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FRONTISPIECE.



S. Williams. Del. S. Springsguit

***Setting her foot on a loose stone
it gave way, and throwing her
down she slipped into the Brook.***

Vide page 105

THE
CLERGYMAN'S WIDOW,
and her
Young Family,
BY
M^{RS} HOPLAND,

Author of
The Affectionate Brothers Barbadoes Girl.
Daughter in Law. Merchants Widow.
Panorama of Europe. Sisters. Young
Northern Traveller. &c.

London.

ARTHUR HALL, VIRTUE & CO
25, PATERNOSTER ROW.

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CLERGYMAN'S WIDOW,

AND

HER YOUNG FAMILY.

BY

MRS. HOFLAND,

AUTHOR OF

THE YOUNG CADET; YOUNG CRUSOE; BLIND FARMER; BARBADOS GIRL; MERCHANT'S WIDOW; THE SISTERS; PANORAMA OF EUROPE; GOOD GRANDMOTHER;
YOUNG NORTHERN TRAVELLER; STOLEN BOY; ALICIA AND HER AUNT; ELIZABETH; THE AFFECTIONATE BROTHERS; GODMOTHER'S TALES; DAUGHTER-IN-LAW,
&c. &c.

Behold the ways
Of Heaven's eternal destiny to man—
For ever just, benevolent and wise.—AKENSIDE.

NEW EDITION.

LONDON:
ARTHUR HALL, VIRTUE AND CO.,
PATERNOSTER ROW.

THE

HISTORY

OF A

CLERGYMAN'S WIDOW,

AND

HER YOUNG FAMILY.



CHAPTER I.

In the spring of the year 1793, as a young Englishman was picking his way through the streets of Lisbon, his attention was excited by a gentleman who was slowly walking on the other side of the street, supported by his cane. His dress and appearance were those of an English clergyman, and his apparent weakness induced the young man to believe he was one of the many who resort to the climate of Portugal, to ward off the effects of a disease at once the most hopeless and the most flattering with which human nature is afflicted—a disorder which seems peculiarly to seize on the most amiable and lovely of our species, and to single out the beautiful and excellent as its prey—a circumstance which gives to its subject an immediate interest in every bosom alive to the claims of humanity; and the youth who was now gazing intently on the fine features, and sighing over the broken form he contemplated, was calculated, in no common degree, to feel the purest sympathies, the best charities of the heart.

These strangers were just going to take advantage of the crossing which was made over the dirty street, now rendered impassable at any other part by the late fall of a heavy shower, when a tall Galician, loaded with a trunk on his shoulders, rudely pushed past the feeble invalid, in such a manner that he would have been completely overthrown in the mud, if the young man springing forward, had not seized his arm and helped him on his feet, while, with indignation flashing in his eye, he turned to chastise the insolence of the Galician.

'Patienza!' said the fellow, and stalked off.

'Patience, my young friend,' said the clergyman, with a placid smile, 'is indeed a virtue we must all practise in this country, and, as far as I am concerned in this affair, I shall rejoice in obeying its dictates, since the accident has given me the pleasure of hearing the voice of a countryman, the first I have happened to meet with since my landing.'

Mr. H——, the young man, replied, that the circumstance was not less pleasing to himself; and observing that the streets were very disagreeable to delicate people, offered the gentleman his arm, which was thankfully accepted; and turning back with him, he saw his new acquaintance safe to his lodgings, which he observed with pain were by no means suitable for the complaint under which he laboured.

It was impossible for a reflective mind not to see at once that the interesting invalid had to contend with the evils of confined circumstances, in addition to the sufferings of bodily infirmity; he was alone too—he had neither a servant to administer to his wants, nor a wife or daughter to alleviate his sorrows; he was, indeed, a stranger in a strange land; ignorant of the language, shocked with the conduct, disgusted with the manners of all around him, he seemed alone in the world, an isolated and deserted being, cut off from the society he was evidently calculated to adorn, and most probably from a scene where every benevolent propensity of his nature had been daily exercised.

While thoughts like these were passing in the mind of the youth, the good man on his part was surveying his guest with looks of fond and grateful approbation; and after taking a restorative medicine, for which it was evident he had great occasion, he informed him that his name was Gardiner; he was a clergyman who possessed a small living in Devonshire; that in going to baptize a sick child at some distance during the night, in the preceding autumn, he had caught a cold, which had fallen on his lungs; that after various applications, all medicine appearing ineffectual, he had been induced to try the celebrated air of Lisbon—'And who knows,' said he, faintly smiling as he spoke, 'who knows but it may restore me: I have only been three weeks in this place, and I sometimes fancy my cough is abated, and my fever less violent; and these favourable symptoms I communicated to my poor wife this morning.'

'But, my good sir,' interrupted H——, 'is it not a pity but Mrs. Gardiner had accompanied you?'

'The thing was impossible, sir; my poor wife is far advanced in her pregnancy: besides,' added he, in a tremulous tone, and his eyes glistening as he spoke, with a tear that could not be restrained, 'there were other reasons. I have already five children, and this sickness of mine has pressed very hard upon our little store; for my family would not rest without obtaining the best advice for me; and though the young man who has for some time done my duty accepts but a very slender pittance for his services, yet every thing, you know, adds to expence we are ill provided to bear: but you,' added he, 'you are young, and cannot be supposed to understand these things. Come and see me to-morrow, and I will try to amuse you better.'

Deeply penetrated with sympathy and awakened affection, the young man took his leave, perceiving that a chord was awakened in the heart of this tender parent, which vibrated too strongly for his feeble frame to bear. On his retiring, the

good man sought repose where alone he could find it—in the consolations of that religion which had been his guide through life, and was his hope in death: with humble confidence he devoted not only his own soul to the hands of a merciful Redeemer, but the safety of those so exquisitely endeared to him, that their welfare appeared infinitely dearer than his own; for them he had lived, and still wished to live; and if ever he lifted up his eyes to God, to implore prolonged existence, for their sakes he looked—for them he implored, but, with the submission of his Great Master, concluded every orison with, 'not my will, but thine be done.'

Mr. Gardiner had attached himself early in life to a very amiable orphan, whose helpless situation had first excited his pity, whose good conduct secured his esteem, and whose many amiable qualities, on a further acquaintance, engaged his fondest affection: uniting the utmost simplicity of manners with a sound judgment and an active mind, Maria Benson appeared uncommonly calculated to fulfil the duties of a country pastor's wife; and as soon as the gift of a small living, to which a little farm was attached, became Mr. Gardiner's lot, he married her, and proved her power of fulfilling them to the full extent.

They had at this period been married fifteen years, and in that time she had been the mother of seven children: two fine boys their pious parents had consigned to the dust; but three fine girls and two infant sons were still their precious companions. To educate those pledges of a love which increased with time, agreeable to their rank in society, and their very bounded prospects, was a task of no little difficulty; but it fell on those who knew how to discharge it faithfully; their good father had been their only preceptor, their mother their only governess, at such times as the many cares of her household allowed her to attend them; at others, the ancient schoolmistress of the village supplied her place.

The situation of Mr. Gardiner was such as to call forth every benevolent exertion; his parish was extensive, but its inhabitants poor; and he found them ignorant, stubborn, and though not always ill-natured, yet uniformly ill-bred: mild by nature, and patient through principle, he applied himself with gentle diligence to cultivate the sterile mind, and soften the stony heart; with some difficulty he prevailed on the peasantry to suffer him to instruct their youth, for a few of the first years of his residence—a task in which his Maria took her share: with such happy effects was this care attended, that when the claims of his own family obliged him to relinquish this charge, the inhabitants of his village were become willing and able to maintain a schoolmaster respectably; and so much was he beloved for his exertion, and revered for his steady exercise of every Christian virtue, that at the time of his departure for Lisbon, not a being existed within the circle of his duties, who did not feel they were parting with a father and a friend: in every house there were prayers offered for the restoration of their minister: some were lamenting the teacher who had instructed them; others, the friend whose counsel and good offices had assisted them: and all, the compassionate comforter, who, like the angel of pity, at one time or other, had soothed their afflictions, and wiped away their tears.

But this simple and affectionate people had offered not only prayers and blessings for their good rector's restoration; some of them knew very well the state of his finances, and would, according to their own bounded power, have given more substantial proofs of their attachment; but this the delicacy of superior minds shrank from receiving; and one thing after another was parted with out of the farming stock, to procure the means of making the wished-for voyage, till nearly all was gone: and one neighbour, whose only son Mrs. Gardiner had nursed through a fever, was obliged to insist on her accepting a cow, till his reverence came back; and another, whom the good pastor had rescued from the horrors of a lawsuit, declared, if she would not accept his wheat, 'he should think her main cruel, so he should.'

To glance on the feelings of such a wife and such a parent, at the moment of departing on such an awful occasion, is impossible; those who have suffered similar privations will see it all, and sympathize with it; the thoughtless and unfeeling are unworthy of the picture: it is therefore sufficient to say, that after a tedious and uninteresting voyage, in which his disorder gained ground, Mr. Gardiner arrived at Lisbon, with not one friendly voice to greet him on the shore, nor, indeed, any voice whose language he understood; that with some difficulty he procured wretched lodgings, where the filthiness of the inhabitants, and their execrable cooking, opposed to the neatness of his own comfortable home, and the sweetness of those morsels prepared by the hand of her he loved, destroyed the little appetite he had, and thus hastened the approach of that hour which had long hung suspended, though inevitable: and the sense of his forlorn situation, added to the consciousness of what they were suffering for him, whose sufferings were most painful to them, hung on his spirits, and increased the consuming fever that preyed on life.

Under these circumstances, the meeting which took place between him and his countryman, as we have seen, appeared a blessing of such consequence as to call for especial gratitude to Heaven; and the good man laid not his sleepless head on his pillow that night, till he thanked his Heavenly Father for this precious prospect of consolation, which fell like 'manna

in the wilderness.'



CHAPTER II.

When Mr. H—— paid his promised visit to his new acquaintance, the following morning, he found him tolerably cheerful, and extremely grateful for the kind attention: he now spoke of his family with composure, and even pleasure, sometimes anticipating his return with sparkling eyes, whose very brilliance proved its impossibility; at others, expressed anxiety about his wife, who was now near her confinement; but in every thing expressing submission to that divine hand, who 'killeth and maketh alive.'

The mental acquirements of Mr. Gardiner kept pace with his virtues; and his interesting conversation, and conciliating manners, endeared him so much to his young friend, that, except at those hours when it was his duty to attend to business (being a junior partner in a mercantile house), his whole time was given to the invalid, whose increasing weakness proved but too fully that the cares of friendship were drawing to a close. As soon as their acquaintance warranted the offer, H—— accommodated Mr. Gardiner with his own lodgings, and slept on a mattress in the same room, attending to all his ailments with the most sedulous affection; and, as far as his circumstances enabled him, relieved every want, and supplied every deficiency to the departing saint, whose spirit appeared to rise in proportion to his sufferings, and whose faith shone brightest as the glimmerings of life declined.

It was generally their custom to take two short walks in the day, when the strength of the patient permitted it: these were frequently taken in the burial-ground of the British factory, on account of its vicinity to their lodgings. This solemn spot, where rows of tall cypresses shed a deep gloom over the sacred ground, is peculiarly calculated to awaken pensive reflection in the minds of Englishmen; for there lay many of our countrymen, cut off in the very blossom of life, in the very zenith of enjoyment; it is the very cemetery of youth, beauty, and rank. How affecting must it have been to these two, then, one of whom knew not but on the morrow the very ground on which he now stood might be opened to receive him; the other, rendered conscious, from every inscription around him, that the strength he now felt bracing his limbs, the health that now mantled on his cheek, was no security for life, but that he, like the companion that now clung shivering to his arm, might be blasted in his prime, the fond expectations of his heart cut off, and those he best loved sigh over his untimely tomb!

One day, as they were returning from their melancholy walk, the good man paused at the gate, turned round, and took a view of the ground they had quitted, with an air of pensive satisfaction in his countenance; after a short pause, 'I am thinking,' said he, 'that there is scarcely one person in this burial-ground who has attained my age. I have lived near forty years, most of which have been passed in serenity and content, and the last fifteen (with a few exceptions) in a state of as much felicity as is consistent with probationary existence. For these wonderful blessings ought I not to bow down in grateful adoration to Him who ordereth all things well? Yes, my young friend, I ought; and I *do* cry, with humble thankfulness, "Be it unto me according to thy will, my Father and my God!" for thy promise is precious to my heart; I can "leave my fatherless children to Thee, and my widow shall trust in Thee, and be at rest."

As the pious sufferer thus repeated the blessed promises of the divine word, his pallid countenance glowed with the sublime emotion of devout affection and stedfast faith, and his words were uttered with a precision and fervour, that appeared an emanation of supernatural power to the eye that glanced over his emaciated form. With awful admiration and chastened pleasure, to be felt, but not described, the young man gazed on him, as he supported him, and, unable to speak, could only lift up his heart to 'Him who seeth in secret,' and pray that like composure, might be given to *him*, when the same solemn sentence should be passing on his head—Nor was the prayer unheard. The exertion of this day appeared too much for the enfeebled patient, and his affectionate young friend secretly resolved that it should not be repeated; he even interdicted conversation for the rest of the evening. In the course of it, an English officer, with whom he had some acquaintance, came in, and earnestly pressed him to accompany him to the opera; Mr. Gardiner joined in the entreaty, saying—'You have lately confined yourself so much with me, that I really fear I am doing you an injury. Your spirits and health will suffer from it. Do, my dear fellow, leave me for once, and go with your friend,'

Though Mr. H—— did not apprehend that his suffering charge was materially worse this evening, yet his mind was not in unison with objects of frivolous pursuit, and he was aware that the time would be very short in which he could drink wisdom from the faltering lips which so kindly urged him to depart! he therefore positively refused to go, and, in a short time, saw reason to congratulate himself on his resolution, as the patient was soon after seized with a fit of coughing, so violent as for some minutes to threaten suffocation.

When he was a little recovered from the state of exhaustion this had occasioned, H—— proposed putting him to bed,

which was thankfully acceded to, but was found unusually fatiguing and distressing, but, when accomplished, seemed to give him new spirits. Contrary to the injunctions of his anxious attendant, he indulged himself in speaking of his wife and children, with even more than his usual tenderness; and begged that H—— would promise him, that if ever he went within fifty miles of their habitation, he would visit them—a promise the young man willingly made, but lamented that some years would pass before he returned to England. 'No matter,' returned he, with calmness, 'you will write to them, I am certain, and you will arrange all my affairs in the way I wish. Yes, excellent young man,' he exclaimed, with increased energy, 'you will do all things well. Know, that much as I thank you for your labour of love towards me, a helpless stranger, and sincerely as I pray that it may be repaid sevenfold to your own bosom, I yet rejoice most in your friendship, as deeming it the especial gift of my Almighty Guardian.' As he spoke, the last words were uttered with difficulty, and his vivid eye said more than his parched lip. In great agitation, the youth besought him to speak no more, but endeavour to sleep. 'I am going to sleep,' he replied, with a smile of heavenly calmness, 'and never forget how sweet that sleep was made to me:—let the remembrance of this hour be your shield and support in the world of sin and sorrow, whither you are going; and then my dear, *dear* boy, *my* God will be *your* God also.' He ceased to speak and to breathe. The youth stooped forwards, to catch the last precious sound, but all was still—the last pulse had ceased to beat, and the good man slept in peace.

CHAPTER III.

When the first emotions of pity and regret were subsided, Mr. H—— endeavoured to fulfil the wishes of the departed, by examining the few effects he had desired to be sent to his widow, and arranging his funeral, which he determined should be at his own expence. He likewise felt it a painful duty to write to poor Mrs. Gardiner as soon as possible—a task of severe suffering to a mind of sensibility, especially in the circumstances under which she stood. This letter he enclosed in one to the young man who was Mr. Gardiner's curate at the time of his decease, and who resided in the house with the family. These melancholy duties occupied the next day: on the evening of the following, he prepared to follow the corpse of the man, so late a stranger to him, to the house appointed for all living. When he reflected on the shortness of their acquaintance, and how much it had comprised, he was forcibly struck with the last words of the departed, and felt as if he had been indeed an instrument, in the hands of an All-wise Disposer, to bless and protect his servant. He saw clearly, that in every situation the goodness of God can consistently raise up help for those that trust in him; and he rejoiced in having been the means of comfort to one so uncommonly worthy to receive it. This sensation was still farther increased, when, on looking over the deceased's pocketbook for his commands respecting his interment, he saw many passages respecting himself, addressed to Mrs. Gardiner—such as these:—

'Oh, Maria! I have got a good and tender nurse, such as only thy love could exceed: let this be thy comfort when I am in the dust—tell my girls that this young man fulfils all their duties, and is unto me even as a daughter.'

'Help me, my dear wife, to thank Him who, in the midst of judgement remembereth mercy, and hath sent me a friend in a strange land. Assure yourself that I am surrounded with comforts; the tedium of my languid state is assuaged by the intelligence of my young friend, and my sufferings soothed by his kindness,' &c. &c.

From the contemplation of these effusions of a devout and tender heart, Mr. H—— was obliged to tear himself for offices of a different nature. The people of the house not only refused positively to assist in paying the last duties to the body of a heretic, but with contradictory stubbornness, insisted on its immediate removal. He was therefore under a necessity of entreating the British consul to suffer his own English servants to convey the good clergyman to his grave. They came, accompanied by the chaplain, who preceded them, while H——, the one only mourner, slowly followed the venerated clay. As they passed through the gate where so lately those lips, now cold and pale, had uttered the language of inspiration in the voice of hope—that eye, now closed for ever, had beamed with the triumph of faith and anticipated immortality, he felt the full value of that religion which looks beyond the grave, and he felt grateful that he had seen its effects so fully and happily exemplified. But while he stood at this last receptacle, where there were only the two men who bore the body, the chaplain, and himself, he could not help contrasting the forlorn attendance of the funeral with what it would have been in the beloved pastor's own country, surrounded by the flock he had so long fed with the doctrines of life; he felt as if he should have had a mournful satisfaction in witnessing the heartfelt tribute of their tears, and knowing that his little ones had wept over the ashes of their father. He deprecated the cruel folly of sending a man in a hopeless disorder from the bosom of a family, then most endeared to him, to seek among strangers for comforts rarely found, and which no change of air, or benefit of climate, can supply. The prayer excited by this mournful contemplation was answered to this excellent young man: in about three years, he too fell a victim to consumption; but *his* sufferings were soothed by a wife and mother tenderly, beloved, in whose arms he at length expired. Surely we may say—'The blessing of the stranger was upon him.' 'The Lord remembered him in the day of trouble.'

CHAPTER IV.

Poor Mrs. Gardiner was spared the agonizing knowledge of her loss, till she had become the mother of another son about three weeks, when just as her eldest daughter was admiring the baby, and observing with what delight her father would see it on his return, the second entered the room, to inform her mother that Mr. Wallingford, the curate, had got a letter from Lisbon, and she flattered herself that her father was on his road home, and had wrote to Mr. Wallingford, to inform them of it at the best time.

The heart of the poor mother throbbed violently in her bosom; life and death seemed suspended before her! she durst not hope with her children, nor had she courage to embrace that fear, which, in her situation, was best. The innocent children, whose buoyant spirits in every case of doubt look on the brightest side, were shocked at the speechless dismay which appeared in their mother's countenance; and little George, who, on his knees, was playing with the baby's fingers, gave a loud shriek on seeing her sink back on her chair. This sound induced Mr. Wallingford, who, with eyes dimmed with tears, was perusing Mr. H——'s letter, to conclude that the fatal secret was by some means anticipated; he flew into the chamber, exclaiming—'Dear, dear madam, do try to support yourself, for God's sake! for your children's sake!' This well-meant, though ill-heard exhortation, unfolded to all the dreadful truth—a shriek of distress rent the room; the widow fell senseless from her chair; deep and silent agony succeeded the burst of frenzied lamentation—it was the calm of despair.

'Maria,' said the curate, 'help your mother—she is only faint; exert yourself my good girl; prove worthy of the father you have lost—of the mother you have left.—Sarah, take these dear little ones down stairs; they will be good, and make no noise—for their mother's sake, they will control their grief.'

The curate had a right to conclude, as he did, that Maria would exert herself; for though only now entering her fifteenth year, she possessed acuteness and strength of mind to an uncommon degree, and added to great suavity of manners a degree of fortitude rarely found. She succeeded in restoring her mother to animation, who, moved by her tender assiduities, and still more by her repressed emotion, happily found relief for a bursting heart in an abundant flow of tears. From this natural effusion no one sought to divert her; the children were suffered to mingle their sorrows with hers, till exhausted nature took refuge in temporary repose.

But short and broken is the widow's slumber; and she who, to the poignant anguish of being severed from that beloved being who has been to her as the light of life—who, for years together, has been the father, lover, and brother of her soul, adds the misery of being mother to many unprovided babes, will seldom taste the blessings of repose; care and anxiety corrode the little peace which violent sorrow failed to destroy, and leave the mind to the gloom of despondency, or the helplessness of despair.

But, happily for herself and for her children, this good woman had been not only the companion of her husband's gay hours, but the partaker of his most awful cares; they had taken sweet counsel together, and walked in the house of God as friends. She firmly believed that the union begun on earth would be perfected in heaven; that the hand which had blighted her joys in this world, would bid them reblossom in another to eternity.

In what way so large a family could be provided for, in even the poorest way, was a consideration that not only distressed the poor mother and the good curate, who, though very young, partook her cares, but every person in the village. Those who had not shed the tears of grateful affection literally over his grave, gave full testimony of their sorrow, when on the following Sunday, the young minister, in a plain impressive manner, preached a funeral sermon, not calculated to exhibit his own eloquence, but to awaken their remembrance, which was done still more effectually by his reading a short address to his parishioners, written a little before his death, and found among the papers transmitted to his widow. Thus attached to the memory of their minister, the people naturally wished to retain his family amongst them: but it was soon found that she must quit the parsonage; and though several were ready to offer a part of her family a temporary accommodation, yet there appeared no possibility of procuring the means of a permanent residence amongst them.

Mrs. Gardiner had only three relations in the world, to none of whom she could apply for assistance; two of them were nephews of her mother, who had offended her family by her marriage with Captain Benson, who as a younger brother, was unable to support his wife in the circle she had been accustomed to move. These gentlemen were strangers to Mrs. Gardiner, and little likely to regard her, especially as one had a large family, to whom the other had attached himself, in

a manner that allowed no hopes for his humbler relatives.

The other relation was likewise a cousin, but on the mother's side; he was an apothecary, and she had been told, in good business; but she knew he was married, and had a family; and as he lived at a considerable distance, she had not heard any thing of him for some years: nor had her late husband any relation with whom he kept up an intercourse; having been an only child, the nearer connexions of life were unknown to him.

Something, however, must be done, for the house must be evacuated. Happy would the parishioners have thought themselves, if their young curate had obtained the living; but this was in the gift of a great man who gave it, as he happened to be asked first, contrary to the example of his predecessor, who knew the *value* of the man he had served; but the young man was informed, that as it was understood he was the schoolmaster of the village, and was much approved in it he would be retained in his present capacity, notwithstanding the residence of the incumbent, and allowed thirty pounds a-year for his services. Happy in this addition to his income, the young man hastened to the widow, and having told her of his advancement, entreated permission to take little George under his protection, assuring her, that he had already engaged for the board of both at a neighbouring farmer's; 'and his education,' added he, 'I am sure you will trust me with, as I received mine from his excellent father.' To this offer Mrs. Gardiner could make no objection, and Mr. Wallingford wanted no thanks. The little boy loved his protector so well, that he made no objection to accompany him; and though the poor widow felt as if this was the first limb torn from her of a family about to be dissevered, perhaps for ever, yet she felt the value of the protection demanded a cheerful, as well as grateful compliance; and she parted from her eldest boy without a tear.

The goods of her neat dwelling—the farming utensils, and stock, were appraised, and bought partly by the neighbours, and partly by the clergyman who succeeded. From this disposal of all her worldly property, except a little linen, she raised a sum of between two and three hundred pounds; and with this she prepared to set out to the nearest market-town, to take a cheap lodging, and endeavour to get into some employment which might find bread for her little ones.

Desirous to remain in a house so long endeared to her till the very latest moment, Mrs. Gardiner did not avail herself of the invitation of her neighbours, but with calm fortitude saw one thing after another taken out of her house, till it was the very picture of desolation. She was sitting on a broken arm-chair, with her babe at the breast, and little William on the floor at her feet, while her daughters were seated on the kitchen-table, vainly endeavouring to suppress the tears this terrible reverse occasioned, when farmer Gooch, who had been busy about the place all day, came again into the kitchen, and hoped she would change her mind, and take her bed at their house; he said he could not bear to think of her sleeping in that place, it looked so forlorn and poor-like.

'I thank you, friend,' said Mrs. Gardiner, 'very sincerely; but as your wife has kindly lent me beds, I prefer using them: we shall manage very well, I assure you.'

The farmer looked wistfully round, and stroked his hand across his eyes, but did not offer to go.

'Do you want to take away any thing more to-night, Mr. Gooch? I think every thing seems gone.'

'Why, yesz, madam, to be sure moast oth things be gone, more'z th' pity; but I be come to tak zummit, zure enough; but I doezn't know how to ax verry weel, that I doezn't.'

'I beg,' said Mrs. Gardiner, earnestly, you will tell me what you mean. Do we owe you any thing? Did my dear husband get any money of you for his journey?'

'Noa! noa! what I meanz is this; woife and I settled a week sin to take little William, if zo be you can spare he; we haz but one, and we may thank yo for he; but I could na fashion to ax yo, becaze we know how much it would cut ourselves to part wi' ovr own like; but if ye'll part wi' Willy, he shall go to schoal wi' his brother, and yer zure my woife'll be good to him, and he'll have his health far better here than in a gret toon, maist likely; and when, please God, ye can do wi' him back, we'll not be zae wicked to rob ye o' your child.'

To part with Willy was indeed a trial, but to leave him in such kind and tender hands, was amongst the greatest comforts to this good mother; with many tears and thanks, she placed her blooming boy in the rough arms that were stretched out to receive him, and which clasped him to a heart not only more benevolent, but more delicate, than thousands that boast refinement—a heart that thanked her for having permitted him to be generous, and on which, from having tried its worth, she could repose unlimited confidence.

With her two boys thus happily provided for, the heart of the poor widow would have been a little lightened of its load, but for the pang of leaving a place still so dear to her. But finding the new rector was to come in a few days, she determined on setting out the following morning; and having procured lodgings, she desired another farmer, whom we formerly mentioned, to convey her and her children thither in his covered cart, with which he complied, with a grateful bow. Her little luggage was easily packed, and sent to be placed in the covered cart. The sound of the farmer's whip was heard in the yard, and the widow, finding that delay only increased the pang of parting—a pang increased by the bitter grief of her poor servant, snatched her infant to her arms, and hastily kissing her boys, passed on to the cart. A post-chaise stood at the garden gate; the girls were standing at the cart, and assured her it was so full there was no possibility of getting in. 'Noa, Miss, it wazn't meant for madam nor ye to get in nather!' exclaimed a dozen voices at once.

'But, my dear friend,' said Mrs. Gardiner, 'I must get in somewhere; there is the rector come in that chaise, and indeed I cannot—*cannot* see a stranger.'

'Madam,' said a miller, pulling off his white hat, 'here's nae boddy near you but your own foaks; we haz made free to get this chaize for you to go in, being az how mare properer for you; and az to the cart ye zee, we ha put a few things in it to be uzeful, if so be ye'll excuse uz; we couldn't let you go without a token o'love—his reverence made uz better Christians than that, I hopes. Farmer Eade will drive it for you, and frae him we sall hear ye got safe—God grant it!'

Strangely blended were the sensations that now rushed on the widow's heart; grief, gratitude, and admiration, combined to affect her, especially as she saw the whole yard, and the lane through which she must pass, filled with her husband's parishioners. Some aged people, to whom she had been kind, clung to the heads of the horses, as if to stop her progress, and wept aloud; but the more sensible part of the crowd repressed their own feeling, as if out of compassion for hers: to those around her she offered her hand, but words were utterly denied her; the children ran with alacrity, though drowned in tears, among the crowd, and shook hands with all within their reach, till the curate, trembling for the effects of such an affecting scene on the weakened frame of their mother, placed them in the chaise with her. The carriage drew slowly off, hindered by the crowd around, who, in silent sorrow, watched it turn the corner of the lane: the moment it was out of sight, a burst of general sorrow was heard, and a thousand blessings, mingled with a thousand sighs. Little George and William, each held in the arms of their respective protectors, next attracted the homage of the crowd: and the good curate, anxious to imprint the best lessons on their young hearts, taught them to learn from this impressive spectacle, how much they owed to the virtue of their parents, and how sure were the rewards of piety, even in a world of sorrow.

CHAPTER V.

As the crowd were slowly dispersing on all sides of the parsonage, and the widow, with her fatherless children, pursuing their melancholy journey, a smart gig, with two clerical gentlemen, attended by a servant, drove down the lane.

'What a number of people,' said the driver of the gig, 'are standing about the house! Are they attending the sale, or are they looking out for me, I wonder? I shall be cursedly vexed if I do not find the house empty; and yet it may be my own fault too, for I sent the widow of the last owner a message, importing my arrival would not take place till Saturday.'

'You had better have written to her,' said his friend, 'and then no mistake could have arisen.'

'But I detest writing. I sent down a man on whom I could depend, to buy up the best of the furniture, and to lock it up; of course I concluded she would leave the house when it was empty.'

'A fair conclusion certainly.' As these words were spoken, the gig was drawn up to the garden-gate, and the last lingering group of parishioners were modestly withdrawing, when the new rector, addressing the nearest, cried out—'Harkee, my honest fellow, are all these people assembled to meet me? or what are they about, hey?'

'Ye, zur! why noa, we none on us thout about ye, loike; we be comed to bid madam ferweel, and to wish her good luck, and such loike, that be all; we hopez no offence: 'tis an ill day to we, God knowz.'

'Oh, 'tis all very well, I find; the widow is gone then?'

'Yeez, more'z the pity; zhe be gone, zure enough.'

'This same widow, or her late husband, or both,' said the rector's friend, 'must have been people of no common character, to have attracted these people's attention and attachment so strongly; from the grief expressed in their countenances, I fear she is poorly provided for.'

'Very poorly, your honour,' said Mrs. Gooch, dropping a low curtsy, as she applied the corner of her apron to her eye; 'and zhe do dezerve richez without end, zo zhe do. This be her zun; your honour never zeed a zweeter; we do all call um zweet William, zo we do; he be the immagine of his feather, zo he be.'

'And how happens this little boy to be left with you, good woman?' inquired the clergyman, as he patted sweet William's rosy cheek, still moistened by the parting tear.

'Why, zur, what cud her do wi zix childer? It brak her poor heart to part, to be zure, wi' thiz'n; but still zhe were fain to put him under huzband and I, for zhe did know we would feed him o'th best we had, and the curate in good time will see after his larning.'

'How you stand, Simpson, listening to that woman's palaver,' cried the new rector, 'while I am quite at a nonplus about dinner! I came here as hungry as a hunter, and had set my heart on a boiled fowl and a slice of ham for my dinner, things one expects, of course, to find in a country village; and here's one fellow tells me he had but three chickens, and his wife put them into Mrs. Gardiner's cart; and another informs me very coolly, that he put the only ham in the village into the same cart himself—what the devil shall we do?'

'I am thinking,' said his friend, awaking from a reverie, 'I am thinking we must procure——'

'We can procure nothing but a beef steak and a leg of mutton.'

'Tis but a trifle, indeed, among so many; but still it will be a great matter to her.'

'To *her!* to *us*, you mean; then you think we can manage with these things?'

'I will never rest till I have managed it; and I have two friends on whose services I can rely.'

'*Two* friends! why, for such a dinner, one cook is as good as a thousand.'

'Cook!' cried the benevolent absentee; 'yes, Cook is the very man who is most likely to secure the bounty.'

'Bounty! what are you talking about?'

'Queen Anne's bounty to be sure, which we must get immediately for Mrs. Gardiner; and by-and-by, when this little man is big enough, surely either you or I can find interest to get him into Christ's school.'

'May God in heaven bless your worship, and your worship's children after ye!' cried Mrs. Gooch, dropping on her knees; 'Christ's school, indeed! ay, that be the school where ye were taut yourself, zo it waz, I be zure. I think i' my heart, zo I do, yer jutz zuch another az our own parzon; and may the bleszing of bleszings be on ye!'

The emotion of the honest dame attracted the remaining group, and they all fervently joined in invoking good for him who sought it for the widow and the fatherless.

The rector was moved with this scene, for he was a good-natured man; and while with a relaxed countenance and conciliating voice, he led his friend into the house, he assured him, that after dinner, he would gladly concert any measures most likely to procure the wished-for annuity for Mrs. Gardiner.

This business the benevolent clergyman did not suffer to pass unnoticed. When the proper letters were dispatched, the evening shut in, and the hour of social intercourse returned, after thanking the rector for his attention to a subject which was so interesting to *him*, he inquired farther, what motive had induced him to take up his residence in a house, which, though neat and pleasant, was far inferior to the vicarage of his more beneficial living in Staffordshire?

'Dear me, what a question! I thought I told you, when I asked you to induct me to this, that it is the very best sporting place in the West of England. I know I shall not be able to live here after Christmas, but, in the mean time, I expect much amusement. I have engaged a curate on that account—the young man you saw in the garden.'

'Whose modest department, I confess, interested me much. Did you tell me what you meant to give him?'

'I do not recollect; he is the schoolmaster here, and as I concluded he could live somehow, even if he had not my curacy, I settled to give him thirty pounds a-year.'

'You forget yourself; it is your footman you give that.'

'No, I am right. I give my footman twenty-five guineas, and find him in boots; so, as you say, 'tis much the same.'

'No, *you* are mistaken there; 'tis by no means the same, for your footman lives in your house—your curate has to pay for his board.'

'True, very true; but what can we do? one cannot live without servants; and these fellows are so scaucy now-a-days; and then, as to the curate, poor man, if he is *content*, you know, why, that is every thing.'

'Not every thing, my dear sir. Many of our cloth practise resignation as a duty, whose external calmness induces the unthinking to mistake it for content; but, alas! the feeling heart can be seldom blessed with the sweet cheerfulness of content, when it is burthened with the cares of poverty, or smarting under the sneers of vulgar pride, too often bestowed on that very delicacy which is the natural offspring of superior education and conscious worth. The situation of such men presses heavily on my heart, not the less so because their sufferings are endured in silence, and their sighs breathed only in secret.'

'Tis a sad thing indeed, and I wish the legislature would think about it.'

'As you say, 'tis a *sad thing*. I hope something will be done by-and-by; mean time, do you think it would be right for me to give Wallingford forty pounds a-year?'

'I think it would be a very good thing indeed; 'tis a very excellent thought; I give you great credit for it.'

'And when I am not here, he may as well live in the house; 'twill save him some expence, you know, hey?'

'This too is an admirable thought,' said Mr. Simpson, rising; 'you are going to use your new acquisition as you ought, I perceive; and I wish you good night, under the most pleasing impressions both of the parishioners of Whitechapel and their new rector.'

CHAPTER VI.

We will now return to Mrs. Gardiner and her daughters, who arrived in due time at the town of S——, and were civilly received by the mistress of the house, who conducted them into a neat small parlour, which had been hired for them by farmer Eade, who shortly after arrived with his store-cart, the contents of which considerably enhanced the consequence of her lodgers in the eye of the hostess. The good farmer took a hasty but most affectionate leave, followed by the heartfelt thanks and good wishes of all the party. Mrs. Gardiner, extremely fatigued, though less by her journey than her feelings, lay down with her infant on the bed, while her affectionate children undertook to dispose of their clothes and provisions in the new apartments: while they are doing this, and getting ready a cup of tea for their mother, we will introduce our young readers to each of them personally, as well as we are able.

Maria, the eldest, was a tall, handsome, fine-looking girl, with dark-brown hair, that hung in clustering curls upon her forehead, and shadowed her bright hazel eyes; the rich glow of health animated her features, and gave strength and agility to her motions: to the most lively sensibility she added a sweetness of temper, patience of disposition, and firmness of mind, not often united with acute feeling; and the quickness of her penetration, the extent of her capacity, and the solidity of her judgment, gave promise of an early but not premature maturity; she appeared likely to be not only as a second mother to the younger branches of her family, but in some measure to supply to their surviving parent the friend she had lost.

Sarah, the second daughter, was a most amiable girl, but of a very different character to that of Maria. Her form was elegant, but delicate even to fragility; and though her health was very good, the exquisite fairness of her skin, and the slight texture of her frame, conveyed the idea of its instability, in a manner which increased the interest her beauty excited; she appeared like an exotic flower, which will shrink beneath the first blast of winter, and wither under the first touch of pain. Her manners were so gentle and meek, her voice so sweet and deprecating, that her good father used to call her his 'lily of the valley,' and often observed, that she was a kind of privileged being in the house, for though she might often err, yet she never offended; and as the angry passions never reached her heart, so the voice of reproof had been a stranger to her ear.

Though the timidity of this lovely child threw a veil over her talents, yet, like her eldest sister she too was blessed with an excellent understanding, to which was added intuitive taste, a fine perception of excellence in whatever was presented to her mind 'of beautiful and good,' and a faculty of pursuing and combining ideas not often found in early life.

Retired and enthusiastic, her acute sensibility and vivid imagination had induced her to suffer more than either of her sisters on the late grievous loss, while with less activity, either from nature or habit, she had fewer resources to fly to; and notwithstanding the many excellent reasons urged by her mother, and her own strong sense of their propriety, she sought to indulge the sorrow which increased her own helplessness and her mother's tender solicitude.

Betsey, the youngest girl, was just turned eleven; in her person she greatly resembled her eldest sister: but the arch glances of her black eyes, and the smile of playful roguery that dimpled round her mouth, attracted more general admiration. There was a spice of waggery in all she did, that made her at once the delight and torment of the house; and but for the excellent education, and the undeviating propriety of all around, she had become that dangerous thing, a female wit; but as far as there is mischief in this character, the innocent mirth of Betsey, and the good-humoured raillery with which she sought to raise a smile on the faces of her own dear circle, will be found exempt. She was an industrious little girl, as well as a clever one, and gave promise of possessing those kind of powers her forlorn situation so peculiarly called for. Being very near the age of George, who was only one year younger, she had found it a great trial to part with him; but when Maria had assured her that her crying would make her poor mother suffer more, Betsey struggled with her feelings, and smiled through her tears.

Such were the daughters that the widowed mother, on her arising, found waiting, with anxious looks for her return. Maria approaching, took her little brother from her mother, while Betsey drew her chair to the tea-table, and begged her to eat the nice toast Maria had just made. Sarah sat still, gazing on her with looks that spoke volumes of kind things to the mother's heart, yet pained while they consoled it.

How various were the plans, no sooner formed than rejected, that now passed through the mind of the agitated parent, as she surveyed these lovely blossoms, whose humble hopes thus blighted on the very entrance of life, left them exposed to all its hardships, at the very time when they would feel them most severely! They were too old to enjoy the happy

ignorance of infancy, too young to feel the salutary influence of reason and religion. We can all feel long before we can argue; but it is likewise the happy characteristic of youth to feel sorrow rather as an acute pain than a corrosive disease, and easily to throw off the burthen of grief, at the first dawn of hope, the first promise of relief.

Nearly a fortnight had passed in their new habitation, in which time the extreme anxiety of her mind had made Mrs. Gardiner's cheek look more pale than even the sorrow of the preceding month; and yet she had not been able to form any feasible plan, or adopt any mode of employment that appeared likely to afford a prospect of subsistence for herself and children; but, though distressed, she was not despairing; day by day she looked up to Him who can make 'rough places plain, and crooked paths straight, before those who put their trust in Him.'

One day, as these thoughts were passing in her mind, with her hand before her eyes, she happened to withdraw it hastily, and saw her eldest daughter looking at her with a countenance so full of tender solicitude and anxiety, that she felt the amiable girl was justly entitled to share every thought, as she partook every care of her bosom; and she therefore freely told her all that was passing in her mind, her plans for future life, and the many fears those plans involved.

'My dear mother,' said the good girl, 'you do not mention the necessity you will undoubtedly be under for parting with us, at least with me. I see all your kindness, in trying to save me the pain of this information, and my heart thanks you for it; but I beg you will not distress yourself on my account: I can *indeed*, mamma—I *can* do any thing you wish me.'

The fond mother clasped her daughter to her full heart, and for some minutes their tears were mingled together in silent emotion; but as soon as Mrs. Gardiner was able to speak, she desired Maria to tell her what had passed in her own mind respecting her situation.

'Why, mother,' said Maria, endeavouring to compose herself, 'as far as I can learn, there are only three ways in which a woman can gain her own subsistence; the first and best is being a private governess, or teacher in a school; the second is being a milliner; and the last is being a lady's maid. Now I am too young for either the first or last; besides, my education is too unfinished for the one, and yet too refined for the other: the middle place appears, therefore, every way the best. I have hands, and I know how to use them now, thanks to your care! and if I am taught a business, in a very short time I may use them for you and the baby, my dear mother.'

'But, my dear Maria, you are fond of reading; you have even a passion for study; I fear the employment you speak of will never be sufficiently interesting to you. If I had the means of finishing your education—but alas!—'

'Do not think of it, dear mother. I assure you I have examined my own heart; I know where my weak place lies,' said the sweet girl, forcing a smile. 'Yes, I remember stealing the Grecian history out of the study to read it in the hayloft, when I ought to have been stitching wristbands; but I was then a thoughtless little girl; I know better now, and you shall see, dear mother (if you dare trust me), you shall see that when it is my duty, I can sew the whole year through, without reading a single page.'

'And when you are grown a great woman,' said little Betsey, pressing in between them, 'will you teach me to make things, and get money for my mother, and send some to brother George?'

'I will do the best I can, my love,' returned Maria; 'but you are too young yet; you must go to school before you can do any thing.'

'To school!' said Mrs. Gardiner; 'alas! that is impossible.'

'No, indeed, mother,' interrupted Maria, eagerly, 'it is not; there is a boarding-school only a mile out of town, where they take little girls who are sharp and active, as a kind of apprentices, for fifty pounds; they would take Betsey for seven years; they would teach her every thing that would qualify her to teach others; but then she must be obliging, industrious, and—'

'Oh!' cried the child, 'I will do all, everything they ask me; you know father used to call me his little bee, I mended his stockings so nicely.'

'But then,' said Maria, gravely, 'you must not laugh at the young ladies, not make game of the maids, nor have any of your old tricks, Betsey.'

To this Betsey, with a deep sigh, replied, she would not do any thing naughty, if she could help it.

'Pray, Maria, how came you by this knowledge of the school?' interrupted the ruminating mother.

'Mrs. Robinson, the mistress of the house, told me,' said Maria; 'and by the same channel I have learned that Mrs. Ideson, the milliner, is in want of an apprentice. I assure you, dear mother, I did not begin the conversation with Mrs. Robinson; but people in towns, I suppose, make themselves free with the business of other people.'

'The poor and dependent,' said the widow, 'are every where made free with, my love; but Mrs. Robinson, I doubt not, meant very well; and her information is of great consequence to us. I will endeavour to call on Mrs. Ideson to-morrow, and, at least, hear her terms; and I will lose very little time in applying for the vacancy at the boarding school.'

'But, mother,' said Sarah, raising her long silken eyelashes, and looking wistly in her mother's face, 'you have said nothing about me.' This appeal was answered only by a shake of the head. She turned to her sister—'Maria, what am *I* to do?'

'You must muse, and draw, and poetize, and nurse little Henry, my love, and comfort our mother; you can do nothing better than *that*, my dear Sarah, for then you will do us all good.'

The tear of conscious helplessness was mingled with a smile of gratitude at the conclusion of this speech; and Maria closed the conversation, by throwing her arms round Sarah's neck, and declaring that if it pleased Heaven to prosper her endeavours, she should feel it her greatest delight to place Sarah under such instruction as would expand her talents, and enable her to become as much the benefit as she was now the ornament of her family.

CHAPTER VII.

The day following, Mrs. Gardiner, consigning her infant son to the tender Sarah, took the arm of her eldest daughter, and for the first time left her lodgings, to make the necessary inquiries of Mrs. Isedon, the milliner.

It would not be easy for the most gay and light-hearted mortal to have beheld this interesting woman, now in the very prime of life, graceful in her person, elegant in her manners, and dignified even by her sorrows, thus slowly moving on, supported by her blooming child, without feeling the finest chords of sympathy awakened in the heart; and the worthy woman to whom her visit was paid was capable of feeling all the claims of compassion; she received Mrs. Gardiner with the deference due to her virtues, and the consideration necessary to her circumstances; and so much courage did the poor widow gain from the unaffected friendliness of her manners, and the comfort she found in her first reception, that she advised with her on the establishment of her younger child, and had the satisfaction of hearing an extremely favourable account of the governess and her establishment.

Having settled with Mrs. Ideson that her daughter should be taken as an apprentice, for the easy fee of twenty guineas, she was rising to depart, when the good woman, in a kind of half-thoughtless way, took up a linen glove, and, as if she had been addressing a customer, observed, such gloves were very much worn at present, especially by children, for whom they answered exceedingly well.

'Then my children must learn to make them,' said Mrs. Gardiner, laying the glove upon the table.

The milliner looked a little disappointed, but, as if not willing to relinquish her point, she said—'If you, ma'am, or any of your daughters, should like to make such, I will give you a pattern, and teach you in a leisure hour any day. I buy a great many of them, and there is no person in this town who makes them.' She paused.

The widow now caught her meaning, and overwhelmed with a sense of the Divine Hand, which, by various channels, was thus relieving her oppressed heart, she sat down on the chair she had just quitted, pale and agitated, almost to fainting.

'I hope, dear madam,' said Mrs. Ideson, with evident alarm, 'I have not grieved or offended you; God knows, it was very far from my intention,' and her streaming eyes proved the truth of this assertion.

As soon as the widow was able to speak, she assured her of her gratitude for the kind interest she had taken in her welfare, and declared her intention of taking the earliest opportunity of accepting her instruction respecting the gloves, as an employment peculiarly adapted to her retired habits, and those of the daughter that remained with her; and after taking an affectionate leave of the first acquaintance she had formed in her new place of residence, she returned, with a heart greatly lightened of its burthen, to her dear little circle, who, with gratitude and pleasure, saw the first dawns of hope shed a lustre on her lovely, though still pallid features, and joined with her in devout acknowledgments to Him who causeth 'light to spring out of darkness,' and giveth the 'spirit of joy for the garments of heaviness.'

Mrs. Gardiner found that Maria's information respecting the school had been pretty correct; and having duly considered the matter, she settled it as the best plan she could possibly adopt for her youngest daughter, who accordingly in a few days removed to her new habitation, as did Maria to that of her worthy mistress.

When these important matters were arranged, Mrs. Gardiner began seriously to apply herself to the making of gloves, in which she was assisted by Sarah, who, though not possessing the quickness of either of her sisters, excelled them both in neatness.

The mistress of the boarding-school, who soon felt for her new pupil that preference her talents and temper were equally calculated to inspire, no sooner learnt Mrs. Gardiner's mode of employment, than she sent her a large and profitable order; and in a short time she found herself quite unequal to finishing the work before her; while demurring on the possibility of the thing, she was surprised by a visit from farmer Gooch, accompanied by her sweet William, who, the very picture of health, ran into her arms with all his accustomed fondness.

After the first surprise was over, Mrs. Gardiner informed the honest man of all that had befallen her since she had left the parsonage, and received from him an account of the welfare of her eldest son, who, he said, often visited the old spot, as the new rector was very fond of him—'But, odds boddikins!' cried the farmer, recollecting himself, 'I ha got a letter in

my pocket fra he; and I beez very near forgetting he, zo I be.'

This letter was a very short but very pleasant one, and not less surprising than agreeable. It contained the information that the bounty for clergyman's widows was granted to her; and it contained an enclosure advanced for the first half-year. The honest man exclaimed with joy at the sight of the bank-bill—'Why, there now, look you, I hopez az how when I goez back, ye'll let me zend yer maid Nanny agen; zhe be gon to live wi neighbour Eade, but zhe do nathing but fret after ye, and I 'zure, so I be, that ye'll never be able to nurze that beaby without; za next markit day I'll zend her, zo I will.'

Well aware that Nanny would be of the greatest service, Mrs. Gardiner gladly accepted this offer; and the farmer, after spending a few hours, which, as Ossian says of the joy of grief, were 'pleasant though mournful,' he took his leave, accompanied by his young charge, from whom the poor mother found it an increased pang to part. She had written a grateful letter to the new rector, and likewise a few lines to her son George; on receiving the latter, the farmer once more drew out his well-worn pocket-book, and produced a letter from the child, which, as he justly observed, was as nigh forgotten as need be, for being no scholard himself, he was mighty apt to look over such things. The fond mother seized it with avidity; and having bade one boy adieu, consoled herself with perusing the simple epistle of another; and little boys who have mothers, and mothers who have little boys, may not find it wholly uninteresting.

'MY OWN DEAR MOTHER,

'I am very glad Mr. Gooch is coming to see you, because I can assure you I am very well; and every body is good to me, and I am very happy; and I do not cry but when I have been at the church, or at our own house, and then I cannot help it; and I'm sure you know why. Mr. Wallingford says I do very well at my Latin, and I go on with geography, the same as Maria told me. Mr. Wilson at the parsonage was so good as to give me my own little garden; but I feel as if I had rather not go and dig it now; and so I go to work in Willy's; and Mrs. Gooch is so glad to see me, she gives me pie, and clotted cream; but I know it is all for love of you and dear father. Pray tell Betsey to write me a long letter, and kiss little Henry for me, and give my love to sisters. And so no more from your very loving little man,

'GEORGE GARDINER.'

Over this scrawl how many tears were shed! how many kisses were given the unconscious paper! But the heart-thrilling effusions of a mother's love and a widow's woe at length subsided, and left the heart calm, resigned, and even grateful; for much of sorrow was removed, and a prospect of comparative happiness presented, which she alone can fully estimate who has drank, as this widow had done, 'the dregs of the cup of affliction.'

CHAPTER VIII.

On the arrival of Nanny, Mrs. Gardiner found herself enabled to pursue her employment, in a manner which (with the late income she had acquired) enabled her to provide for her little family, and likewise to procure clothing for her two absent daughters; but more she could not possibly do, though her heart yearned to procure for Sarah the advantages of education. This lovely young creature had a fine taste for poetry, had a little knowledge of music, and a decided talent for drawing. No wonder that a mind formed for these elegant exercises shrunk from the dull monotony to which it was subjected, and sunk at times into a state of listless apathy, or melancholy silence. These changes the tender heart of the mother felt, and mourned so much, that, joined to the severer trials she had endured, greatly injured her constitution, and brought on a slow fever, that during the succeeding spring continually harassed and threatened her. This circumstance, however painful in itself, was of essential benefit to poor Sarah, whose energies thus powerfully excited called into being virtues, and awakened exertions, as desirable in herself as they were efficacious to her afflicted parent. She had now no sister on whom to lean for help, and the mother who had been her support so long, now leaned for help upon her alone. She saw, and she fulfilled her duty; day after day she became more conscious of her own powers; and by the time that her services had restored her afflicted mother to a degree of health, she had herself attained a new being, and rejoiced in the acquisition.

With joy and gratitude, the mother, as she gained convalescence, beheld this happy change, and thought it cheaply purchased even by her own sufferings, and that derangement of her strict system of economy which was inevitable during her illness. She was still extremely weak and low, and greatly in need of support, when her conscientious exactness in the discharge of her little arrears of rent, and other necessaries, induced her to curtail the few indulgences she enjoyed; and Sarah saw, with extreme alarm, that every bad symptom was reviving, when one day an old lady visited her lodging to order some gloves, being recommended by Mrs. Ideson. Being utterly unable to stand, and receive the lady's commands, Mrs. Gardiner respectfully withdrew, and the gentlewoman, in a cross tone, desired Sarah to measure her hand.

Sarah obeyed, with trembling haste and ill-managed alacrity.—'The girl's a fool,' said the cross lady.

Poor Sarah felt all her former weakness returning fast, but had no time for the contemplation of her own feelings, being interrupted with—'Who is that pale-faced woman that just now left the room?'

'My mother, madam.'

'Umph! I thought as much: but who is your mother, child, and what's the matter with her?'

In a tremulous tone, and with glistening eyes, the poor girl, in a few but well-chosen words (for the elegance of native refinement dictated them), informed her harsh interrogator, that her mother was the widow of a clergyman; that she had six children, had suffered much sorrow, and was slowly recovering from the effects of a disorder occasioned by too great solicitude, and by nursing her youngest child too long.

'Umph! and I suppose she regains strength by living on weak tea and water-gruel?'

Sarah innocently replied, 'That her mother did certainly live in that way, but yet did not gain strength, as she had hoped to do.'

'That may be,' returned the interrogator, doubtfully; adding, 'So you and your mother make gloves. I suppose you prefer it to any other employment, hey, child?'

'I have great pleasure in helping my mother, ma'am; but I do not *prefer* it to——'

'To what? why can't you speak? what would you *rather* do than make gloves?'

'I am so fond of drawing, ma'am, that I should be happy if I had a pencil always in my fingers.'

'Drawing!' vociferated the lady; '*drawing indeed!* This is a high joke—drawing indeed!'

'Yes, madam,' said the trembling Sarah—it is wrong, in our situation, I know; and I assure you it is now nine weeks and four days since I touched a pencil.'

'You reckon accurately, I doubt not; but who told you it was wrong to draw?'

'I concluded so, because my mother was as fond of it once as I am now; but she never indulged herself in pursuing it, after I was born, except to give me instructions about two years ago, when we had no little baby in the house, and it helped to amuse my father. I have tried to follow her example, and, since her illness, have made a resolution to draw no more.'

'You are a precious couple, both mother and child,' said the lady, with a perturbed countenance, rushing hastily out of the parlour, dropping her glove in her haste to depart; Sarah picked it up, and ran after her with it; she hastily snatched it from her, and getting into an elegant, though plain carriage, was quickly out of sight; and the astonished girl returned into the house, to relate the strange occurrence, as she deemed it, to her mother.

The very private manner in which Mrs. Gardiner had been enabled to carry on her little business had saved her from many a pang, to which caprice, haughtiness, or levity, would otherwise have subjected her; but from her various conversations with Maria, whose commerce with the world was more extended, she knew that 'such things were;' and she assured her timid child that though to them this lady's conduct was new, yet there was nothing surprising in the case; that she must not allow herself to be hurt at it, as it was what poor Maria was subject to every day of her life, and must continue to be; and yet you see, my love,' continued Mrs. Gardiner, 'she is cheerful and happy, and looks forward to that time with pleasure, when by encountering such kind of difficulties more fully, she shall be enabled to serve us all: and you, Sarah, have exerted yourself so much, and so happily of late, that I have no doubt you will soon be enabled to share her satisfaction.'

Grateful for her mother's praise, and happy in the consciousness of having merited it in some measure, the good girl smiled away the tear that had sprung to her eye, and began to play with little Henry, who was now a fine child, remarkably like that parent whose eye was closed in death ere his began to shine; he was now near two years old, and beginning to prattle—a period of infancy the most interesting and delightful; and many a sweet and many a bitter hour did he impart to his widowed mother, who, we should remark, had, during the last summer, frequently been blessed with a short visit from one or other of her sons, who still remained with their protectors.

For her eldest she had few cares, for he was altogether lodged in the best of hands, and his improvement in learning and manners was equal to her largest wishes; but her sweet William, that young blossom, on whom the latest, fondest cares of his ever-lamented father had been lavished, was in imminent danger of being ruined, by the ill-judged indulgence of the generous farmer and his tender wife. He had naturally contracted their dialect, and acquired somewhat of their manners; and though the native sweetness of his disposition made him remain a good child, he was no longer the charming boy who excited lively and affectionate regard. These circumstances were subjects of great regret to the anxious mother, and were amongst the many cares which, by preying on her mind, contributed to enfeeble her frame, and would undoubtedly have ruined her constitution, had she not been able, from time to time, to look upwards, in humble confidence that the supporting hand of a merciful Father would be still further extended in her behalf, and that, with progressive wants, she should experience progressive mercies.

CHAPTER IX.

Soon after the last-mentioned incident, Mrs. Gardiner put on her cloak, to step into the town with a newly-finished order, and Sarah, taking Henry in her arms, walked to the window. An equipage was at the door, which attracted the infant's attention; and as Sarah heard (as she believed) her mother's foot re-enter the parlour, she said—'Look mother, this is the cross lady's coach; 'tis a splendid shell for a bitter kernel;' In uttering the last words, for which her gentle spirit instantly reproached itself, she turned blushing round, and beheld, *not* her mother, but the cross lady herself!

'A pretty reception for a customer truly! but not intended for the cross lady's ear, of course; but don't stand blushing and trembling there; you can't face out a lie, I see you can't, so you had better not attempt it, child. So I am a cross lady, and a bitter kernel, am I? I think it quite enough for a girl like you to set up for a beauty, without pretending to the insolence of wit into the bargain.'

'I never do attempt to lie, madam,' said Sarah, a little recovering, 'and I know very well I have no pretensions to——' She was interrupted by the entrance of the lady's servants, who carried a large hamper, which having set down, they withdrew. But Sarah remained silent, glad to be relieved from her embarrassment.

'Well, child,' said the lady, after a pause, 'I rather think those men saved you from the sin of lying, for once. D'ye see this hamper?—it contains old Madeira wine, which you must give your mother a glass of three times a-day, and you will find, that though I am a cross old woman, I am a good doctress.'

'Oh, madam! oh, dear madam!' cried Sarah, clasping her hand, and bending suppliant before her benefactress, 'can you—will you forgive me? how could I be so wicked to call you cross? Oh, I have behaved very ill, but it all arose from my ignorance, and from——' She burst into tears.

The lady walked to the door, apparently to give some directions to her servants, but in reality to hide her own emotions; on her return, she found Sarah endeavouring to compose herself.

'You will oblige me, child,' said she, in a somewhat softened tone, 'if you will finish your speech—you were going to say, I believe, why my ill-humour had so particularly affected you.'

Sarah gained a little courage, and wiped her eyes, answered—'I believe, madam, you were the first person that ever spoke in a harsh voice to me in all my life, and that was the reason I used such an epithet to you. I have been treated like a pet-lamb, ever since I can remember; my poor father used to call me his lily of the vale, and, like that humble flower, I was protected as with a double guard; my mother and sisters have been at least equally tender over me, and the sad change which has separated us, was not permitted to "visit my face too roughly."—Thus, you see, madam, I have been spoiled by indulgence: we were always a family of love; but I, like the favoured disciple, have been the only one who reposed constantly on the maternal bosom; and you cannot wonder that I am a little weakened by the tenderness with which I have been so peculiarly blessed.'

'Umph!' said the lady, taking a pinch of snuff; 'you have read Shakespeare, child, it seems, and the New Testament, too—and you love drawing—and so do I.' She paused; and Sarah, too young to comprehend her intentions through the veil of manners so singular, stood quietly before her. Such was their situation, when Mrs. Gardiner did indeed re-enter her little parlour.

Unable to comprehend the looks of either party, Mrs. Gardiner was on the point of retiring, when her daughter seized her hand, saying—'Oh, mamma, this good lady has brought you some of the very wine which the doctor said would restore you; she is very, very good: and I,' said Sarah, covering her face with her hands, and sinking on her mother's breast, 'I have behaved to her so very, very ill, I can never,' said she, sobbing, 'never look at you, and forgive myself.'

Mrs. Gardiner was now in her turn astonished: so meek and unoffending, so gentle and conciliating, were the manners of her darling, and so firm her principles of conduct, that she could not imagine how it had been possible she could offend the most irritable, or provoke the most supercilious; as Sarah had, however, asserted the fact, she could not doubt of its existence, and nothing remained for her to do, but to intercede for the self-condemned culprit.

The lady heard, with great calmness, her apology for the unknown crime, and then tapping her snuff-box, ejaculated—'Both alike; I thought how it would be!'

'For your generous present to myself,' resumed Mrs. Gardiner, 'I am indeed very grateful; for it has been indeed strongly recommended to me as a restorative, but was one I never could have procured without your assistance.'

'I am glad you think well of it,' said the lady, 'as it may be the means of your conferring a favour on me. This saucy girl, it seems, has taken a fancy to an art for which I have a passion, and which, if she could properly cultivate, would eventually make her independent. Now, if you will permit it, I will have her taught: there is a reputable master in this town, who will prove a good instructor, I doubt not, for the next year or so. You cannot afford to keep her idle, so here is a twenty-pound bill for her board, till I see you again. Send me her performances from time to time. I shall settle with the master before I leave this place, where I am only a visitant. Here is my address in London.'

Mrs. Gardiner received the address of Lady Barbara Blount with a silent courtesy; her heart was far too full for even a single word of gratitude to find utterance; but Sarah, with a rapid impulse, new in her character, but equally graceful and expressive, threw herself round the knees of her protectress, and exclaimed—'Thank you, dear madam, thank you for all, but *most* of all that you have forgiven me.'

'Let me go, you provoking minx, let me go!' said the lady; but Sarah still clung to her knees; and the unconscious child, thinking his sister wanted to hold the stranger fast, ran to them, and, with his little arms, helped to detain her; but Mrs. Gardiner beheld with pain a deadly paleness suffuse itself over the face of their guest; she withdrew the child, and Sarah arose, grieved and alarmed. Mrs. Gardiner presented some hartshorn to Lady Barbara, who, a little recovered arose, and pressing Mrs. Gardiner's hand, said—'I am much better, but I must not see that brat again; I had once a blue-eyed boy myself—but no matter; I must go to him—he cannot come to me!'

The tone in which these few words were spoken, and the few tears which followed them, awoke a new and powerful interest in the sympathetic hearts of the widow and her daughter; they now perceived that the repulsive manners of their noble visitor were adopted for the express purpose of hiding the poignant sensibilities of a heart alive to every demand of pity, every emotion of compassionate beneficence.

Unequal to conversation, and unwilling to hear her own praises, even from the still small voice of unaffected gratitude, Lady Barbara withdrew, leaving the widow and her daughter to blend delicious tears, and invoke blessings on the head of their new-found friend.

Lady Barbara Blount was the widow of a gentleman of large fortune, who left her with two children, a son and daughter, both of whom were torn from her in one week, by the ravages of the scarlet fever, a very short time after the death of her beloved lord. These dreadful afflictions falling on a mind of strong and ardent affection, as yet untouched by sorrow, for a long time completely overwhelmed her; but when time had somewhat softened her sorrows, the natural warmth of her heart began to seek food for its affections, in singling out objects of charity it could relieve, or of genius it could patronize. In this laudable pursuit, however, the good lady, like many others, often found herself imposed upon, and her generosity abused: from the frequency of these occurrences, she had contracted a cold, unkind, and suspicious air; and whilst her heart was glowing with the best propensities of our nature, she affected to be indulging its worst; and though the penetrating might unmask the deceit, yet it was no wonder it had completely imposed on the innocent and timid Sarah, who, from the first moment she was seen by Lady Barbara, had excited the most vivid interest for her future welfare, which was not a little increased on her hearing that she had a *penchant* for drawing. To this elegant art Lady Barbara owed the relief of many sad—the amusement of many tedious hours; and she had afforded to several young artists, at different periods, the kind of assistance they were most in want of; but about two years before this time, she had been led, not less from her admiration of his talents, than her esteem for his character, to offer one young man an apartment in her house, where he now resided, and was rising every day into deserved celebrity. She thought his time too valuable to be wasted in teaching the rudiments of his art to her new-found *protégée*; besides she thought it would be hard on Mrs. Gardiner to part at present with her only companion; but it was her intention, if, on her return into the country the following summer, she found Sarah tolerably improved, to place her under his care, and thus secure her those advantages of instruction which might prove the means of not only giving independence to herself, but ease and comfort to her excellent mother, whose interests, in other respects, she determined not to lose sight of. She had seen and admired Maria exceedingly, and had learned from Mrs. Ideson, that her industry and abilities were such as to afford the best prospects; and she determined that, were it necessary, this good girl should likewise experience her bounty: but she deemed it most prudent rather to hold back at present, and leave her to the benefit of self-exertion, not only as the best means of maturing her virtues, but of increasing her happiness.

CHAPTER X.

Sarah, now employed in a manner alike suited to her inclination and her talents, gave decided proofs of those powers which had hitherto been as the marble in the quarry—suspected, but unknown. Her delighted mother now saw her cheerful without restraint, and industrious from choice, not necessity. Agreeable to the orders they had received, in about three months' time some specimens of her improvement were transmitted to Lady Barbara, which were honoured with laconic approbation, agreeable to the humour the good lady had adopted, and which had now become her habit; but on the second package being received, it was answered with a handsome present of clothes and books, and a little purse containing two guineas.

The box was directed to Sarah, but it contained articles suitable for her mother's acceptance: among others were a piece of Irish linen and some broad-cloth, which, Sarah observed, should, with her mother's leave, be made up for George.

To this Mrs. Gardiner gladly assented, for it was a long time since George had had a new coat. At this time the fate of her boys was much upon her mind; the eldest was now attaining his fourteenth year, and what was to be done with him, or for him, she knew not. After paying the respective fees for her two daughters, and the little expenses of her family, previous to her obtaining work for herself, she found herself possessed of only one hundred pounds in the world. This she had placed out at interest, intending, as soon as Maria's time expired, to employ it in furnishing a little stock of millinery goods, which, with her own assistance, might enable this excellent child to obtain a decent competence, and perhaps their mutual endeavours might enable them to place William at some cheap school. But yet George could not be placed in any line of business, without money being required; and though his education had fitted him for a profession, yet the power of pursuing that appeared equally difficult. Look on whatever side of the business she might, all was alike obscure and embarrassing.

She wrote, however, to her son, and desired him to come over, that she might consult him; and accordingly he obeyed her summons sooner than she expected, accompanied by his unfailing friend, the curate, who was not a little proud of his charge, who was grown very much since his mother had seen him, and was a fine handsome lad, with an intelligent countenance, and a gentlemanly air.

'We are come,' said Mr. Wallingford, with an apologising accent, 'we are come sooner than you expected us, in consequence of a letter having arrived last night at the parsonage for you, and desired to be forwarded to you by the present inhabitant, wherever you may happen to reside.'

'It must be from some great stranger,' said Sarah, with a sigh.

'I flatter myself it is from a friend, notwithstanding,' said Mrs. Gardiner; 'for I have seen this hand, though not for many years.' She then opened it, and read as follows:—

'DEAR COUSIN,

I hope you have not forgotten me, though many years have passed over our heads, and great changes taken place since I knew you a little girl in Gloucestershire. I have now been a married man above twenty years, and led, on the whole, a very prosperous life, having married a good-tempered worthy woman, with a pretty fortune, and enjoyed a very excellent run of business, as a surgeon and apothecary; but every one has their trials, and I have had mine, having lost my only son, which has almost broken his poor mother's heart, so that I have been nearly losing her also. I have, however, two bonny girls left, who, I hope, will live to close my eyes. In the course of my attendance on the sick this winter, I heard from one of my patients, a Mr. H——, a very affecting account of the death of your late excellent spouse; and as he has assured me that you have a family of all ages and both sexes, I write to you to say, that if you happen to have a son betwixt fourteen and sixteen, who would like my profession, I beg you will send him to me immediately. From what Mr. H—— says, the son of such a father will be a blessing to my house; and I assure you, my wife and the girls will be as good to him as your heart could wish. I enclose a ten-pound note for the youth's journey; and begging a speedy answer, remain your affectionate cousin,

'JOHN STANILAND.

'N.B. I wish to know how all your children are situated, and how far you are comfortable yourself.'

The moment Mrs. Gardiner had perused this truly kind letter, she placed it in the hands of George, and not making a single comment, sat down, earnestly watching his countenance, on which eager curiosity was succeeded by lively hope and expectation.—'Surely, mother, you will let me go?' he cried; 'you know I shall be fourteen next week.'

'Yes, indeed, my love,' said the now satisfied and thankful mother; 'I will let you go most willingly, and hope that you will unite with me in humbly adoring the Divine interposition in our favour, which has, by a singular providence, raised us up a friend in the very hour of need.'

Mr. Wallingford and Sarah were immediately made acquainted with the extraordinary contents of this letter; and as Mr. Wallingford observed it was a great pity Miss Gardiner did not partake their pleasure, and George thought Betsy ought certainly to hear it, the maid was dispatched to fetch them both; and perhaps a happier little family have seldom met together, than those which now assembled round the neat though frugal board of this pious widow, whose joys were still chastened by her regret, as her sorrows had been assuaged by hope.

In the course of the afternoon, she heard, with great satisfaction, that the comforts of the good man who had been so long the support of her son, were increasing. He informed her that Mr. Wilson had now given up living at the parsonage, in which he permitted him to reside, and to take a few pupils, and that two were already entered on very liberal terms; that the number was limited to six; but even half of them, on the present footing, would make a great addition to his income—'I believe,' added he, 'I may thank the progress and good conduct of George for the confidence with which I am thus honoured; so you see, my dear madam, our obligations are mutual.'

It was now settled that George must remain with his mother till he set out for his destined residence—a circumstance heard with great joy by the sisters, but with a sigh by the good man, who had for so long a period found him a delightful companion. On bidding the party farewell, Mr. Wallingford said, that on entering the house, this time, he had little thought of the good news he had brought with him; but when he came again, he hoped to have the pleasure of *knowing* that he was the bearer of good tidings. As he uttered this in an enigmatical manner, no one thought themselves entitled to inquire after his meaning, and they soon forgot it in the pain of parting with him, which, in poor George, arose to agony; he flung himself on his neck, and, almost suffocated with emotion, poured forth a torrent of strong, though broken assurances of endless gratitude. The worthy young man, unable to suppress his feelings, wept also; and Maria was scarcely less affected than either; and even after their good friend had torn himself away, Mrs. Gardiner observed, that she remained pale and pensive, absorbed in profound meditation.

'What are you thinking of, Maria?' said her mother; 'you are not wont to be so very pensive.'

'I was retracing my best days, mother; I was thinking of the parsonage.'

'I hope, my love, your best days are to come yet. Maria, I hope you have not deceived me—that your present mode of life is not unpleasant to you?'

'By no means, mother; I like to be engaged in pursuits that require activity.'

'Then why do you weep, my love? You know your time of living with Mrs. Ideson will soon be gone, and then you will be again with your mother, and we shall all do very well, I doubt not.'

"'Tis very true, my dear mother,' said Maria, brushing away the last tear: 'I have no more doubt than you, that we shall do very well here; but you know I was born and brought up in the country, and the simple circle of duties in which we were then engaged have ever appeared to me the most delightful of all occupations, and I cannot think of them at times without regret. I do not dislike the station into which Providence has thrown me; and when I view it in connexion with the possibility of benefiting my family, I rejoice in it; but there will be *moments* of regret, you know, dear mother, in which the heart recurs to its first impressions of pleasure, and gives an involuntary sigh.'

The mother acknowledged the truth of this appeal, by kissing her daughter's cheek; but her heart, like the Holy Mother's, was now pondering on many things; and while one source of anxiety was happily closed, another appeared opening on her mind. But she had one source of satisfaction that increased with time; this was the excellent dispositions and continued affection of all her children, whom, at every interview, she found increasing in wisdom and ripening in virtue.

CHAPTER XI.

At the appointed time, George, neatly equipped by his sister Sarah's present, set out, amid the prayers and caresses of his family, for his new abode, and was received by the worthy surgeon and his family with civility, that soon rose into confidence and affection; and the course of a very few letters convinced Mrs. Gardiner that he was placed in the very situation he was most calculated to fill, with honour to himself and profit to his employers. Active and humane, uniting resolution with gentleness, and courage with feeling, possessing acute observation and deep thought, he appeared in no common degree calculated to fulfil the arduous duties of his profession; and the more his mother contemplated the steps which had led to this happy issue, the more she saw cause to rejoice in an overruling Providence, and to say—'I will praise Thee for all that is past, and trust Thee for all that is to come.'

As, from the circumstance mentioned by Mr. Staniland, they had reason to conclude that Mr. H—— was returned to England for a permanent stay, the widow wrote to him a letter, expressive of her long-cherished gratitude. This letter he received from the hands of the son of that father he had so tenderly cherished, with emotions of the purest joy; but this interview, so affecting to both parties, was the only one either were permitted to enjoy. This excellent young man, like the one he had deplored, was sinking under a consumption, and poor George in him lost a friend, who, at such a distance from home, might have been peculiarly valuable to him.

As soon as George was settled, Mrs. Gardiner, considering the time drew near for Maria's return, began to look out for a house, and was returning from a visit she had paid to the landlord of one that was likely to suit her, when she was overtaken by Mr. Wallingford, who, with a look of great pleasure, said that he was now come to announce the good tidings he had hinted at in his last visit.

With a look of great anxiety, Mrs. Gardiner asked what they could possibly be?

'A situation is procured for your sweet William in Christ's Hospital. 'Tis an excellent thing, ma'am; 'twill be the making of him. Mr. Wilson and Mr. Simpson have been trying to get it these two years, but would not tell you, lest you should be disappointed.'

'May the blessings of the fatherless be on them!' cried the grateful mother: 'this is indeed what my heart has long wished for, but never dared to hope. But does the poor boy know of this?—Where is he?'

'In your parlour at this moment, with farmer Gooch and his wife. I could not prevent their coming, though I gladly would, lest the poor child should suffer from their ill-timed sorrow; but I am come myself, prepared for a longer journey, being determined to accompany him to London.'

'Generous, excellent young man!' said Mrs. Gardiner, involuntarily grasping his hand—'how much do I owe you!—Nay, do not repress the effusions of my heart; I must and *will* tell you how dear your many kindnesses have made you to my heart: you are the brother, the son of my sincere affections.'

'The son!—Ah, madam, would that I were indeed your son!—but alas!—'

At this moment they entered the house, and William impetuously rushed into the arms of his mother, who, at this moment, forgot that the world contained another being, and might have remained much longer absorbed, but for the honest congratulations of her old neighbours, who with alternate expressions of joy and sorrow, now claimed her attention.

'I be zure I be zo glad to zee you,' said the good woman; 'I reely do think az how my very heart wull break; I never thout to ha come za far fre hame, but just to zee you, and bid Willy good-bye; why, zumhow, I could not help it.'

Mrs. Gardiner kissed the good woman, and begged her to be composed; but she was either too much pleased or grieved to accept this advice. To part with a child for more than three years nourished at her heart's core, was a bitter pang; but then, to send him to a fine London school, where he might learn to be such a man as his father had been before him, reconciled her; and she owned it was a great pleasure to see madam, and the little babe grown up so finely, as it were.

'But, dame,' cried the farmer, 'where be thy eyez? Doezn't thee zee the young ladies how they be grown up fine young women, fair and zightly?'

'I zeez every thing; I thanks God for all I zee,' cried the dame, 'but I cannot zpeak.'

Mrs. Gardiner saw the good woman's heart, to use her own expression, was indeed 'like to break.' She endeavoured to prevail on her to take some refreshment, and to turn the conversation to indifferent topics; but notwithstanding all the pains she took, the good dame remained agitated and uncomfortable.

'Here's Maria,' said the farmer, 'and the lily; but I still want my own favourite, black-eyed Betsey—Where be zhe gotten?'

'I expect her every moment,' replied Mrs. Gardiner; and as she entered soon after, the farmer appeared perfectly happy.

'Come here now,' cried he, 'and tell me if you remember putting grains of gunpowder in my tobacco-box, and making a scare-crow of my best wig?'

Betsey confessed to these crimes, but assured the farmer she had left off all kinds of mischief a long time, and had only two bad tricks since the first year she went to school.

'And what beez they, my duck?'

'I only,' said Betsey, with an air of most ludicrous gravity, 'stuck a few pins in the dancing-master's false calves, and put a pot of blacking in madame's pocket, instead of her rouge.'

'Well duck, and what then?'

She rubbed a little on in the dark, and came down stairs in full dress, with black cheeks instead of red ones.

The farmer's boisterous mirth was now equal to his past sorrow, and he declared he would have given his best haystack to have seen the French-woman in her mourning cheeks. But when he was told that for these tricks his black-eyed Betsey had been called to a strict account, his spirits again sunk, and he wished, with great gravity, there were no places like schools i' th' varsal world, being az how they curbed poor childer's spiritz, zo they did.

Fearful of the tendency of this conversation on the mind of William, Mrs. Gardiner was not sorry when her worthy friends rose to depart, though, at any other time, she would have rejoiced in their stay. Their parting was agonizing, and such as poor Mrs. Gardiner was ill able to bear; and after it was over, she was herself obliged to retire, leaving the curate and her daughters to settle the weighty affair of the journey to London, which, after various considerations, it was found expedient, on Mr. Wallingford's account, to commence in two days; but this became easier, as there were no clothes to provide for William, and his kind conductor insisted upon being at all the expence of the journey for them both.

CHAPTER XII.

As soon as the precious little traveller and his truly-estimable guide had set out on their important journey, Mrs. Gardiner again applied herself to the business they had so happily interrupted. In the conducting of this affair she was assisted by the good Mrs. Ideson, who, far from feeling any narrow jealousy, appeared to have great satisfaction in directing the arrangement of Mrs. Gardiner's affairs, and giving every kind of necessary information to Maria, who, to great diffidence and modesty, united great firmness and perseverance, but whose extreme youth and personal attractions led Mrs. Gardiner and her late worthy mistress to conclude, it would be best for her not to attempt opening any public shop, but, under the auspices of her mother, to begin business as a chamber milliner—a scheme which suited equally the inclination of the parties and their slender finances; and after various consultations, it was agreed that the family should only remove to lodgings somewhat genteeler and more public than those they at present occupied.

In a short time, then, we behold Maria in that situation to which her warm and gentle heart had so long aspired—the companion and assistant of her mother, the friend and the example of her sister, to whom her society was become an invaluable acquisition, as it served still more to awaken her energies, and rouse her to affectionate emulation.

As the summer advanced, business increased so much on the hands of Maria, whose good taste and prompt execution were justly estimated, and she became so great a slave to her employment, that Mrs. Gardiner became alarmed for her health; but the poor girl's spirits were so elated with a success she valued only for its powers of conferring good on the objects of her affection, that she declared herself insensible of fatigue, and would not hear of procuring assistance, till she saw that her mother's anxiety was so great as to destroy her peace of mind, and then she gladly assented to whatever plan was proposed, for in every respect this dear parent's wishes were consulted; far from affecting that independence her situation might have led a mind less delicate to assume, in proportion as she became consequential, in fact, she became more humble and obedient in her deportment. Tall and commanding in her person, graceful and dignified in her deportment, to the world she was become a fine sensible woman, but to her mother she was an artless child, still clinging for protection to her maternal care.

Towards the close of summer, just as Maria had laid down a new-fashioned cap, to indulge herself with looking at Sarah's drawing-book, while Mrs. Gardiner was pouring out their tea, a person bolted into the parlour, and, in a well-remembered voice, exclaimed—'Umph! this is as it should be, to be sure! each at her work, I perceive.'

Sarah uttered a short scream of joy; but at the same moment recollecting herself, she put a bit of toast into little Henry's hand, and hurried with him out of the room. As she returned, Lady Barbara said, 'Well, you vixen, you see I have popt upon you on foot this time, that you might not see the bitter kernel turned out of its shell.'

'Oh, madam,' said Sarah, blushing, 'I did hope you had forgotten—I flattered myself that you had for—forgiven me.'

'You see you were mistaken, child. But give me that book, Maria; let us see what sort of scratching we have got now-a-days. Umph! not quite execrable, I perceive. How long have you learnt, child?'

'It is now fifteen months, madam, since you had the goodness to——'

'Ay, ay, I owe your mother for your board, then, it seems, more than I thought. How old are you?'

'Seventeen, madam, since April.'

'Umph! and suppose I were to take you to London, and put you under a cross master one half of the day, and make you read or work the other half with my old housekeeper, or at times my own cross ladyship, do you think you could endure it, for the sake of gaining proficiency in your art, and, like Maria, being an assistant to your mother in time to come?'

'I could go with you any where, most thankfully, my dear lady,' said Sarah, now glowing from gratitude as much as she had lately done from shame; 'and to effect such a purpose, I would go with any body.'

'Well, hold your tongue; I came to talk about a bonnet.'

The affair of the bonnet, as to its form, was soon discussed; but the liberality with which Lady Barbara gave orders for bonnets, cloaks, and caps, astonished her auditors. She soon after left them, first desiring that Maria would make her sister decent, and then informing Mrs. Gardiner that she returned to London that day week.

Surprise absolutely chained the tongue of Sarah, and a kind of mixed emotion, in which grateful joy was blended with many tender fears, rendered her mother equally silent, and they stood gazing on each other, as if unable or unwilling to reveal the emotions of their hearts; but Maria with more self-possession, began to congratulate Sarah, in a manner which, by displaying all the advantages of her new situation, enabled both mother and daughter rather to rejoice in their prospects than to lament their separation; but Sarah, though on connecting images of gratitude to her benefactress and her mother with her accompanying the former, had so thankfully embraced the proposal, yet she found her heart would sink at the thoughts of parting from the maternal roof; she had never left her mother for a single day, and she had formed no idea of happiness in which her dear family were not included; and all her enjoyments had lately been so increased by Maria's residence with them, and her mother's increased ease and cheerfulness, that, unconnected with other circumstances, she would not have exchanged her present residence for a palace. On the other hand, she had not only the desire of benefiting her dear parent—a feeling paramount to every other in her kind and duteous heart—but she had likewise an enthusiastic love for the art to which she had devoted herself; and with a very inadequate idea of the pleasure that awaited her, she yet felt that much was to be enjoyed.

But the tender heart of the mother saw many things to fear, the happy inexperience of Sarah prevented her from fearing; she dreaded lest the singular manners of Lady Barbara should wound the sensibility of this delicate flower, even while she fostered its powers. She was going into a new world, equally unknown to herself and her parent, who could therefore afford her no rule of conduct—no admonition that could apply. Maria, though pained with the thoughts of losing her dear companion, was the only one who saw unmixed benefit arising to her sister from Lady Barbara's protection, and was therefore enabled to enjoy the good unmixed. Sarah was not only dear to her as a sister and friend, but the generosity of her nature, and the discrimination of her mind, had ever given to her, from their earliest childhood, the palm of superiority, even when she was her guide and instructress; and since her commencing business, when she had been frequently so hurried in getting up a hasty order, that her mother entreated to call Sarah to their assistance, she would answer—'No, my dear mother, let her pursue her studies; I would rather work night and day than interrupt her. She is the gentlewoman of the family, and I am richly paid for my exertions, in the pleasure of beholding her pursue the avocations for which superior talents have fitted her so well.'

Agreeable to these feelings, Maria exhausted her own little wardrobe, and added the utmost limits of her power and skill to provide for the wants of Sarah, not thinking that an order for Sarah's being decent included Lady Barbara's intention of being herself the purchaser. So short was the time, and so busy did it make them all, that happily it was passed before they had time to indulge that sorrow which, even under the happiest circumstances, must be unavoidably felt by people so situated.

On Lady Barbara's carriage drawing to the door, the heart of Sarah beat so violently she was obliged for a few moments to retire with her mother, who struggled to give her strength. The interval was necessary for Lady Barbara's settling with her sister for the millinery she had purchased; and which done, she insisted on paying for Sarah's new clothes; this poor Maria thankfully, but firmly refused, till the angry looks of the lady said that another word on the subject would not be borne. But the tone she had assumed softened, when she saw Sarah advance, with dry eyes, and a serene though pale countenance, to wait her commands. She knew the effort this cost a mind of Sarah's cast, and she gave her no common praise for the exertion; and willing to shorten a scene unavoidably painful to all, she hastened their departure; but the closing of the carriage-door, the last waving of her mother's hand, and Maria's half-uttered adieu, were too much for Sarah's fortitude; she burst into an agony of tears, which she indulged uninterrupted for many miles. As soon as Lady Barbara perceived that she was recovering, she kindly pointed out various objects of attention on the road, and by degrees drew the young traveller not only from her grief, but her timidity, and thus unlocked the stores of a mind whose intelligence richly repaid the effort.

Lady Barbara drew the most pleasing auspices of the future improvement of her *protégée*, from observing the admirable discrimination, not less than the lively interest which all that was grand and beautiful in nature awakened in her mind; not a plant exhaled its perfume, not a mountain reared its head, unmarked by her eye, unregistered by her memory. But on their entering London, her thoughts appeared rather to rest on past, than delight in present objects; the novelty of the scene had an effect upon her mind, equally remote from the stupor of unmoved dulness and the bustle of vulgar surprise; she seemed to view that which she had expected, rather than desired—an effect no common mind will feel on first viewing this wonderful metropolis. Nor did the splendid mansion at which she now stopped, excite more than pleasantly-calm sensations in her mind, unmixed with that sense of self-annihilation too commonly felt by little people, when they tread the thresholds of the great. But when Sarah entered the breakfast-parlour, which was adorned with many

beautiful pictures, she manifested a perfect sensibility to an elegance in unison with her own taste, and for some minutes was so lost in admiration, as to be completely absorbed in delight, from which her kind patroness with some difficulty awakened her.

CHAPTER XIII.

The young artist, whom we mentioned in a former chapter as having apartments in Lady Barbara's house, did not, in consequence, constitute one of her family, and therefore Sarah did not hear his name mentioned, or see him, during the first day of her residence in Portland-street; but, on the following morning, Lady Barbara told her to bring down her portfolio and pencils, for she was going to take her to her new master.

It so happened, that the only portrait in the breakfast-parlour we have mentioned was that of an Italian artist; it represented a man about fifty-five, of an olive complexion, wrapped in a morning-gown, with a velvet cap on his head. On this picture Sarah had gazed till she had associated the idea of an artist being inevitably an old man in a velvet cap, of a dark complexion and keen expression. The summons was therefore obeyed with a sort of trembling alacrity; and her colour came and went so fast, that Lady Barbara, fixing on her a doubtful eye, said—'Pray, child, have you seen Mr. Montgomery?'

'No indeed, my lady—*except* his picture,' she added, hesitatingly.

'Umph! *his* picture truly!—Well, come along.'

Sarah followed to the end of a long gallery, when Lady Barbara, entering, cried out to a very elegant young man, who was intently gazing on a picture in his hand—'Here, Charles, I have brought you this girl to teach; I doubt you will find her a blockhead, but then she may be of use to you as a model for a fury, if you want one.'

The artist withdrew his eyes from the paper, and gazed on the elegant young creature before him with astonishment, not less than hers on whom he looked, as she could not conceive herself that a slender young man, scarce three-and-twenty, of a sweet and open countenance, could be indeed the man designated as her cross old master; and surely nothing could be less like the man upon the chimney-piece.

Lady Barbara seemed much amused by the surprise of each, but she hastily arranged the plan of Sarah's instruction, and exhibited what she had already done; adding, at length—'You must give what time you *can*, but take care and do not give her more than you ought; and remember, Charles,' said she, fixing on him a severe and scrutinizing eye, 'remember, I will have her taught nothing but drawing.'

The young man blushed, and Sarah felt sorry for him, concluding, from his ingenuous countenance, he could not teach her any thing wrong, and that her patroness, though a very good, was certainly a very singular woman.

She now applied herself to study, under the most favourable circumstances, and her proficiency became such as to astonish her tutor; but it was procured through a devotedness which alarmed Lady Barbara for her health. She however hit upon a benevolent expedient to oblige her to take exercise, which was, to frequently send her to visit little William, who was now become a very fine boy, extremely happy in his situation, and every way improved.

Her letters to her mother, during the following year, contained only the most agreeable intelligence; and the happy Maria saw now the first wish of her heart fulfilled, in Sarah's proficiency and excellent prospects. Nor were the prospects of George less flattering; for his good master wrote, from time to time, such accounts of his steadiness and attention to his profession, as gave Mrs. Gardiner every reason to hope he would never part with him, especially as he had never suffered him to draw on her purse for more than a little pocket-money, Mrs. Staniland having hitherto kindly supplied all his wants, and even given Mrs. Gardiner to understand that Mr. Staniland had her full consent to provide for the young man in the most liberal manner, when his apprenticeship expired; and as that is the period when the education of a medical man is necessarily the most expensive, poor Mrs. Gardiner's anxieties on this head were greatly relieved by this communication. She well knew that the utmost exertions of Maria and herself, in their little way of business, would be completely inadequate to the task of supporting a young man in London, at such an exorbitant expence as would, in this case, be demanded, however steady and good he might be; and yet she knew that such would be her Maria's solicitude to help her brother, that she might ruin herself in the attempt: besides, little Henry was now growing up a fine child, and must soon be sent somewhere; and though his more immediate wants were supplied by a neighbouring day school, yet it was natural and necessary to look a little further. For her youngest daughter she had few cares; her activity, ability, and good-humour, had secured her a warm friend in her governess, who would therefore, most probably, either retain her as a teacher, or procure her a more advantageous situation; or, in case of the worst, she would be an assistant to Maria. This scheme, however, neither herself or daughter thought equally desirable with her remaining in a more retired

situation, as the volatility of her temper might be drawn out to the disadvantage of them all; for Betsey had an almost irresistible propensity to detect the ludicrous, and enjoy the comical part of every character. 'Twas her misfortune to be an admirable mimic, and, with great good-humour, to be prone to satire: a quick perception of the ridiculous, and a thorough contempt of the affected in any person, formed a leading trait in her character; of course, she was little fitted for commerce with the world, in a business where the vain and the frivolous become important from their very foibles. Of this defect in her child (for defect, however charming it may be, we must certainly deem it) Mrs. Gardiner was fully aware; and she justly deemed her present residence the very best that could possibly be obtained, for rendering the unlucky talents of her daughter most likely to draw upon themselves that inconveniency which, in time, would teach her wisdom to restrain them; for although a large society must present food for ridicule, yet, when it is circumscribed, the mischief cannot extend beyond its own circle; each in turn becomes its subject and its corrector. Hence the foolish are enabled to see wherein they have been ridiculous, and yet to punish the person who has ridiculed them; and hence it is scarcely possible for any one in a large seminary to indulge long in habits of pride or affectation, especially if there is a wag in the school. Poor Betsey, ever in difficulties herself, was yet the means of curing many foibles in others, and in time grew the better of her own; but this was not the work of a day, and her education was as yet incomplete, my young friends, though she was allowed to be accomplished (in the common acceptance of the word) to a very high degree; and she possessed so warm and tender a heart, that it might be truly said, she gave no pain to any one by her raillery, which she did not afterwards feel herself in a tenfold degree; but she wanted the resolution to resist the inclination to laugh at absurdity, to which must be added the desire to shine, which is ever irresistible, or nearly so, to those who are gifted with that rare and dangerous quality called wit.

CHAPTER XIV.

In the spring of the year following that which placed Sarah under the protection of Lady Barbara Blount, that good lady determined to treat herself and favourite with a jaunt to the lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland, intending to make Keswick their head-quarters. She was induced to adopt this plan, partly because Mr. Montgomery, the artist, who had resided at Keswick about a month, described that neighbourhood as extremely delightful, and partly because she thought Sarah's health and spirits had been hurt by too close attention to her studies, and that a journey of this kind was calculated to do her good in this respect, and at the same time teach her to sketch from nature, by accompanying Mr. Montgomery. It was her intention, likewise, to travel from thence through the west of England, and visit Mrs. Gardiner before she returned to town; and accordingly they set out, and in their route visited every thing most worthy of attention to Sarah, who was exceedingly delighted with every thing she saw in Derbyshire, particularly Matlock and Dovedale. From the former place they proceeded to Harrowgate, where they took up their abode a few days; and from whence Sarah wrote a few lines, at Lady Barbara's request, to the housekeeper in London.

In looking over what Sarah had written, the lady remarked that the letter was signed S. C.—'I never knew,' said she, 'that you had two names; pray what may the C. stand for?'

'Cordelia, madam.'

'Cordelia! and is it possible that you should bear such a fine-sounding, sweet, lack-a-daisical name as Cordelia, child, and be willing all your life to be called plain Sarah!'

'Certainly, ma'am; and I should now be sorry to exchange it, for my dear father thought it most proper for my situation; he said romantic names were often connected with romantic notions in girls.'

'Why did he give you such a name then?'

'I was called after my two grandmothers, ma'am, I believe; but they were both dead long before I was born.'

'Tis a singular name: I never knew but one Cordelia in my life, and she has been dead near forty years. It was her nephew,' continued her ladyship, musing, 'that I spoke to at the well.'

'The gentleman who looked so ill?' said Sarah.

'The same. Poor Lawrence! I doubt the well will not do him much good; he seems very weak.'

'Lawrence!' said Sarah—'dear, how strange!—My grandmother was called Cordelia Lawrence; my brother George has her surname. This gentleman is the person some people talked about as being likely to assist my mother. Pray does your ladyship know if he has a brother?'

'To be sure he has, child—an elder brother, who enjoys the family estate. This gentleman was brought up to the law, and has made a fine fortune in it, which is expected to come to the second son of the elder brother, as he has always been his favourite. Your mother is forgotten, I suppose, by them all. But I now recollect Cordelia had a child; but having no intimacy in the family, I merely remember the circumstance being mentioned by my mother. I was young, and it did not make much impression on my mind beyond the moment; I will, however, inquire where Mr. Lawrence may be found, and introduce you to him.'

'Oh, no, no, my lady! pray do not trouble yourself.'

'Not trouble myself! what do you mean, child? The man must own you, when I introduce you, and he may be of great use to your family.'

'Pardon me, dear madam,' said Sarah, her cheek reddening, and her eyes filling with tears; 'I am certainly much obliged for your wish to benefit my family, and it is my duty to submit; but——'

'*Submit!*—is the girl mad?—*submit* to be introduced to your rich relation! Why, you're as proud as Montgomery himself! A pretty pair I've got to deal with, truly! He has fairly matched me in a similar case; but I believe your little queenship will not carry your point so easily.'

'Oh, don't be angry, dear madam!' cried the poor girl—'I hope I am not proud; it is not pride surely, but, I trust, a better motive, though I cannot define it, which made me at first shrink from a man who does not own my mother—who looks down, I apprehend, upon her and my father—upon two people, madam,' said she, rising majestically, her angelic countenance brightening as she spoke—'two people whom no earthly potentate need blush to own—whom God himself will distinguish in that great day, "when the meek shall be clothed with honour."

At this moment Lady Barbara became at once herself, and forgot the humour she affected, the habit she had assumed; and as she clasped the lovely girl in her arms, and kissed the tears from her cheek, she promised that no consideration should induce her to push Sarah into the notice of her rich cousin; but observed very justly, that as it did not appear that Mrs. Gardiner had ever been repulsed by Mr. Lawrence, and as they had been separated from their childhood, it was probable he had forgotten her; so he was certainly entitled to polite attention from her child, since chance had thrown him in her way. To this Sarah readily assented, and the sweet serenity of her mind became regained.

Lady Barbara, however, secretly resolved not to leave Harrowgate till she had shown her *protégée* to this relation. She did not consider it probable, nor indeed desirable, because it was scarcely justifiable, that Sarah, amiable as she was, should supplant in this gentleman's affections, the nephew he had so long taught to consider himself his heir; but she saw clearly he was a dying man, and she thought that, if only a small legacy was ceded to Mrs. Gardiner, it would, in her case, be a matter of importance, and would be little missed by the rich family, who were already provided for without any collateral supplies.

As Lady Barbara was at the Dragon, and Mr. Lawrence at Low Harrowgate, she could not immediately learn where he was; but Mrs. Goodlad having made every possible inquiry, she learned he was in private lodgings; and went out the next morning, intending to call upon him, but met him on the way. After the usual salutation, she said—'I am sure, Mr. Lawrence, you will with pleasure see your young cousin here. This is Cordelia Gardiner, Maria Benson's daughter.'

Mr. Lawrence appeared very much surprised; and after speaking to Sarah with tolerable frankness, inquired how long she had been with her ladyship?

Lady Barbara, quitting Sarah's arm, who now walked forwards, informed him of the circumstances which had brought her acquainted with Mrs. Gardiner, and what were the present situation and prospects of her family; and ended with a warm eulogium of the mother and her children, dwelling particularly on the disposition and abilities of her with whom she was best acquainted.

Mr. Lawrence heard her not only with the deference suitable to her rank and character, but with a degree of apparent satisfaction on the subject itself. He lamented that his health was so bad as to prevent him from seeing more of Sarah, but said he flattered himself, on their return from the Lakes, he should be quite another creature, and hoped they would take Harrowgate in their way. This, though contrary to Lady Barbara's intention, she determined on doing; and having given and exchanged a friendly adieu, they parted, Mr. Lawrence affectionately pressing the hand of Sarah, and repeating her name of Cordelia twice, very affectingly observing, though he had known but little of his aunt, he had loved her much.

Lady Barbara, having now satisfied herself with this apparently-fortunate rencounter, set out with renewed spirits on her journey, which every hour increased in interest to Sarah; and the delight she experienced communicated itself to her less enthusiastic patroness. To every mind capable of sympathy, nothing can awaken purer pleasure than to trace the feelings of vivid imagination which pervades the breast when 'all things please, for life itself is new,' ere experience has destroyed the charms of novelty, and sorrow the zest of enjoyment.

But there was in the pleasure of Sarah a purer and higher charm than is often enjoyed even by young people; this was the spirit of devotion, which ever pervaded her mind, and enhanced all the good she received; and every opening prospect of 'mountains piled on mountains to the skies,' of valleys and of lakes, not only were seen with an artist's but a Christian's eye; every where she acknowledged the presence of a God, and every where she felt the protection of an all-surrounding Father.

On arriving at Keswick, they felt some mortification at finding Mr. Montgomery had left that place for Ambleside, whither, after sleeping one night, Lady Barbara determined to follow him, having made a resolution to surprise him. He was as yet a stranger to their journey, so that when they got to Ambleside, he was still not visible; but as, from the account they received from the landlord of the inn, they thought it was probable that he was sketching in that beautiful country, they set out to ramble, in the hope of meeting with him, Lady Barbara concluding that there would be no

difficulty in inquiring which way he had bent his course; accordingly, being puzzled by the crossing of two paths, either of which were likely to have drawn him, she stopped the first man she met, and asked him if he had seen an artist, walking or sketching on the road?

'Hoo say yo?' quoth the man, staring.

Lady Barbara explained herself as well as she was able; to which he answered—

'Hey, bairn, I'se warrant noo ye mean that felly at gangs about wi' a girt baik under's airm, taking aff every thing at he sets his een on. 'Twas no but last week he made me stand stock still, and cart an' aw, at top on a brig, while he put us aw' down in his baik, though I tell'd him to wait till I'd gitten mysel shaved, and patt'n the horses into the raid like; but he wad hawe his ain way, ye see.'

'Well, friend, that's the man: can you tell us how to find him?'

'Why, what, he's gane up th' rocks a lile way; but ye need nae be feared for him; naebody'll take him up here, as they did in Yorkshire.'

'What did they do there?' cried Sarah, anxiously.

'Why yo see, bairn, they seed him luiking about an about like, an' they knew not what he wanted; and at last he sat down on a wauside; and an old wife cam oot on her hoos, as she sed—"Sur, if ye poo my hoos doon, I'll pray ye build me a better;" and sae twa or three gat round him, and a blacksmith thout he were come to turn the raid; but an exciseman sed at he were a French spy, come to see the nakedness of the land; sae th' auld wife cried out to her dowter—"Come, Mally, bring th' tongs, for we've taken a spy.'"

Lady Barbara laughed heartily at the good man's recital; but Sarah inquired, with great solicitude, if Mr. Montgomery had escaped injury from these brutes?

'Eh, bairn, eh!' said the man: 'an he cam doon amang us, where foak ken better what's what; and if ye be o' that sort as like prospects, and ye'll come to my hoos just as the sun's blinking his last ower th' fell tops, and glimmering upo' th' lake, I'se shew you the sweetest glen your eyes e'er luiked into.'

Lady Barbara thanked him very cordially; and then turning to Sarah, said—'In this man you see, with all his coarseness, a decided share of that taste which Akenside has so admirably delineated:—

*"His rude expression and untutor'd airs,
Beyond the pow'r of language will unfold
The form of beauty smiling at his heart;
How lovely! how commanding!"*

'True, my lady,' said Sarah: 'a portion of taste is often given to the roughest peasant who traverses the bleakest mountains; but yet, as the same poet observes—

*"Without fair culture's kind parental aid,
And shelter from the blast, in vain we hope
The tender plant should rear its blooming head,
Or yield the harvest promis'd in its spring."*

'Surely no one can feel this truth more fully than yourself; for who with kinder hand fosters the humble germ, and leads into life that flower, which else had withered on the spray?'

Absorbed in a subject which inspired her genius not more than it warmed her heart, Sarah forgot the roads were not paved, and at this moment setting her foot on a loose stone, it gave way, and throwing her down, she slipped into the beck, above which they had been picking their way. She was little hurt, and not very likely to be drowned; but Lady Barbara, alarmed with so novel an accident, screamed aloud, and brought back the countryman they had just quitted; but he was too late, for Montgomery, who was just descending from the rocks, heard the scream, and hastening forwards, beheld the lady's distress; but, on jumping forwards to take Sarah out of the water, his astonishment was so great, that he

was nearly letting her fall again, which excited Lady Barbara's mirth as much as her fears, and she could scarce assist Sarah for laughing.

After dry clothes had been procured, the party entered into a regular investigation of the fine country around them, and amused themselves exceedingly with the genuine simplicity and *naiveté* of the inhabitants, whose solid sense and native penetration they found equal to their simplicity. They were delighted with the exquisite scenery, which, Sarah agreed, infinitely surpassed her own famed county, though styled the garden of England. At Keswick they remained a month, and Lady Barbara saw, with sincere gladness, that her young charge was now become the picture of health, her fine form daily adding the grace of stability to that of elegance; she bounded over the mountains like the young hart, unwearied by exertion, or set for hours at her portfolio, untired by attention. From Keswick they went to Penrith, and thence visited the Lake of Ulswater, with which, on the whole, they were better pleased than with any of the rest; in that respect resembling Cumberland, whose Ode to the Sun they read upon its banks. They then returned to Ambleside, visited Winandermere and Buttermere, and then, with great regret, left this enchanting country, where the young artists had found all that their hearts sought for, and their eyes desired.

As Mr. Montgomery was extremely desirous of seeing Hack Fall and Bolton Abbey, he determined to accompany the ladies at least as far as Harrowgate. Lady Barbara then concluded to go from thence into Devonshire; but as she intended her stay at Harrowgate to be governed in a great measure by the situation in which she should find Mr. Lawrence, it was concluded that Mr. Montgomery, after viewing the objects of curiosity in that neighbourhood, should pursue his journey to London.

With Hack Fall the travellers were exceedingly delighted, and as the weather continued favourable, they obtained some fine sketches; but with the ruins of Bolton Abbey, and the fine views of the Wharfe, they were absolutely transported, and felt surprised that it had hitherto attracted so little attention. They would most willingly have lingered out the autumn here, had not Lady Barbara been anxious to pursue her journey into the west, according to her plan; therefore they tore themselves from this sylvan abode, and pursued their journey to Harrowgate, where we will leave them for a time, to inquire what is become of Mrs. Gardiner and her eldest daughter.

CHAPTER XV.

During the summer in which Sarah had been thus uniting amusement and improvement, Maria had been pursuing her business with diligence, and continued to be the comfort and delight of her fond parent; but this parent's hopes and fears were now excited by a new interest, which, for a short time, was a source of great solicitude.

In the same street where Mrs. Gardiner and her daughter lived, there was a very respectable family, from whom she had often received many pleasing and friendly attentions. The family consisted of a father and mother, one son, and two daughters. The father was a mercer, in a very good line of business, in which he had realized a handsome fortune; and this summer he gave the whole of it up to his son, and retired into the country, leaving his eldest daughter to keep her brother's house.

This young lady had attached herself much to Maria, with whom she frequently sat an hour in the evening; and sometimes her brother came to fetch her home, at which times Mrs. Gardiner had remarked an attention and deference to Maria, which she thought indicative of an attachment she could not disapprove. As she knew the young man to be in every way respectable and amiable, and being handsome in his person, as well as agreeable in his manners, she felt no doubt but Maria would soon feel for him that regard he appeared so well calculated to awaken. As, however, though his wishes were evident, yet his advances were extremely distant, Mrs. Gardiner became alarmed lest he should be involving himself in some disagreement with his family; she apprehended that, as an only son, his father had most probably a wealthier bride in his eye for him, and she dreaded lest the happiness of her child should become the sacrifice of her principles. She well knew that Maria would never enter a family clandestinely, or owe that to pity which she merited from esteem; but she dreaded lest her affections should be engaged ere she was aware that their freedom was necessary for her happiness. She had remarked an air of embarrassment whenever Mr. Clarkson (the young man in question) addressed her, and that she had of late been often absent in company, and appeared frequently lost in intense thought. The tender mother felt for her all the anxiety such a case merited in so excellent a child, but she did not feel empowered to break into the delicate reserve that Maria had adopted; she now looked forward with great eagerness to the period when Sarah should arrive, as she thought that her sister would be able to open her heart more fully to a person so near her own age; and she too, felt a want of some one to whom she could fully confide all her hopes and fears, on a subject of so much importance.

From this state of inquietude she was, however, partly relieved before Sarah's return. Miss Clarkson having one evening prevailed on Maria to take a short walk with her, the young man seized that opportunity to entreat Mrs. Gardiner's permission to allow him to pay his addresses to her daughter, to whom he said he had been attached more than two years, but that he had been deterred from declaring his affection sooner, partly from Maria's youth, and partly from his own want of an establishment, which was now happily removed, and enabled him to offer a comfortable home, not only to her daughter, but herself.

'I cannot permit you to proceed, sir,' said Mrs. Gardiner, 'without interrupting you, just to ask if your father knows of your attachment to Maria, as I am confident, without his full consent, you will never obtain my daughter's: I need not mention mine, for her own sense of propriety will, I am certain, dictate this conduct.'

To this question Mr. Clarkson made no other answer than by immediately placing the following letter in her hands:—

'MY DEAR SON,

'To see you well settled in life has been for many years the first wish of my heart, and, as far as lay in my power, I have struggled to obtain it; and having done this for you, I rejoice that there is no necessity for you to make fortune an object in a wife: you have therefore my free consent, and your mother's likewise, to marry Miss Gardiner, who, we think, is a fortune in herself, as you observe. All my advice in this affair is, that you will treat her mother with the attention due to her as a son, she being, in our opinion, a woman whose piety and virtue will be a blessing to all who are connected with her. As we are greatly concerned for you, we beg you to write us soon, and give us information of every thing relating to this affair. I remain, dear son, yours, &c. &c.

'THOS. CLARKSON.'

Under these circumstances, she did not hesitate to give her consent most gladly to the young man, who received it with unbounded gratitude, and took his leave. Poor Mrs. Gardiner failed not, on her knees, to thank the Almighty Disposer for what she believed to be the greatest mark of his interposition, of the many she had hitherto experienced. She had kept Mr. Clarkson's letter in her hand, and was admiring the plain sensible style of it, when Maria returned from her walk: she parted from her young friend at the door, and entered, with a pale countenance and a trembling step. On seeing her mother, she just observed, in a tremulous tone, that the evening was fine, and was going to leave the room; but Mrs. Gardiner, alarmed at her paleness and evident embarrassment, said—'My love, you are not well; had you not better sit down here?'

Maria sat down, violently agitated; but struggling to gain composure, she at length, by a strong effort, obtained courage to say—'You have a letter there, mother, I perceive?'

'I have, my love, and one that nearly concerns you, Maria; but we will talk about it another time.'

'No, my dear mother,' said Maria, pressing her hands, 'we will talk about it now; for I wish not to conceal from you, that Eliza Clarkson has given me the history of that letter during our walk. Indeed,' she added, with a deep sigh, 'I have long seen the evil that was hanging over my head, and I thought the cloud would burst upon me soon.'

'The evil!' exclaimed Mrs. Gardiner—'the cloud burst over you!—why, Maria, you absolutely astonish me. If I did not know you utterly incapable of airs or nonsense of any kind, I think I should conclude you were playing off Lydia Languish in the comedy. But I see how it is; Eliza has been amusing herself at your expense. You do not know that this letter is a full, free, generous consent from Mr. Clarkson, that Francis should marry you.'

'Ah, but indeed I do, mother! I would it were not, for then I should have a reason for refusing which even you would approve.'

'And do you seriously intend to refuse him?' said the surprised and mortified mother.

Maria answered only by tears.

Mrs. Gardiner had suffered *for* her children much, but this was the first pang she had borne *from* any one of them, and she felt it severely—more severely than the nature of the case warranted. But where is the human being whose feelings are regulated by the hand of wisdom in every emergency of life? and where our expectations have been highly raised, is not our disappointment proportionably acute? One hour ago, this fond mother, presaging her daughter's happiness, had trod on air; she was now laid in the dust, and time and prayer were necessary to restore her to her wonted tranquillity.

When Maria's overburthened heart had found some relief from the plentiful discharge of tears, she began to reflect on her own conduct in this affair, and the review gave her courage; the more she investigated her feelings, the more she felt convinced that she was justifiable in her conduct, and that, when the first vexation and disappointment were subsided, her mother must, upon her own principles, justify the resolution she now condemned. This consideration at length gave her confidence, and she spoke thus:—'Do not, my dear mother, for one act of apparent disobedience, condemn a daughter, who, till now, has made your will the law of her life; nor think that I am rashly throwing away a proffered blessing, which I feel to be equally above my expectations and merits. I have for many weeks been endeavouring to school my own heart on this subject; I have pointed out all the advantages of such a connexion to my family, the blessing of securing you a certain asylum for life, the advantage such a connexion would be to my two younger brothers, and, in short, the value of such a friend as this truly estimable young man would be to us all; and there have been moments when the desire of diffusing this happiness to objects so exceedingly dear to me, has risen paramount to every selfish feeling; and had it happened that I had been asked in one of those fits of affection (if I may use the expression), I should doubtless have given my hand to Mr. Clarkson; but I believe it to be happy for us both that I have not, for every moment of cool deliberation has assured me, that I shall never feel for him that unalloyed affection which would be necessary for the discharge of my duties. You know I am not romantic; I do not think it necessary to be in love (as the phrase is) with the man I marry, but I *do* think it necessary to have a very decided preference.'

'How do you know that you shall not feel this same decided preference? There is no man for whom you feel more esteem than Mr. Clarkson: time may do much: you will not refuse his visits?'

Maria was silent.

'If I had not known,' resumed the widow, 'that you had neither correspondence nor acquaintance with any other man, I should really think, Maria, that, with all your apparent openness, you had deceived me, and that you had some engagement, some attachment, that I know nothing of.'

'But I have no engagement, my dear mother; indeed I have not. Oh, do not look unkindly at me! it will break my heart. Never, never did I harbour one deceitful thought from my cradle.'

'Do not distress yourself, my child, if you have no engagement or attachment of any kind.'

'Spare me, my mother! I did not say I had no *attachment*, nor do I mean to equivocate: I wish you could read every thought and feeling of my heart. But indeed I can say no more.'

The poor girl sunk sobbing on the bosom of her mother, who forbore to urge her further; but this painful conversation not only convinced her of the mortifying necessity of refusing this truly desirable connexion, but left a degree of inquietude upon the mind of Mrs. Gardiner which had hitherto been unknown. She remarked, however, with pleasure, that Maria was restored to her usual equanimity; and grateful for her indulgence in urging the affair no farther, exerted herself to prove how deeply she felt the obligation.

CHAPTER XVI.

On the arrival of Lady Barbara at Harrowgate, she learnt, with more sorrow than surprise, that Mr. Lawrence, finding himself grow weaker every day, had sent for his favourite nephew about a fortnight before, intending, under his care, to return to his own house in London; but that, being taken much worse at Leeds, he had been obliged to stop there about ten days, when he expired in his nephew's arms. From all these circumstances, her ladyship was led to conclude that he had not made any addition to his will in poor Mrs. Gardiner's favour; but her hopes revived on their passing through Leeds (as they happened to be at the inn from which the funeral had departed a few days before), as the communicative chambermaid informed them a lawyer had been with the sick gentleman for two hours, a week before he died: but she heard her master say, Mr. Scepticus did not come to make the gentleman's will, but another thing with a very odd name; but it was a thing that wanted signing all the same as a will, she believed.'

'Was it a codicil, my good girl?'

'Well! Lord bless us, if that wasn't the very word, I declare!' cried the wench, in amazement.

Having obtained the attorney's address, Lady Barbara set out to obtain the wished-for information. Being introduced to the man of law, having little time and great anxiety, she inquired, in her usual blunt and somewhat acrimonious manner, if he had made a codicil for the late Mr. Lawrence, in favour of the widow Gardiner, or her children?

'Pray, are you the widow Gardiner?' said Mr. Scepticus, drawing up his neck and adjusting his cravat, with an air of determinate hostility.

'No,' said the lady, abruptly.

'Perhaps you are a relation of hers?'

'I am not.'

'Then, as I doubt you possess no legal right to inquire, ma'am, you must allow me to doubt my right to give you a categorical answer.'

'Heaven defend me from a country attorney!' cried Lady Barbara. 'Won't you tell me whether he had left Cordelia any thing?'

'I never heard the word Cordelia in my life, ma'am—except, indeed, upon the stage,' said the lawyer.

Lady Barbara flounced out of the office, equally angry at the dead man and his attorney.—'"Tis a pretty job truly!' she muttered to herself: 'it will cost me a thousand pounds, I expect, and I have but a life estate; yes, 'tis a very pretty job indeed!—I wish he had lived till I had come back—I'd have taught him to make codicils, indeed, without remembering the child! that I would!'

On her return to the inn, she found the young people employed in looking at some paintings, one of which Montgomery recommended her to purchase, as it was reasonable.—'Me buy pictures!' cried the lady in a fury—'I'll buy nothing; I have not a shilling to spare; 'tis fairly a thousand pounds lost.'

Utterly unconscious what Lady Barbara alluded to, but sorry to see her so discomposed, the young people continued silent for the next stage, when they parted, as Mr. Montgomery went from thence to London, and they pursued the road through Birmingham and Bath to S——, in Devonshire.

Lady Barbara continued silent till they got near Sheffield, when she asked Sarah what ailed her, and what she was thinking of?

'I was just thinking this neighbourhood is very beautiful, but the town is not near so pretty as Doncaster.'

'Umph! I thought your brains were on the Doncaster road; but I would advise you to call 'em home again, child; you must make all your forces rally round the citadel, or we shall have a speedy surrender, I doubt.'

The blood rose in torrents to poor Sarah's cheeks, and forsook them as speedily; but Lady Barbara pursued her game no farther, and grieved for the pain she had given, shook off the morning's chagrin, and passed the evening in good-humour.

Sarah was, during this journey, presented with a scene very different to any thing she had yet beheld: this was the rich orchards of Worcestershire and Gloucestershire, now in perfection, and glowing with Hesperian beauty. She was particularly struck with the almost immeasurable vale, which, from the high hill above Froucester, spreads out like an immense carpet, through which the Severn winds in serpentizing folds. Orchards and cottages, villages with their neat churches, meadows, cornfields, and gentlemen's houses, all conspire to give the idea of a rich country, on which 'the power of cultivation sits, and joys to see the wonders of his hand.'

Bath, though it could not boast of much company, was likewise a pleasant object to Sarah, as the most elegant place she had ever seen; but she could not give it one sigh of regret, as from thence it was scarcely a day's journey to her dear mother's arms. Lady Barbara remarked her eagerness with complacency; and though it was some miles out of her way, yet she did not proceed to her destination, till she had set her down at her mother's door.

Sarah flew into the room in breathless impatience—'Oh, my mother! my sister!' she exclaimed, and was instantly embraced by both. Again and again they looked at and admired her; she was much taller, and considerably plumper than she used to be, though still slight, and roses were now blown on her cheeks, to rival the lilies which had named her; there was an air of fashion now blended with her simplicity; and, altogether, she was so much improved, that the fond parent and sister could never sufficiently gaze at her.

Sarah thought her friends were just as she had left them, but she had some difficulty in persuading herself that the house was the same as she had left it; the parlour appeared so small, the staircase so narrow, and the whole establishment so totally different to what she had been used to, that she was obliged to watch herself very narrowly, lest something should escape which might wound the feelings of those dear relatives who were exerting their narrow means to the utmost, to procure her comparative comforts.

Much had both parties to hear and to relate; and it was extremely delightful to Mrs. Gardiner to perceive that her child was so far from being corrupted by the luxuries to which she had been accustomed, that in the course of a very few days, when the novelty of her situation was gone off, she appeared to enjoy all around her with her accustomed zest, and that every branch of her family was still as dear to her as before she had left them. She was exceedingly desirous that little Henry should be sent to school to Mr. Wallingford, and was extremely anxious that part of Lady Barbara's liberal allowance of pocket money to her should be applied to this purpose. While this point was debating, the family was agreeably surprised with a letter from Mr. Staniland, which was the more welcome, as they had not heard from George for above two months, and were become extremely uneasy on his account, as his general regularity rendered them alive to every defection in his correspondence. Mr. Staniland's letter was as follows:—

'DEAR COUSIN,

'I have been for seven weeks confined to my bed with a fever, and I make the first use of my convalescence to inform you, that I believe, under Heaven, your excellent son was the means of saving my life. His conduct has been such as to secure the affection of my wife and daughters, to the last day of their lives; but as words are poor payment, I think it my duty to set your heart at ease, by informing you that, from this day, I take all his expences upon myself; and hereby promise, that on the day he is twenty-three years of age, I will make him my equal partner. I hear a very good account of your son William, who, it seems, has a desire to enter the church; if a friend should be wanted, do not forget that you have a sincere one in your affectionate cousin,

'J. STANILAND.'

Delightful to the widow's heart was this honest and grateful testimonial to the worth of her eldest son, whose example, she hoped, would be followed by his brothers. She had often, very naturally, lamented that the elder branches of the family were of the weaker sex, and were obliged to extend protection to brothers, instead of receiving it from them; but she now felt a belief that all things were for the best, and that every circumstance of their lives had been ordered by overruling wisdom; and though she could not look upon the past without emotions of tender regret, yet it was blended with a sense of pure gratitude and abundant consolation, and the future presented fruitful sources on which hope might repose with reason and confide with joy.

CHAPTER XVII.

In consequence of the certainty of George's happy establishment, Mrs. Gardiner began to consider the scheme of placing Henry under Mr. Wallingford's care, as somewhat more feasible than it had hitherto appeared. She had been afraid of mentioning her wishes on this head to that gentleman, lest she should be thought to levy a second tax on his generosity, which she was well aware would be readily extended: after maturely deliberating the point, it was at length settled, that, though she could not by any means afford to place Henry under the good man's care on the terms of his other boarders, yet she was enabled to do it on terms which would secure him from loss; and as they understood he had one vacancy, they determined that no time should be lost in procuring so excellent a situation. This matter was more easily settled by the sisters than the mother; for though her judgment completely approved the arrangement, her heart shrunk from the execution of a plan which tore her youngest darling from her sight: the widowed mother will know how to appreciate her feelings in this respect, and such only can.

A day or two before that on which it had been fixed to send little Henry to school, the family had the pleasure of receiving a call from Lady Barbara, who was immediately acquainted with their intention, which she approved much, saying, she hoped in another year that Sarah would be equal to bearing a large proportion of his expences. She then inquired the exact situation of the village, and on learning it, informed her auditors that she could very conveniently pack them all in her coach, if they wanted to take the child, as she was under a promise to spend some days with an old friend in that neighbourhood, Sir Thomas Singleton; and that the carriage should bring them back to S——, and return for her at the time she wanted, which would be within a few days of her return to London. Having hastily settled her plan, she left the party to decide the minutiae of the business at their leisure.

Mrs. Gardiner, though often invited by her late worthy neighbours, had never been able to prevail on herself to visit this dear village, and she trembled with the thoughts of encountering the many objects of tender recollection which must press upon her view. Still she could not quit her little darling, without herself placing him in the hands of her excellent friend the curate; the opportunity of conveyance, too, was such as could not be lost: it was therefore settled that herself and two elder daughters should accompany their little darling, while Betsey should (with the leave of her good governess, who was always happy to oblige a family she so much respected) undertake for one day the management of Maria's business.

This interesting moment arrived, and they set out, all happy, but all thoughtful—a pensive tone of thought pervaded every mind, and silenced every tongue, except that of the little boy, who, as he partook of the coachman's seat, interrupted no other person by his garrulity.

The nearer the party approached their once happy mansion, the more acute became their sensations: the lane, the meadows, were old friends; the coppice behind the house, that favourite walk of him whose hand had planted it; that garden, whose cultivation had been his amusement and his pride, now rose to their view, and boasted more than its former neatness; in every thing around there was little change, except improvement—an attention to the character and taste of the former inhabitants at once flattering and affecting.

A splendid equipage at the parsonage-door was not at this period so wonderful a sight as it used to be, as the parents and friends of Mr. Wallingford's pupils occasionally called upon them there; but it was still a spectacle of admiration, and the few who were going past stopped to see the fine folks get out. The young ladies, who alighted first, were not remembered, being grown out of knowledge; but Mrs. Gardiner, who was at a period of life less subject to change, was instantly recognised, and the news of her arrival spread through the country before even Mr. Wallingford was aware of it. Seated with his pupils in a back-room, the party had bidden adieu to their noble conductor, and were walking down the garden, Mrs. Gardiner leaning on the arm of her eldest daughter, while Sarah led Henry by the hand, who was carrying a package nearly as large as himself, when a little boy informed his good master that company was coming.

When Mr. Wallingford ran out to receive the party, his pleasure and surprise were such as to destroy the power of utterance: he seized the hand of Mrs. Gardiner, and respectfully kissing her cheek, led her forward to the parlour, and placed her in the chair once occupied by her revered partner, while he took himself the one she used to sit in herself. This attention to her feelings was not lost upon her, but it served to increase the agitation that swelled her bosom; she attempted to speak, but her voice was suffocated; she sunk back on her chair, and burst into tears: her children and her friend wept with her.

From this timely relief she arose refreshed, though still sad; but scarcely had she regained composure, when the arrival of the old neighbours recalled, in a great measure, her former sensations; many received her with tears of joy, and many with obstreperous pleasure, but all with sincere affection. A thousand inquiries were put about Willy and George; and as soon as Henry appeared, he was embraced with ardour: but here a new trial wrung the widow's heart, though mixed with tender joy: they all declared this boy was the very image of his reverence; he was even more like him than Miss Sally; and a thousand prayers were poured round the astonished child, that he might resemble him in all things.

When it was found that Mrs. Gardiner and her family were to return the same evening, murmurs succeeded to congratulations; Mrs. Gooch grumbled aloud; farmer Eade thought it main hard zhe zould come an' peep at 'em, az it were, an' then run away az if zhe did not like 'em; but finding this observation had given a new pang to those under which the widow evidently laboured, he became so vexed with himself, that he sobbed aloud. His wife, a sensible woman, then observed, that it was a plain case zo many people were quite too much for maddam: she hoped, zo she did, az how dear mistress wud come next year, and stay a long time among 'em; to which Mrs. Gardiner affectionately conceded, the curate observing, that either then or the summer after, he hoped she would come and stay a *very* long time amongst them.

Elated with this promise, the party took their leave; the curate went to shew his garden to the young ladies, and Mrs. Gardiner lay down on the sofa, endeavouring to regain that strength of mind she had often evinced on occasions perhaps more trying, but not more touching than this affecting visit.

A summons for dinner now called the party from the garden, and roused Mrs. Gardiner to an exertion which was very beneficial to her spirits: she was much pleased with the young family, and gratified by finding Mr. Wallingford in possession of many comforts and increasing prospects. When the cloth was drawn, he entered into a free communication of his present circumstances; and while this conversation took place, Sarah led Maria out of the room, and unpacking the package which Henry had brought from the coach, exhibited a beautiful drawing, elegantly framed, which she said was done in London, on purpose for a present to Mr. Wallingford, and she hoped Maria would give it him now, as it appeared the best time.

'But, my dear Sarah, why not give it him yourself? 'tis your own drawing, and your own present.'

'Because it will be more welcome from your hand, Maria: you need not blush so, for I am sure it will.'

Maria was now angry, and returned still blushing to the room; so poor Sarah was content to take her pretty present in her hand, and with sisterly affection offer it to the friend of the family, who received it with much pleasure and many thanks, and expressed sincere admiration of the talents it displayed, particularly admiring the figures, which he thought uncommonly well done.

It was now Sarah's turn to blush, as she acknowledged they had been put in by Mr. Montgomery.

Mrs. Gardiner, pleased with the picture, and still more so with the manner of its disposal, did not attend to the tell-tale faces of either of her daughters; but after having agreed with Mr. Wallingford as to the best place to hang it in, proposed taking a short walk round the house, to look at its improvements; and accordingly they set out on this interesting little walk.

As they were returning, Mr. Wallingford observed that the church had undergone many repairs, and in the course of the last spring, had been whitewashed and beautified.—'I would ask you,' said he, hesitatingly, 'to look at what we have done there, but I know not how far it would be agreeable, or, indeed, good for you.'

Mrs. Gardiner, who had now greatly recovered the usual serenity of her mind, replied that she should like to look at the church; and putting her arm through the curate's, quietly resumed her walk.

The curate led the way down the middle aisle, and pointed in silence to some improvements round the pulpit, to which, as each eye glanced, it was bedimmed by a tear of fond remembrance; when little Henry, to whom all things were new, and who had made the circuit of the church while the rest were slowly entering it, ran up to his mother, and seizing her hand with violent agitation, his eyes twinkling away a tear, while his heart throbbed with fond emotion, cried—'Come, mother, come! tell me, is not this my father, my own poor father that I never saw?'

Astonished at the strange address and perturbation of the child, Mrs. Gardiner turned pale as death, and her trembling limbs almost refused to obey his summons; but Mr. Wallingford endeavoured to reassure her—'I see how it is,' he said

—'the child has found out a little memorial of our love, which I wished, yet was fearful you should see: I now find I ought to have told you myself.'

As he spoke, he gently led the way to the chancel, where the ready finger of Henry pointed out a neat tablet of white marble, the only monument that had ever adorned these humble walls, and on which, with trembling haste and pious curiosity, they traced the following lines:

'Sacred to the memory of the Reverend GEORGE GARDINER, ob. May 10, 1793, and was interred in the burial-place of his countrymen at Lisbon; but whose virtues as a man, and whose piety as a Christian minister, still live in the hearts of his parishioners, who have erected this monument, as an humble proof of their love, their veneration, and their gratitude.'

As the widow perused these lines, every fibre of her heart vibrated with new and overwhelming sensations, and she sunk on her knees, with uplifted hands and streaming eyes, apparently engaged in silent prayer; her daughters, clasped in each other's arms, at once seemed to lament over the separation of their parents, and to exult in their excellence; while the beautiful boy, standing by his mother, wiped the tears from her cheeks with his little handkerchief, or kissed them away with his rosy lips, while, with silent sorrow, he evinced sensibility superior to his years. The curate supported the widow with his arm; his heart was engaged in fervent prayer to Heaven for her, but not a sound escaped the lips of any one.

To beings thus engaged, the lapse of time passed unperceived, for their intercourse was with objects of eternity; and they had been thus situated many minutes, when a stranger entered the church. He beheld the group, he read the inscription, and the scene explained itself. Struck with the sacred form of sorrow thus awfully engaged, he advanced with silent reverence, as if anxious to partake that holy communion of spirit in which the whole group evidently participated; and with chastened joy he beheld the countenance of the widow by degrees lose the sense of present pain in that of anticipated joy in an eternal reunion with her lamented husband; he saw heavenly resignation in her sweet daughters blend with pious love, as, gently turning, they each endeavoured to assist her; but, just at this moment, the eyes of Sarah met the stranger's; she uttered a faint scream of surprise, which so alarmed her already exhausted mother, that she would have fallen prostrate, if the stranger had not caught her in his arms.

A distressing confusion was visible in the countenances of Maria and Mr. Wallingford, but their anxiety to recover Mrs. Gardiner superseded every other concern. As they jointly conveyed her to a seat, she perceived herself in the arms of a stranger, but he wore a look of such genuine sensibility and pure benevolence, that her heart felt willing that he should be the partaker of its inmost confidence. Sarah set them all at ease by the exclamation of—'Oh, Mr. Montgomery, at what an awful moment have you found us!'

'A moment,' replied the young man, 'for which I hope to be a wiser and a better man to the latest of my existence.'

Mr. Wallingford grasped his hand with the warmth of an old friend; another pause ensued, after which Mrs. Gardiner finding herself better, was desirous of returning home. On their road thither, Mr. Montgomery explained the reason of his unexpected appearance. He said that some business of importance required the immediate presence of Lady Barbara Blount in London; that knowing she generally paid various visits during her stay in Devonshire, he dared not trust to the incertitude of letters, and had therefore determined to convey the information, as it respected the sale of an estate to be disposed of in a few days. He had, in consequence, arrived at S—— that morning, about an hour after the party set out; that learning that her ladyship was gone to Sir Thomas Singleton's, had followed her thither; that immediately on his arrival, the lady had ordered her carriage, and they had come together to the parsonage, when finding the party were gone to look at the church, she had sent him to hasten them home, as it was her intention to proceed to town as fast as possible.

Under these circumstances, the party were obliged to bid adieu to their kind entertainer in great haste, but not till little Henry had been warmly recommended to his protection, and till Lady Barbara had assured Mr. Wallingford that Sir Thomas Singleton was his warm friend, which he the more readily believed, as he had experienced several good offices from that gentleman, in the recommendation of pupils. The pain of parting was at this moment, however, uppermost in his mind; and when his friends drove off, the good man retired, dejected and forlorn; he traversed his little garden, with measured steps and downcast eyes; he recollected that these walks had been often trod by two beings, whose united hearts had here shared many a guiltless joy, and divided many a little sorrow, which had vanished by participation; in these paths they had trained up those lovely babes, who now shed blessings on their mother's head, and crowned their

father's memory with honour. 'Twas true, that father was no more, and that mother had waded through a sea of sorrow; but notwithstanding all the sufferings consequent on the connection, the good pastor again concluded, for the thousandth time—'it was not good for man to be alone.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

Lady Barbara and the young people pursued their journey to town, where they arrived in time for the benevolent lady to settle her affairs agreeably to her wishes, and where Sarah resumed her employment with increased avidity. In the mean time, Maria resumed her usual occupation; but Mrs. Gardiner observed, with some pain, that her mind was frequently abstracted; and though she could not be called low-spirited, yet she by no means enjoyed that degree of vivacity natural to her age and temper: she was always serene, but seldom lively; and as, in the course of this winter, the time of Elizabeth's school-term expired, she determined on taking her home, for a few months at least, in order that *her* cheerfulness might tend to restore that of her more thoughtful sister.

She had the satisfaction of finding her youngest daughter in every respect exceedingly improved; in her person she greatly resembled Maria, though scarcely so tall; and the pleasant archness of childhood still enlivened her dark intelligent eyes, without in the least diminishing that expression of modesty, which is above all other charms in a young woman.

From Sarah they were in habits of hearing frequently, and she generally conveyed agreeable intelligence of their beloved William, whom they hoped to see in the following summer. Their Christmas was greatly enlivened this winter by a visit from George, who was become a fine young man, and appeared as tenderly attached to his family as he had been during his childhood. He lamented the not finding Sarah at home, but consoled himself with the reflection that it was probable he should see her in London the following winter, as it was the intention of his good cousin to send him there for improvement as early as possible. The duties of his situation only permitted him to remain ten days with his mother, but the comfort she had received in this visit was long dear to her memory, for she never reflected on it without drawing the happiest omens respecting her first-born boy.

In the month of February, Mrs. Gardiner received a letter from her sweet Sarah, written in unusual spirits, and containing a bank-note of five pounds, which she had that morning received for two drawings of her own, the first she had sold. In a style indicative of the warmth and tenderness of her feelings, she entreated her mother to dedicate this first-fruits of her talents to some necessaries for little Henry, whom she appeared so anxious to divide with Maria, who, on her part, was ever desirous in any way to contribute to the general happiness, and sincerely rejoiced in Sarah's acquisition of powers, of which herself had long been the quiet possessor. In the month of May this present was renewed by Sarah, who informed her family that she had reason to believe, in the beginning of autumn, she should be again their guest; and this welcome news was observed by Mrs. Gardiner to have the happiest effect on the mind of Maria, who was now beginning to be much engaged with the summer business, and who had therefore need of every assistance to her spirits which kindness could procure.

In consequence of the destruction of his long-cherished hopes, which Mr. Clarkson had experienced, the two families had not, since that time, held any intercourse, as the blow had had a great effect on the young man's spirits; but Mrs. Gardiner had the satisfaction of observing that he now began to speak to her, if any circumstance threw them together, with his former cheerfulness, and that he even bore the presence of Maria without restraint. That good girl, who had a sincere esteem for his character, and a grateful remembrance of his disinterested affection, sincerely rejoiced in his restoration to peace. The steady propriety of her conduct, by leaving no hope for a change in her sentiments, much contributed to his cure, while it gave him an increased sense of the real value of her character.

At Midsummer, Mrs. Gardiner had the satisfaction of embracing her long-lost William, whom she found in every respect improved to her wishes; as was Henry, who was grown so much, that they could no longer apply to him the endearing epithet of *little*. These brothers had been so completely parted, from the very birth of the youngest, that Mrs. Gardiner had a particular satisfaction in having them to spend a few weeks with each other at this time, as she was extremely anxious to strengthen that bond of affection which is the very essence of domestic happiness and virtue; and she rejoiced to see that William, like the rest of his family; appeared to see Henry in the most endearing point of view—as a plant they were all called to nourish with peculiar care as the last gift of that parent who was obliged to leave him to their protection.

As William was very anxious to pay his respects to his worthy benefactors at his native village, he accompanied Henry on his return to school; and after hastily paying his respects to the worthy clergyman, he hastened to farmer Gooch's, where he found the whole family employed in rearing their last haystack. He was not immediately recognised by the farmer, but the moment he spoke, the dame, who was the only person unemployed, clasped him in her arms, declaring he

was her own sweet William; she could tell 'the voice on him frae a thousand.'

Forks and rakes now flew about in all directions, and all the family crowded round the stranger, who received their caresses with heartfelt gratitude and unaffected gracefulness; while the farmer and his wife listened to all he said with profound attention, and at every pause extolled his wisdom and his manners, with all the hyperbole their language admitted, every now and then walking round him, with all the happy pride which resulted from the consciousness of having contributed their share to the raising of this promising scion. It was, however, happy for William that he was under a promise of returning to the parsonage, as it was not likely that the vanity incident to his age should lie dormant under the load of fuel with which these good people were innocently feeding it. Having presented a parcel to Mrs. Gooch from his eldest sister, he passed on to call on some other neighbours, followed by the blessings and praises of the group. But it was not till he was out of sight that Mrs. Gooch unpinned Maria's present: she found it a neat cap, to which a note was pinned, which her son was called upon to read, and which was merely to beg the dame would wear it for her sake; but this she declared must never be the case, as she would keep it the longest day she had to live, 'zo zhe would; and when John got married, his wife zhuld have it a'ter her.'

William spent a delightful week among his old friends, and Mr. Wallingford settled to accompany him home, but was prevented from doing so by the arrival of a message from Sir Thomas Singleton, requesting his company for an hour; and as this worthy baronet lived at some miles distance, the good gentleman was obliged to give up the promised indulgence, which was one he so rarely enjoyed, that, if any common occurrence could have ruffled the equanimity of a temper which was governed by such principles as his, this would have done it. He certainly was both vexed and sorry; but as he could blame no one, he was determined to trouble no one; so, bidding the dear boy an affectionate adieu, he set out one way, as William set out the other. The regret of the latter was nearly equal to that of the former; but he was at that happy age when 'the tear, forgot as soon as shed,' leaves no regret behind: he soon reached home, and amused his mother and sisters exceedingly with his humorous account of the kind reception he had met with among their old neighbours, and the destination of Mrs. Gooch's cap. Maria had sent many similar tokens of remembrance among the friends of her youth, and it was found that they were generally set apart for like useful purposes, being thought too valuable to be worn, as being the work of dear Betsey's pretty fingers, or, to increase their dignity, of Miss Gardiner's own hands.

The day was a very sad one when William bade his mother and his sisters farewell, though it is but justice to say that he took all possible pains to prove that he was not only a man, but a stoic; and it was not till the coachman had given the last signal to the passengers, that William, like a fond boy, threw his arms round his mother's neck, and wept in her bosom, while that mother once more struggled with the feelings so often exercised, and smiling through her tears, exhorted him to fortitude, and praised him for that he had already shewn. This praise was a stimulus to exertion, for his mother never flattered, and he therefore felt its power; and his last nod from the coach window convinced the anxious parent that his worst struggle was over, and she returned in confidence and peace.

CHAPTER XIX.

As Mr. Wallingford's character and life have been necessarily the objects of our attention in the course of our little history, we hope the reader will not be displeased if we follow him to Sir Thomas Singleton's, just to see how far the business was of consequence, which drew him from the pleasure he had promised himself in accompanying William.

He found Sir Thomas sitting alone in his library, who received him with great respect, and said thus—'I have sent for you, Mr. Wallingford, because, as I saw nothing of you yesterday, I concluded you had no intention of paying me a visit, at which, I must say, I was a little surprised; but it is possible, to be sure, that you may not know what has happened.'

Mr. Wallingford assured Sir Thomas that he did not know of any thing that had happened to any person, or in any way, which was likely to have procured him the honour of his present visit.

'That is surprising,' said Sir Thomas: 'why, surely you have known that old Mr. Jervas, the incumbent of this living, has been ill above three months?'

'That I certainly knew, sir, having frequently officiated for him during the last three months.'

'Then allow me to tell you, sir, that any young man but yourself would have known that he died early yesterday morning; and as the living is in my gift, would most probably have asked me for it in the course of yesterday, remembering the old adage, "first come, first served." You see I am Lady Barbara's first cousin, and, like her, I speak my mind.'

Mr. Wallingford, in great confusion, replied, that he had heard of the death of Mr. Jervas the day before, but that, as almost every patron of a living was well acquainted with many to whom such gifts were highly acceptable, they were generally promised, some time before the death of the incumbent, especially, as in the present case, when he was an old man. He must own, he said, reddening as he spoke, that the thoughts of this living had passed his mind; but he had not allowed himself to dwell on the subject, having no doubt but Sir Thomas was acquainted with many men of merit, *married* men too, whose wants were greater than his, to whom, of course, the patron's views would be directed.

'True,' said Sir Thomas, 'you are single now; but, as I take it, you have scarcely reached your thirtieth year, and are what the women call handsome, I take it, Mr. Wallingford, there are more unlikely things than that you *may* marry; and allow me to tell you, that the longer you are without a living, the longer you must necessarily remain single; and I take that to be no small inconvenience to a man in your situation, since what you are toiling for in your school is probably, from the want of a good housekeeper, wasting in your kitchen. It is therefore my particular desire, notwithstanding your excellent reasons to the contrary, that you should accept this living, and marry as fast as you can.'

'Sir! Sir! I beg pardon—indeed I am so surprised, so exceedingly obliged, that——'

'Ah, well,' said Sir Thomas, 'say nothing about it, I beg, for it is me and my parish that are the obliged parties; but hear what I advise you; 'tis a pity you should leave a place where you are so comfortably settled, so I would have you stay where you are, by all means; but choose some such young man as you have been yourself, if such a thing is to be had; let him be your curate, and serve the two churches alternately, which the distance renders perfectly easy; thus both your doctrine and your example will be diffused. Old Jervas has made the rectory here a very pretty, though a very small place; I can find you a gentleman who will be an excellent tenant; so, every way, you will be helped.'

'Every way indeed!' said the good man, rising to depart, for he was unequal to conversation; and his heart sought to disburthen, where only the full tide of gratitude could flow freely in the presence of his Father and his God. Sir Thomas understood and respected his feelings, and in the silent bow with which he bade him adieu, read gratitude and joy beyond the power of language to convey; he therefore contented himself with only desiring Mr. Wallingford not to leave home till he had him regularly inducted, as he expected a friend in a few days, who would perform that ceremony.

'And was it for this I murmured, shortsighted being that I was!' cried the self-reproaching pastor, as he journeyed homeward, wrapt in amazement at an event which appeared so like a dream, that he feared lest he should awake from the flattering illusion, to feel again the fears which had haunted him so long. When he had retired to his closet, and on his knees devoutly thanked the great Disposer for this unlooked-for blessing, he walked out into his garden, and began indeed to taste the 'sober certainty of waking bliss;' the long-promised haven was now before him, towards which he had long steered heavily, and often hopelessly; and as the visions of future life passed in succession before him, he

experienced pleasures so exquisite, that he felt the cares of a much longer life would have been overpaid and forgotten in these precious moments.

Never surely did time move with such leaden wings as on the three following days; the fourth was a morning of business, and got tolerably over; the fifth was the Sabbath, and he was expected to preach to his new congregation; but on the sixth, he took the wings of the morning, and flew to S——.

Mrs. Gardiner and Maria were still loitering at the breakfast-table, though it was by no means their custom; but William, whom they had parted with the evening before, was the subject of their discourse. On the entrance of Mr. Wallingford, it struck both the ladies that he was come to see William before his departure, and they both cried out, with one voice—'Ah, sir! you are too late!'

'Too late!' cried he—'good Heavens! what can you mean?'

'That poor William set out by the mail last night.'

The good man breathed again; but his heart was almost too full for utterance, and the tears stood in his eyes. Mrs. Gardiner became alarmed (the fears of a mother are ever on the wing)—'Oh, sir, tell me, I conjure you, what is the matter? I saw you were agitated when you came in. What is the matter?—How is my child, my poor Henry?'

'Perfectly well, my dear madam—at the head of a whole troop of urchins, who are ringing the bells, and turning the whole village topsy-turvy.'

'Thank God,' said the widow. 'But what are they all rejoicing for?'

'Because—because Sir Thomas Singleton has given me the rectory of Normanton, and——'

'Oh, happy, happy news!' exclaimed Mrs. Gardiner; 'may God grant you many happy years to enjoy it!—Maria, child! do you hear!—But you are ill! What can be the matter? What can I give you?'

Mr. Wallingford flew to Maria, whose colour changed from pale to scarlet at his approach.—'I am truly glad to hear of your acquisition; may it be a blessing to you, and, through your means, to many!' said she, offering her hand.

'To make it such *indeed*,' returned he, with extreme perturbation, 'this dear hand must be mine, not only at this moment, but for ever. Oh, Maria! surely you must long have read my wishes, and must have known that my situation alone prevented me from a declaration, on which the happiness of my life has long depended.—Oh madam,' he continued, turning to Mrs. Gardiner, 'will *you* not speak for me? will *you* not allow me to become your son?'

'Alas!' said Mrs. Gardiner, with extreme anxiety, 'tis the only subject on which I cannot speak to my child.'

'Ah, my mother!' said Maria, hiding her glowing cheek in that maternal bosom which had once, on a similar occasion, received her tears, 'forgive me that my heart ever harboured one thought not open to your view! it is so no longer; and in giving my hand to this inestimable man, you will read all that has appeared mysterious in my conduct, and I trust, see nothing there unworthy of your daughter.'

The worthy clergyman, not less grateful for her consent than rejoiced to find, from this ingenuous confession, that he had long had an interest in her affection and esteem, now enjoyed his prospects of happiness with undiminished joy. In his heart, devotion, eagle-winged, was ever ready for its flight; and while he held the hand of his affianced bride, and mildly gazed on her retiring eye, his silent adoration ascended to the throne of grace, in praises to his God.

When the first emotions of this soul-awakening scene had a little subsided, Mr. Wallingford entered more particularly into his schemes of happiness for future life, and proposed that Mrs. Gardiner should once more take up her abode in that house where her happiest days had been spent. The approving eye of Maria thanked him for this attention to her feelings and wishes, but Mrs. Gardiner declined giving any answer at present to a subject of so much importance, and the entrance of Elizabeth for a while suspended this interesting topic. In a short time, Mrs. Gardiner withdrew with her youngest daughter, to whom she communicated the happy prospects of Maria, and her own approbation of the connexion, in terms suited to her feelings.

Elizabeth expressed sincere delight on the occasion, for she loved her sister with pure affection, but she expressed some surprise at Maria's preference of Mr. Wallingford to Mr. Clarkson.—'To be sure,' she added, with her usual *naïveté*, 'he

is more sentimental and melancholy, and all that, and may suit her better, so 'tis all very well; but I know 'tis not my fancy, that's all.'

The widow took some pains to convince her volatile daughter that fancy was not a proper guide in such serious cases; and she then assured her mother, that though she spoke with apparent thoughtlessness, yet she would in her own case, be extremely guarded, and conscious of her natural proneness to levity, would never listen to the addresses of any man, without consulting a mother on whose indulgence she could so fully rely, and whose judgment should ever be the guide of her own.

Happy in this assurance, the tender mother kissed the moistened cheek of her Elizabeth, whose gaiety instantly resumed on the brow from which it seldom found more than a momentary exile; and they both returned in peace to the only two people who were happier than themselves.

CHAPTER XX.

The return of Sarah was now anxiously expected by Maria, whose happiness was incomplete, till partaken by her beloved sister. Mrs. Gardiner, too, felt anxious to consult with a child on whose judgment she had ever placed much dependence, on the propriety of accepting Mr. Wallingford's kind offer, or of remaining with her youngest daughter, and, endeavouring to continue the business; in the former scheme she saw more ease, but the latter promised independence, which she valued still more; besides, if the business was abandoned, some situation must be found for Betsey, and this might probably place her at a considerable distance, a circumstance she by no means desired. To have been in the immediate neighbourhood of Maria, and have witnessed from day to day the exercise of her virtues, and the increase of her happiness, would have been delightful; but this she considered impossible in their present circumstances, and she judged it right, so long at least as the younger branches of her family were unsettled, to preserve for them a home in their mother's house; and she was the more confirmed in this idea, as she observed that Maria never urged her residence at the parsonage, without Elizabeth manifesting symptoms of regret and disappointment. She was indeed always partial to residing in a town; in that respect greatly differing from her eldest sister, whose sense of duty alone had rendered the town endurable, but, in all the years she had lived there, had never made it palatable.

At length the long-wished-for visitant arrived, and Maria found her happiness complete. The truly-affectionate Sarah embraced Mr. Wallingford with the warmth of a friend and the tenderness of a sister: she commended the steadiness of their long attachment, which she seemed to have discovered at an earlier period than the parties themselves; but when her mother revealed to her the fluctuating state of her own mind as to the future residence, Sarah kindly, but firmly, opposed even the wishes of her dear Maria, and gave it as her decided opinion, that at least her mother ought not to quit her present residence till there was a necessity for it; as it was plain, that, if she did, Mr. Wallingford would be burthened with a whole family, which though it might not be felt at present, would at a future period, when his own would probably be increased. There was now a certain home for Elizabeth, who was at this time a year older than Maria had been when she undertook the business, and whose talents in that line, though not equal to Maria's, were by no means despicable, and would every year be improved, especially as she appeared extremely anxious to remain where she was, and supply to the parent, from whom she had so long been parted, the daughters she had lost.

To this reasoning Maria could reply only by requesting, that if the business should decline in consequence of her removal, that it was her earnest wish that her mother would not contend with it, but would allow her own wants to be supplied at the parsonage, while she conceded those of Henry willingly to her dear Sarah, who flattered herself that in a very short time she should be able to answer for them entirely; and to this proposition the mother willingly assented.

Maria now prepared to enter on that change which every thinking woman, however happy her prospects may be, feels to be an awful one, involving many new duties and solemn engagements. Her mind was not engaged in splendid preparations or frivolous occupations; but though no attention to the decent proprieties of dress, &c. was neglected by her, her principal study was the regulation of her own disposition, and the surrender of herself, not only to her husband, but to her God, justly concluding, that a mind imbued with the humility of a Christian was most fitted for the obedience required in a wife. No pernicious doctrines of modern philosophy had contaminated the purity of her understanding, or tainted her sensibility; yet neither her rectitude nor her simplicity was the effect of ignorance, for she had lived sufficiently in the world to hear much of the doctrines of mental equality and 'woman's rights;' she had been told that 'mind must govern,' and that her own was of the highest order, and she had thought much on the subject: the result of her deliberations had answered this purpose—it sent her to her Bible for precept, and her mother for example; and from both she had learned, in despite of all new-fangled doctrines and metaphysical jargon, this simple precept must be the government of her married life: 'Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as unto the Lord.'

As Maria could not consent to be married till she had settled every little affair in her business, so as most to conduce to the comfort of her mother and remaining sister, this sacred engagement did not take place till the latter end of September, which Lady Barbara declared was the very latest stay she could make in the country. As Mr. Wallingford had informed his good patron that he was about to obey his injunction and get married, the good baronet declared that he would himself take upon him the office of father to the bride, and insisted upon the ceremony being performed in their own parish-church—a circumstance by no means agreeable to Maria, but which she felt it her indispensable duty in this case to comply with cheerfully, as well as to partake of the wedding-dinner their worthy patron insisted on providing, agreeably to the custom of his ancestors on such memorable occasions.

Things being thus arranged, the good man had the satisfaction of finding himself surrounded by a group whose happy countenances were the reward of his benevolence, though their awakened sensibility and proper reflection prevented them from partaking in that cheerful conversation he was anxious to promote; and he had just been observing that Lady Barbara and himself were the only people who wore tongues in their heads, the parson himself being dumbfounded, when a servant entering, announced Mr. Montgomery.

'Bird of ill omen,' said Lady Barbara, 'what in the name of confusion, brings you here?'

'Nothing bad, I hope, madam,' said he, bowing, and presenting a letter to Mrs. Gardiner.

'Umph! so you're come from London to bring a letter which the post would have brought better by half.'

"Tis a singular letter, my lady, being addressed for Mrs. Gardiner by your care, and I thought—I—I apprehended that it was better to bring it myself.'

'Say, you *liked* to bring it, Charles, at once.'

'So I will, my lady,' said the young man smiling, as he took a chair, 'for I am as fond of *seeing* happy faces as you are of *making* them; so you must allow me to partake your pleasure.'

While this conversation was passing, Mrs. Gardiner had retired to a distant window, and was perusing her letter; an exclamation of unfeigned astonishment and thankfulness at this moment escaping her, drew the attention of the company, and Mr. Wallingford approaching her, insisted on his title to share in her satisfaction.

'It must be something good that is come to William,' said Sarah: 'he has been examined and approved, perhaps.'

'Or George is coming to see us,' cried Elizabeth.

'Read the letter, I entreat you, sir,' said the widow, 'for I am convinced there are some in the room who will be less surprised with its contents than myself.'

Mr. Wallingford cast his eyes over the letter, observing that it was a very cramp hand, being apparently written by an attorney, and read as follows:—

'Mrs. Maria Gardiner.

MADAM,

'As the year is now expired, which was granted by the late John Lawrence, Esq. to his executor, for the arrangement of his affairs previous to the payment of his legacies, you are hereby acquainted, that your drafts on the bank of Down, Thornton, and Free, will be duly honoured, to the amount of the sum specified in the annexed copy of a codicil, made by the said John Lawrence, a short time before his decease.

I am, MADAM,

Your most obedient servant,

JAS. HARCOURT.'

'Copy of the Codicil, so far as relates to the Widow Gardiner and Family.

'And I do hereby give and devise to Maria, the widow of the Rev. George Gardiner, late of Whitechapel, in the county of Devon, the sum of five thousand pounds, in way and manner following, viz. I give the sum of two thousand five hundred pounds to her own sole and separate use, and the remaining sum of two thousand five hundred pounds I bequeath to her trust and care, willing that she do apply the interest of said sum, to the maintenance and education of her children during their minority, and that on their severally attaining the age of twenty-one years, she do equally divide the said sum, share and share alike, amongst them (number being unknown to said testator).'

As the bridegroom concluded, a low murmur of congratulation was heard on every side, while the girls pressed round their mother, and breathed rather than expressed their joy; but Maria with more vivacity than she had shown before on this eventful day, cried out—'Now, now, my mother, all the wishes of my heart are fulfilled; for you will return to your own village, to your own people, and to the daughter who so anxiously desires you.'

'Yes,' interrupted the baronet, 'she will make a very good tenant for the rectory, and the curate can board with her. I am heartily glad I did not let the house, as I expected to have done before now.'

Inquiries began now to spread round the room respecting this generous testator, and Sarah, with great modesty and sensibility, related all she knew of the affair, justly imputing the present noble acquisition to the information and eulogium Lady Barbara had given Mr. Lawrence of her mother, when she introduced Sarah to him at Harrowgate the preceding summer.

'Ay,' interrupted her ladyship, unwilling to hear the grateful effusions that rose from every tongue, 'and when I was at Leeds, I went to old Scepticus, the lawyer there, to ask about this same codicil, and the surly scoundrel put me in a passion with his hums and hahs, so I got nothing out of him. Don't you remember, Charles, how cross I was all the way to Wakefield?'

'You were so often cross, my lady, during our tour, 'tis hardly likely I should remember the ill humour of a single stage, especially as it was a short one.'

'What an insolent puppy!—I'll turn you out of my house for that very speech, Charles Montgomery, within a month, take my word for it.'

'That's a compliment he may return some day, my lady,' said the baronet, chuckling at her affected anger: 'what say you, Montgomery?'

'That I am not very likely to turn her ladyship out of my house, for the Coventry reason, that I have no house to turn her out of; but that, however I may be situated, or wherever I may be thrown, whether protected in a palace or pining in a shed, I will never turn her out of my heart, or cease to consider her protection as the pride and blessing of my existence.'

This speech began with a smile, and ended with a tear. Lady Barbara, with a gay air, now cried out—'Nay, prithee. Charles, don't turn sentimental, or I shall get that vixen Sarah to help me to abuse you. She, poor soul! had all the plague of bearing with the mischief old Scepticus had made in my brain, and I see by her cheek at this moment, she had not forgot one of my sallies.'

Sarah arose, in no little alarm, to accompany her sister, it was said, but in fact to cover her confusion, trembling lest Lady Barbara should proceed: this motion, however, broke up the company, whom Sir Thomas sent in his coach to the parsonage, if we except her ladyship and the young artist, who were his own guests of course.

As Mrs. Gardiner's affairs had now undergone a great change, she more readily adopted the plan of removing into the country, and Lady Barbara offered her the pleasure of Sarah's society for some time longer, that she might assist her in removing and forming anew her little establishment; observing, at the same time, that indeed she had no intention of keeping Sarah much longer, and intended to tell her so before she parted, if Mrs. Gardiner thought it would not set the child a-whimpering.

To this the mother replied, that though it would be impossible for Sarah ever to part from such a friend without feeling acutely the pangs of separation, yet she was persuaded that Sarah would acquiesce properly with her ladyship's determination, whatever it might be, especially as she could now reside constantly near Maria, to whom she was ever so tenderly attached.

'Umph! why, yes, I believe she will get over parting with me: but you know, my good friend, my house contains somebody besides myself. Have you ever thought any thing about Mr. Montgomery?'

'I think him an uncommonly intelligent and agreeable young man; and I have understood from you, madam, that he is a very worthy one. Surely he does not consider Sarah as his rival in your generous protection? Far be it from me or my child, to intrude upon your goodness, so as to create uneasiness in your family. Oh, my lady!—I wish—indeed I wish you had sent away my poor child before.'

'I have a scheme in my head,' said Lady Barbara, 'that will set us all to rights; and I hope, when it is out, you will not oppose its execution; for, depend upon it, you have not the welfare of your lily more at heart than I have.'

Mrs. Gardiner had no difficulty in assuring Lady Barbara that she would gladly accord with any plan she might think proper to adopt; and they parted in mutual comfort at the town of S——, whither Mrs. Gardiner had been necessarily led for the settlement of her affairs, accompanied by Sarah and Betsey. The former could not see her patroness depart unmoved, and, even after she was gone, continued to appear more dejected than, in her mother's opinion, was warrantable, and she therefore mildly reproved her dejection; when Betsey, with a sigh, observed, that, for her part, she did not wonder at Sarah feeling low, for she herself was sorry to leave a place where she had lived so long and been so happy; 'but indeed,' said she, 'that is not the only cause of my uneasiness.'

'Your uneasiness, child!' cried the mother, with a start, and almost a smile; 'you must excuse me, Betsey, but I cannot help smiling at so serious a complaint from one so little used to it, and at a time too, when the hearts of us all are called upon to rejoice for so many mercies.'

'It is very true, mother; but all the reasoning in the world will not make my heart light till I have told you, and I really do not know how to begin.'

'Told me what, child?' said the widow, a little alarmed.

'That Mr. Clarkson has—yes, indeed he has paid his addresses to me these two months.'

'To you, child!—what is he thinking of?'

'Why mother,' said Betsey, bridling and blushing, 'I am not a child now, you know, for I am nineteen this week, and I waited till I was, before I would tell you, knowing that, because I was the youngest, and rather given to giggling, you might think me worse than I was. I know all about Maria and Mr. Clarkson, and I like him no worse at all for having loved her first; 'tis a proof of his sense and his goodness. I only wish I may be equally worthy of his affections with my excellent sister.'

'I think,' said Mrs. Gardiner, after a pause, 'that Mr. Clarkson ought to have spoken to me.'

'My dear mother,' said Elizabeth, with great anxiety, 'do pray forgive him for not doing it; but you see he was so unlucky in his love affair with Maria, that he determined never to ask the consent of any parent again, unless he had *pretty strong reasons* to believe his offer would not be disagreeable to the lady herself.'

'And you have been willing to give him these pretty strong reasons, hey, Betsey?' said Sarah, endeavouring to suppress a smile.

'As to that,' said Betsey, recovering her native manners, '*strong reasons* I seldom meddle with; but you see I don't like people to be low spirited, and I thought it would be a sort of a sin to drive him to despair; and so at last I told him I would tell my mother, at which he rejoiced very much; so there's an end of the matter.'

'A beginning, you mean, my dear,' said Mrs. Gardiner, 'for the end must not be yet: though you have reached your nineteenth year, yet, my love, you have spent so much of your time in school, and, since then, in acquiring Maria's business, that you are extremely ignorant of the common business of housekeeping; and I think it by all means desirable that you should go down into the country with me for a year or two, to make yourself fit for the duties required in your future situation: and to this reasonable request I am persuaded Mr. Clarkson will make no objection, especially as it will afford you an opportunity of studying the character and acquiring the manners of that amiable sister, to whom he was so long and so sincerely attached.'

To this plan Elizabeth readily assented, willingly allowing that there were many things in herself that admitted of improvement, which she was in no way so likely to attain as by contemplating the superior character of her eldest sister, who had ever been a blessing and an example to her family.

The widow, on retiring this night, contemplated, with heartfelt satisfaction, the situation of her family, and the joy she felt was visible in her looks; but it received a little check, from observing that an air of mild dejection spread itself over the countenance of her fairest flower, and that, although she declared herself extremely happy, that declaration was followed by a sigh.

CHAPTER XXI.

In a short time Mrs. Gardiner and her two daughters were comfortably settled in their pleasant habitation, where Henry was a frequent visitant; and the new curate, an agreeable young man, became a very pleasant inmate. Their society was for a short time enlivened by a visit from William, who, rich in school preferment, was now going to college. From George they received very pleasant letters, accompanied by an affectionate present to his married sister, and some brotherly admonitions to his playmate, Betsey, who was now, in good earnest, using every possible endeavour for her improvement, and whose activity and good-humour were the life of the little household.

In the mean time, Lady Barbara Blount had been not less engaged in London, having frequent conferences with her housekeeper, her attorney, and various tradesmen, so that Mr. Montgomery seldom saw her in his apartment, which he had for some time found unaccountably dull; and though he applied himself with great diligence to the duties of his profession, he could not conceal from himself that it ceased to yield him the pleasure he had once experienced in his exertions.

At length Lady Barbara made her appearance in the painting-room, and after commending the artist for making history his study, began to make the circuit of the room: after she had been some time, Mr. Montgomery inquired if she had found any thing new?

'Yes, truly,' said the lady; 'for I find Sarah protecting Alcibiades from the flames, Sarah carrying the ashes of Germanicus, and Sarah, still more like herself, watching the tomb of her Redeemer.'

The artist was silent.

'You have now been very industrious, Charles, for a long time, and pretty successful too; and as you have left off the various admirable modes of throwing away money with which you once amused yourself, I apprehend you are growing rich.'

'Indeed, ma'am, I consider myself so, for I am worth near six hundred pounds.'

'Umph! 'twould have been eight, I think, if your mother's old servant had not lain so long sick, and Ned Thomas had not wheedled you into helping to purchase his ensigncy; but it is all very well; six hundred pounds is a very pretty thing to begin housekeeping with.'

'Housekeeping, my lady! housekeeping!'

'Yes, housekeeping. When I told you I would turn you out of mine in a month, I was in very good earnest, I assure you, being at that time contracting for one I have since purchased. There are the title deeds,' she added, giving the papers into his hands; 'so now I can turn you out with a very safe conscience. What does the fool stare at?—The house is completely furnished, as Wilson can tell you, for we have both had no little trouble with your beds and your tables.'

'Madam!—my lady!—I know not what to say.'

'Then you had better say nothing: but don't look so pale, or you'll frighten me: the sight of you just now would put Sarah into a fit.'

'Sarah!—oh, my lady, if I had Sarah, I should be too, too happy!'

'Ah, well, she has brought your colour again, which was all I wanted. 'Tis true, I did think of sending you to fetch her back; but if it will make you *too* happy, I think we had better let it alone.'

'Do not jest with me, dear madam,' cried the young man, in great agitation. 'Do you really think that Miss Gardiner would condescend to——'

'Why, yes,' said Lady Barbara, smiling, 'being of a very humble disposition, I do think she really would condescend to— to become Mrs. Montgomery; and having said this, I shall leave you to consider about the matter, and whether you should or should not put yourself in the mail to-night, and go down to Normanton to ask the question.' So saying, the good lady left the room.

As we cannot describe the sensation which pervaded the bosom of this amiable young man, we shall be content to follow his steps, which were directed equally by his own affections and the wishes of his benefactress, whose happiness was nearly equal to his own, and who, at parting, put a letter into his hands, for Mrs. Gardiner, which she said would obviate all his difficulties. On receiving this last proof of her maternal care, his full heart could no longer restrain its emotion; he pressed the withered hand that presented it with ardour to his lips, while the tears that coursed each other down his manly cheek fell upon it, and were the only heralds of his heart, for his tongue denied articulation.

'My dear Charles,' said the good woman, sobbing, as she warmly returned the pressure of his hand, 'I know all you feel, and all your heart would say, Go, and in your turn bless me, by bringing again that sweet and virtuous girl, who will love me with a tenderness still greater than yours—she whose love shall be the solace of your life, and whose piety shall give consolation to your death. Go, Charles, and may Heaven be your guide and protection!'

'What a very odd man Mr. Montgomery is!' exclaimed Betsey; 'he always comes in so suddenly somehow: here he is coming down the garden, as it were on purpose to catch me *en deshabelle*. I'll run and call Sarah out of the garden; he is her visitor, not mine.'

In consequence of this resolution, Mrs. Gardiner received the gentleman alone, and was happily the only witness of the embarrassment visible in his ingenuous countenance, on presenting her with Lady Barbara's letter, which she immediately opened, and with unfeigned joy perused the following lines:—

'MY DEAR MADAM,

'The bearer of this has been long known to me, and you know my sentiments respecting him. He loves and is loved by your Sarah, and it is my desire that they should be speedily married, as he has a very good house to take her to, a year's income, at least, beforehand, a very good prospect for ensuing cares, and in case that should fail, a steady friend in her who is likewise the friend of you and your family,

'BARBARA BLOUNT.'

'You have my free consent, my dear sir,' said Mrs. Gardiner, 'but forgive me if I leave you abruptly—the feelings of a mother will not be suppressed; but believe me when I assure you, that it is with no common pleasure I shall give my darling to your care; for the first awful moment in which I beheld you inspired me with the wish of one day calling you my son.'

As Mrs. Gardiner, agitated and in tears, was retiring, Sarah, having obeyed the summons of her sister, entered the room; the fond parent clasped her in her arms, and kissed her with unusual fervour, then broke from her, and immediately left them. Sarah timidly advanced, and sought from Mr. Montgomery an explanation of her mother's conduct, which he got through with little difficulty, and, there is every reason to conclude, with tolerable satisfaction, though the conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Wallingford, who came to take the family to dine at the parsonage, and were glad to rank Mr. Montgomery amongst the number of their guests. An explanation soon took place, which drew the hearts of all the parties still nearer to each other, and made that day one of the happiest that had ever been enjoyed, even at the parsonage.

In the course of a fortnight, Mr. Montgomery received from the hands of her pious brother his elegant and virtuous bride. They immediately set out for the capital, where they were welcomed to their own house, by that generous friend who had been to both so invaluable a benefactress, and who, in their gratitude, their virtues, and their happiness, found her beneficence repaid, and her hopes exceeded.

We have now traced the widow and her family through the most eventful periods of their lives, and have only to observe, that in the year 1810, they were in a state of increased happiness, as Mrs. Wallingford was become the mother of two lovely children, and was every day fulfilling her extensive duties with vigilance and success; Mr. and Mrs. Montgomery were enjoying a large portion of public fame and private respect, often visiting their worthy patroness, whose greatest pleasure lay in the caresses of their little lovely boy: Elizabeth is married to Mr. Clarkson, to whom she is an excellent wife, and who is tenderly attached to her: George is lately married to Miss Staniland, whose father has resigned his business in favour of a son-in-law he justly esteems very highly; William has justly obtained a fellowship in his college,

where his talents have excited much admiration, and his conduct secured him great respect: Henry is placed very happily with Mr. Clarkson; and Mrs. Gardiner herself now lives in a pretty cottage near the parsonage, where she enjoys the daily sight of her grandchildren, and the society of their invaluable mother. Thus is that promise fulfilled which consoled the dying moments of her dying husband, and sustained her own heart in the hour of severe sorrow—'Leave thy fatherless children, for I will provide for them, and let thy widow trust in me.'

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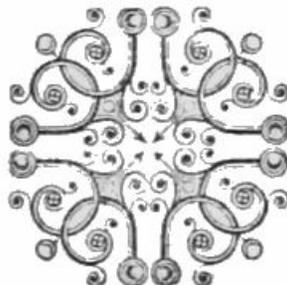
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Transcriber's Notes:

- Page 8, in evey bosom ==> in every bosom
 Page 28, as friends.' ==> as friends.
 Page 47, severely! they were ==> severely! They were
 Page 85, like to break.' ==> 'like to break.'
 Page 85, and uncomfortable.' ==> and uncomfortable.
 Page 94, on subject ==> on the subject
 Page 120, it anther time ==> it another time
 Page 133, to v sit this ==> to visit this
 Page 159, of El zabeth for ==> of Elizabeth for
 Page 165, mothe and ==> mother and
 Page 187, 2s 6d. ==> 2s. 6d.
 Page 190, among emigrants ==> among emigrants.
 Page 193, li tle pictures. ==> little pictures.
 Page 193, int lligibility of ==> intelligibility of

[The end of *The Clergyman's Widow* by Mrs. Hofland]