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*Title:* Alicia and Her Aunt: Think before you Speak

*Date of first publication:* 1859

*Author:* Barbara Hofland (1770-1844)

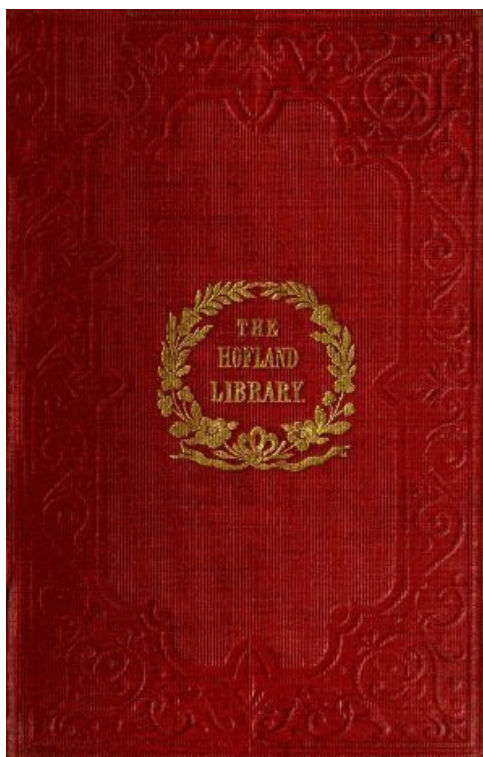
*Date first posted:* October 28 2012

*Date last updated:* October 28 2012

Faded Page eBook #20121042

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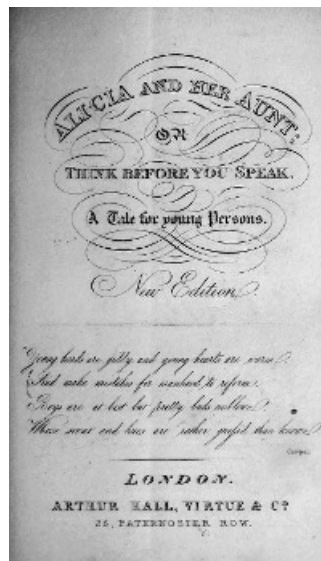
# ALICIA & HER AUNT.



*"Well, Charles, are we to keep your birth-day in the Cottage, or at our own house?"*

*Page 135.*

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# ALICIA AND HER AUNT;

OR,  
**Think before you Speak,**

A TALE FOR YOUNG PERSONS.

BY  
MRS. HOFLAND,  
AUTHOR OF

THE BARBADOES GIRL; YOUNG CRUSO;  
BLIND FARMER; ELIZABETH; CLERGYMAN'S WIDOW;  
AFFECTIONATE BROTHERS; STOLEN BOY; THE SISTERS;  
WILLIAM AND HIS UNCLE BEN; RICH BOYS AND  
POOR BOYS; GOOD GRANDMOTHER, &c., &c.

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Young heads are giddy, and young hearts are warm,  
And make mistakes for manhood to reform;  
Boys are at best but pretty buds unblown,  
Whose scent and hues are rather guess'd than known.

COWPER.

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New Edition.

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LONDON:  
ARTHUR HALL, VIRTUE, & Co.,  
PATERNOSTER ROW.

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NORWICH:

PRINTED BY JOSIAH FLETCHER, UPPER HAYMARKET

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# ALICIA AND HER AUNT.

## CHAP. I.

"I CANNOT imagine what makes you so fond of that old Mrs. Launceston," said Edward Eyre to his young friend Charles Parry, "for she is a very queer-looking old woman; and though you call her aunt, yet she is only, in fact, your mamma's great-aunt; so that all the relationship must be worn out before it reaches you: yet you are running to see her, morning, noon, and night.

"Because I love her, to be sure!" replied Charles, bluntly, surprised, and almost shocked, that any person could doubt the propriety, or undervalue the reasonableness, of his entire attention to one whom he had beheld as an object of veneration from his cradle.

"I suppose so," resumed Edward, "but I cannot see the *reason* why you love her. Now I love my grandmother dearly; but it is very natural that I should do so, for she is my own father's mother; of course, I owe her love and respect; and she is not to be called an *old* woman; and she speaks very well, and hears very well, and is always making me very handsome presents; so that it would be very strange indeed if I did not love *her*. But I don't think, if I were in your place, I could much like my great-great-aunt."

"But I do like her, and that is enough," replied Charles, and the angry tone in which he spoke acted as a warning to Edward against continuing a conversation which he now perceived to be rude as well as foolish, since it gave pain to the best-tempered boy of his acquaintance; and therefore, immediately starting a different topic of discourse, he continued to walk forward with him, till they reached the door of Mrs. Launceston's cottage, whither Charles was going at the time when Edward joined him.

The old lady was sitting within the porch of her door, which was formed of a pretty green trellis, covered with woodbine and roses, on which Charles was accustomed to bestow a considerable portion of his gardening skill; a slight white paling, enclosing a small garden, separated this dwelling from the footpath; so that when Charles entered the door, Mrs. Launceston saw him part from a companion; and though her eyes were weak, she guessed that it must be Edward, and she called out to him, in her usual Scotch accent—"What's the hurry, maister Edward? can ye not walk in a wee bittie wi' my bonny Chairlie?"

Edward immediately entered, conscious that the inviter had a more than usual claim to his complaisance, as a balance to the unkind manner in which he had so lately spoken of her, though without any bad intention.

Mrs. Launceston was now almost eighty years of age; she never had been handsome, and her tall spare figure was now bent by time and habit, so as to render her apparently even much beyond that advanced period. She wore a mob cap, and a black satin close-fitting hood over it; and the whole of her dress, although neat, and that of a gentlewoman of a distant period, was certainly different to that of any other person in her neighbourhood. Her tones, as well as her dialect, were broad Scotch, and therefore sounded uncouth and vulgar to the ear of an English boy, who was accustomed only to the society of a gentleman's house; and being a little deaf, she aided the unpleasant effect by generally speaking in the loud voice which persons thus afflicted so generally adopt.

Yet Edward thought at this time that her countenance was open and benevolent, and that the happy and affectionate looks which she cast upon Charles had really something engaging in them, and he observed internally—"Well, I really think, if the old woman loved me as well as she does Charles, I should, like him, come to see her very frequently, and sit down and bawl to her just as he does."

"I'm no fond of troubling ye, maister Eyre; but I wad jist like to know whan ye heerd fra the brave captain, yere noble father, and how the gude leddy, yere mither, bears his absence?" said she.

"My mother is at present very well, and happy; for we have just heard from my father, who is quite recovered from his wound, and hopes to be at home in less than two months."

"God be thankit!—it has been a weery time for twa hearts, sae good and sae united, to be parted fra eech ither—*His* name be praised!"

Mrs. Launceston took off her spectacles, and wiped away the moisture which a devout and joyful emotion had bedewed them with; and again the heart of Edward smote him, for he was fondly attached to both his parents, and therefore grateful to those who esteemed them.

Observing the thoughtfulness of her young visitant, and not aware of its real cause, the old lady endeavoured to cheer him, by saying—"It will be a proud moment for ye all, maister Edward, whan your father comes back; for if every true Briton's heart beats warmly towards a brave mon, weel may the mither that nurtured him, and the son that honours him, feel the honest glow of a gladdened bosom—to say naething o' the tender wife wha has pined for his absence, and trembled for his safety; ay, my dear bairns, this is joy indeed! and when we receive it as the gift of a merciful Almighty, then is it doubly sweet to us; such will it be to that good leddy."

Edward, affected and confused, cast his eyes eagerly around in search of Charles, in order to offer, at least by his looks, some apology for words which he would have given the world to retract; but his friend, on the very first address of his aged relative to her young visitant, had slipped into the house, under an impression of something approaching to shame; and he therefore neither witnessed the contrition of Edward, nor heard the expressions of benevolent sympathy which had awakened it.

Just as Edward entered the old lady's sitting-room to speak to Charles, his eye glanced on the timepiece which stood upon her chimneypiece, and he was surprised to see that the hour was much later than he had supposed; he was therefore compelled to bid a very hasty adieu to the old lady, and run home as fast as possible, although he felt a weight upon his mind, which hung there so oppressively as almost to impede his progress.

Charles had passed through the house, and, feeling by no means his usual lightness of heart, was at this time wandering about the little orchard behind it, or peeping into a small inclosure for poultry, which was of his own construction, as if seeking for something that he could neither find nor describe: at length, wearied and dissatisfied, he returned to his grand-aunt, and on learning that Edward had been gone for some time, observed that he should go too.

"It's little I'm the better for your veesit," said Mrs. Launceston, drily.

As this was an undeniable truth, Charles did not reply, but he felt angry for the first time in his life with the speaker, whom he inwardly accused of being ungrateful for the attention he had been paying her every day during the vacation. He departed with a cold good-bye; but his steps lingered, and as he moved slowly away, he heard the old lady say to herself—"There's something the matter wi' my ain Charlie; mair's the pity, puir fallow!"

A short sigh followed this ejaculation, and Charles for a moment checked his steps, and was ready to run back and apologize for his manners; but, alas! evil seed had been sown in his heart—the ill-humour of the moment, and the awakened thoughts of his preceding conversation, alike tended to check the generous repentance which sprung in his bosom, and he walked slowly home, continually repeating to himself—"I am sure I don't know why I am so fond of going to the cottage; I don't see any occasion there is for it, as Edward says, and I really think I shall not do it again. I don't suppose any boy in the school, who is thirteen years old (which I shall be next Thursday,) has spent so much time with an old woman as I have; and yet——"

The "*yet*" brought forward, in quick succession, many thoughts which militated against the foregoing resolutions and the newly-imbibed opinions; the high respect, as well as cordial affection, with which Mrs. Launceston was ever treated by both his parents—the uncommon regard she had ever manifested towards him and his sisters—the remembrance of the pleasure he had enjoyed in listening to her recitation of old ballads, and especially her histories of Sir William Wallace and Robert Bruce—and perhaps, above all, the idea that she was in some measure either dependent upon, or materially obligated to his parents—conspired to render painful any thought derogatory to his accustomed feelings towards her.

Under the new and disagreeable conflict of present perceptions and past ideas, Charles at length came to the wise conclusion of talking over the matter with his mother, who, although likely to be partial to her aunt, was also very fond of Edward, and would, of course, think it very reasonable that her son, who was almost two years younger, should attach some importance to his observations; "at any rate," said Charles to himself, "I shall learn from my mamma what I ought to say, when he asks me for my *reasons* for loving old Mrs. Launceston; for though I really do think they are many, yet somehow, since all relate to her kindnesses to me as a child, I fear it would be childish to give them; and that is what I can't endure, now I am getting into my teens."

On arriving at his own house, Charles, under these impressions, was soon placed at the elbow of that maternal friend whose counsels were alike dear and valuable to him, and especially at this time, as his father was absent in South Wales, inspecting the inclosure of some land which had only become his property within a few years, and which called for that improvement which, as a country gentleman of ability and activity, he was well calculated to give.

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## CHAP. II.

WHEN Charles found himself in the situation he had desired, he yet was sensible of some difficulty; and it was not till after a period of silence unusual with him, that he at length unhesitatingly said—"Pray, mamma, do you think that one ought to love their relations, just because they are one's relations, better than any body in the world?"

"Certainly not, Charles; but I think it very natural and proper to give one's relations a decided preference; for, even if we make no allowance for ties of blood as a cause for affection, yet they are our oldest acquaintance, and we have probably received from them great kindness before we were able to return them any; so that gratitude, as well as social habits and early impressions, ought to influence us in our feelings towards them."

"Very true, mamma; but if people have a relation that they really *cannot* like, what can they do?"

"You mean, of course, a relation who is wicked in his conduct or disposition: in that case, all one can do is to pray to God to change *his* heart, and so to soften our *own* towards him, that although we abhor his sins, we may yet feel pity and regard for his person."

Charles gave a deep sigh—he felt as if he was farther from the point than ever; and his mother, sorry to see his mind in a state of doubt and anxiety, continued to say—"Young people are very apt to forget the two first lessons of religion and reason, when they are thinking on their fellow-creatures, and their relations among the rest: the first tells us that man is a fallen creature—of course, liable to fall into error; and the second confirms this doctrine, by pointing out every day proofs of petulance, misconduct, passion, extravagance, meanness, even in those whom we yet deem estimable in many points, and feel to be exceedingly dear to ourselves. Of course our own relations are human beings, and, like the rest of their species, may be sometimes vicious, and often disagreeable; but if they bear with us, we surely ought to bear with them, and even to love them. Don't you see the truth and the necessity of this, Charles?"

"Ye—es," replied the boy, with another deep sigh.

"It is happy for you, since you think so deeply on this subject, that you have so few relations—and most assuredly not one, at *this* moment, of whom you may not be proud."

"Do you think so, mamma?"

"Undoubtedly; for your sisters are all too young to have done wrong materially; and in the few connections we have beside, few families are equally happy."

"Oh! as to my sisters, poor little things! they are the sweetest children that ever were born—and my papa is a man of a thousand—and you, mamma, so good, and so handsome, too! Then your great-uncle Powis, when he was alive, what a nice old gentleman he was!—he had such a beautiful pair of noble greys in his carriage!—and he gave me a Welch pony when I was such a *little* boy!—and left you an estate, too!—Ah! *he* was, indeed, something like a relation!"

"Something like a relation certainly," said Mrs. Parry, "but he was a very distant one; and as I did not know him until after my marriage with your papa, although I am sensible of his kindness, and grateful for his bequest, yet I am apt to forget he was my relation."

"But you always remember aunt Launceston was a very *near* relation, though, in point of fact, they were the same akin to you exactly?"

"Yes, Charles, I do indeed feel that she is very *near* to *me*; and it has ever been a source of the purest pleasure I have enjoyed as a mother, to think that my son felt her equally near and dear to *him*. In your grateful attentions to her comfort, the delight with which you have listened to her precepts, the patience with which you have amused her lonely hours, or supported her tottering steps, I have seen the foundation of many virtues in your own character, and have been led to hope that you would one day resemble your father."

Charles's usually-open countenance did not beam with its wonted smiles, when such hopes were uttered by his beloved mother; on the contrary, he appeared rather depressed than elated, and yet not able to relieve his mind by a confession of

any errors he might have been guilty of. Mrs. Parry was therefore led to guess what might be passing in his mind, and she added, in a very earnest tone of inquiry—"I cannot for one moment suppose, Charles, that you conclude that your aunt Launceston's deficiency, in not having a carriage and noble greys, and an estate to leave, are reasons why she should be neglected—why she should be thrown at a greater distance from our hearts."

"Oh no, mamma—I did not think that; for surely those who need us the most are the very people to whom we ought to attend the first. But yet we are the most obliged, you know, to those who do the most for us; so that, in one case, there is gratitude, as you said yourself, to be added to love and duty, which, in the other, there is *not*. I must have a more exalted sense of what I owe my uncle Powis when I am a man, than I can have towards aunt Launceston; though I know her very well indeed, and him very little."

"I will venture to assure you to the contrary, because I know you to be most tenderly attached to myself, and that, for my sake, you will love her the best. I see that something unpleasant is rankling in your mind, and I would wish your own good sense to overcome it, without being compelled to say more than you choose, and without implicating any other person: and in order to prove to you my opinion of the manliness of your mind and your power of discrimination, I will write out for you a manuscript, which you may read, if you please, in company with Edward Eyre, next Wednesday evening. If, after reading it, you are not of opinion that your aunt Launceston is a person of equal value with your uncle Powis, say to me—'Mamma, I wish to keep my birthday at home;' a request I shall certainly comply with, although, at present, I have arranged matters for our dining at her cottage, where Mrs. Captain Eyre, her excellent mother-in-law, and Edward, would join us, since my dear aunt cannot come hither."

Charles thanked his mamma most cordially for her kindness in taking so much trouble for him, and retired, impressed with sincere thankfulness for the confidence that she reposed in him, and particularly glad that his own had not been violated towards Edward; he felt sure that although his young friend had not asked him for secrecy, even by a look, yet that he would not have liked that Mrs. Parry (whom *he* dearly loved, and whom his *mother* held dear as a sister) should have thought him capable of influencing her son's mind towards a person she esteemed so highly as this aged relation; and by this time Charles was fully aware that his friend Edward had done very wrong. Under this view of the affair he remained, until he received the promised manuscript from his mother, when, summoning Edward to the reading, he sat down, and with great interest perused the following story, which he soon perceived to be the early history of his excellent mother, which she had designated, "Alicia and her Aunt."

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## CHAP. III.

### *Alicia and her Aunt.*

MR. LAUNCESTON found himself an orphan at a very early age, without any relations save a maiden aunt, with whom he had a very slight personal acquaintance, because she resided at a distant part of the country on a small annuity, whereas he had been born and brought up in the city of Edinburgh.

His education had been good, so far as it had proceeded, and as he possessed sufficient fortune to bring him up to a genteel profession, his guardian recommended him to choose that of medicine. He was a young man of fine person, superior abilities, and engaging address; and to these qualifications he added the better characteristics of sound principles in religion and morals, extensive knowledge, and unquestionable integrity.

Although the Scottish school of medicine ranked very high, yet when young Launceston became of age, he wished to take a more extended view of all that appertained to the practice; and after calculating on his means of doing this, resolved to spend some time in London. He did so for two winters, and greatly improved himself in that knowledge which may be attained by practical observation; and was preparing to return, for the purpose of obtaining the diploma which he now felt that he had a right to demand, when he happened to meet in company a young person, whose extraordinary beauty attracted his eye, and whose perfect simplicity of manners won his affections.

Alicia Powis was, like himself, an orphan; she was also a stranger, having arrived in London but a few days before, from South Wales. She was still in mourning for her father; and he was not long in learning that she was portionless, and dependent on her relations, one of whom had invited her to London, with a specious show of protection, to be little better than an upper servant to a large family, her employments soon becoming more numerous, and her task more difficult than they would have been in any menial situation.

Mr. Launceston's profession leading him frequently into this family, he was a constant witness to the trials, and an admirer of the character as well as person of this young lady, who soon interested him so much, that he delayed his return until he had secured her esteem, and a promise of her hand, so soon as circumstances would enable him to claim it. This important point settled, he returned to Edinburgh—was well received amongst the few acquaintance he had formed—obtained his diploma, and other honourable testimonials of merit—and having taken handsome apartments, commenced his career in life, with every prospect of success.

Having met with more than usual practice, for so young a man, during the first winter, when the gentry of Edinburgh left town for their country seats he set out, with all the impatience of a young and sanguine heart, for the English metropolis, to claim the hand of his affianced bride. She was rejoiced to see him, but she looked pale and thin—far different from the blooming creature he had first beheld her, but yet as lovely as ever; and aware that the air of London, and the many disagreeables she silently endured, had produced the change, he was impatient to transplant her to his own country, and restore her by his tenderness and skill: indeed, as his own profession required his immediate return, and her uncle gave a joyful consent to a marriage which he considered a respectable way of disposing of a burden, no delay was called for, and the young couple were soon on their way home, married, and happy.

This union, although the parties had perhaps ventured upon it too soon, was one of singular felicity: Alicia was not only affectionate, but grateful to her husband for the change in her circumstances; and having the good sense to know that although her husband's rank in life called for genteel appearances, yet that great prudence was necessary, she readily adopted every means of helping him in her power, and was at once an honour to him in the elegance of her person and manners, and a source of economy in the comfortable arrangement of his expenses; whilst he, charmed with all she did and said, found her society equal to all his wishes, and watched with delight the rose of health revisit her cheek, and the light of love and cheerfulness sparkle in her eyes.

Dr. Launceston's practice increased during the following winter, but it was barely equal to his expenditure, as few people choose to trust a young physician; but his situation was rich in well-founded hope. Alas! his prospects were soon clouded—his hopes overthrown; within one year after his marriage, his beloved, his almost idolized wife, died, a few hours after she had given birth to a little girl, and in a manner wholly unexpected.

This stroke was not less sudden than overwhelming, and the unhappy man almost lost his reason for many days; and even when he was enabled to recover a little from the astounding blow, he found himself so utterly lost, wretched, and bereaved, as to be unequal to the duties of his profession—incapable of attending to those who naturally reminded him of his loss; and it appeared as if all the accumulations of his mind, all the energies of his soul, had sunk into the grave with his young and beautiful Alicia; and the sight of her ill fated child served only to renew and sharpen the severity of his affliction.

One gentleman, to whom he had been very successful in his medical attentions, gave to his situation not only the sincere pity which many felt, but those personal attentions and sincere proofs of friendship which it called for. Believing that nothing would so effectually relieve the mourner as a change of scene, and a necessity for some exertion under novel circumstances, he proposed to him to take a voyage to the East Indies, and engaged to procure such recommendations for him as could not fail to ensure the means of fortune, if he chose to settle there, and would increase the circle of his friends in case of his return; also to procure his reception as a surgeon during the voyage, for the purpose of lessening his expenses.

This plan was gratefully acceded to by the afflicted man, and in a short time arranged, although the poor babe, the sole remnant of his Alicia, and the bearer of her name and features, had during the short period of its existence, made a considerable progress in his affections. The child was now with a good nurse in the neighbouring village of Musselburgh, to whom he paid two years in advance, his good friend offering to become the future guardian of the infant. The little property which remained after his outfit, he converted into ready merchandize for his own use upon his landing; and he set sail, with the esteem and good wishes of all who had ever known him.

Dr. Launceston wrote to his friend Mr. Mackinnon from the Cape of Good Hope, and although his style still proved him a prey to painful reflection, this gentleman trusted that he was not a slave to sorrow, and his friendly heart rejoiced in the part he had acted towards him; but within a year he learned, with feelings of bitter anguish, that the ship in which Dr. Launceston sailed was wrecked in the Bay of Bengal, and that neither the property or the life of a single individual was saved, although it sunk within the view of many. At the time this account from his friend at Calcutta reached Mr. Mackinnon, he was far gone in consumption, that being the complaint from which Dr. Launceston had, in a certain degree, relieved him; and the news so entirely overpowered the little strength he had remaining, that, in a few hours after receiving it, he breathed his last.

The little Alicia had just passed her second birthday, when the double death of her friend and her father reached her nurse, and overwhelmed her with consternation. This poor woman had fulfilled her duties to the bereaved little orphan with care and tenderness, but her humble comforts had all been overthrown by the reception of her little guest. The sum of money which Dr. Launceston had placed in her hands being a much larger property than they had ever possessed before, had been seized by the husband, and spent by him in idle and vicious pursuits; and his family were now involved in poverty from his misconduct; and he was awaiting with impatience the day when he could demand a further sum in advance for the helpless little one, whom he declared he would not harbour in his house upon trust, for more than a single week. The poor woman flew in agony to the relations of Mr. Mackinnon, and found that, with the usual delusion peculiar to his complaint, he had confided in amendment, had made no will, and that his large property descended to an heir, who being a mere boy, was incapable of making any provision for the child in question, even if he had the inclination.

Rendered alive to all the means of aid, by the pressing necessity of the case and the brutal threats of her husband, the nurse by turns addressed herself to all whom she considered likely to inform her where the relations of Dr. Launceston and his lady resided; and at length learned, from a woman who had been their servant, the address of that uncle in London, from whose house her late mistress had married. She then procured an intelligent neighbour to write to this

gentleman, stating the case; but the appeal was thrice made before any answer was received. In this letter the uncle of Mrs. Launceston declared his utter inability to provide for the child in question; but he enclosed an address to his eldest brother, who being a bachelor, might with much more propriety take other people's children than himself, who was but a younger brother, and burdened with a family of his own.

To the elder Mr. Powis, who was a country gentleman residing on the patrimonial estate, application was made, which was immediately refused, with various invectives against the child's father for having married a girl of no family—reflections upon its mother for having married a Scotchman—and observations on the utter impossibility of a man having anything to do with a young child, who had neither wife nor family.

What was to be done now the poor woman could not conceive, for there are not in Scotland poorhouses, into which desolate children so situated may be put, although the poor are supported by charity; many a tear of pity did she shed on the unconscious babe, and many a fruitless inquiry did she make after English, Welsh, and Scotch relatives; but week after week passed, and no tidings were heard of any.

At this time the aunt to whom I alluded as the only relative of Dr. Launceston, lived, in a neat little cottage near Stirling, on an annuity of forty pounds a-year, which, in that cheap country, was equal to all her wants, and even enabled her to be a person of some little importance in her own circle; but her existence was scarcely known beyond it. She had heard of her nephew's marriage, for he had sent her the usual compliment on that occasion; but, on the death of his young wife, the distraction of his mind had induced him to omit informing her of it until he was on the eve of quitting his country, when he gave her a melancholy account of all that had befallen him in the preceding year—mentioned his future intentions, the situation of his poor babe, the kindness of Mr. Mackinnon—and, lastly, the fact, that before she could receive his communication, he should be on board the *Africana* East-Indiaman, on his way for Calcutta.

Mrs. Catherine Launceston was a member of the English Church, and as there were very few of that community in Stirling, each party were well known to each other; and in returning home from church one day, she remarked to a neighbour that she was sorry to observe a certain family, of their acquaintance, in deep mourning.

"Yet it were high time they put it on, for it's a gude quarter since the news cam' tul 'em o' their puir son's shipwrack, I'se warrant ye; but they wad needs gae to inquire ower and ower again, in the vain hopes o' finding a true story were a fause one."

"There's naething wonderful in that, neighbour," said Mrs. Catherine, who sincerely sympathized with the mourners, and could readily enter into their feelings.

"Why true—we aw like to turn a deaf ear to a waefu' warning; but still, if the *Africana* went doon as she did to the bottom o' the girt deep, 'twas no' likely their Tammy suld come back agin."

"The *Africana*!" exclaimed Mrs. Catherine.

"Aye, sure—that's the very name on't, as ye might ha' read in the *Gazetteer* lang syne."

Mrs. Catherine hastened to her own house: she opened her bureau, read again the letter of her nephew, sent to the house of a friend to borrow the *Gazette*, and assured herself of the fact; she then retired to her own room, where she continued several hours; and on coming out of it, announced to her maid, and a neighbour who had stepped in to see her, an intention of setting out for Edinburgh in the morning.

"I fear," said the latter, "something sorrowful takes ye, my gude body; for I weel ken ye have a great aversion fra sleeping in a strange bed."

"It is a sorrow indeed; the only son of my brother James has lost his life in the Indies."

"Yere brother James, Mrs. Catherine, was e'n a strange brother to you: if it had nae been for the annuity ye gat by your godmother, who was no kin at all, ye wad ha' been badly off."

"This is nae time to remember these things; James died in the flower of his age, and his faults lie under the turf with him. He left a brave boy behind him, and that boy has left a wee bit bantling, without a mother. I must just go seek it, puir lammy."

"But what can ye do with a child, Mrs. Catherine? they'r e'en plaguy things for maiden bodies, and take muckle to rear them, especially girlies."

"I have a heart and hands—though I'm not young, neither am I old: the Heavenly Father who bestows the gift, will doubtless uphold it."

With this hope in her heart, Mrs. Catherine set out on her benevolent errand; and she soon attained the object of her search, whom she found a little, ragged, meagre child, of betwixt two and three years old. The air of squalid dirt and extreme penury which pervaded, at this time, the wretched habitation of the nurse, impressed her with the most unfavourable idea of the people; but the affection which the poor child manifested for its foster-mother, proved at least that personal unkindness had not been added to scanty food and manifest neglect, since she had great difficulty in persuading the poor little orphan to accompany her. All demands upon her purse were paid by Mrs. Catherine, and many necessaries were likewise purchased; after which the new-found relation accompanied her to the cottage, which was destined to be henceforward her pleasant home.

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## CHAP. IV.

ALTHOUGH Mrs. Catherine had never been accustomed to children, yet her native good sense and benevolence, aided by her religious perception of duty, rendered her a most excellent preceptress, as well as tender friend, to the helpless little being committed to her care. The child grew up in health, beauty, and activity, beneath her auspicious management, and soon became the delight of her heart, and the great object of her hopes and desires. These pleasures were, of course, blended with much solicitude, as it soon became evident that her expences were considerably increased; and when little Alicia became six years old, and it was thought desirable to send her to a neighbouring day-school, Mrs. Catherine found it absolutely necessary to part with the little maiden, who had hitherto waited upon her and her young charge, and undertake herself the most menial offices. This change she not only cheerfully adopted, but she gave up every little indulgence to which she had ever been habituated, for the purpose of aiding the improvement of Alicia, and of rendering her personal appearance equally respectable with those children who were better provided for, in the possession of wealthy parents.

During the leisure of her former life, Mrs. Catherine had been a great reader of history, poetry, and divinity, and she now called upon the stores of her own mind to enrich and amuse the daily opening intellect of Alicia, to whom she conveyed such a portion of knowledge as tended to increase her desire for more, and not less to awaken her taste than to stimulate her industry. The lessons of Mrs. Catherine were frequently given under circumstances the most pleasurable and impressive, as they generally took place during long rambles in the beautiful and romantic vicinity of Stirling, where every object that surrounded them was calculated to elucidate historical facts, or excite sublime emotions. From the Castle-hill, on which they would frequently walk in the summer evenings, the good aunt would point out to her attentive niece the site of many a well-fought field, and thus lead her mind not only to recall important facts connected with the history of her country, but that sense of patriotism which, in binding our hearts to the land we live in, teaches us to imbibe the virtues for which we value it. Here too she would recite legendary ballads, the poems of Burns, or the songs of Allan Ramsay, while the scenery which surrounded them aided the impressions of the poets of nature and antiquity. Before them lay stretched, as an ample carpet, the Carse of Stirling, and as far as the eye could extend, the silver Forth came rolling from his native mountains, increasing in beauty and importance, as, in windings innumerable, he drew near to this ancient abode of Caledonian royalty; Bannockburn, the heights of Demayit, the lofty range of Highland mountains dignified with the epithet of *Ben*, encircled the mighty landscape with a vast imperishable frame, within whose boundaries lay nearly all those objects of beauty and interest which have since given birth to the exquisite description of Sir Walter Scott, which you will one day read with the purest pleasure. No wonder then that the enthusiasm of Alicia was excited, that her heart was softened and her mind expanded, and that she imbibed, with an insatiable thirst for knowledge and a laudable desire of improvement, such love and gratitude towards her generous protectress, as no circumstance in after life either tended to subdue or weaken.

When Alicia was in her twelfth year, she was so tall of her age, and remarkable in her appearance, that many silly people would frequently pay her foolish compliments upon her person, in such a manner as to create confusion to the child, and not unfrequently raise indignation in her aunt.—"Ah! weel," they would say, "maistress Katie, I warrant ye'll soon find a husban' for such a lassie as this'n. A pretty face needs no bands to set it aff wi'; and some sonsie squire will suin ease yere heart—sooner an' better, for I fear me yere purse waxes lighter as yere darling waxes aulder."

To which observation the good woman would generally reply—"I hope my child will never marry a man who looks no farther than a face, for the love of mere beauty will go a short way in married life. If she's the lot to marry at all, I trust she'll marry a guid man, and pruve a worthy woman. But it shall be my care to put the means of securing independence into her own hands, and then she can marry, or leave it alone, as may suit her affections and agree wi' her principles."

Alicia observed, that whenever conversation of this kind had occurred, poor Mrs. Catherine would sit and think deeply for many hours, often heaving sighs, and casting upon her looks of the utmost solicitude; and one day, after a long fit of abstraction, she rose hastily from her chair, and exclaimed—"Tis no use to think—my path is a plain one, though 'tis thorny: and, with God's will, I'll begin fra this hour."

As Mrs. Catherine spoke, she took a cushion upon her knee, on which, when she had a little leisure, she was accustomed to weave the narrow-laced edging with which her cap-borders were trimmed; and as she relapsed into silence, Alicia put on her bonnet, and went to school, as usual. On her return, she found her aunt sitting as she had left her, but accompanied by a person she had never seen before, who appeared to be giving her instructions in the art of lace making.

"Ye'll take yere evening walk without me, my love, for I'm varry busy," said the aunt.

Alicia complied, but found it very lonely, for her young heart ached to think of the labour to which her aunt was subjecting herself, since she doubted not but she was seriously beginning to learn a new art for the sake of assisting her; and she returned home in a state of great solicitude, vainly turning in her inexperienced mind every possible way whereby she might assist her aunt, and save her from an exertion, which, smart and active as she was, could not fail to be unpleasant to a person turned of fifty.

For several days the same person regularly came to give her aunt lessons, and Alicia was rendered so busy, from being obliged to attend to household duties on her return from school, that she had not leisure to indulge her cares; but one afternoon, on her return, she perceived her aunt was at work in spectacles, which being an aid Mrs. Catherine's sight had never required before, affected her exceedingly; she burst suddenly into tears, and throwing her arms round her neck, expressed, as well as she was able, the pain she felt.

"Never cry for that, my sweet girlie—rather be thankfu' that I have done without glasses so long, and that such things are given to aid puir downhill-going folks."

"But why cannot I be taught to make lace, dear aunty? I will work all day, and all night too, if you will permit me; my eyes are good, my fingers nimble."

"True, my hinny; but it is dreery wark and wee profit; and you, my child, have a mind for better things, and, after a few years' struggling on my part, will be able to exert yourself to far better effect. I hope to see ye earn yere bread, 'tis true, Alicia; but, with God's blessing on my endeavours, it shall be as becomes a gentlewoman, and worthy o' yere father's family."

The good lady then informed Alicia that she had been for a long time casting about for the means of giving her a superior education, in order to enable her, when at a suitable age, to undertake the charge of instructing the daughters of some person of rank and fortune, not doubting but she had yet the means of procuring such a situation for her; that, after innumerable inquiries, she at length found that, for the forty pounds per annum which constituted her whole income, her niece might be properly boarded and taught every elegant accomplishment in France; and that, in the course of the next two months, a person, who was leaving Stirling for the purpose of visiting a relation at Boulogne, had undertaken to convey her thither.

This extraordinary news agitated Alicia exceedingly; curiosity, natural to her age, an ardent desire to attain knowledge and to become useful prompted her to rejoice in it; but the thought of leaving that dear relative, who was not merely her only friend, but hitherto her only companion, was very painful, and the idea of the sacrifice to which it would subject her aunt for a time appeared an insuperable objection. Mrs. Catherine, however, obviated all difficulties, by insisting upon the advantages that would accrue; and while her own heart bled with the thoughts of parting, and her mind naturally shrunk from the new and dependent state to which she was about to subject herself, she yet never dwelt on these sorrows for a moment before the object of her bounty, but exerted herself with double vigilance to learn the art she had adopted, and encouraged Alicia to make the new clothes which she purchased for her, with a thousand kind words and encouraging prophecies for that future which she yet inwardly dreaded to encounter.

Agreeable to that noble generosity, that magnanimity of kindness, which marked her whole conduct, Mrs. Catherine kept from the eye of Alicia every circumstance which could wound her young and affectionate heart, and rendered the circumstances of her voyage, the future disposal of her time, and, above all, earnest exhortations to preserve her

religious sentiments untainted, the sole objects of her discourse. Under this prudent management Alicia was enabled to depart with tolerable composure, considering the severity of the trial; but to the aunt the pangs of parting were indeed bitter. Within a short time, however, she arranged all her little plans, parted with her cottage, sold her furniture, paid those debts which the outfitting of the orphan and the expence of her long journey had compelled her to contract, and then, with a small sum of money, a scanty wardrobe, and a sad heart, she set out for the city of Glasgow, where she was utterly unknown, to shroud herself in a narrow lodging, and seek amongst strangers the means of precarious existence, fully determined that every shilling of her income should be devoted to the excellent purpose for which she had so nobly assigned it.

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## CHAP. V.

THE person to whose care our wandering orphan was now assigned, was a respectable merchant, and the father of a family; he was, therefore, a desirable guardian during their journey; and he fulfilled conscientiously the task he had undertaken, and placed Alicia under respectable protection in a French convent, where she was received with kindness, and furnished with every means of improvement required in her situation. The difficulty and the novelty of her education, by compelling her to perpetual exertion, so occupied her mind, that she was unable to dwell much on any other subject than those which were connected with her own situation during the day; but never did she lie down on her little mattress without imploring a blessing on her far-distant friend—never did she hail the light of morning without praying that its comforts might be doubled on the head of her beloved aunt.

Accustomed as she had been to an humble and retired path of life, the continual sight of the same faces, the recurrence of same duties, were by no means irksome to her, as in fact her sphere of society was considerably larger in the convent than it had ever been in the dwelling-place of her aunt; the only thing which annoyed her, was the circumstance of being enclosed within high walls, and unable to view the wide and varied face of nature, as she was wont to do in the suburbs of Stirling; a narrow garden, a few stunted trees, and formal parterres of flowers, were a poor exchange for lofty mountains, murmuring streams, an ancient castle, and an immense horizon. The pompous pageantries and sweet music of the church, the neat habits and subdued deportment of the nuns, the air of sanctity which pervaded all around her, and the devotion which all professed, were, for a short time, circumstances of the most attractive and interesting character, and awakened her to the closest observation and the deepest research of which she was capable. She soon found that the most awful pageants of the church were not so truly solemn as the scenes she had witnessed in her own country, in the administering of the sacrament, which yet was often polluted by unworthy associations, as her present abode was by idle frivolities, and she rejoiced in being authorized to profess a creed which, devoid of the high pretensions of either church, combines all that is excellent in both.

Among the young girls who were pensioners like herself, were several English ones, who were fond of separating themselves from the rest, and of conversing in their own language; with this little knot of her countrywomen Alicia would not join, because she knew that it was her express duty to make herself mistress of the French language, and to speak it with the greatest purity. Her conformity to the wishes of the abbess in this particular, ensured her the goodwill of this lady, who was a kind-hearted and accomplished woman, and though a stranger to the world *without*, was yet so well acquainted with all *within* her own little dominion, that she was a most valuable instructor to one whose future duties led her to the task of studying the human heart and mind. From her Alicia learned to scan the capacity, to examine the disposition of those around her, and to become aware that the first duties of a teacher are self-government, and the best lesson she can bestow is an upright and consistent example.

With the various cabals, petty intrigues, and romantic friendships, which usually distract the minds and consume the time of girls so situated, Alicia had nothing to do. The letters of her aunt, though few, were to her invaluable, because they kept her mind steadily fixed upon the real object of which she was sent thither; and every line that was traced by an unsteady hand, as it bespoke the advancing age or infirmities of that invaluable friend, called upon her anew for that exertion which would enable her to restore ease to the declining years of one who was more than mother to her. As her mind and person advanced to maturity, every step increased the sense of her obligation, and her desire of evincing how well she had used the means of improvement; and on attaining her sixteenth year, she earnestly entreated her aunt to recall her, and to provide her some means of exerting her talents and industry for their mutual welfare.

It may be naturally supposed that the heart of the good aunt yearned to embrace the child of her adoption; but as she was well aware that Alicia was yet too young to be entrusted by a prudent parent with the control of her children, with her usual oblivion of self, she determined that she should remain till she had passed her seventeenth birthday—a resolution that she immediately communicated, at the same time informing her that she would, during the year that remained, endeavour to look up her friends, and procure her, if possible, a situation in some English family of distinction, believing that it would be, in many respects, the most advantageous for her.



Poor Mrs. Catherine at this time felt that she was encompassed with more difficulties than ever: a poor lacemaker, living in obscure lodgings in a trading town, was utterly unequal to claiming a friend of sufficient importance to recommend a young lady of untried abilities to a family of distinction; and the few respectable connections Mrs. Catherine had formerly enjoyed, were either removed by time or circumstances, or had so entirely lost sight of her for the last five years, and would be so shocked to learn her actual situation, that she knew not how to present either herself or her petition before them.

After various cogitations, she determined, at all events, once more to array herself as a gentlewoman and set out for Edinburgh, although it would now take the last pound of her little hoardings to accomplish her wishes.—"Yes," said she, hesitating, "it will take all I have: and what to do I really know not, for the puir child's journey will cost a round sum; and shuld I get hir into the house of a braw English lairdie, she will want fine claes and gay accoutrements, or the very servants will look scornfu' at her and the bairnies deride her; 'twould be better for her to twirl dree bobbins in her auld auntie's garret, than bear the consciousness of a high-gifted soul and a quick feeling heart, under the sneers of a proud waitin'-woman, and the snarling of a petted bairn."

Again she considered the subject, and the necessity of the journey rose more strongly to her view, since it appeared evident that, in her present situation, she could do nothing; and she had, on the mother's side, several rich relations, with whom she had ever been on the best terms, although they knew each other only by name (but, in Scotland, the ties of blood are held sacred through the most distant branches of consanguinity,) and to them she determined to apply for counsel and assistance.

To Edinburgh, therefore, she went, and after waiting to recover a little from her fatigue, and arrange her plans, she subdued, as far as she could, that repugnance to venturing over the threshold of a rich and unknown relative for the purposes of solicitation, which was natural to her, both as a woman of independent mind, and retired habits; and long after she had put on her black padusoy gown, and her cardinal satin cloak, and arranged her cap and pinners to her satisfaction, she could not determine whether to pay her respects first to Mrs. Campbell, the wife of a rich India adventurer, or Lady Lawrence, the widow of a Highland baronet.—"If I gae to my cousin Campbell's, I'll maybe be laughed at by the flunkies, and looked coldly at by *her*; for she has lived in a land of slaves till she's likely to have forgotten the claims of the free. Yet her sister Sally, though she's my leddy noo, is not like to have a mair tender heart; for she forsook the lover of her youth to marry a wicked auld mon, for a title and jointure."

These cogitations passed her mind as she slowly made her way up George street, gazing at all she saw in surprise, and being herself an object of much attention to the gay and fashionable promenaders who passed. At length she recollected that a very worthy gentleman, who formerly lived at Stirling, must reside near the spot where she then was, and she resolved to call upon him, and take his advice in the first place.

Two young gentlemen were descending from the steps of a house just as she made this resolution, and observing that they both were looking at her, she inquired of them if they knew where "Maister Stuart livit in that part?"

"We have this moment parted from him; this is his house," replied one of them.

The footman, who was closing the door at the time, now re-opened it; and the young gentlemen, who were still attentively examining the tall, stately, antique figure of Mrs. Catherine, heard her say to the servant—"Mrs. Catherine Launceston wad speak wi' yer maister."

"*Mrs. Catherine Launceston!*" exclaimed one of them; "well, this is a most curious circumstance; I have sought this good lady diligently for above a year, and now pop upon her when I had lost all hopes of finding her." So saying, he ran into the hall of Mr. Stuart, and after a short apology, informed her that his name was Mackinnon, and that, about a year ago, on taking possession of the house of his late uncle, he found a large mail trunk, on which was nailed a card, signifying that it was Mrs. Launceston's property, and inscribed thus by his deceased relation; that a servant of that good gentleman's informed him that the clothes belonged to an orphan whom his master had undertaken to provide for, and he had therefore made every possible inquiry after the child and her relations, but found that her nurse was dead, her husband gone to sea, and it was only known by a neighbour that the child was removed, almost fifteen years ago, by a

Mrs. Katie Launceston, "whom I hope, madam, to find in you," added the speaker; "and I heartily rejoice that a lucky chance has thus favoured me."

"Talk not of *chance*, I pray ye, young gentleman," said Mrs. Catherine—"it was a far higher Pooer that directed ye to the means of cheering an anxious woman, and of aiding a desolate orphan."

After a short interview with Mr. Stuart, which proved to young Mackinnon not only the identity but the worth of his new acquaintance, a coach was called, and she accompanied him to his house, where, as the key had long been lost, a carpenter was procured to force the lock of the trunk. Had any doubts remained as to Alicia's right to this property, they would have been now fully removed, as the name of her mother, at full length, was inscribed within the lid twice over, as *Powis* and *Launceston*.

The pleasure and gratitude Mrs. Catherine expressed gave her considerable interest in the eyes of young Mackinnon, and he pressed her so hospitably to take up her abode in his house during her stay at Edinburgh, that she consented to it, on his assuring her that he would obey her wishes, and pursue his engagements as usual, and leave her to the care of his housekeeper.

Mr. Mackinnon, however, dined at home the first day, and in the interim Mrs. Catherine devoutly lifted up her heart to Heaven in praise, and then addressed herself to examining the contents of the box, not without many fears that, although highly acceptable, there would yet be found few things which would suit Alicia, as fashion had gone through a complete revolution during the period of her infancy. Happily she soon found the treasure far surpassed her hopes, as the box not only contained a neat assortment of useful apparel, but all the plate the young couple were worth, a handsome gold watch, and many articles of valuable jewellery set in an old-fashioned manner, which had evidently belonged to the family of the Powises; there was even a small purse, containing between three and four pounds in gold and silver, which had undoubtedly belonged to poor Mrs. Launceston, and been hastily placed with other things in this receptacle.

During the dinner-hour Mrs. Catherine became well acquainted with her entertainer, who was a genteel and amiable young man, and, as it appeared, about to be married to one of the daughters of her cousin, Mrs. Campbell. He therefore readily entered into her views, and in every respect assisted her, first by purchasing the plate, which she judged it right to dispose of, and afterwards by accompanying her himself to the houses of Colonel Campbell and Lady Lawrence, where she was received with great respect, and her desires promoted in every possible way for the benefit of her niece. She therefore left Edinburgh much happier than she had entered it, and returned to her humble lodging and wearisome occupation, in the hope that she should soon exchange both for a happier situation; but yet fully resolved to continue her plan of endurance, until her dependent child should be completely established in the situation which she had endeavoured to procure for her.

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## CHAP. VI.

IN the course of the following winter, Lady Lawrence recommended Alicia in such a manner to the Countess of Lammermuir, who had determined on educating her daughters in England, and residing with them in the vicinity of London, that she was induced to write to her, engage her, and fix the time when she would expect to find her at a villa she had taken on the banks of the Thames.

Alicia left the convent with the good wishes of all who had known her, and with a beating heart returned to her native island—not, however, without an earnest desire of continuing her journey northward, and once more clasping to her heart the generous protector of her youth, the more than mother, whom she so entirely loved. As circumstances denied her this indulgence, she submitted as well as she was able, and prepared to enter upon her duties with conscientious zeal and unremitting vigilance.

The Countess of Lammermuir was a widow, in what *she* called the prime of life, but *others* termed it autumn; she had been very handsome, but having contemplated her own features until she deemed them the perfection of beauty, she had contracted an aversion to that property in any other person; and therefore, when she saw Alicia, who was now in the bloom of seventeen, she unfortunately became somewhat disgusted with her features, and by no means accorded her the gracious reception for which the orphan stranger humbly but ardently sighed.

Her manners disarmed the countess, and she told her, with an air of condescending encouragement, that provided she was prudent and willing to bear confinement, she would undoubtedly find herself very happy, as the two young creatures, her daughters, were absolute angels in their dispositions, and naturally so clever, that it would be really a pleasure to teach them.

Alicia was surprised to find, in Lady Emma and Lady Augustine, tall girls of fourteen and sixteen years, but so totally uncultivated in mind and unformed in manners that, so far at least, they might be classed with children. Their external appearance was not less unpromising, for they were unfashionably and even shabbily dressed; and in the meanness of their attire she felt comforted with the idea that little splendour would be exacted from herself, and that nearly the whole of her liberal salary would go to comfort the excellent friend to whom she was so deeply indebted.

Happily for Mrs. Catherine, at the very time when Alicia's situation was procured, she had agreed to work one more year for her present employers, and therefore the flattering letters of her dear child did not involve her in those difficulties which would inevitably have ensued had she ventured to appropriate her income to her own wants too soon. The countess was fond of dressing in the most gay and expensive manner, of keeping an hospitable table, and giving entertainments in the most splendid style: in order to do this she kept her children ill clothed and ill fed, and, hitherto, ill educated; and wherever she could exact credit with impunity, she totally omitted all payment; and the poor but patient tradesman, the faithful and unassuming servant, were ever forgotten in the day of payment, even when their services called most imperatively for reward. This was the case with Alicia, who being new to the world, extremely anxious to perform her duty, and naturally active and ingenious, had been led to conciliate the lady by engaging in various little services besides those of instruction; and was in fact soon made a perfect slave—as secretary, milliner, sempstress, and ornamental artist to the family. Those kindnesses beyond the line of her profession, which were at first received as favours, were soon considered as duties, which were demanded as rights and exacted as daily labours; and in the course of a few months her situation became nearly insupportable.

The pale looks and dejected spirits of one who was rather their friend and companion than their governess, awoke the pity of the young ladies, and roused them from the state of inert indolence in which they had hitherto lived, into one of comparative energy and considerable improvement; for Alicia's sake they attended to their tasks, practised their music, and began to consider also the higher ends of their existence; and in a short time improved themselves so much, that even their mother began to see that she could not much longer keep them immured in the nursery. Selfish to the last, the countess now concluded that her own interest would be best consulted by exhibiting her daughters, and she became

suddenly as anxious to dress and form them for society, as she had hitherto been to keep them down and hide from the world.

Alicia had been nearly two years in her present office, without receiving the most trifling remuneration, and although her own wants could be borne, the idea of never transmitting any thing to her aunt became intolerable, and she therefore looked forward with the highest satisfaction to the time when she should be dismissed from her ladyship's service, not doubting but she should soon be reinstated in a situation less arduous, and be at least gratified with the power of visiting her aunt, and offering her the means of increased accommodation.

At length the day of release from more than Egyptian bondage was announced, together with the welcome information that the countess had spoken to a friend, who had written to another friend, who knew a Lady Westhampton, in Yorkshire, that had a little family about her, for whom she would probably be glad to engage Miss Launceston's services.

Alicia, with many thanks, ventured, with reddening cheeks and hesitating tongue, to suggest her great want of money, and her hopes that her ladyship would——

"Money!—oh, you can't expect much money from the wife of a country baronet; you must make your own agreement, Miss Launceston—with *that* I can have nothing to do."

Alicia was sorry to trouble her ladyship, but she wanted money for her *present* occasions.

"Oh, that is another affair. I shall send to you, of course, at the proper time."

That time came not, and the day of departure drew nigh; Lady Lammermuir was ever too busy or too haughty, or, in some cases, too agreeable, to be intruded upon, and one note of modest entreaty after another was despatched, until it was discovered that it would not be possible for her to leave the house without cash, when she received a bill of twenty pounds, and an intimation that pressing for her salary was impertinent and ungrateful in one who must owe her future success in life to the recommendation of the countess.

Grieved, mortified, and disappointed, Alicia, thus portioned, set out for Carlisle, to which place Mrs. Catherine had removed six months before, for the sake of being a step nearer to her *protégée*, and yet in a place where her little income would afford the means of existence. Had the niece on whom she lavished so much returned to her with the wealth of India in either hand, she could not have been received with more joy, or approved with more sincerity; and her evident disappointment and vexation only served to render her entertainer more abundant in kindness, and profuse in tender reassurance—"Oh, never fear, honey, but yere next voyage on the ocean of life will be far better than the first: we maun all buy our experience; saft breezes follow bitter frosts—the sweet violet hersel' is the child o' hoary winter."

Never had Alicia been so sensible of the happy disposition and superior character of her aunt, as during the single month she had now the happiness to pass with her, for never before could she perceive how intimately the cheerfulness of her temper, the benignity and benevolence of her heart, were connected with the purity of her faith, and the sublimity of that hope, which, whilst it spoke of earthly things, yet ever looked beyond them. She found, too, that, even with her bounded means, she yet helped many, either by activity or good counsel; and that, stranger as she was, most of her neighbours knew and respected her; and so much personal attention did she receive during this visit, that her spirits, worn out by the fruitless toil and the oppressive contumely she had endured, again rose to their wonted equanimity, and the glow of health and pleasure re-animated her faded cheek.

A few neat muslin dresses, purchased at little expence, and made by her own hands, were all the preparation she was enabled to make for re-entering the world; and she once more bade adieu to the relation who was more dear to her than ever, and whose declining years and increased wants seemed to give her a more than common claim, not only on her love, but her personal services, with the deepest regret, often wishing that any mode could be devised for her to gain the means of support, without dividing two people so well calculated to comfort and sustain each other.

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## CHAP. VII.

ALICIA travelled in very low spirits for many miles, but when she approached the mansion of Sir John Westhampton, the extraordinary beauty of the surrounding scenery, the wide expanse of hill and valley, wooded moorlands and cultivated meadows, which charmed her, diffused a soothing influence over her spirits, and she looked forward with hope and pleasure—"Surely," said she internally, "I may now hope to enjoy the sweet face of nature, as I did in the days of my childhood. I shall no longer be locked up in the walls of a nunnery, nor condemned to the more galling imprisonment of living in a back parlour all day long, to look out upon the walls and chimneys of Hammersmith, yet conscious that the princely Thames was flowing within a hundred yards of me, and that objects of interest and beauty surrounded me on every side, from which I was ever excluded."

The postchaise which she had taken from the last market-town now stopped at the house, and with trembling steps and a beating heart, such as those only can conceive who are thus condemned to seek for friends among strangers, she entered the hall.

A respectable-looking woman, whom she concluded to be the housekeeper, addressed her with much respect, but in a dialect so strong, that had she not lately parted from her aunt, it would have been very uncouth to her ears; but it now sounded like that of long-remembered accents, and was pleasant and soothing to her mind. She was shewn into a very pleasant bedroom, where every thing was provided that could tend to her comfort; a respectable maid soon followed to assist her toilet, and the housekeeper departed to procure her that refreshment which she insisted was necessary, observing that her lady was gone out for a ride, not expecting Miss for these two hours, and would never forgive her if she did not pay proper attention to a stranger.

After adjusting her dress, Alicia obeyed the summons of the good woman, and was conducted into a neat sitting-room, in which, from perceiving books, globes, and a work-table, she apprehended her future hours were destined to be spent. Here she found, upon an ample tray, abundant proofs of delicate and substantial provision, which formed a striking contrast to the meagre fare and ostentatious parade of her late residence, and every other observation she made, confirmed the idea that her situation was greatly improved; but extreme solicitude rendered her unequal to profiting by the good things before her, and her very soul seemed to live in her ears, until the return of the lady who was so important to her.

At length she heard the wheels of a carriage, and soon afterwards, many steps ascending the stairs, among which those of the housekeeper were distinct from their heaviness; and a very sweet voice was heard to address her with—"You did perfectly right, my good Parker; and as we are all hungry, we will join her."

The door opened, and a lady, about thirty, simply dressed, but having an air of superior elegance and even high fashion, advanced towards Alicia, and welcomed her with equal grace and cordiality. She was accompanied by four children of different ages, who gazed upon her with looks of awe, which were soon exchanged for those of confidence; and they would have soon encircled her chair, if they had not been told by their mamma to assemble round the table, as she knew they all wanted something.

The children were soon fed, and dismissed for half an hour to the nursery, when Lady Westhampton took refreshment herself, and pressed it with courtesy upon her guest; she made many inquiries after her journey, spoke of her good aunt, and gave her to understand that it was through her relation, Mrs. Campbell, that she had heard of her, and that the Countess of Lammermuir had merely answered her letters of inquiry, which arose from her knowing that the young ladies were of an age to dispense with her instructions; of course Alicia was under no obligation to the proud woman who had condescended to the meanness of rendering her recommendation a payment for the services of Alicia.

They were still engaged in agreeable conversation, when the opening of a distant door announced the return of the children.

"Oh! here comes my family, whom I must now personally introduce to you, Miss Launceston, premising with the observation that they are neither better nor worse than other people's. By their papa they are properly treated, for, with great tenderness, he has firmness and solidity; but their mother unhappily cannot boast his good qualities.

"I believe mammas are in general too indulgent," said Alicia, with a smile.

"That is by no means my greatest sin," returned the lively lady: "'tis true, I thought my first two babes were most angelic creatures—all innocence and loveliness, and such like; but when I had two more, I found out that children were troublesome, disagreeable, wayward little animals; and, now I have half a dozen, I am apt to consider them in both points of view, with the exception of my *eldest*, who is just set out to Eton, and is, we hope, a clever boy—and the youngest, who is a lovely plaything not able yet to walk, and, of course, not subject to running into mischief.—This tall, ruddy, vulgar-looking girl, Laura, is my eldest daughter; she is turned eleven years old—has been hitherto educated with her brother, so far as she can be said to be educated; she reads tolerably, writes *intolerably*, and spells abominably; but, on the other hand, she is a much better accountant than I shall ever be, and the housemaid has taught her to sew very prettily; she is also not ignorant of Latin, because she took lessons with her brother of the curate, to please him, certainly not with the slightest intention of becoming a learned lady, for slander itself would acquit Laura of being affected or pretending."

"Has Miss Westhampton commenced learning any of the usual accomplishments, madam?"

"No; but she has, with all the avidity of natural genius, attained many unusual ones; for instance, she can load a gun better than her elder brother, and discharge it as well; she can follow the hounds, either on foot or horseback, admirably, and excels in accuracy at finding a *fault* or uttering an *holloa*; then she can pull peas with the gardener, or shell them with the cook; she can discover hens' nests and feed turkies—has a tender regard for cade lambs, and not less for poor children and old women, to whom she can trudge even through the snow, to carry the soup she has begged from the cook, or the milk she has stolen from the dairy. She has also an accurate knowledge of the dialects of her own country, and can, with good effect, address a beggar either in the Hull and Beverly style, which, like the French, makes *ou* into *oo*, or like the Sheffield and Rotherham, which sounds the same letters *aw*; I therefore term her a literary prodigy, especially as she understands the innumerable "I'ses" of this district, which is at a great distance from either; but I much doubt whether she could articulate a syllable to a lady or gentleman, or even to her own governess."

Alicia held out her hand, and Laura, bashfully, awkwardly, but smilingly, took it, and as if seeking protection from her mamma's raillery, continued to stand close to her chair.

"This little snowdrop, always pale and always hanging down her head, Miss Betsey, is very different; delicate health for a long time tied her to the nursery, and inclination at this time unfortunately confirms the bondage: the young lady is at present a great reader, and very much of a quack doctress, which, as the humour changes in advancing life, will make her, in another ten years, a sentimental Miss, full of melancholy and moonlight—and, ten years after that, a sickly, pining wife—an indolent, useless mother—and finally, a refined but wretched woman, with all the elements of perverted intellect and acute sensibility aiding her destruction."

"God forbid!" ejaculated Alicia, as she gazed with warm affection on the interesting little girl.

"Now comes my son Frederic, for whom, although a boy, I must bespeak some share of your good offices, being well aware that, under eight years, all boys are best educated by our sex. I think I may venture to say, that as this little fellow is not six years yet, he may do credit to your instructions, for he is an affectionate creature, and by no means a fool; but he is troubled with his mother's temper, for which the only prescription, at his age, is a good rod, or an hour's confinement in a solitary closet.—Finally comes little John—not four years old—by much the most hopeful of your subjects, for the brilliance of his intellect is already manifest from the mathematical precision with which he can quarter an orange, and the accuracy of computation he displays in accumulating sugar plums, as the old song says. Alas! he cannot read, for which I hope you will like him all the better; and, to conclude my introduction, like the first scene of an old play, I may add—

"If to his share some little errors fall,  
Look in his face, and you'll forget them all."

"It is indeed a lovely one," said Alicia, as she took the blue-eyed boy upon her lap and kissed him.

"Well, I have then only to add, that over these new subjects, Miss Launceston, your reign is *absolute*; not that I promise neutrality, but I mean to insist on your rights; for, excuse me, you are so young, and your expression of countenance is so mild, and you have been living so long under an arbitrary government, that it seems my first duty to establish your *power*. And now, my young *dramatis personæ*, as Miss Launceston must be weary, we will say, *exeunt omnes*."

In a moment they were all gone, and Alicia was left for some hours to write to her aunt, and consider on her plan of instruction to the unformed, but interesting, children thus given to her care.

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## CHAP. VIII.

WHEN Alicia was introduced to Sir John Westhampton, she found him indeed the sensible and good man his lady had declared him to be. He was tenderly, yet judiciously, attached to his family, and he treated with the highest respect that person whom he wished his children to love, honour, and imitate. He was fond of field-sports, which were indeed necessary for his health, for, though scarcely thirty-five, he was too much inclined to feed; otherwise, he sought only for happiness in his own family, and the occasional visits of those friends and neighbours for whom he could really feel esteem.

His lady, as a young, handsome, accomplished, and much-admired woman, had, during the first years of their union, been more fond of pleasure than her duties and his fortune, though it was a noble one, had permitted; and her winters in London had caused some heartaches and many gentle remonstrances on his part. Such was her good sense, her sincere affection for him, and the excellent principles in which she had been educated, that she wisely gave up this course in the very zenith of her attractions, and resolved henceforward to devote herself to the duties of a wife and mother; and it was now nearly five years since she had visited the metropolis. Her vivacity, her accomplishments, were given to her own circle, and the consequence was an increase of respect, love, and admiration, on the part of her husband, almost unparalleled; and he was the more inclined to render Alicia happy, because he perceived that she was well calculated to be a desirable companion to his lady, and to keep alive in her that taste for elegant pursuit, and playful display of conversational talent, which rendered her the charm of general society, and the life of a more contracted circle.

When Alicia became a little more domesticated, she adopted towards each child that course of study and mode of conduct which was best calculated to correct, by imperceptible means, the errors their mother had so ingenuously depicted, and to improve the virtues and energies for which she had given them credit. To Laura's active, though uncultivated mind, she gave a bias for feminine accomplishments, and pruned the luxuriance of her talents to render their exertion effectual; and as she found her a most affectionate, warm-hearted creature, who soon became excessively attached to her, she found no difficulty in persuading her to study for *her* sake, and endeavour to excel, in order to please the parents she loved, and the governess she earnestly desired to gratify. There was less difficulty in taming the exuberance of her spirits, and compelling her to sit still and think, than in rousing Betsy to exertion, and winning her from the books over which she perpetually pored, to take a lesson in dancing, or partake a healthful stroll in the fine country which surrounded them; and delicate indeed was the task to guide a mind so situated, into that narrow path of propriety which will give to each duty that which is its due; and remember, that even the best pursuits have their bounds, and that the highest claims of knowledge and the best acquisitions of mind do not exempt a female from necessary attention to personal neatness, to trifling decorums, and especially to obeying the will of her superiors, whether it demands great sacrifices or petty observances.

Betsy was so mild and quiet that she never disturbed any one; and if they disturbed not her, she seldom complained, or at least never did it in a loud and angry tone; but, on the other hand, you might ask *her* to do a thing twenty times before she complied with your request, and when she did, it was with the air of a person who was forced to do that which she disliked. All motion was hateful to her, and must be forced upon her; but so gently, yet firmly, did Alicia induce her to obedience—so constantly did she reward her willing compliance, by rendering her walks the source of mental recreation, that by degrees she became habituated to motion, and at length eager to engage in those rambles which never failed to secure for her a rich reward in the knowledge conveyed and the pleasure excited.

But although the improvement of the young ladies was very encouraging to Alicia, yet Frederic was in fact the pupil most grateful to her feelings, for he came to her as a blank paper in point of knowledge, on which she could inscribe what characters she chose. His eager desire to learn, the happiness and importance he displayed when he had made an acquisition, and the gratitude he evidently felt towards her for having opened such a source of pleasure to him, were really delightful; and her cares to implant in his young heart the best motives of action and principles of self-control, were a diversity of occupation to her own mind peculiarly grateful and invigorating; so that it might be said that the happiness and the intellect of both grew and flourished together.

Lady Westhampton seldom entered the room set apart for study, which was a happy circumstance, as the pleasantry of



her conversation, or the quickness of her temper, seldom failed to derange the sober system of her young but vigilant preceptress: she was however generally received with pleasure by the children, not only from their love to her, but because she frequently came to announce some scheme of innocent pleasure, which was to be the reward of exertion, and required the concurrence of their governess.

One morning when she entered, finding Laura at her French lesson, she did not speak, but walked up to the window.—"How comes this beautiful carnation to be broken?" said she, hastily breaking silence.

"I have no idea," replied Alicia; "I am certain that it was perfect at breakfast-time, for I gave it water, and pointed out the varieties of its colouring to Eliza."

All were silent, and Lady Westhampton darted a keen and penetrating eye upon her youngest daughter, who blushed exceedingly, and even was observed to tremble.—"Did you break it, Betsey? Speak up, child."

A faint "No" issued from the little girl's lips, on which, in a more angry tone, the lady said—"Then who did? I see you know."

Frederic rose from his seat, and walking up to his mamma, he looked earnestly in her face, and said—"It was *me* who broke it, mamma."

"You, sir!—*you* broke it!—Take that for your pains."

A most tremendous box on the ear accompanied the words, and the poor child ran crying back to his seat, at the same time darting a reproachful look towards his governess, which she fully understood. She had seen the inward struggle of his heart, between fear of his mother's anger and a sense of honour in himself, and the justice to which his sister had a right, and that as he advanced towards his mamma, his colour fled and his lip quivered; she was therefore sincerely sorry to see him suffer in consequence of an effort of virtue, which had already cost him so much—she felt assured that this was one of the most important moments of his early life, and in her extreme anxiety for his welfare, her cheek flushed, and her eyes filled with tears.

Lady Westhampton, already angry, beheld her emotion with displeasure, and observed, with a sneer, that it was a curious circumstance the punishment she had given her child for spoiling Miss Launceston's flower should excite her vexation; adding, "'Not that I should have given him so severe a blow, if he had not so impertinently said—'*I did it.*'"

"I did not mean to do wrong," said Frederic, sobbing; "what you call *impertinence*, governess calls *sincerity*; and if I had held my tongue, I know it would have been the same as telling a lie, which is wicked and shameful."

"Yes," said Eliza, as the silent tears coursed down her face in sympathy, "It would have been *equivocating*, for mamma would have thought I broke the flower, whereas I only saw you do it by chance, and of course I did not want to tell of you, especially as it was an accident entirely."

"Come to me, Frederic," said Alicia, in a mild tone; and the boy instantly obeyed, and listened attentively as she said—"You had no right to touch the carnation, for I had forbidden you all from meddling with it; therefore you are very properly punished by your mamma for this fault, for which I hope you are sorry, and that you will humbly entreat your mamma to forgive you for having committed it."

Frederic did not speak, feeling that his punishment went beyond the fault which he had endeavoured to expiate; he considered himself the injured party, and his little heart swelled with indignation, which subsided by degrees, when Alicia added—"But although very blameable in your conduct, I consider you an honest and noble boy in taking the error and its consequences upon yourself, and scorning to see your sister suffer in the opinion of your mamma. I consider you as having acted like a child in your fault, but like a man in your confession of it; for which reason, so far as it concerns *me*, I freely forgive you, and trust that you will not be so foolish again."

The boy's countenance brightening, his pain forgotten, and his affections recalled to their usual action, he now hastily ran to his mother, crying—"Pray, dear mamma, do forgive me, and I will never meddle with the flowers again."

"I do forgive you, Frederic—you are a very honest little fellow; but I," she added, in a low and almost inaudible voice, "cannot so easily forgive every body else;" and with these words left the room immediately.

Alicia felt very uneasy, for she thought the words implied the dissatisfaction of Lady Westhampton towards herself; and the sincere regard she felt towards her for the innumerable favours and kindnesses she daily experienced from her hands, rendered the thoughts of her serious displeasure insupportable to her affectionate and grateful dependant. Yet she was well aware that her duty had demanded the conduct she had pursued; that it was of the utmost importance to the dear child that his views on such a momentous point should be properly directed; and also that, however vexed with her Lady Westhampton might be at this unhappy moment, both herself and Sir John were persons of scrupulous veracity, and abhorred all meanness. She was much relieved when a servant appeared to say that her lady requested that the children might be sent altogether with her into the garden; but her heart rose to her lips when she added, "for I believe both my lady and Sir John are coming to see you, ma'am."

The children departed, and the further they removed, the more sunk the spirits of Alicia, although she endeavoured to sustain herself by the recollection that she had done right; but she was well aware that the world would not think so, and that her future prospects would be involved in any cloud under which she should leave a family of such high respectability: the situation of her aunt, the disappointment *she* would experience, sunk heavy on her heart, and completely unnerved her. At length Sir John and his lady approached, the door opened, and she felt as if her very life hung on the first words which should be uttered.

"I have brought you a naughty girl," said Sir John, "who declares she can never forgive *herself*, Miss Launceston, for some sin against you and Frederic which she has committed this morning, yet fancies that you will accord her mercy."

"It is all very true, and I am heartily ashamed of myself; but I would not say this before the children, lest you should not think it right; for, in every thing in which they are concerned, I will henceforth be not *partly*, but *wholly* governed by you," said his lady.

Under this sudden relief to her feelings, Alicia was led to speak more fully, and perhaps more eloquently, on the duties of her situation, than she had ever done before; and the result of the interview was increased confidence and goodwill on both sides.

"It just occurs to me," said Lady Westhampton, "that you have been here a long time, Miss Launceston, and yet I have, with most blameable carelessness, never once spoken to you on money matters. May I ask what the Countess of Lammermuir gave you?"

"She agreed to give me fifty pounds a-year before I came from France, madam, and to pay my expences to London."

"Now let me become accuser in my turn, for really that answer is not given with your usual ingenuousness. I wanted to know what she *actually* gave you."

"She gave me—that is—I could get no settlement with her ladyship—in fact, I only received twenty pounds."

"And you hesitate at giving this proof of her meanness to your only friends!—Believe me, I should not have asked, but under the persuasion that Lady Lammermuir, conscious of your merit, had rewarded it by outgoing her agreement; not that her conduct ought to govern mine, because it is my duty to consider my family. I shall, therefore, offer you eighty pounds a year; and I hope, after this time, to pay you regularly; but at present you must look to Sir John, for I am very poor."

Sir John in a few moments laid forty pounds upon Alicia's work-table, and they both left the room, the lady jestingly telling the Baronet that she was now determined to accompany him to London when he next visited it on parliamentary duty, as she had formed as strong a resolution to get money in the metropolis, as she had formerly shewn an avidity for spending it.

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## CHAP. IX.

By degrees the wild habits and boyish propensities of Laura were exchanged for the elegant accomplishments becoming her sex and her rank, whilst the genuine benevolence and active humanity of her heart were still retained, and all her native artlessness and simplicity appeared combined with engaging modesty and propriety of deportment. She now made her sister the companion of her rambles as well as her studies, and since both were taken under the eye of their kind and observant governess, they alike tended to improve the appearance and correct the habits of each. Eliza learned to exchange the sickly compassion of indulged sensibility for the actual offices of humanity, and was taught to see how much more valuable that person must be, who can sacrifice personal gratification in order to relieve a fellow creature, than one who sheds tears over a pathetic story, without exerting herself to assist the real sufferer. She now conquered her indolence, for the sweet gratification of visiting the neighbouring poor, and contributing her means of assisting them; her pale cheeks now glowed with health and cheerfulness, and her delicate frame became vigorous and elegant, and she moved and danced with grace and agility. When the eldest son paid his first visit at home, after a year's absence, he was astonished and delighted with the improvement made in both his sisters, and he declared Frederic to be a prodigy in learning, and yet a very agreeable boy, and therefore very different to all the little prodigies he had ever met with before.

When this young gentleman returned to Eton, Sir John and his lady accompanied him, happy in committing their young family to one whose character they highly estimated, and whose conduct they had diligently investigated, before they thus left her the uncontrolled mistress of their mansion. They returned in the beginning of summer, delighted to find themselves most fondly welcomed by all their children, and without any drawback on their happiness; for Lady Westhampton's conduct had been most exemplary in every respect, and whilst she had been an object of the most flattering attention to the fashionable world, she had never allowed herself to be seduced, by its blandishments, into expenses beyond her means, or dissipation unbecoming her character. The consciousness of having acted so as to merit the love of her children made their caresses delightful to her, and united with the warm approbation of her husband to shed the sweetest amenity over her manners, and to spread through all her habitation the cheerfulness and serenity which were predominant in her own feelings.

But when the family in general had retired for the night, with a sensation of more exulting pleasure she took the hand of Alicia, and placed in it a bank-bill of one hundred pounds, saying—"There, my sweet young friend, there is Lady Lammermuir's debt to you, sent with a thousand kind wishes to her amiable *protégée*. I hope you will henceforward acknowledge the extent of my diplomatic powers."

Alicia could scarcely believe herself the possessor of so large a sum as this appeared to her, and those who consider either the deep obligation she lay under to her aunt, or the sense of pleasure it must ever be to help a worthy relation in the decline of years, who is labouring under a scanty provision in those days which most solicit indulgence, will not be surprised that, after surveying her prize for a moment, and gratefully gazing on the person who gave it her, her eyes filled with tears, and she begged leave to withdraw.

"Oh go, my dear, by all means, and consider how smart to make yourself with your money, for we shall have a great deal of company by-and-bye."

But Alicia's consideration was only how best to express to her dear aunt the pleasure she had in sending her the hard-earned sum, which good Mrs. Catherine, as well as herself, had long ago given up as lost, and which it is certain would only have been regained by the skilful manœuvring, as well as active benevolence, of Lady Westhampton, who not only sought to assist in doing justice to one she loved, but in compelling one she despised to restitution, which was in itself a punishment.

Before breakfast the next day, Alicia had sought Sir John for the purpose of procuring a frank, and the anxiety she shewed convinced his lady that the bill she had given her the preceding evening was enclosed. Although Lady Westhampton was aware that Alicia had no other friend, and was under great obligations to her aunt, yet she did not

know their extent, and she inquired, with an air of dissatisfaction, if she had sent the *whole* of the bill; observing that Sir John would have changed it for her, or could do so yet.

"Ah, my lady! if you knew how much I owe this dear Mrs. Launceston, you would not think of such an emendation."

"Well, tell me all about her, then, my dear; I know you are an excellent *raconteuse*, as the French say."

Although this kind of praise somewhat abashed Alicia, yet she immediately began to speak of her own infantine losses and misfortunes, displayed the goodness of her aunt in seeking her when all the world had deserted her; and proceeded to depict, with the simple eloquence which belongs to true feeling, the privations and labours her good aunt had endured for her sake so many years. It might be truly said of her warm-hearted auditors—

"That often she beguil'd them of their tears,  
When she did speak of some distressful stroke  
Which her youth suffer'd;"

and when she paused, the warm-hearted, enthusiastic Lady Westhampton insisted upon it that such was her admiration of Mrs. Catherine, that she could never rest till she had personally assured her of her regard; and she determined to write immediately, and press her to visit her niece, at a house where they would be proud to receive her.

Alicia well knew that this scheme would not tend to the old lady's happiness, and she therefore gently, and at length effectually, opposed it; and the affair terminated much more happily, from her gaining permission to be the bearer of her own letter. She found her good aunt most happy to see her, but grievously altered for the worse, as she had lately laboured under a severe illness, which, from the kindest motives, she had forborne to mention, knowing that the absence of Lady Westhampton rendered it impossible for Alicia to visit her in comfort. Under these circumstances, the presence and the present of Alicia were doubly welcome, since even her previous remittances were more than called for by the affliction she had encountered.

During the following autumn, the season for shooting being unusually fine, the hospitable mansion of Sir John was full of company—a circumstance which did not add to the pleasure of Alicia or her young pupils, since it only tended to confine them more closely to their own apartments, and deprive them of the dear society of the heads of the family. Though ever a welcome guest in the drawing-room, Alicia was by no means a frequent one at these times; nor did Lady Westhampton press her to come; she prudently thought that a young woman of superior attainments and personal attractions would be likely to become an object of attention to some man of fortune, who, after paying her great attention, and thereby securing her affections, would probably leave her for a more suitable and wealthy choice, to pine in regret for the remainder of her life; or, even if he married her, repent himself when it was too late, and subject her to the bitter mortification of seeing a dissatisfied husband and haughty relations look down upon her, through the rest of an existence, perhaps abridged by uneasiness and the endurance of unmerited reproach.

Yet, notwithstanding the kind precautions taken by Lady Westhampton, Alicia became an object of attraction to several who were led to watch for an opportunity of seeing a person of whom the children were continually talking; and a gentleman of large fortune was so much pleased with her, that he entertained serious thoughts of paying her his addresses, if he found that her family was respectable; and after begging a private interview with Lady Westhampton, he made known to her his wishes, and begged her to satisfy his curiosity on a point which was important to his happiness.

Lady Westhampton gave him an account, of course, which she thought likely to add to the affection he felt for Alicia, but concealed not the opinion she entertained, that this young person would never forsake her aunt, even for the highest offer; and therefore, whoever married her must do it in the expectation of taking charge of two persons instead of one.

"That is indeed a serious consideration," said the gentleman.

"I do not mean to say he must take the aunt into his house, for I have reason to believe that she would prefer the quiet, humble independence of her distant home, but of course he must enable his wife to continue to her that assistance which, even in her dependent state, she now supplies, otherwise he abridges the virtues and the happiness she now enjoys," observed the lady.

The young gentleman thought deeply for a few moments, and then said, if he could converse with Miss Launceston she would probably give up this silly point. On being assured that it was impossible, he rang for his horses and departed, leaving Lady Westhampton well satisfied with having saved Alicia from an interview which, although insufficient to shake her resolution, might have been injurious to her happiness.

Nothing occurred particular until the return of Christmas, which brought the young heir again to the paternal mansion; in consequence of which various invitations arose among the neighbouring gentry, and their parties were augmented also by the arrival of a young gentleman to whom Sir John was much attached, and had not seen for several years, the two last of which had been spent at the Madeiras, with a relation who was sick.

One evening when they happened to be alone, and could therefore converse more freely, this friend (Mr. Parry) said, that, in passing through London, he had spent an evening with their mutual acquaintance, Mr. —— (the gentleman above-named,) who appeared rather out of spirits; and when he was rallied upon it, said that he owed his dejection to Lady Westhampton.

"Why 'tis true I did tell him a long story which affected him a *little*; but a young, handsome, independent man, with a fortune of two thousand a-year, might have got over it."

"I wish you would tell it to me," said Mr. Parry.

Lady Westhampton readily complied, and when she concluded, the gentleman eagerly asked if the old lady were still alive?

"Oh yes, and likely to live many years."

"How sincerely do I wish she would permit me to double her little income!—my fortune is much more than equal to my wants now; and if I should marry, which is very probable, yet such a trifle could never be felt in my family; and if it were, so much the better—it would serve to remind us of that virtue we ought to imitate."

"I will inquire how far such an offer would be acceptable to the feelings of a Scottish gentlewoman," said Lady Westhampton; "it is a delicate matter, and must be delicately arranged; but, be assured, it is to me a delightful commission. In the meantime, let us all be silent upon it for one week at least, and consent to remain with us a fortnight longer."

"I believe I have already done that," said Mr. Parry, "because, having some business in London, I have promised Sir John to take charge of your son to Eton."

Nothing farther passed at this time, but on the following evening, as Lady Westhampton gave a little ball to the young people in the neighbourhood, Mr. Parry was introduced to Alicia, who, of course, accompanied her young ladies. Circumstances threw them much into conversation with each other, and they were mutually pleased with the powers which each displayed; but it was not till several succeeding interviews had confirmed the prepossession, and until Alicia had heard from Sir John many traits of the excellence of Mr. Parry's character, that his lady first mentioned his proposition respecting her aunt.

Pleased, thankful, and much affected, yet Alicia begged in the first instance to decline it; but the recollection that either sickness or death, on her part, might deprive her excellent aunt of an advantage she had no right to refuse, caused her to hesitate; but she could not delay returning her thanks to Mr. Parry for his intentions. In this interview Mr. Parry made her an offer of his hand; and, not to detain you on a subject you must have foreseen, I shall only add, that about six months afterwards they were married, and removed to his house in Cheshire, where they now reside.

Before this event took place, Mr. Parry had made the settlement in question, Alicia being anxious that the gift should be one emanating evidently from the kindness and generosity of her husband, as a tribute due to an unknown but meritorious

person, and not as proceeding even from his affection to herself. But after they were married, the excellent man to whom she was united, made it his first care to alter and improve the prettiest cottage on his estate, so as to resemble the one where she had formerly dwelt with her aunt at Stirling; and when he had finished it with conveniences of every description, and furnished it in the most comfortable manner, he went himself to Carlisle, and brought back Mrs. Catherine, by easy stages, in his own carriage, to be settled near her beloved niece for the remainder of her life.

Before it was in his power to carry this benevolent plan fully into execution, a circumstance of much importance had arisen to his bride. It appears that, in the extent of her goodwill, and the anxiety she displayed for giving importance to the much-loved governess of her children, Lady Westhampton had caused the marriage of Mr. Parry and Miss Alicia Launceston to cut what might be called a good figure as a newspaper paragraph, and an old gentleman, who resided in South Wales, read it by chance, transferred into the Swansea Chronicle, and thus reasoned upon it:—"Alicia—Alicia Launceston!—why the Christian name was my sister-in-law's, and her daughter (my niece) married a Dr. Launceston, and left a child called Alicia: *this* must be the very girl. Um! um!—handsome! accomplished!—that may be; but she must be poor. I will write to George about it—no, I won't, for that would look as if I wished to make up the quarrel, and that I never intend to do, either with him or his impertinent sons—no, no, I will let them see that I can find heirs without them. Why this girl, if it be the poor brat a Scotchwoman once wrote about, is sprung from a brother above two years older than George."

Anxious to discover the truth, this old gentleman caused his steward to write to Sir John Westhampton on the subject; and after a somewhat tedious investigation of every circumstance, being fully, and, as it appeared, most happily satisfied that Alicia was indeed his grandniece, he wrote a kind letter, acknowledging her as his near relation, and enclosing her a handsome sum of money, as a proof of goodwill, and an earnest of future favours. Of course, Alicia found this acknowledgment of her relationship, and the power of presenting something to that dear husband who had received her a portionless orphan, without friends or expectations, a very pleasant circumstance; and accompanied by Mr. Parry, made a journey into Wales to visit him, where she was received with the utmost honour and courtesy, and valued the more because she had married a gentleman whose name at least was a Welch one.

When Mrs. Parry became the mother of a son, the old gentleman came himself to visit her, and formally declared her his heiress—stood sponsor for her son, to whom he gave his name, and to whom he presented a thousand pounds, in consequence of learning that his christening-mantle was trimmed with lace wrought by the hands of Mrs. Catherine Launceston, who was also sponsor on this occasion; observing at the time, that the trembling hands and dim eyes which had engaged in such a work of affection, argued that age had not impaired the love, nor quenched the energy of her to whom the happy circle were indebted for the preservation of one so dear and valuable as the mother of the babe.

Twice after this time he came to visit his niece, and during the last period she was enabled to subdue so far the implacability of his temper towards his brother's family (Mr. George Powis being himself dead), that he left them all legacies indicative of forgiveness. He did not long survive this journey, dying in his eighty-fifth year, and leaving to Alicia the property he had promised, together with a considerable estate, to which she was the legal heir, although her rights had never been ascertained until the period of his decease.

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## CHAP. X.

TWO or three hours after Mrs. Parry had given the manuscript we have just finished to her son, she was under the necessity of entering the apartment where he was retired with his young friend. She found the two boys sitting by each other in perfect silence, and the little work, which they had finished but a few minutes before, lying on the table on which they were leaning. Mrs. Parry approached them, and said to her son—"Well, Charles, are we to keep your birthday in the cottage, or at our own house?"

"Oh, mamma, how can you ask me?" said the boy, bursting into tears, "unless you think—and I am sadly afraid you *do think*, that I am not worthy of visiting my dear, *dear* aunt Launceston."

"I thought—at least I hoped that you would perceive, Charles, that there was indeed a great deal of difference between the debt of gratitude I owed to her you deemed my poor relation, and him whom you exulted in as my rich one; for surely there was little comparison in the goodness they displayed. Mrs. Launceston was distantly related to me, personally unknown even to my parents, and neither called upon by law or honour to provide for me; yet, like her Divine Master, she literally came to seek and to save me when I was lost, to rescue me from the lowest state of poverty and wretchedness to which an unhappy orphan could be doomed, and give me to share, not her wealth, for she had barely competence, but her home, the comforts of which must inevitably be diminished by my presence. From motives of the purest pity, the most exalted benevolence, and Christian charity, she compelled herself to forego all her own habits, at a period of life when they were fully formed, and to give up the quiet and orderly path of life she had travelled above forty years, to become the nurse of a sickly and often wayward child, abandoned to vulgar habits, and habituated to the filthy customs of squalid poverty."

"Oh, mamma, you could never be such a child as this."

"Indeed I must have been such, Charles, for nothing else could arise from a situation so horrible as mine; yet from this was I saved by your aunt, and nurtured with a tenderness so judicious, a love so full of wisdom, that I soon gave indication of talents which promised to reward a culture she had it not in her power to bestow. In order to procure me higher aid, she sacrificed her *all*—she abandoned home, friends, and independence, and at a period of life when numbers think justly that they are entitled to *rest* from their labours, she, for the first time in her existence, entered upon a life of daily toil, for a scanty and dubious reward, to procure the bare means of existence. This, *mark me, Charles*, was not the effervescence of an enthusiastic mind, which, under strong excitement, feels capable of a noble resolution, a splendid act of generosity—no, it was the steady purpose, the undeviating, unostentatious goodness of those years of her life in which the active often become supine, the sanguine hopeless, the generous selfish, and even the best conclude themselves justified in assuming those comforts which declining life evidently demands. And when that period arrived in which she had a right to expect release from her cares, and it arrived not, was there not still the same kindness continued, the same confidence exerted, the same generous belief that she was duly estimated, fondly beloved by the child who had been so long separated from her? Yes, I can truly say that this portion of my excellent aunt's conduct, which was perhaps, in many respects, the most difficult to persevere in, was equally admirable with the rest; and during the short time I spent with her at Carlisle, when I returned to her almost pennyless, mortified at the past and fearful of the future, shocked to contemplate the change which time had made in her person, and which my wants had made in her humble comforts, not a word, or sigh, or look of hers, added to my chagrin; on the contrary, she gave me encouragement alike by her manners and her counsels, and would have given me again a share of that bread which, as a hungry child, I had innocently robbed her of in my infancy."

"Oh, mamma, I see it all; I am sure I shall ever consider her as an angel," exclaimed Charles.

"You will at least see, my dear, how much higher *her* conduct rises than that of our uncle, so far as I am concerned: it is true, he owned me, loved me, and enriched me, but it was not till I was honourably and highly married, and when, from having quarrelled with the family of his only surviving brother, he was in a manner thrown on the world for connections. I am sensible of great obligation to him, and during the period of our intercourse I became much attached to him; nor would I wish to reflect on his memory; but when I wish to impress an important lesson on the mind of my son, I must not sacrifice an awful truth, even to an affectionate and charitable impulse: *he* who left me to perish unaided, in the possession of wealth himself, must not be placed on a level with *her* who rescued me from misery in despite of her own poverty: like the widow's mite in the Gospel, her services must be registered in my heart, and the hearts of my children, as an offering beyond all price."

Although Mrs. Parry ceased to speak, her young auditors were so deeply impressed by her words, which were indeed aided by her tears, and the animated tone in which she spoke, that for some minutes they still seemed to listen—with this difference, that the eyes of Charles, though somewhat downcast, as if he were listening rather to a lecture on his own conduct than an eulogy upon that of his friend, were still turned towards his mother, whereas those of his companion were bent only upon the floor, and all his usual vivacity and energy appeared to have forsaken him—a circumstance which Mrs. Parry could not help noticing to herself with much surprise, for he was a youth of much feeling, and ever prone to enter, with glowing sympathy, into every circumstance of character and conduct which indicated the lofty qualities and higher exertions of virtue.

"Well," said Mrs. Parry, after a long pause, "I must not stay here any longer; we are all busy in the house preparing for to-morrow; Alicia and Jemima are filling the large vases in the hall with flowers, and as all the servants are engaged, and neither of you have been out, I think you had better carry them to the cottage."

"Oh yes, mamma, I should like to go of all things—I quite long to see Aunt Launceston, and to beg of her to——"

"But perhaps Edward may *not*.—If you have no inclination, Master Eyre, for the walk, pray do not go; I merely proposed it, because the vases are careful carriage, and the girls would be glad to send them by those who will feel as they do on the occasion."

"I wish I could feel as they do," said Edward, with a deep sigh; "but you know ma'am, I *cannot*, for they are happy, and deserve to be so; and I am not happy. But pray, dear Mrs. Parry, don't call me *Master Eyre*."

"I don't understand you, my dear Edward; there was something in your silence which did not indicate your usual friendliness of feeling, which perhaps gave me a little pain, at a time when I had been opening both my family circumstances and family affections to you, in a manner which proved that I regarded you in the same light as my own son. I wish you would explain this."

"Why, ma'am, you can't surely suppose that I can forgive myself at such a moment as this, for having dared to say a single word against Mrs. Launceston, whom I consider the best of women—not indeed that I spoke *against* her, for I could not, but I said words I have ever since wished to recall; in short, you know all I said—Charles would not make it worse."

"Charles never said a word to me on the matter; I saw, it is true, that something was on his mind, but it seemed to go off the day following, and I thought no more about it; but from some conversation which passed between us, I was led to give him this little history, in order to settle his fluctuating opinions as to whether the *virtue* or the *riches* of his relatives were the more worthy of his affections, and my sincere regard for you prompted me to offer the same lesson to your contemplation, well knowing that your mother would thank me for endeavouring to do you such a service."

"Oh," cried Edward, vehemently, "how good you are to me, just at the time when I am sure I deserve nothing but hatred!—and Charles too, so kind as not to accuse me, when I had vexed him so much by speaking so thoughtlessly and unfeelingly of his great-aunt! My only consolation is, that he repelled my silly insinuations as he ought, and thought no more about 'em."

"You are mistaken, Edward; I thought a great deal, for I said to myself—'He is older than me, and knows better;' and I determined that I would not go so often to the cottage, and I behaved sullenly and negligently to aunt Launceston for two days—I know I did in my heart, and that makes me impatient to see her, and to convince her that I am worthy to be once more her own 'dear bairnie.'"

"You *are* worthy," cried Edward, "but I am *not*; and I feel that I cannot—I ought not to accompany you. Yet if sorrow for my folly would entitle me to pardon, I am certain I ought to have it, for I have never been free from self-reproach since the day when it happened; for her kindness at that time cut me to the heart within ten minutes after I had spoken."

"Then you ought to have told me," said Charles, "and I should have been prevented from acting, as I am sure I did, with a sort of surly sauciness, which, though it dared not speak, was yet very provoking; and besides, I have felt all along a great weight on my heart, as if I had done something very wicked—I am sure I have lost almost a whole week's pleasure."

"So I should," replied Edward, "but you were absent, and I did not see you for two days, and I then hoped you had forgot



all I said; and I tried to forget it myself, and when it came into my mind, I said—'Pshaw! pshaw!' and strove to drive it away; then I tried to comfort myself by reasoning, and said to myself—'After all, I have only spoken the truth; I did not say anything against Mrs. Launceston to Charles; I only said she spoke Scotch and looked queer, and that I wondered how he could love her;' but still it was the uppermost; and when Charles summoned me to read the manuscript, I felt sure that he had told you all, dear Mrs. Parry, and that you had taken this kind method of reproving me for my error."

"Well, my dear young friend, pray continue to consider so; for if you are not only reproved but amended, which I am fully persuaded you will be from this incident, you will have attained a benefit of incalculable importance. Our Saviour has expressly said, that for every idle word we must give an account; and those may indeed be called *idle words*, which, without having the determined wickedness of calumny, or the intention of virtuous censure on real crime, yet throw firebrands as it were in sport, and leave an impression to the prejudice of a worthy person, for causes which we feel too trifling for censure, and should be ashamed to repeat—causes which cease to be such if they were explained, because that which affects *our* narrow views may not operate on a person whose range in society is more wide, whose views are more liberal, or whose mind has been differently directed; as, for instance, the very language you dislike may sound, to an ear accustomed to it, most delightful, as bringing back the most agreeable associations, the dearest ties of his existence."

"I am excessively fond of Burn's poems myself," said Edward—"in fact, I delight in the poetical turns and the rich phraseology of the language."

"So I have frequently heard you say, Edward, and I believe you; which only proves the more decidedly that yours were merely idle words, and such as many much older than yourself use daily; yet they might have rendered a happy family wretched—implanted the seeds of parental disobedience, which would have sprung up into every hateful propensity, and even actual profligacy, in a boy of the best possible disposition, and could not, by any possible construction, do good to any human being. Can you not perceive this consequence too probable?"

"I see it all clearly," cried Edward. "Charles would have incurred the displeasure of his parents; he would have thought it unjust—his heart would have been hardened against them; he would have gone on, from one thing to another, till he became a wretch, and——"

"Then I should have been a fool," said Charles, abruptly.

"You would have been misled by one," replied Edward, "and the more easily, because you knew he loved you. But I hope you will never allow him to injure you again."

The shame, the ingenuous self-reproach, and the tone of deep dejection in which these words were spoken, moved Charles exceedingly, and he instantly clasped Edward fast to his bosom; and the boys, humble and yet elevated by their penitence, wept together, whilst Mrs. Parry, satisfied with the explanation she had received, silently retired.

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## CHAP. XI.

WHEN Mrs. Parry returned to her family, she found that her daughters had not meant to send their vases of flowers to the cottage till the following morning, as they were in fact intended, in the first place, as birthday offerings to their dear brother.

On the following morning, the boys, having been fully reconciled to their much-loved mother and friend, arose with light hearts and the renovated spirits peculiar to the morning of life, to engage in the tasks and pleasures of the day.

It was settled that all the children in the immediate vicinity should receive each a sweet cake and a cup of syllabub, and form a little morris-dance on the grass-plot of Mrs. Launceston, who would see their sports with as much pleasure as the young ones; and the care of preparing the place, and of arranging the dress of the principal performers, was delegated to the boys, who alike felt not only a laudable anxiety to do something which might place them near the person of Mrs. Launceston, but even to suffer or labour for her, by way of expiating their unknown sins towards her; for the feelings of the young are ever ardent and acute. Silently but completely entering into their ideas, Mrs. Parry employed them in bearing between them an immense basket of china, which required the utmost care in conveyance, observing that there was no occasion for it, but if they liked to take the trouble of carrying it, the old lady would, of course, be pleased, as it would set off her table and honour her guests.

The affair was one of much anxiety and great labour, and the heat of their faces subdued the blushes which memory had awakened, as the heavy basket was set down in Mrs. Launceston's parlour.

The old lady was sitting in her armchair, putting a finishing stitch to a Highland pouch which she had made as a curious kind of reservoir for her godson's pencils, fishing-tackle, &c., for a birthday present, and which she had ornamented with silver lace, in a rich and beautiful manner.

The moment that Charles's eye glanced upon her and her employment, his heart was penetrated anew with the most lively gratitude and affection; the preserver of his mother was before him—the beloved relative he had slighted, in despite of age and infirmity, was toiling to please him. Charles felt as if his very heart rose to his mouth, and, unable to speak, he ran forward, and, dropping on his knees, laid his face upon her lap.

"May the guid God bless thee, my son!" said the old lady, solemnly, laying her clasped hands upon his head; "may he give thee many happy returns of this day, and in a guid auld age remove thee gently to himself!"

Edward rushed forward—"Dear madam, bless *me*—pray bless *me* also."

"May the Most Merciful bless thee! may he make thee a crown of rejoicing to the parents that love thee!"

The tone of tender solemnity in which these words were uttered, the simplicity and piety of the speaker, combining with the remembrance of recent feelings and half-subdued agitation, rendered their impression indelible, and gave to each of these youthful bosoms a sense of holy calmness, and a consciousness of having received a kind of patriarchal benediction, which pardoned the past and gave hope for the future. As these more high-wrought feelings subsided, they became enabled to talk with the old lady on the arrangements of the day, and enter, with the hilarity natural to their age, into its enjoyments.

At the appointed hour of dinner, which was a very early one, the mother and grandmother of Edward drove to the door, just as Mrs. Parry and her little girls (who had been there a few minutes) were wishing for them. The boys, who had been home to dress, were soon after announced; and as Charles, now all life and spirits, tied his smart Highland pouch, and an ancient highland dirk presented with it, round his waist, he afforded a subject for admiration, laughter, and comment, until the dinner was on the table.

Mrs. Launceston sat at the head of the table, and Mrs. Parry close by her, that she might save her from all trouble, and Charles, at his godmother's request, sat opposite her.

"I will sit next to Charles," said Edward, jestingly, "and perform Mrs. Parry's part in assisting him."

"I desire you will not; there is abundance of room at the table, and I intend to enact papa in great style."

"There is a carriage at the door," exclaimed Mrs. Parry. "How very awkward this is! But perhaps it is a *friend*."

"'Tis our own carriage," cried Charles, exultingly; "'tis my own dear, *dear* papa."

In a moment Mr. Parry was in the midst of a circle to whose perfect happiness his presence alone had been wanting, and was locked in the arms of his beloved wife, and entwined with the embraces of his lovely girls and his enraptured boy.

"So you would not tell us you were coming, lest you should disappoint us, my dear?" said Mrs. Parry.

"That was my sole motive for silence," returned the husband; "but I had set my heart on being with you on Charles's birthday, and am glad I was driven so late, as it has enabled me to accommodate a stranger for the two last stages, whom I met with by chance, and who proved to be my dearest friend."

"And is he sitting in the carriage all this time?—Fly, Charles, and bring the gentleman in," said Mrs. Parry.

"Stop a moment, my dear; your mother herself must go with you. I am sure, my love, you will pardon me for exacting from you, on this occasion, an act of unquestioning obedience: go to our friend, and converse with him a few minutes.—And now, my dear ladies, I hope you will each take a glass of wine with a starving traveller, before my dear Alicia returns with this stranger; for, to tell you the truth, I fear his presence may somewhat affect you, as, like one very dear to you, he is a seaman, has had a bad wound, and is a little pale, but otherwise in good health, and flushed with honours, being promoted to be an admiral on Tuesday."

"Oh! we shall rejoice to see him," cried Mrs. Eyre—"we shall hail him as the herald of our own dear wanderer."

"But I wish you, my dear madam, to give that honourable office to me, who am in truth the herald of Admiral Eyre."

A burst of astonishment, a cry of joy, that reached even the carriage, sprung from every tongue; and the welcome guest, aware that the secret had transpired, instantly alighted from the carriage, (into which Mrs. Parry had entered); but, ere he could reach the house, his wife, mother and son, had surrounded him—gazed on him in transport; and that silence, in which the excess of joy assumes the appearance of sorrow, succeeded to the loud cry of rapture which had so lately transpired.

Almost overcome by his feelings, the admiral, with steps that trembled as they had never done in the hour of the hottest battle, approached the usual seat of Mrs. Launceston, under the trellis before her door. With one arm he supported his wife, who, almost fainting, sunk upon his shoulder; with the other he drew his mother tenderly towards his bosom, and Edward, kneeling at his feet, with his arms fondly clasped around him, seemed to claim his share of love. At the sight of his boy, grown beyond his expectations, and bearing in his handsome, intelligent countenance, his own features mingled with those of his ever fondly-loved wife, the heart of the father was touched beyond the powers of resistance, and for a short time the brave man wept like an infant.

As these overpowering but delightful emotions subsided, the happy family became enabled to receive the sincere congratulations of their friends, among which those of the oldest person were the more immediately attended to; and at her earnest entreaty, after a short time, all the party were once more assembled round her hospitable table, and the two travellers gladly partook the refreshment which a long ride had rendered particularly desirable.

When the cloth was removed and the servants withdrawn, Mrs. Parry endeavoured to promote conversation, which

languished on the side of her visitors, not from the want of subjects, but the abundance and interest of the many things to hear and to relate, which pressed on the minds of each, and particularly seemed to affect the spirits of the stranger, although he struggled to overcome the emotion, and was particularly attentive to old Mrs. Launceston, who, pleased with his friendly manners, and rejoicing in the happiness of all around her, could not forbear to say—"I am just rejoiced to my varry heart, to find, sir, that goovernment has shewn a proper sense of yere services. There was a time when I thought them varry long about it, I confess."

"Ay, madam, the first step is often the most difficult; it *was* a long time before I got upon the list of preferment, but, since then, I have had nothing to complain of. I was then young, and my fortune, of course, was either assisted or retarded by the officers above me, which must ever be the case; the most liberal and enlightened government may overlook a faithful servant, if his own friends and companions stand in his way."

"But, my dear son," observed Mrs. Eyre, "surely they were all fond of you from the time you were a midshipman?"

"Not *all*, my dear mother; for I have since learned that lieutenant Badger prejudiced our worthy captain so far, that he always preferred any person of the same standing to me; and this trifling circumstance, in all probability, threw me back some years. But never mind—it is all over now; we must forget and forgive."

"God forbid that we should not, especially on such a happy day as this! But yet, I must own, I am desirous of knowing why the lieutenant was so angry with you that he should thus injure you? How did you offend him?"

"Pardon me, dear mother; you mistake the case wholly. I never gave him cause for anger, nor did he seriously intend to injure me; but you may recollect that, in the first engagement I was in, a ball struck my knee, which occasioned me to walk lame for above two years, during which time he (for fun, I suppose,) always spoke of me by the name of 'Hopping Neddy;' then I was a Yorkshireman, you know, and he therefore termed me 'a Yorkshire bite;' then my name, in its pronunciation, afforded the ready means for a pun; so that, being either associated with ludicrous ideas, as a person to be laughed at, or with those of an infirmity, which might produce the supposition that I was unequal to my duty, or with the more disgusting thought that I was inherently, as 'a Yorkshire bite,' cunning and malevolent, the captain always overlooked me, without any bad intention on his part, and probably with scarcely anything meriting that term on the part of him who, in this foolish manner, rendered him unjust to me."

During this recital, Edward and Charles exchanged many intelligent looks with each other, and their cheeks were suffused with burning blushes, which each of their fathers naturally imputed to the unworthy treatment which the admiral had received; but Mrs. Parry well knew that they were applying the story of his wrongs in a manner which touched not only their affections towards him, but their consciences. With this subject on their minds, the wife and mother became fluent in conversation, and the gentlemen were led to speak on the many well-fought naval battles which the admiral had shared.

When Edward perceived that all were engaged, he went round to Mrs. Parry's chair, and leaning over her shoulder, said in a low voice—"Dear Mrs. Parry, how much happier am I to-day than I could have been yesterday, under the same circumstances! I had then such a weight upon my spirits, that even the presence of my father would have failed to remove it."

"I hope it would, my dear Edward; for although it is a painful thing to feel self-reproach, it is a far worse thing to be so habituated to error that we have ceased to feel it. But I am certain that is neither the case with you nor poor Charles."

"Oh no! we have both been suffering, *justly* suffering, all that my father's story awakened so naturally in our minds; it has confirmed every word you said on the subject last night."

"Then, my dear boy, we will forget all that is past, except the excellent lesson it inculcates, which is alike that of experience, good sense, and Christianity—to think before we speak."

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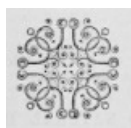
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Transcriber's Notes

Obvious punctuation and spelling errors have been corrected.

Betsey and Betsy are both used interchangeably - no changes have been made

Image at front of book references Page 138 - reference should be to page 135, illustration pointer changed.

page 20 your are not ==> you are not

[The end of *Alicia and Her Aunt: Think before you Speak* by Barbara Hofland]