





## THE OLD MANOR HOUSE.

WO years ago, I was a lonely old maid, living by myself in my tiny village cottage, without kith or kin, almost the last survivor of the large family of Warburton, who had lived and flourished for generations in Blankshire. True, I had my dog, and my kind neighbours, to cheer me; still, in the long winter evenings when I sat alone with my thoughts and memories, with no sound to break the stillness save the ticking of the clock, and the shuffling and snuffling of my poor old Nell, I felt that I did need human companionship. Therefore, when my poor brother and his wife died, in their (to me) far-off French home, in the same week, from the same fearful epidemic, leaving their one child, Sybil, to my care, there was some alloy to the bitter grief of losing the

last near relative I possessed.

I had not seen Sybil since she was a tiny child, with a white grave face, and big brown eyes, who had cried because I had jestingly offered to take her back to England with me. Now, she was not only grown up, but past twenty; and I was sadly afraid that, when she had recovered a little the terrible shock she had lately sustained, she would find my little cottage home very dull. For my village, as I called it, was the most rustic of villages, in which society was represented by the clergyman and his family and myself. It had not always been so. Once the old Manor House had been inhabited, which added much to the life of the whole place; but just at the time I am speaking of, its drawndown blinds, its untrodden walks were worse than no house at all. I often wished that its master, in his restless wanderings about the world, would remember the stay-at-homes, and let it to some bright, cheery family, who would dispel the gloom that hung about its walls.

I could not expect that Sybil should learn to love