

THE SISTERS: A DOMESTIC TALE

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The Sisters: A Domestic Tale by Mrs. Hofland

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MRS. HOFLAND

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DOMESTIC TALE**



NOT THE LEAST DANGER.

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A Domestic Tale.

By MRS. HOFLAND.



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THE SISTERS.

I

The Faded Flower.

"To Bristol's fount I bore, with trembling care,
Her faded form--she bow'd to taste the wave,
And fled." MASON.



Do not go so near to the edge of the rocks, Olivia; a false step might produce the most terrible consequences," said Mrs. Mortimer to her daughter, as, with the rest of a gay party, they clambered up the neighbouring mountains, to gain a more perfect view of the beautiful lake of Derwentwater, near Keswick.

"My dear mother, there is not the least danger: you are so used to the flat pavements in London, that you fancy every stone a rock, and every

hillock a mountain : in *this* place we can have nothing to dread : had you seen the really terrible drive I took yesterday, with Mr. St. Faire, what would you have said then ? ”

“ I should have said *then*, what I say *now*, Olivia ; that where danger is very apparent, it induces care which seldom fails to prove a preservative ; but in trifling cases, where less caution is necessary, we frequently suffer from our entire neglect— a rule that will apply perhaps as much to the path of life in general as to that we are pursuing.”

Olivia Mortimer, to whom this was addressed by a tender mother, had perhaps as good an excuse for those light and buoyant spirits, which urged her to pursue unheedingly a slippery path, as any young person could possibly have. She was the only child of amiable and wealthy parents, who fondly loved and indulged her ; she possessed uncommon beauty, agility, and grace ; was just turned of eighteen, and was now on a tour of pleasure to the northern lakes, with parents for whom she had the tenderest affection, friends for whom she felt the warmest esteem, and a worthy youth, of most prepossessing manners, whom, with the sanction of her father, and the truest regard of her own heart, she had lately admitted to consider himself as a received lover ; his happiness on that account considerably augmented her

own, since it accorded not only with the increasing partiality she felt for him, but with the general sympathy of her gentle and benevolent disposition, which, though very sprightly, was ever alive to the feelings and wishes of those around her.

Perhaps human happiness, in all the various scenes and modifications in which it is enjoyed, presents nothing more truly excellent than that which must be enjoyed by a young person so situated, "when all things charm, for life itself is new;" there is an elasticity in the spirits, a spring in the heart, which gives power to seize on every form of beauty and follow every vision of the imagination to their utmost limits of enjoyment. Satiety has not cloyed, amusement has not wearied, the world has not disgusted such a one; the frowns of adversity, the languor of sickness, the insipidity of some in society, the virulence of others, and the general cold-heartedness of all, have not yet cast that mantle which the hand of experience never fails to throw over the mind's eye in future life, and which, while it shades us from many evils, yet robs us of the power of viewing life through that medium which alone sheds lustre on the hours of ease and happiness. On the path of Olivia shone light without a cloud, roses unmingled with thorns; admired by all eyes, commended by all tongues, and in appearance at least

beloved by all hearts, without one wish ungratified for the present, or one fear for the future, whose promises were those of love and hope, no wonder that her light foot, like her still lighter heart, scarcely pressed the turf it trod upon, and called for the caution expressed by a mother whose solicitude kept that pace with her affection which is the peculiar characteristic of maternal love, and seldom estimated by the young and lively.

"Too much care is a very bad thing, my dear madam," said Olivia, in reply to Mrs. Mortimer's last observation: "look at the children of the peasantry; they skip and run like mountain goats, and find the recompense of their vigour and activity in the bloom of health, and the power of varying their pleasures. Before I return to London, you will see me able to outdo all the urchins, I hope."

In order to convince Mrs. Mortimer more fully of the irrefragability of her arguments, Olivia had turned round, and with a sweetly-playful smile, her fine eyes fixed on her mother's face, and her hands extended in aid of her words, was thus giving her reasons, stepping of course backwards. She was the foremost of the party, her lover had given his arm to her mother, Mr. Mortimer was some distance below assisting the mother and sister of Mr. St. Faire, when, just as she had pro-