in the church lane, guiding the tottering steps of a lovely infant, to whose innocent prattle she was listening with intense delight. Her rosy cheek, light steps, and blithesome glance, forming a strong contrast with the then pale and woe begone looking Amy Morris. Yet it was Amy, the loving and the loved; the happy wife of Arnold Wallace. She had proved the fallacy of that theory which asserts that the warm and devoted heart of woman is incapable of receiving a second attachment; that her first love is her last. Whilst the cup of domestic happiness flowed to the brim, and she met the fond glance of her affectionate husband; she wondered that another man had ever appeared more pleasing in her eyes; that she had ever loved James Ashford better than her cousin Arnold.

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