

## THE SLANDERER.

"Against slander there is no defense. It starts with a word, with a nod, with a shrug, with a look, with a smile. It is pestilence walking in darkness, spreading contagion far and wide, which the most wary traveler cannot avoid; it is the heart-searching dagger of the dark assassin; it is the poisoned arrow whose wounds are incurable; it is the mortal sting of the deadly adder, murder its employment, innocence its prey, and ruin its sport. The man who breaks into my dwelling, or meets me on the public road and robs me of my property, does me injury. He stops me on the way to wealth, strips me of my hard-earned savings, involves me in difficulty, and brings my family to penury and [R1188 : page 6] want. But he does me an injury that can be repaired. Industry and economy may again bring me into circumstances of ease and affluence. The man who, coming at the midnight hour, fires my dwelling, does me an injury – he burns my roof, my pillow, my raiment, my very shelter from the storm and tempests; but he does me an injury that can be repaired. The storm may indeed beat upon me, and chilling blasts assail me; but Charity will receive me into her dwelling, will give me food to eat and raiment to put on, will timely assist me, raising a new roof over the ashes of the old, and I shall again sit by my own fireside, and taste the sweets of friendship and of home. But the man who circulates false reports concerning my character, who exposes every act of my life which may be misrepresented to my disadvantage, who goes first to this, then to that individual, tells them he is very tender of my reputation, enjoins upon them the strictest secrecy, and then fills their ears with hearsays and rumors, and, what is worse, leaves them to dwell upon the hints and suggestions of his own busy imagination – the man who thus "filches from me my good name" does me an injury which neither industry, charity, nor time itself can repair.

– *Selected.*

