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THE
LITTLE QUAKER;
OR, THE
TRIUMPH OF VIRTUE.
A TALE

FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF YOUTH.

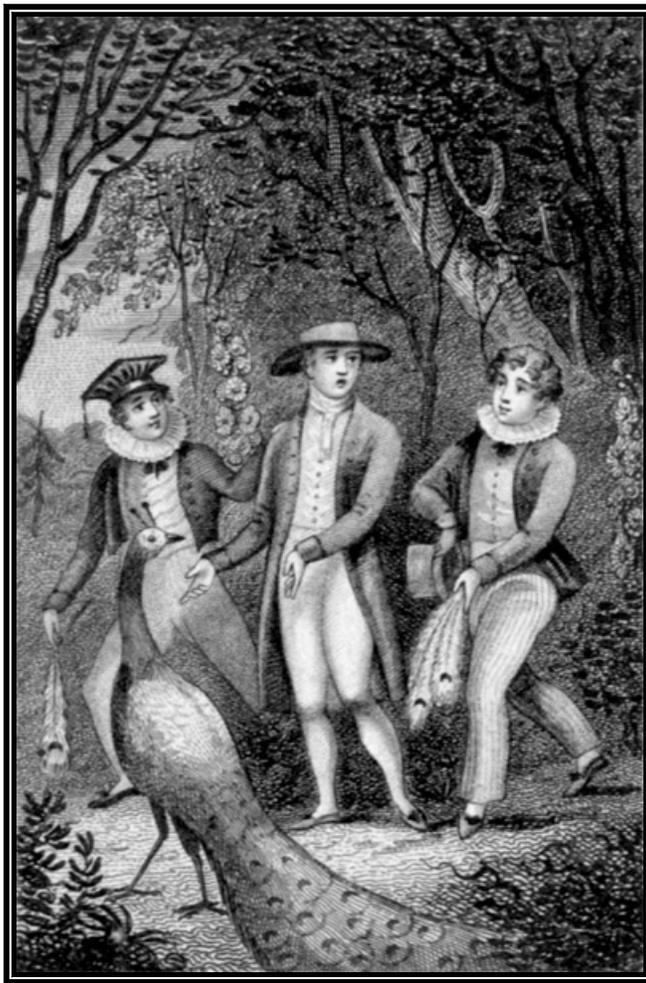
Teach me to feel another's woe,
To hide the faults I see;
That mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me.

POPE.

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FRONTISPIECE.



*The little Quaker remonstrating with George
& William Hope for their cruelty. p. 11.*

THE LITTLE QUAKER.

GEORGE and WILLIAM HOPE were the only children of a gentleman of fortune, who lived in a fine house at the entrance of a pretty village in Berkshire.

It was this worthy gentleman's misfortune to be the father of two very perverse and disobedient sons; who, instead of trying to please him by dutiful and obliging conduct, grieved him continually by their unworthy behaviour, and then were so wicked as to laugh at the lessons of morality their parent set before them.

When they returned from school to spend the holydays, they neglected their studies to roam about the streets with low company; from whom they learned profane language, vulgar amusements, and cruelty to animals; but such conduct, as may well be supposed, did not conduce to their happiness. They had no friends among the good and virtuous in their own rank in life; and were even despised and condemned by the bad companions, who, in the first instance, had encouraged their depravity.

Their idle pursuits gave Mr. Hope great pain, who tried, by gentle remonstrances, to make them ashamed of their evil propensities; but, finding that kindness had no effect in their ungenerous dispositions, he determined for the future to punish them severely, whenever they disobeyed his commands.

Mr. Hope had a very near neighbour, whose meadow and pleasure-garden were only separated from his by a high row of paling. Mrs. Shirley, for so this lady was called, was a very excellent and benevolent woman, and a member of that respectable society of friends commonly known by the name of Quakers.

Mrs. Shirley was a widow; and, having lost her own family, she brought up her two grandchildren, a youth of fourteen years of age, and a pretty little girl, who scarcely reckoned half that number of years.

Josiah Shirley was at once his kind Grandmamma's pride and comfort; and, from his amiable and obliging conduct, was justly esteemed and beloved by the whole village; and his name was never mentioned without the praise his modest and gentlemanlike behaviour deserved.

Mr. Hope had often contrasted, with feelings of regret, this sweet boy's conduct with that of his own sons; and, hoping that his gentle temper and moral pursuits might have some effect on the perverted minds of George and William, he invited him pressingly to his house, and bestowed on the young Quaker many marks of his esteem and favour.

The approbation of the father only drew upon Josiah the dislike and envy of his sons. Among other follies, they ridiculed him for being a Quaker.

The cut of his clothes, the shape of his hat, his modest and retiring manners, were all subjects of mirth to these unthinking boys, who tried by the most provoking language to rouse him into retaliation: but Josiah was a *maker of peace*, not a *breaker* of it; and, though he could not help keenly feeling their unkindness, his good Grandmamma had early taught him this excellent lesson, "To return good for evil;" and Josiah not only treated their insults with the silent contempt they deserved, but often earnestly entreated them to renounce their foolish ways, and he would endeavour to assist them in the arduous task of reformation.

His advice was received with such rudeness, that the benevolent boy, disgusted at length with their unprovoked malice, took his leave, declining all acquaintance with the young gentlemen for the future.

"I wonder, young men, you do not blush at your disgraceful behaviour," exclaimed Mr. Hope, viewing his sons with unfeigned displeasure, the morning Josiah took his leave. "Your folly has deprived you of the friendship of an excellent and upright youth, whose good counsels might have benefitted you through life."

"I hate Joe Shirley, Papa," replied George, with the greatest assurance; "and never will attend to a word he says; a meddling impertinent fellow! What business can he have to trouble his head with us?"

"Go! go! unworthy as you are to be called my sons," said Mr. Hope; "I am glad your poor Mamma did not live to witness your depravity;—and you, George, whom she loved so well, that she expired with you in her arms!—it would

have broken her heart to have seen you now. Go, cruel and unfeeling as you are, I no longer wonder at the good Josiah renouncing your acquaintance; but the time may come, when you will bitterly lament not taking his advice." So saying, Mr. Hope set them their accustomed tasks, and left the room.

His father's reproofs, instead of softening the heart of George, only enraged his haughty spirit more violently against the unoffending Josiah; and he was determined to annoy him every opportunity which chance should afford him: nor was it long before he was enabled to put his designs into execution.

One day, after Mr. Hope had dismissed his sons from their morning studies, William inquired of his brother, where they should play.

"Not in the garden, William," replied George; "I have not forgotten the stripes I received yesterday for treading down the flowers. I hate flowers! We cannot steal a handful of green gooseberries without spoiling the flowers."

"But we need not confine ourselves to the garden, George. We can play at football on the lawn; or shoot arrows at a mark, in the court-yard."

"I am tired of these games," said George. "Let us climb over the pales into the Quaker's meadow, and chase the geese."

"With all my heart," replied William; "but if Mrs. Shirley should see us, and tell Papa, you know how our diversion would end."

"Why surely, Will, you are not such a coward, as to be afraid of the old woman. If she catches us, she will only talk to us about cruelty and such stuff, in her methodistical way. Come, let us play in their meadow, if it is only to spite that sly-faced hypocrite, Josiah."

"It will certainly be good sport," replied William, "to see the geese waddle and scream, flapping their wide wings, which look exactly like young broadbrim's hat."

George laughed heartily at this sally. "Yes! yes! William, Master Graveairs dare not fight, if he can *scold*; so make no more scruples, but follow your leader:" and, with the greatest dexterity, climbing over the pales, these wicked boys safely descended into Mrs. Shirley's meadow.

When there, they raced the pony, and stoned the geese, till they flew screaming into a large pond in the middle of the field, in what they called a very diverting manner.

Josiah was busy working in the garden (in the cultivation of which he spent most of his leisure hours), when the general outcry from the poultry reached his ears; and, too well acquainted with the cause of their disquiet, he threw down his spade, and ran to the scene of action; and arrived just time enough to save the plumage of a hapless peacock from being entirely demolished in their cruel hands.

"George and William Hope," said Josiah, mildly addressing himself to the intruders, "desist from such unmanly sport, and leave these poor creatures in the quiet possession of the field."

This speech was received with loud peals of laughter by the young gentlemen; and George, with mock gravity, replied

"Verily, friend, you had better leave off preaching, and join our sport."

"I never could derive any pleasure from cruelty," returned Josiah. "Humanity forbids me to join in diversions like these: I would I could persuade George Hope to renounce such practices."

"So you will not play with us," said George: "and you have the impudence to insult us, with what you term your *good advice*. Pray, Mr. Consequence, do you remember to whom you are speaking?"

"Perfectly well," replied Josiah: "I fear I am wasting my words on the sons of a very good man; I wish, for *his sake*, they were more like their father."

Enraged at this speech, George darted forward, and struck Josiah such a violent blow on the head, that it knocked him

down; and the spiteful boy was in the act of repeating it, when he was suddenly caught from behind, and thrown with fury to the earth.

A large Newfoundland dog, belonging to Shirley, had followed his master to the field; and, seeing him ill-treated, had thus revenged the insult, with tenfold interest; and, keeping his captive fast down to the ground, continued to growl over him in a frightful manner.

William Hope, who wanted much of the audacity of George, fled terrified towards his own home: when the geese, willing to be revenged in their turn, followed, hissing and screaming at his heels, beating him with their broad beaks and wings; whilst the prostrate George called out in a tone of agony:—

“Josiah, my good fellow, call off your dog, or he will certainly kill me!”

“I find other bodies are as little proof against pain as the poor animals they just now so wantonly tormented,” said Josiah, as he raised the crest-fallen George from the ground.

“Remember, George, this lesson for the future; and, when inflicting pain on these helpless creatures, who are too weak to resist our power, be assured that God hears their cries, and will avenge their sufferings on all those who inhumanly delight in their agony.”

He paused, expecting George to make some answer; but the sullen boy hung down his head in obstinate silence; whilst Josiah, still hoping to convince him of the error of his ways, continued:—

“George, I once more entreat thee to take my advice: forsake these idle pursuits, which must end in shame and misery; whilst every effort made towards self-improvement will be crowned with the blessings and esteem of a worthy parent, and the approval of thine own conscience.

“I here freely forgive the injury I just now received, and will be thy friend if thou wilt firmly resolve to renounce such evil courses.”

The noble boy held out his hand as he finished speaking; but George, unable to conquer his false feeling of pride, rudely dashed back the proffered gift, and slowly and sullenly returned to his father’s mansion.

When Mrs. Shirley was informed, by her grandson, of what had passed in the meadow, she wrote a letter to Mr. Hope, couched in the mildest terms, merely requesting him to keep his sons from trespassing in her field for the future, as they insulted her grandson, and ill-used her property.

Mr. Hope was so much displeased at this fresh outrage, that, ordering the culprits into his presence, he not only told them sternly of their fault, but desired his butler to give them the most severe chastisement they had ever received before; the recollection of which, he hoped, would induce them to keep at home for the future.

Now George laid their present correction entirely on Josiah Shirley; and, as the injurer is always the most implacable, because generally in the wrong, he determined to requite the stripes he had received on the unoffending young Quaker.

Full of these unworthy resolutions, the moment he was released from confinement, he went into the stables to consult with a young man, whom his father employed as an under groom; and of whom his thoughtless sons had made a confidant and companion.

As he entered the stables, he was thus accosted by Daniel Simpson:—

“So, Master George, I hear you have been flogged. Nat Smith told me the Squire was in a terrible passion, and ordered him not to spare the whip: how came it all about?”

“Would you believe it, Dan, that spiteful young Quaker informed my father of our frolic,” said George, reddening with passion.

“Well, do not look so crest-fallen; I think it will be very strange if we cannot match the tell-tale, Master George.”

“Simpson, if you will but lend me your assistance to chastise him as he deserves,” said George, “I will give you that new half-sovereign Papa presented me last week.”

“Show me the money first,” returned Dan, “and then I will tell you what is to be done in the case.”

“Well, there it is,” said George, putting the money into Simpson’s hand. “If you can find out a sure method to punish young Shirley, and revenge my present disgrace, you shall have no reason to call me a bad paymaster.”

He looked anxiously up in the groom’s sordid countenance, as he finished speaking; but the stable-helper remained provokingly silent, twirling his hat in his hand, till George, losing all patience, pulled him hastily by the sleeve.

“Had I been as long in giving you my money, as you are in bestowing your advice, I should have been something in pocket.”

“Nay, Master George, if you give yourself any airs,” replied Dan, with a sneer, “I will keep the cash, and tell your Papa of your frolics; and I suppose you would not vastly relish that.”

The burning blush of shame, for a few moments, suffused the countenance of the misguided youth; he bit his lips, and remained for some time silent, till, fearing that Simpson would realize his threat, he used the most abject submission, to hinder him from betraying his wicked schemes to his father; nor would the artful servant pacify his apprehensions, till he had succeeded in frightening him out of every sixpence of pocket-money he was worth.

“Well, Master George,” said the groom, “I have hit upon a notable piece of mischief; but I cannot put it into execution without your assistance.”

“You shall certainly have that, Simpson; but tell me first what your plan is?”

“Young Prim is very fond of his garden,” replied the groom; “and lays out all his money in fine shrubs to ornament his favourite spot of ground. The other day, as I was passing the pales, I stopped to watch him at work; the young prig thought, forsooth, that I was admiring his garden, and actually gathered me a fine nosegay, and showed me all his American plants.”

This amiable anecdote of the young Quaker was received by George with peals of insulting laughter; whilst his worthless companion continued—

“Now, Master George, it would go nearer to his heart, and vex him more than any mischief we could devise, to steal out, after the family are in bed, and break all his fine trees.”

George was at first transported at the idea of so full a revenge; then pausing, whilst a secret dread as to the danger of the enterprise stole over his mind, in a hurried voice he said—

“But, Simpson! it will be dark.”

“So much the better,” replied the wicked groom. “Are you afraid any thing will eat you? Besides, it will be moonlight after twelve o’clock.”

“Twelve o’clock!” repeated George, turning pale with apprehension: “I dare not leave the house after midnight!”

“Then let it alone,” replied Dan. “But, Simpson,” said George, in a fawning tone, “cannot you go without me?”

“Master George, if you take me for a fool,” replied Dan, “you are mistaken: it is you want to be revenged on young Shirley, not I: the poor lad never offended me.”

“Then give me back my money,” said George.

“Indeed but I shall not,” replied Dan, chinking it as he spoke. “But if you are so cowardly as to be afraid of a little frolic, I wish you may be insulted every day of your life.”

“Say no more, Simpson; I will go,” said George; “but if we should be detected!—I have heard Papa say, that breaking young trees was transportation.”

“Ay, if they catch us,” returned the worthless groom. “Leave me alone for taking care of my neck: why, George, if you tremble at a trifle like *this*, you will never make a fine gentleman.”

This last speech overcame young Hope's remaining scruples; the idea of not being thought a fine fellow extinguished the remaining spark of virtue in his bosom: and with affected gaiety he said—

“Simpson, you are a clever fellow, but how shall we be able to steal unobserved out of the house?”

“Oh! that is the easiest part of the business,” said Dan, “particularly as you have an apartment to yourself. After the family are in bed, I will raise a ladder against your window; and, when I throw a pebble against the sash, you must dress yourself, and come down directly. I will provide tools for the business.”

Here their conference was broken off owing to William Hope, who came to call his brother to dinner, and the wicked servant and his weak young master parted.

It was not that Simpson was afraid of doing this cruel piece of mischief by himself, that he insisted on George Hope's accompanying him, but he knew it would place the unfortunate youth so completely in his power, that he could from that moment fearlessly defraud him of his pocket-money, by basely threatening to inform Mr. Hope of his son's depravity; and he was too good a judge of human nature to fear that such a boy as George would ever have resolution to own his transgression.

How carefully ought young people to guard against the gratification of evil passions; for, however artfully a plan may be conceived, however secretly carried into execution, sooner or later, detection always follows crime.

It is always dangerous to listen to the advice of those whose education and pursuits are greatly beneath us; or to make confidants and companions of servants. Their offers of service to a young man, against the wishes of his parent, cannot be sincere; if they will deceive their *master*, think not they will spare his *son*; but, taking advantage of his weakness, they will not only render him a tool to their own vices, but too often prove his final ruin.

By nature, George Hope possessed good abilities; and he had arrived at that age when he could scarcely be called a child; and he was therefore perfectly conscious of the sin he was going to commit. All his faults, more or less, might be traced up to his constant association with this artful Simpson, who, bad himself, took a pleasure in perverting the minds of the young and inexperienced; falsely considering that their profligacy would be an excuse for his own.

But Simpson had his own malicious disposition to gratify, in this plan against the peace of young Shirley; and he had formed a scheme so artful and atrocious, that he flattered himself it would be sure of success, and turn all suspicion from the real authors of it.

Just across Mrs. Shirley's meadow stood a small cottage, which was occupied by a poor Irishman, who gained an honest livelihood by working as a jobbing gardener; and Patrick Lary was so well respected, that he was employed by all the gentlemen in that neighbourhood, and by Mr. Hope, among the rest.

Lary, though a good-natured, hard-working fellow, had one great vice, which was being too fond of strong drink; and often, when the labour of the day was over, Paddy would go to the village, and set in the public houses; and, when betrayed in liquor, he would swear, and play a thousand mad pranks on those around, and often had money to pay for the windows he broke coming home; and, though he was very sorry the next day, when sober, for the mischief he had done the preceding evening, he had not resolution enough to avoid the cause.

Once Lary had carelessly levelled his drollery against Simpson, which so roused the malevolent disposition of the groom, that he had from that hour viewed Lary in the light of a bitter enemy, and vowed, the first opportunity that offered, to repay with interest the Irishman's foolish joke.

He knew that Lary would be absent that night at a large fair which was held at a considerable town, a few miles off; and the poor Irishman had not fortitude to resist a temptation that beset him in the shape of a fair.

Simpson remembered that Lary kept his gardening tools in a small outhouse, which he used for a workshop, and that all his implements were fully marked with his name.

The place was easy of access, and Simpson soon procured from thence two small hatchets, such as gardeners use in lopping small branches, that resist the strength of a knife; and, after Mr. Hope's family were in bed, he repaired to the place appointed, and, raising the ladder with as little noise as possible, gave the promised signal.

It was three times repeated before George started from sleep, and for a few minutes he remained unconscious of the meaning of so unusual a sound.

Gradually, with awakening sense, recollection returned; and, springing from his bed, George dressed himself, with a trembling hand, whilst, for the first time, a sense of his degrading situation stole over his mind; and his heart throbbed with feelings which till this moment had been strangers in his bosom.

The moon shone brightly down upon the gardens beneath; and the deep silence and serene beauty of the night filled his mind with new and unknown fears.

The mischievous pranks he had hitherto played had been more the result of violent and uncontrolled spirits,—the hasty flashings of an impetuous temper, than any actual wish to commit crime: they had been performed in the day, in the sight of the injured; but he was now going to steal out like a thief in the night, to commit a vile and premeditated act of malice.

The better feelings of his heart strongly urged him to recede; but the idea of being laughed at by his wicked companion overcame the scruples of conscience, when he heard his rough voice grumble beneath the window.

“Is that you, Master George? Why do you not make more haste. It will be morning before you are ready.”

George cautiously unclosed the casement; but, as he descended the ladder, his foot trembled so violently, that once or twice he had nearly fallen to the ground, to the great diversion of Simpson, who laughed at his visible agitation. Then withdrawing the ladder, for fear of detection, he presented George with one of the above-mentioned tools, and proceeded without further delay to the silent and peaceful dwelling of Mrs. Shirley.

As they walked over the meadow, George had leisure to reflect on what he was going to do; and he felt so heartily ashamed of himself, that he was half tempted to return: and happy had it been for him, had he listened to the voice that spoke within him.

Simpson marked his irresolution, and, being determined to make sure of his victim, tauntingly said—

“I did not think, Master George, you had been such a *coward*, after all the brag you made of your valour at school; but I suppose you and the Quaker have shaken hands, since he so kindly procured you that smart flogging. If I was you, I would wait on him, and humbly thank him for his generosity.”

This sarcasm did not fail in the desired effect. George felt all his animosity rise in his heart against Josiah; and, quickening his pace, they were soon within the quiet bounds of the Quaker’s garden.

They had scarcely begun their cruel devastation, before the Newfoundland dog set out barking in a furious manner.

“Let us return, Simpson,” whispered George; his cheeks blanching with terror as he remembered his rencounter with Rollo, on the preceding morning. “I forgot the dog; he is roused, and we shall certainly be caught.”



George and the Groom destroying the little Quaker's garden at midnight. p. 29.

“Not we!” calmly replied the groom. “Let him bark,—he cannot hurt us, being chained in an outer yard, that comes against the road; and, as 'tis fair-night, they will only think he is barking at passengers, who may be returning in liquor, at this late hour.”

This was in fact the case; and the inmates of the house paid little regard to the noise Rollo made, though he continued to shake his chain, and growl in a frightful manner.

The garden being small, they soon destroyed most of the shrubs and flowers it contained; till, satiated with mischief, they were about to return; when, passing a root-house covered with ivy and creeping plants, curiosity led them to examine what it contained; and their malice was gratified, in discovering some beautiful foreign rabbits, confined in strong hutches. These they set at liberty, laughing heartily at the idea of what a hunt the young Quaker would have for them in the morning.

As they left the garden, Simpson purposely dropped the hatchet, with Lary's name on it, near the gate which led to the meadow, where it would be most likely to be discovered; and, safely depositing the other in the place he took it from, they returned home. George re-ascended the ladder, and retired undiscovered to bed; and soon falling asleep, the events of the night appeared more like a troubled dream than reality.

The first rays of the sun had scarcely gilded the low white railing which separated the field from the Quaker's garden before Josiah had risen from his bed, and returned thanks to God, who had thus graciously permitted him to behold, in health and strength, another day; and, with a light heart and clear conscience, he bounded down stairs, to breathe the fresh air, and to hail the first beauties of a fine morning in June.

This is indeed a pleasure unknown to those indolent beings who let the sun gain his meridian splendour before they

reluctantly leave their slothful beds.

They see him, it is true, in the height of his power; but, at his uprising, the air is filled with harmonious sounds, the insect tribes are on the wing, and unite their feeble voice in the universal notes of praise.

With the sun, the wild tribes of nature awake to adore the goodness of their Creator; whilst the children of men, on whom he has conferred the greatest marks of his divine favour,—who, in intellectual endowments, so far surpass the animals round them, are often the last of all his creatures to leave a state of indolent ease, to return him thanks for the blessings he has bestowed on them.

Those who have ever seen, on a fine spring morning, the sparkling of the dews upon the grass, who have smelt the delicious perfume of re-opening flowers, who have heard the first joyous song of birds from among the verdant boughs, will be more willing to exclaim with fervour and devotion—

“Awake, my soul! and with the sun
Thy daily stage of duty run;
Shake off dull sloth, and early rise,
To pay thy morning sacrifice!”

Thus thought our little hero, as, opening the garden-door, he felt the balmy breeze of a cloudless morning pass over his cheek, which glowed with health and innocence; as, raising his eyes to the glorious heavens, his spirit arose in devout aspirations to the divine author of his being.

How shall I describe the feelings of regret which filled his bosom, when he discovered the scene of ruin before him.

He rubbed his eyes, to assure himself that it was not a dream; that he was actually awake, and in the open air.

The work of his hands for years past was utterly destroyed; and, mild and forbearing as Josiah was, this unexpected misfortune overcame his philosophy; and he struggled in vain to suppress the tears which filled his soft blue eyes, and flowed down his rosy dimpled cheeks.

“What ails thee, dear Josiah?” said a sweet little girl, who had followed him out of the house. “Will not Josiah tell Cousin Rachel the cause of his grief?”

“Ah, Rachel!” he replied, wiping away his tears with the corner of her little apron, “I am indeed ashamed of my weakness; but see, some evil-disposed person has been here in the night, and destroyed all my nice flowers.”

Now, when Rachel beheld the devastation before her, and that even her own little garden in the corner had not escaped from the general wreck, she mingled her tears with Josiah’s.

Josiah comforted his cousin, and at length succeeded in mastering his own feelings.

“I know to repine is useless,” he said; “time and industry will repair my loss; and, though I feel it now severely, it may in the end be for the best: for I own I was too proud and too fond of my garden; and often dedicated hours to that, which I might have employed more profitably in study.”

As he ceased speaking, Dan Simpson passed; and, putting his head over the pales, said in a careless manner—

“A fine morning for your work, Master Shirley! You are determined the sun shall never call you lay-a-bed.”

“My work, Daniel, is at an end,” replied Josiah: “Step into the garden, and see what somebody has done in the night for me.”

With well-affected astonishment, Simpson surveyed the work of his own hands; then exclaimed, with an air of commiseration—

“Who can have made it their business to come here, only to commit so wicked a piece of mischief. I should not at all wonder if it was one of Pat Lary’s mad frolics; I hear he was intoxicated at the fair last night, and broke several windows in his way home.”

“That may be,” returned Josiah; “but, as I never offended Patrick Lary in my life, it would be very cruel to suspect him without a cause.”

“True, Master Shirley; but you are too fond of gardening yourself, and you have heard the old proverb, I suppose, that ‘two of a trade seldom agree.’ Besides, he is such a swearing, drinking fellow.”

“Daniel Simpson,” returned Josiah, scarcely able to conceal the contempt he felt towards him, “I have heard thee swear, and, if I am not greatly mistaken, it is not long since I saw thee disguised in liquor. Is it not, therefore, as easy for me to suspect *thee*?”

Simpson was confounded at this speech, and, had Josiah looked up in his face, he certainly would have detected the real author of the mischief, by the crimson glow which flushed the swarthy countenance of the wicked groom; who, regaining his accustomed assurance, said, in a more confidential tone—

“*I never injured you*, Master Shirley; but, if you will give me a shilling or two to pay me for my trouble, I warrant you I would soon bring the culprit to justice, if he is to be found within a few miles of the place.”

The face of Josiah Shirley glowed with indignation, as, turning his eyes on the sordid wretch, he sternly replied—

“Daniel Simpson, I will spare thee so great a crime. That heart must be hard indeed, that, for the sake of a few paltry pieces of silver, would yield up an erring fellow-creature. Go! I neither want such advice or assistance.”

As Josiah finished speaking, his foot struck against something in the path, and, on stooping to pick it up, it proved to be the poor Irishman’s hatchet.

The young Quaker, with his natural humanity, strove to hide this convincing proof of Lary’s guilt from the troublesome groom; but he saw with grief, by the look of triumph which passed over the other’s face, that he had made the same discovery, as the name of Lary was too plainly marked on the handle to need any close inspection.

“There!” cried Simpson, “I knew it was Lary: who besides him would think of doing such a rascally job as this?”

“I am sure, if Lary had not been disguised in liquor,” said Josiah, “he never would have committed so base an action. Daniel Simpson, at times we are all prone to do ill; and as for the few shillings thou just now proposed, to give up the culprit, since my loss cannot affect thee, there is a crown to keep the affair a secret; as the disgrace of this thoughtless man might deprive his innocent wife and child of bread.”

“You are a strange young gentleman, Master Shirley,” replied Dan; “but your secret shall remain safe for me, though, if I was in your place, I think I should act differently:” and, stifling a laugh, he tossed the money into his pocket.

He yet held the gate in his hand, when little Rachel, quite out of breath, came running towards them.

“Oh, Josiah! my rabbits! my nice white rabbits; they are lost, they are all gone!” said she, weeping bitterly. “Come, dry your tears, my little cousin,” said Josiah, kindly taking her hand, and striving to comfort her; “they cannot be far off, for I am sure they were all safe last night.”

“Little Miss, I think I know where your rabbits are,” said Dan Simpson.

“Indeed!” exclaimed Josiah; “who could be so mean as to rob this little girl?”

“Only the neighbour who broke your trees,” replied Dan; “for, as I passed by Lary’s cottage, his little boy was playing with some fine tame rabbits. They had none yesterday, unless Pat bought them at the fair; and I dare say he will tell you so.”

Now Josiah could not help feeling convinced that they must be Rachel’s rabbits; and he said—

“Daniel Simpson, I thank thee for this piece of intelligence, and will step across to Lary’s cottage, and learn the truth of these things; so good day for the present.”

Simpson returned to his daily avocations, well pleased at his ingenuity; and, relating his conference with Josiah to George Hope, they both enjoyed a hearty laugh at the idea of having deceived the Quaker.

“He is gone now, Master George,” said Simpson, “to cross-question Lary about the hatchet; but the foolish fellow is still so bewildered with drink, that he will never be able to give a correct account of himself; now I am sure young Shirley already suspects him, and suspicious thoughts travel fast, when they once get into the head: for the love of fun, how I should like to hear their conference.”

It was true that Josiah sought the cottage of Lary, but he was actuated by feelings of the most noble and benevolent kind. He hoped, by reasoning with the Irishman, to point out to him the error of his conduct; and, by showing him the ill effects of intoxication, to persuade him from falling into the like follies for the future: and, full of these laudable intentions, he walked across the meadow, and rapped at Lary’s door.

For some minutes the knock remained unanswered, and, whilst Josiah stood waiting for admittance, he saw, through their garden pales, young Lary playing with a fine white doe, which he instantly recognised to be the property of his cousin Rachel.

This circumstance did not fail to strengthen his suspicions; and, knocking again at the door, it was opened by a very neat young woman, who seemed rather confused at the sight of Josiah; and, holding the door in her hand, she asked him, in a hesitating manner, “What he wanted?”

“To speak to Patrick Lary. Is he at home?” said Josiah, in his usual mild tone.

The woman, who evidently had been weeping bitterly, paused a moment, then replied—

“Yes, Master Shirley, my husband is at home, but really he is not in a fit state to speak to any one; but, if you will excuse the disordered condition of our house, please to walk in: perhaps the sight of you may warn him against giving way to drink for the future; for we well know what a good, kind-hearted young gentleman you are.”

Josiah felt grieved at the poor woman’s panegyric, when he remembered the cause of his visit, and was almost inclined not to proceed in the business; but the hope of persuading Lary to renounce his evil habit of drinking induced him to conquer his reluctance, and he silently followed Mrs. Lary into the cottage.

The first object that met Josiah’s eyes, on entering the room, was the Irishman, seated on a low stool by the fire, with his head bound up with a red handkerchief, and resting on his hands, which bandage served partly to conceal two black eyes he had received at the fair.

His shirt was bloody, and his dress rent in several places, and covered with dirt; and his whole appearance bespoke one suffering from the effects of recent intoxication.

On hearing some one enter, he said, without attempting to raise his head—“Wife! who’s there?”

“It is Master Shirley, Patrick, who wants to speak to you.”

On hearing the name of the visitor, Lary staggered up, and begged Josiah to be seated.

“No, Patrick,” replied Josiah, “as my business is one of a very unpleasant nature, I prefer standing.”

“With all humility, I suppose, Master Shirley,” said Pat, striving to be facetious; “but please yourself, you are a dear, good young gentleman, and must have your own way;” and, unable to keep his legs any longer, Lary sunk down, a dead weight, into his seat.

“But what do you want with Pat Lary, Master Shirley; some job in the garden, I suppose?”

“Nay, Patrick,” returned Josiah, not a little provoked at this speech; “thou wast determined to provide a long job at my expense, when thou left this hatchet in my garden;” and he produced the hatchet, and gave it into the hand of the bewildered Lary.

“This is my hatchet, sure enough, Master Shirley; but I am pretty certain I never left it in your garden.”

“Doubtlessly it was done unintentionally,” returned Josiah. “Those who commit bad actions seldom willingly leave a witness of their guilt.”

The Irishman coloured deeply, and, turning to Josiah, said, with great vehemence—

“I should be sorry to use unbecoming language, Master Shirley; but really I cannot comprehend what you mean.”

Josiah then proceeded to inform him of the whole affair, from beginning to end; and concluded by saying, he supposed Lary was in drink, and therefore unconscious of the mischief he had occasioned.

The poor Irishman seemed lost with surprise at this strange account; and he tried in vain to remember the events of the night; and, after having turned the hatchet round and round, and carefully examined it at all points, he turned to his wife, and said—

“I surely did not take this hatchet with me to the fair; did I, Fanny?”

“I cannot answer for what you did at the fair, Patrick,” said his wife, sorrowfully; “I know I left you at midnight in a very questionable state, with some worthless idle fellows: did you stay at home, and mind your business, you would not get into such disgraceful scrapes as these.”

Pat shrugged up his shoulders, and sighed heavily; then, turning to Josiah, said—

“Your honour, I drank too much last night, and behaved like a madman, as these blows will sufficiently witness, though I cannot remember how I came by them, or what I did last night; but if this is my hatchet, which I see by the mark it is, why I know ’tis no use denying the fact. I am heartily sorry for it, and, if you will forgive me this once, I will devote all my leisure hours in restoring your garden to its original neatness.”

Josiah accepted his submission; and, after a long lecture on the ill effects of drinking, he said:—

“And now, friend Lary, I would thank thee to restore my cousin Rachel’s rabbits, which I suppose thee took by mistake last night.”

“Rabbits!” exclaimed both the inhabitants of the cottage at once. “Master Shirley, we have seen no rabbits.”

“It is useless to deny the fact,” said Josiah; “I saw them just now with my own eyes, in thy son Roderick’s arms.”

“Saving your honour’s presence, then your two little eyes must have seen a great story!” cried Pat, colouring deeply. “I am a true-born Irishman! and no thief, Master Shirley!”

At this moment the door opened, and Roderick entered, with the white doe in his arms.

Lary started up, then sat down again, his face scarlet with agitation. He turned his eyes from one to the other, and looked like a person just awakened out of sleep, who as yet scarcely knew whether the objects that met his eyes were real or imaginary; till, turning to his son, in a voice trembling with passion, he said:—

“Roderick, if you have stolen the gentleman’s rabbits, I will beat you severely!”

“Hold, friend!” cried Josiah, stepping in between the enraged Irishman and his son, “remember thy own offence, and calm this unreasonable passion:” then turning to the boy, he said,—“Roderick, how came thee by that rabbit?”

The boy boldly replied, “I found this, and some more with it (nice white dears), feeding in the meadow, early this morning. Daddy says every thing we find we may have, and I found these rabbits.”

“My little fellow,” said Josiah, as he took the animal out of his arms, “never appropriate property that does not belong to thee, without first diligently inquiring to whom it may appertain; for, though certainly it is not so bad as stealing, it falls little short of the same crime.”

Then earnestly entreating Lary to abstain from drink and bad company, he took his leave, firmly persuaded in his own mind, that the Irishman was the author of the mischief.

How often, following our own suspicions, do we condemn, on circumstantial evidence, persons who may be perfectly guiltless of the crimes laid to their charge. Yet, though the gardener and his son were innocent of the faults they were accused of, had Lary staid at home, instead of joining in a scene of riot and folly, he would not have returned in a state which rendered him incapable of saying where he had been, or what he had done, on the preceding evening.

After this circumstance, nothing happened to disturb the young Quaker’s peace; the Hopes returned to Eaton school;

and, till after the Christmas holidays commenced, Josiah and his little cousin enjoyed uninterrupted tranquillity.

The new year was ushered in by a heavy fall of snow, which was succeeded by such severe frosts, that the young gentlemen, unable to keep themselves warm within doors, had recourse to the healthy diversion of skating; and a fine piece of water, opposite Mrs. Shirley's dwelling, was chosen for that purpose, where all the young people in the village assembled to try their skill at this active game, and the young Hopes came with the rest.

Josiah was quite a proficient at this sport, and took great pleasure in practising with a young gentleman, a friend of his, who was the only son of their good Vicar, Mr. West, who entertained the highest opinion of Josiah's moral character; and, though differing so widely in their religious principles, Shirley was always a welcome and favourite visitor at the parsonage.

When the Hopes made their appearance on the ice, knowing their quarrelsome disposition, Josiah would have returned home, but Henry West prevented him, by saying—

“Never give way to their airs, my dear Josiah; I know they are cowardly fellows (as the bad generally are), and will never dare to insult you, surrounded by your friends.”

Henry was perfectly right in his conjectures; for the Hopes, seeing Josiah so well supported, confined their malice to a few contemptuous sneers.

George was an admirable skater; and for some time his skill and dexterity, and the ease with which he performed the most difficult movements on the ice, added to the advantages of a tall and graceful figure, drew forth the admiration, and in some instances the envy, of his young compeers. Josiah, with his natural goodness of heart, paused to extol the fine execution of his ungenerous persecutor; when George, venturing too near a part of the pond which had been broken for the cattle, and slightly frozen over again, the young Quaker mildly warned him of his danger.

“I suppose, Mr. Shirley, I have the use of my sight, and know how to skate as well as you; therefore, I beg you will keep such impertinent advice to yourself,” was the ungracious reply of the insolent boy; and immediately, out of bravado, he directed his course towards the doubtful spot.

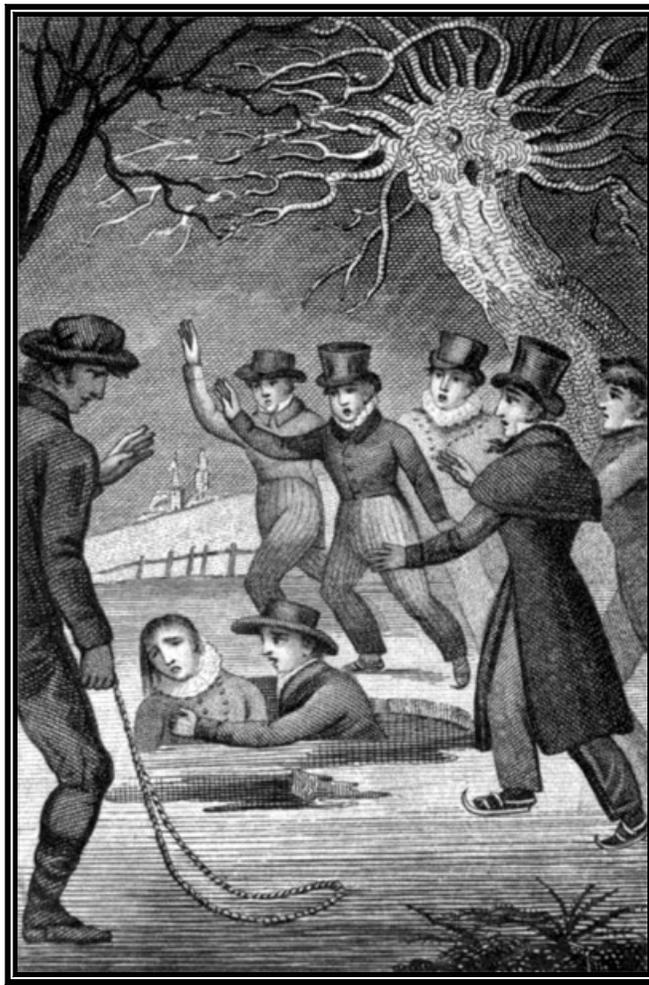
The next moment a piercing scream informed the terrified party that the daring boy had too surely tempted his own fate. All eyes were instantly turned to the spot where George Hope had stood. One hand alone was seen above the water, which continued to grasp one of the immense masses of floating ice with convulsive agony; and, being covered with a thick worsted mitten, for some minutes retained its desperate hold.

Whilst the young people ran shrieking away, and calling for help in all directions, Josiah, who was an excellent swimmer, never paused to consider the danger, but plunged boldly into the water, and, with the timely assistance of Lary, who came with a rope to his aid, he succeeded in bringing the senseless boy in safety to the land.

Dan Simpson happened to be passing at the very moment George fell into the pond; and, on Henry West imploring him to come and rescue his unfortunate young master from a watery grave, he had the brutality to reply:—

“No! no! Master West, I am not such a fool as to risk my life for any one, much less for George Hope; but here comes Lary with a rope, who will do the job much better than I.”

“Unfeeling man!” exclaimed Henry, turning indignantly away; “you may one day know what it is to perish for want of assistance.”



The little Quaker plunges in the water to save George from drowning. p. 52.

But to return to Josiah Shirley; when he beheld the pale ghastly countenance of the youth for whose life he had so nobly risked his own, the first idea that entered his mind was that George had already paid the debt of nature, and, turning to Lary, in a hurried voice, he said—

“Oh, Patrick! he does not breathe or move! I fear he is quite dead!”

“I doubt, Master Shirley,” said Lary, as he raised the body in his arms, “he is quite gone: his poor father will be distracted at his loss; for, in spite of his faults, ’tis a fine youth.”

“Oh! think not of his errors now,” said Josiah; “he has most likely dearly paid for them. Carry him to our house directly, and let some one run for Mr. Carter, the surgeon!”

“His own father’s mansion is as near, Master Shirley.”

“Do not carry him there, Patrick; Mr. Hope is in London; those servants hate him, and will not take care of him: but my dear Mamma will pay him every attention.”

They had now reached Mrs. Shirley’s door, who, hearing the tread of many feet, came out to inquire the cause, and, though greatly shocked at the sight which met her eyes, she had courage sufficient to give the necessary orders for George’s recovery, and sent one of her servants directly for Mr. Carter.

That gentleman soon arrived; and Josiah, anxious to know the fate of George, was going to follow him into the room where the poor lad was; but Pat Lary, in his rough honest manner, prevented him.

“Excuse my want of manners, my brave young gentleman; but you shall not stir a step till you have changed these wet

clothes; and, if you will not take my advice, you may chance to be in a worse plight than Mr. George himself.”

So deeply was Josiah interested in the welfare of George, that he had totally disregarded his own wet, miserable condition; and, thanking the blunt Irishman, he instantly retired to make the necessary change.

He had scarcely completed his task, when the dreadful cries of poor George, who was returning to a state of feeling, and that accompanied by exquisite pain, filled the house; this, added to the exhaustion he now felt from his late adventure, so completely overcame the mind of Josiah, that he sank down into a chair, and burst into tears.

At this moment, Henry West entered the room; who, kindly taking his hand, said—

“Compose yourself, my dear Josiah, George is in no imminent danger; Mr. Carter has succeeded in restoring him to sensation; but, he says, the reanimation of a body taken out of the water in frosty weather is always accompanied by great pain.”

“Oh, poor George!” exclaimed Josiah, shuddering, “I can feel for the anguish of his present situation, when I consider what pain a thumb or finger produces, numbed with the cold. How a whole body must suffer in the same state.”

“He is quite delirious at present,” replied Henry; “and, when his senses return, he will have little recollection of what he now endures: but, my dear Josiah, your hands are as cold as ice; had not you better take something to prevent any ill effects arising from your late perilous adventure?”

“Entertain no apprehensions on my account, Henry,” said Josiah: “I am strong and healthy; early rising and exercise have inured my body to the slight inconveniences of wet and cold. I only feel for poor George; and, in contemplating his sufferings, such trifles are disregarded by me.”

“Dear Josiah, the longer I know you, the more I esteem and love you,” cried Henry, warmly pressing the young Quaker’s hand. “You have performed a great and noble action to-day; you almost make me guilty of that wicked passion, envy, for I wish this day I was Josiah Shirley!”

The gentle boy shook his head. “Do not flatter me, Henry; I have not merited such praise for performing a mere act of duty, which we all owe to each other. Has not God himself commanded us to succour a fellow-creature in distress; even if it were an enemy that stood in need of our assistance. Let us, therefore, bestow our praises and thanks on that great and awful Being who has wrought this act of mercy through our feeble hands. Let us earnestly entreat him to shed his divine grace upon the darkened mind of this deluded boy, and finally recall him from the error of his ways.”

George Hope could scarcely recover his senses sufficiently to remember the accident that had nearly deprived him of life, before he was attacked with a violent fever, which required the greatest care and attention from his kind friends; indeed, they spared no pains to relieve his sufferings. Josiah seldom left his bed-side: he gave him his physic, adjusted his pillows, and cheerfully performed for him every little service. Mr. Hope came every day to see his son; and expressed the warmest gratitude to the good Quakers, for their unremitting kindness to the unconscious sufferer. William always attended his father on these visits; and the state in which he saw his brother had such an effect on his mind, that, before he returned to school, he promised his excellent parent, that he would obey his injunctions for the future, and never more give him cause to complain.

“Already, my dear Josiah,” said Mr. Hope, taking the hand of the young Quaker, as he stood by the bed-side of his son, “to your goodness I owe the reformation of one of my children, the life of the other; and, oh! if it should please God ever to restore this unhappy boy to my prayers, use your utmost endeavours, my good Josiah, to turn him from his present forlorn state of mind: and your virtuous endeavours will be repaid by the blessings of a grateful father.”

“Oh, Sir!” returned Josiah, his eyes filling with tears as he spoke, “I have little doubt of his amendment. A bed of sickness brings an awful picture before our eyes. When George comes to reflect on his late providential escape from death, his heart will soften, and he will remember his past conduct with feelings of painful regret; and such reflections, I trust, will bring with them a sincere and lasting repentance.”

“God grant that your words may prove true, my excellent young friend,” said Mr. Hope; “and rest assured, that your noble endeavours to reclaim an erring fellow-creature (and one who, I am sorry to say, has given you such just cause of displeasure), will meet with a reward both here and in another world.”

A few days after this conversation, George Hope was declared out of immediate danger; and, when recollection returned, he found himself supported in Shirley's arms.

A sense of his situation rushed over his mind. The strange room, the strange bed, all confirmed the idea that Josiah was his preserver, and that he was in the house of Mrs. Shirley; his heart, by nature not bad, though by the force of evil example so sadly perverted, softened into remorse and gratitude, and, burying his face in Josiah's bosom, he burst into a flood of tears.

"Is it to you, Josiah Shirley, that I owe my life, whom I have so basely and cruelly injured. Oh! if you did but know what a worthless wretch it is you support thus tenderly in your arms, you would fling me from you with disgust and horror."

"Calm these agitating feelings, my dear George," said Josiah, attempting to sooth him; and forgetting, whilst he did so, his usual precision. "I have long ago forgotten and forgiven our foolish dispute in the meadow; let not the recollection of such trifles discompose thy mind in an hour like this. Remember the past only as it refers to the improvement of the future; and believe that Josiah Shirley is thy sincere and lasting friend."

"God bless you for that word, Josiah!" exclaimed George, in a feeble voice, as he sank back exhausted on the pillow. "How little have I deserved this kindness from you. Oh, may I never be tempted to forfeit your esteem for the future!"

"After this worthy resolution, friend George," said Josiah, playfully putting his finger on his patient's lips, "I must insist on silence, for it cannot be very prudent for thee to converse on any subject in thy present weak state."

George smiled at this restraint on his tongue; but he very patiently submitted to the young Quaker's request.

Most sincerely did George promise amendment for the future; and Josiah was not backward in assisting him in the arduous task of self-improvement.

Whilst watching by his sick pillow, for George was confined to his bed many weeks, Shirley read to him passages from the best of our moral works, and daily portions of the divine gospels, whilst, in his simple language, he set before him the dreadful consequences which generally followed disobedience to parents, and keeping company with vicious people.

Every day added to young Hope's mental improvement; but his health remained in so precarious a state, that a decline was apprehended, and Mr. Hope granted Josiah's earnest request to let his son remain with them till he should have gained sufficient strength to return to school.

Indeed, George had grown so fond of Josiah, that he could not feel happy a moment out of his company. Often, when Shirley was busily employed in his studies, George would silently watch his mild sweet countenance, till he felt the tears tremble in his eyes, when he recalled the unworthy treatment the noble youth had experienced at his hands.

Yet, though he deeply repented of the past, George could never summon up courage enough to inform Josiah of his baseness in destroying his trees. A hundred times a day he was on the point of declaring his guilt; but false pride always hindered him from confessing so degrading an action.

As the spring advanced, he would rise early in the morning, and work with Josiah in the garden, and help little Rachel to feed her rabbits, and plant and tie up the flowers; and these small jobs he did with greater alacrity, hoping that the earnestness with which he performed any little office towards the re-embellishment of the garden would, in some measure, atone for the wanton mischief he had been guilty of in the summer; but he never entered the garden without a secret sigh, or saw Josiah labouring to restore it to its former beauty, without bitter feelings of self-condemnation.

Pat Lary came every day to inquire after the young Squire's health, and George never shook hands with the honest creature without the keenest remorse, while Simpson, who had been the author of all his vices, was heard to say in the village, "that it was a pity young Shirley saved him from being drowned; for he was a wicked lad, and he was sure he would never come to a good end."

The spring came, and passed away, with all its flowers and verdure, but George remained so feeble and dejected, that he was not able to return to school that quarter. Mr. Hope was greatly alarmed at the increasing debility of his son, though equally delighted with his mental improvement; and was not behindhand in making handsome presents to Mrs.

Shirley, for the kind attention she paid to the suffering youth.

He likewise presented Josiah a beautiful pony, and a small library of choice books, as a testimony of his gratitude and esteem, which the young Quaker received with unfeigned pleasure; and, as he went to turn his new favourite into the meadow, Mr. Hope followed him, and, taking his arm, thus addressed him:—

“In spite of all your pains, my good Josiah, I fear my poor boy is fast hastening to the grave. Mr. Carter told me this morning he could assign no reason for his lingering illness; he thought it now rested entirely on the mind of the patient. You have many opportunities of noticing him, what is your opinion on the subject?”

“I agree with Mr. Carter, Sir,” replied Josiah; “though I cannot discover the reason of my friend’s obstinate grief. I have often questioned him, but to no purpose, as he only answers me on this head with tears.”

“I fear, my kind lad,” said Mr. Hope, sighing heavily as he spoke, “that it is some bad action he has committed before his illness, that lies upon his conscience; which, if once removed, would restore his health and spirits. If you can, my dear Josiah, possibly discover the cause of his dejection, I shall be greatly obliged to you.” Josiah promised to do his best, and Mr. Hope wished him good morning.

It happened that day, that George was in better spirits than usual; and Josiah, as he watched the bright glow which at times flushed his pale cheeks, hoped he was fast improving in health. The evening was uncommonly beautiful; and, after they returned from their accustomed walk, Rachel invited them to take a turn in the garden, and eat some nice ripe strawberries she had gathered in their absence.

They gladly accepted her offer, and retired to a bench at the bottom of the garden, which was overshadowed by a noble oak, which, in the language of that delightful poet of nature, Bloomfield—

“Had reached its full meridian height
Before our father’s father breathed.”

“Hark! how merrily the Reading bells are ringing,” said Josiah. “Listen, Rachel and George, how delightfully the sound, softened by distance, floats over the woods.”

“Yes, they sound very pretty,” replied Rachel; “but I wish they were not ringing, for we shall not hear the nightingale, as we did last night; and I prefer her sweet melancholy notes to the sound of those jingling bells.”

“I wonder what they are ringing for?” said George, thoughtfully. “I shall never hear the sound of bells with pleasure again.”

“Why not, my dear friend?” asked Josiah, not a little curious to learn the cause of his dislike.

“Indeed, Josiah, I have not fortitude enough to tell you,” returned George, hiding his face with his hands. “I once heard them ring as merrily as they do now, on as beautiful and calm an evening as this; but I have never been happy since, and, whilst the events of *that night* weigh upon my mind, I shall never be happy again.”

“And will not George reveal to his friend the cause of his grief?” said Josiah, kindly taking his hand. “Whence is this want of confidence and affection; surely I have deserved neither at thy hands?”

George flung himself into Shirley’s arms, and the long-concealed truth trembled on his lips, when little Rachel cried out in a joyful tone—

“Oh, here comes Henry West! he will tell us what the bells are ringing for!”

“And that I will, and give you a fairing to boot, pretty Rachel,” said Henry, as he stooped down to kiss her rosy cheek. “Why, what’s the matter with Josiah and George? I thought I should have seen you both at the fair.”

“Nay, Henry, I am sure such a thought never entered thy head,” replied Shirley, “well knowing my aversion to such places of amusement.”

“Well, I will own I did not much expect to see you there, Mr. Prim,” said Henry, laughing; “but George has no such scruples of conscience, I dare say.”

He turned to young Hope as he finished speaking, but was astonished and frightened to see the ghastly paleness which had overspread his countenance. "Josiah! your friend is ill: I think you are very imprudent to expose him to the evening air."

Josiah started up, and regarded George's varying countenance with interest and commiseration.

"Oh! no, no! I am not ill," exclaimed George, in a hurried voice; "I feel much better in the open air:" then, in a mournful tone, he added, "Are you sure, Master West, that to-day was Reading fair?"

"I am certain," said Henry, smiling, "for I am just come from thence; Mrs. Wilson took me in her carriage, and I was very well entertained by all the fine things that were to be seen, which my good friend, Josiah, will allow to be very babyish in a great fellow like me. But, Joe, to make my peace, I have brought you two small copies of verses for your scrap-book; and, as the subjects are serious, perhaps you will edify us all, by reading them aloud by the light of this glorious moon."

"With all my heart," said Josiah, unfolding the paper, and, hoping to divert George from his present state of dejection, he read the following lines:—

Awake, lute and harp, all thy melody pouring—
To heaven with the wild notes of triumph ascend;
While the children of earth, their Creator adoring,
The sweetness of song with their thanksgivings blend.

On the breezes of night, when the anthem is swelling,
With shadowy splendour the air seems to glow,
While fancy could hail each bright star as the dwelling
Of spirits released from their bondage below.

When o'er the raised soul high sensations are stealing,
The glorious spark immortality gave
Seems to lose, in the glow of devotional feeling,
Its portion of suffering, and soar o'er the grave.

To those regions of gladness, eternally glowing,
With the glory of Him who created the spheres,
From the light of whose countenance blessings are flowing,
To wipe from the eyes of the mourner all tears.

Where glorified spirits, each other outvying,
The praise of the Godhead triumphantly sing;
Such strains as might steal on the Saviour when dying,
As angels supported their crucified King.

To those mansions of bliss, for the faithful preparing,
Who the ordeal of suffering undauntedly tried,
With their master and king in his glory are sharing,
And exult that, to live, they in agonies died.

On the soul while such visions of splendour are burning,
It sighs for that peace the world cannot bestow;
Till the shadows of night, on the spirit returning,
Awake it again to its portion of woe.

There was something in these lines that greatly softened the heart of George Hope; and, turning to Josiah, he said with a deep sigh:—

"Josiah, does God always take vengeance on our crimes?"

“Not if we sincerely repent of them, and faithfully promise to sin no more;” returned Shirley; “and, should we again fall into temptation, God knows the weakness of our nature, and is ever more willing to forgive than we to implore his mercy.”

“I have deeply repented of my past errors,” said George; “and yet I feel as if my transgressions were not pardoned.”

“You must banish such thoughts as these, my dear George,” returned Henry, “or you will never be happy. I have heard my Father say, that if we sincerely repent of any crime we have committed, we must not doubt the mercy of our God. Surely you have every reason to be more cheerful than you are. Do but contrast your present character with your idle pursuits last year; and I am sure you will rejoice at the change.”

George shuddered, while Henry continued—

“You were universally and justly despised by the whole village; and I will frankly own, I felt for you the most hearty contempt. Now, every one mentions you with interest and commendation; and you have gained the unfeigned love of Josiah and myself. Such a change in your favour should raise, not depress your spirits.”

“I am perfectly sensible of your goodness, my kind friends,” returned George, “and feel that gratitude towards you which no words can express. To-morrow I may feel in better spirits; but I cannot conquer the depression that clouds my mind to-night. But I see Josiah is going to read something else to us.”

“It is a paraphrase on the twenty-ninth psalm,” said Josiah; “and, though the author has failed in conveying the awful grandeur of the original, I think the verses will please my friends:—

“Ye sons of the mighty, a sacrifice bring
To the footstool of power, and your thanksgivings raise;
For the Lord is your strength, your Creator, and King,
Who demands from his children the tribute of praise.

“Yea, the voice of our God, in its fury, controls
And stills the wild waves of the tempest-swoll’n deep;
When borne on the thunder as slowly it rolls,
We hear midst its terrors Omnipotence speak.

“The voice of our God is a glorious sound:
When it moves on the waters, or speaks through the storm,
The cedars of Lebanon bend to the ground,
And the mountains and hills from their fabric are torn.

“The voice of the Lord, in his wrath, can divide
The red rushing flames, and their fury awake;
When forth on the wings of destruction they ride,
And beneath them the powers of the wilderness shake.

“Yea, the voice of our God is mighty in power
On his bounty the wild tribes of nature depend:
The hind rears her young in the green forest bower;
From his altars the prayers of his children ascend.

“The voice of the Lord, in his glory, shall bring
To his people the fulness and blessings of peace;
The Lord o’er the water-flood reigneth a King,
And his portion, eternity, never shall cease.”

Josiah had scarcely concluded the psalm, when Mrs. Shirley came to fetch the young people from staying out longer in the night air; and Henry, bidding Josiah good night, and shaking George heartily by the hand, hoping to see him in better health and spirits the next day, took his leave.

The sun was scarcely up the following morning, when George tapped at Shirley's door, and proposed a long walk into the country before breakfast.

The young Quaker was already dressed, and he accepted the invitation with pleasure, hoping, by the way, to induce his friend to reveal the cause of his grief. In the parlour they were joined by little Rachel, who begged so earnestly to accompany them, that George insisted on her request being granted.

The morning was delightful, the dews sparkled on the grass, and the blackbird poured his merry lay from among the high hawthorn hedges that rose on either side of them.

The spirits of the little party rose in proportion to the beauty of the morning; and they directed their course down a long, lonely, but very romantic lane, over-arched with old oaks, that formed a rich canopy over their heads.

Rachel ran laughing on before, filling a little basket she had in her hand with flowers; then, having passed a sudden angle in the lane, the friends were alarmed by her giving a loud scream.

"What can have happened?" cried Josiah, hurrying forward. "I am afraid she has trod upon a snake among the flowers."

He had scarcely finished speaking, before Rachel came running towards them, out of breath, and very pale; and, flinging her arms round Josiah, she sobbed in the most agitated manner.

"Turn back! turn back, Josiah! There is something dreadful in the road."

"Do not be alarmed, Rachel; it shall not hurt thee," said Josiah, still fancying she had seen a snake.

"Oh no, it is dead! and the ground is all bloody! and it looks as pale as George did, when they took him out of the pond."

Frightened in his turn, Josiah burst from the hold of the terrified child; and, bidding her sit down on the bank till he returned, the two friends, with faces almost as white as Rachel's, proceeded to the spot she described.

What language can describe the horror they felt, when, on turning the projection of the lane, they beheld the mangled body of Daniel Simpson, lying dead across the path.

This wretched young man had stayed drinking late at the fair; and, returning home in a taxed cart, in a state of intoxication, the horse took fright, and, turning suddenly down this narrow lane, Simpson lost his balance, and fell out of the cart, with violence to the ground; and, the wheel going over his head, he was killed on the spot.

Thus did this wicked young man come to a deplorable end, on the very night that a twelvemonth before he had so successfully plotted against the peace of the poor Irishman and Josiah Shirley.

George was so dreadfully agitated at this shocking sight, that Josiah could scarcely keep him from fainting; and, calling Rachel, he bade her lead George home, and fetch assistance from the village, whilst he remained by the body.

Pat Lary, with some working hands, immediately ran to the spot, and, raising the mangled remains of Simpson on a hurdle, they were conveyed to the next house, there to remain till the Coroner's inquest could be held on the body.

When Josiah returned home, he found George leaning against the window in the parlour, pale and in tears. Knowing his unfortunate association with the deceased, Josiah was not surprised, that the untimely death of this unfortunate young man should deeply affect his friend; and, kindly taking his hand, the amiable boy strove to comfort him.

"George! dear George! pray dry these tears: they really distress me. Though Simpson merited his death, remember that God is merciful, and all-sufficient to save."

"Oh, Josiah! I, too, have merited death!" exclaimed the agitated George, burying his face in Shirley's bosom, and giving way to a fresh burst of grief.

"We are all liable to err, George, and merit death every hour in the day, if it were only for our vile ingratitude to that great and munificent Being from whom we received the principles of our existence, and upon whose bounty we depend from day to day. We cannot be saved by our own righteousness; did not we read together last night, in the Psalms—That

God did not find one perfect amongst the children of men. Then dry these unavailing tears, and return thanks to that divine Providence that has saved thee from a similar fate.”

George returned no answer to this speech for some minutes, but seemed to be struggling with intense and overpowering feelings; at length, turning toward Josiah, with a face burning with conscious shame, he said—

“Yes, Josiah, God has indeed called me to a sense of my past wickedness; and I will no longer withhold from you the base cruelty with which I suffered an innocent fellow-creature to bear the disgrace of my own infamous conduct.”

Then casting his eyes to the ground, in faltering accents, he continued—

“Josiah, you suspected that poor Irishman of having broken your trees. The dear, honest creature is innocent. I was the perpetrator, in conjunction with that wretched Simpson.”

Josiah started back, whilst the surprise he felt was strongly marked on his countenance.

“Thee, George Hope! Oh, poor Lary, how basely I have injured him.”

“Oh, do not—do not say so!” cried George, weeping bitterly. “I only am to blame. Ah, Josiah! dear good Josiah! I fear you will never love me, or call me friend or brother, after this disgraceful disclosure. Yet do forgive me? and I will never act so unworthily again.” He would have thrown himself at his feet, but the noble boy prevented him, by raising him in his arms.

“Indeed, George, I did not suspect thee of such a crime; but I forgive thee, from my very heart. But poor Lary! I cannot pardon myself for having suspected him, without being certain of his guilt; and then the circumstance of the hatchet being found in the garden, and Rachel’s rabbits being in his son’s possession—how could all that come about?”

“Oh, Josiah!” replied George, “the more I reveal of this dreadful business, the more shocking it will appear; but, as I have commenced the narration, I will continue it to the end.”

He then faithfully informed the young Quaker of the whole transaction, not sparing himself at all in the relation. Josiah was shocked and astonished at the depravity of heart, and the depth of dissimulation, that had been shown throughout this disgraceful affair; and, when George finished speaking, he grasped his hand firmly, and said:—

“Bless the hour, George, when the waters engulfed thee, and the long and lingering illness which bowed down thy exhausted frame, if they were the means of snatching thee from guilt like this.”

“And, above all,” cried George, pressing Josiah’s hand to his heart, “the kind friend who not only forgave the injuries I had so undeservedly heaped upon his head, but saved my worthless life, at the peril of his own, and, by his unremitting care and advice, has brought me to a full conviction of my past guilt.”

“Say no more, George; I have only one request to make, which will sufficiently repay me for all my trouble. Let us go instantly to poor Lary and state the case to him; I cannot be happy till I have asked his pardon for the unjust suspicion which I have attached to his name. I know the honest creature so well that I am sure we shall never have any reason to repent trusting to his generosity.”

This George willingly consented to do; and he felt so much happier since he had opened his mind to his friend, that he no longer dreaded the interview with Lary; and, after breakfast, the two friends stepped across to Lary’s cottage.

They found the poor Irishman sitting on the bench before his door, trimming some plants to put in ’Squire Hope’s garden; and, taking a seat on either side of him, the young gentlemen informed him of the cause of their visit. The Irishman listened to them with surprise and wonder; but, when they proceeded to ask his forgiveness, Pat interrupted them, by saying, “That it was not fit for young gentlemen like them to ask pardon of a poor fellow, such as the likes of Pat Lary; and that he forgave them from his very soul; and as to the poor lad that’s gone, he has been punished enough, Heaven knows; Pat Lary bears no malice against him.”

“But, Patrick, why did not thee boldly deny the charge I brought against thee?” said Josiah.

“Why, your honour, I was not sober, and I thought I might have done it,” replied honest Pat; “besides, was there not my hatchet staring me in the face, as much as to say, ‘Pat Lary, you know you did it?’ Would it have been right, Master

Shirley, to have denied my own? However, I always thought one day I should find out I did not do it.”

This speech would have upset the young gentlemen’s gravity at another time: and Josiah could scarcely forbear smiling, as Pat continued—

“And since you gave me that good advice, Master Shirley, I have never been intoxicated since; and, now I have seen the shocking end of that poor lad, I think I shall never give way to strong drink again.”

“In truth, friend,” said Josiah, shaking hands with him, “if thou hadst been soberly inclined, Simpson never dare have taken thy tools, and I never had suspected thee.”

They then made the poor gardener a handsome present, and returned home.

When once this painful load was removed from George Hope’s mind, he rapidly improved in health and spirits; and, before the midsummer vacation commenced, Mr. Carter proclaimed him sufficiently recovered to return to school.

The young friends parted mutually attached to each other; and, on leaving the house of the good Quakers, George grasped Josiah firmly by the hand, and said—

“Accept, my dear Josiah, my boundless gratitude and affection. You have taught me a lesson I never shall forget during the remainder of a life I owe to your care,—that moral virtues are confined to no rank or station in life; that such exist among every class and sect of people; and that the greatest of all weaknesses is that of despising any one because he may differ in opinion from ourselves.

“For your sake, I will never judge any one before I have gained a thorough knowledge of his character; and, whatever my prejudices may have been, I frankly own, that to the day of my death I shall have reason to bless the name of a Quaker.”

THE END.

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In the list of Instructive Toy-Books, numbers 14 and 15 were not included in the original book.
