

*CHAPTER XII.*

Death is the crown of life:  
Were death denied, poor men would live in vain;  
Were death denied, to live would not be life.

YOUNG.

MR. FORSYTH was for about forty years an elder of the church, and never was the office more conscientiously or more consistently held. It was observed, however, that, though not less orthodox in his belief than any of his brother elders, and certainly not less scrupulously strict in his morals, he was much less severe in his judgments on offenders, and less ready in sanctioning, except in extreme cases, the employment of the sterner discipline of the church. On one occasion, when distributing the poor's funds, he set apart a few shillings for a poor creature, of rather equivocal character, who had lately been visited by the displeasure of the session, and who, though in wretched poverty, felt too much ashamed at the time to come forward to claim her customary allowance.

"Hold, Mr. Forsyth," said one of the elders, a severe and rigid Presbyterian of the old school, — "hold; the woman is a bad woman, and doesn't deserve that."

"Ah," replied the merchant, in the very vein of Hamlet, "if we get barely according to our deservings, Donald, who of us all shall escape whipping? We shall just give the poor thing these few shillings which she does not deserve, in consideration of the much we ourselves enjoy which we deserve, I am afraid, nearly as little."