

in mere decencies, with consciences made up of the conventional moralities, who think by precedent, bow to public opinion as their god, and estimate merit by its weight in guineas."

"And so your visit," I said, "was a very brief one?"

"You distress me," he replied. "It should have been so; but it was not. But what could I do? Ever since my father's death I had been taught to consider this man as my natural guardian, and I was now unwilling to part with my last hope. But this is not all. Under much apparent activity, my friend, there is a substratum of apathetical indolence in my disposition: I move rapidly when in motion; but when at rest, there is a dull inertness in the character, which the will, when unassisted by passion, is too feeble to overcome. Poor, weak creature that I am! I had set down by my uncle's fireside, and felt unwilling to rise. Pity me, my friend, — I deserve your pity; but oh! do not despise me!"

"Forgive me, Mr. Ferguson," I said; "I have given you pain, but surely most unwittingly."

"I am ever a fool," he continued. "But my story lags; and, surely, there is little in it on which it were pleasure to dwell. I sat at this man's table for six months, and saw, day after day, his manner towards me becoming more constrained, and his politeness more cold; and yet I staid on, till at last my clothes were worn threadbare, and he began to feel that the shabbiness of the nephew affected the respectability of the uncle. His friend the soap-boiler, and his friend the oil-merchant, and his friend the manager of the hemp manufactory, with their wives and daughters, — all people of high standing in the world, — occasionally honored his table with their presence; and how could he be other than ashamed of mine? It