

The image shows the front cover of a book. The cover is a deep red color with a fine, woven texture. In the center, there is a gold-colored wreath made of leaves and flowers. Inside the wreath, the words "THE HOFLAND LIBRARY." are printed in a gold, serif, all-caps font. The text is arranged in three lines: "THE" on the top line, "HOFLAND" on the middle line, and "LIBRARY." on the bottom line. The wreath is positioned within a large, vertically oriented, arched frame that is embossed into the cover. This frame is surrounded by a decorative border of repeating scroll and floral motifs, also embossed into the cover. The overall design is classic and elegant.

THE
HOFLAND
LIBRARY.

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THE
GOOD GRANDMOTHER,

AND
Her Offspring,

A TALE

BY

M^{rs}. G. S. P. G. G.

AUTHOR OF

*The Clergyman's Widow. Merchant's Widow.
The Sisters. Daughter in law. Young Northern Traveller.
Panorama of Europe. Barbadoes Girl.
Affectionate Brothers. &c. &c.*

He that diligently seeketh good, procureth favour.
Proverbs.

Second Edition with Additions.

London.

ARTHUR HALL, VIRTUE & CO

25, PATERNOSTER ROW.

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BY MRS. HOFLAND,

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**THE CLERGYMAN'S WIDOW; YOUNG CRUSOE; BLIND FARMER; THE SISTERS; BARBADOES GIRL;
MERCHANT'S WIDOW; PANORAMA OF EUROPE; YOUNG NORTHERN TRAVELLER; DAUGHTER-IN-
LAW; AFFECTIONATE BROTHERS; WILLIAM AND HIS UNCLE BEN; STOLEN BOY; ELIZABETH AND
HER THREE BEGGAR BOYS; ALICIA AND HER AUNT; &c., &c.**

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NEW EDITION.

LONDON:

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PATERNOSTER ROW.

**TO MRS. HAUGH,
OF DONCASTER.**

MY DEAR MADAM,

Although the wide circle of your more immediate duties lies amongst the children of wealthy and enlightened parents, and you have been many years successfully employed in applying the resources of a powerful and cultivated mind to the higher walks of education, yet I have no difficulty in offering you this sketch of children in very humble life, well knowing, towards such as these, you daily exercise the most judicious beneficence, and extend the kindest protection.

To console the sorrows, stimulate the energies, and encourage the efforts of the industrious poor, is the intention of the following simple story; but this end will certainly be obtained most effectually, by rendering it the medium of interesting the liberal and well-informed, in the struggles to which the poor and ignorant are liable, and engaging them, both from principle and feeling, to assist these their "weaker brethren." Thus to draw the links of society closer to each other, and awaken the most endearing ties and active virtues of which human nature is capable, is a task so congenial to your character, habits, and situation, that policy would authorize me in seeking your patronage, if the sincere friendship and long-cherished esteem with which I regard you, had not induced me to offer it to your acceptance.

This little work is so humble in its pretensions, that I should consider it due to you to offer an apology for it, if I had not enjoyed the honour of having it approved by the first female author^[1] of the present day, whose numerous works for the benefit of youth are, I well know, so justly appreciated by you, as to render such a sanction a full passport to your favour, even if you were less inclined to indulge me than I have ever found you.

With every sentiment of sincere respect,

I am, DEAR MADAM,

Your affectionate friend,

And faithful servant,

THE AUTHOR.

THE

GOOD GRANDMOTHER

AND

HER OFFSPRING.



CHAPTER I.

A tender creature full of whims and charms,
A beauteous nursling from the parent's arms,
Who sought no business, no affairs she knew,
Of reason thought not, and had nought to do.

CRABBE.

"I have no objection to you for a son-in-law," said old John Morton to William Harris, "but I am sorry to say your father is a drunken, idle man, and has been a dreadful husband to your poor mother—if you should ever become like him!"

"God forbid," exclaimed the young man, "that I should resemble my father in any respect! No! I most solemnly promise, that I will be a different husband to what he has ever been. You have long known me, and are aware that my mother has trained me to honesty and industry, ever since I was born."

"Very true—well, take her then, boy, when I am gone, and may God bless you both!"

William accepted this gift with all the thankfulness natural to a young man who was tenderly and ardently attached to the object for whom he had solicited, yet with all the chastened joy and solemnity which attached to the circumstances under which he received it. With so much genuine feeling did he express his sense of the important duties of the marriage state, and so affectionately did he press the cold hand held out to him to ratify the contract, that the old man, though deeply affected, could not help congratulating himself that he had thus disposed of the object of his only earthly care, of his tender love and unceasing anxiety, on whom he had expended all his earnings, and of whom he might truly say, that she had never known sorrow.

"Nor ever shall," said William, "if I can prevent it."

When William had bade the father he respected and the daughter he loved, a kind farewell, he repaired to his mother, anxious not only to inform her of the engagement he had thus entered into, but to excuse himself to her for having gone so far without her consent. His apology consisted in stating that he had loved Letty Morton for more than a year, but had determined not to make her an offer until he had provided a house for her reception; but that, alarmed by the information of her father's sickness, and desirous of his consent, he had repaired to his bedside, and there entered into a conversation which led to an irrevocable engagement. When William had made this statement, he went on to repeat to his still silent parent the particular conversation which had passed, and concluded by repeating the old man's assertion, that "his daughter had never known sorrow."

"So much the worse," said the mother.

"Surely, my dear mother, Letty can be no worse because she has hitherto led a happy life. I am sure it shall be my endeavour to render her future days as free from sorrow as the past have been."

"God grant, my dear son, that your endeavours may succeed! but a life of indulgence rarely contributes to render the possessor either good or happy: the woman that has never known sorrow herself, too frequently introduces her husband and family to a very intimate acquaintance with it."

William Harris had been long accustomed to consider his mother so wise and so kind, that her words were to him of as much importance as an oracle, and his spirits sunk, as she thus pronounced an opinion, founded rather on her fears for him, than on any personal knowledge of the young woman in question. His mother perceiving what was passing in his mind, considered that he was engaged, and willing to hope, from the modest air of the young girl, that notwithstanding the father's indulgence, she might eventually be a good wife to her dear William, she in her turn sought to remove his uneasiness, by saying—"Poor John Morton did not marry till late in life—his wife died when this child was very young, so that she has never known a mother's guidance. The poor man doted on her, and, I fear, has worked beyond his strength for her sake; but he would hardly have done this, if she had not been as good as she is pretty; I will therefore hope that she will make as good a wife as you, I trust, will make her a husband."

William raised his head, and began to think his mother wiser and better than ever.

"I do not wish to damp your expectations, my dear son; but you must make allowance for the fears of one who has herself been bitterly disappointed; you must remember also, that sorrow, more or less, is the lot of every human being, and that you and I have been long used to taste this bitter cup together; therefore if your partner could have sympathized with us, it would undoubtedly have been better."

"Alas!" exclaimed William, "my poor Letty will do this but too soon; consider she is on the point of losing her dear father, her only parent; surely this is the greatest of all earthly afflictions, and one under which she will need every possible consolation; her sufferings will soon exceed all that I have ever known."

As William uttered these words, his expressive eyes fixed on his beloved mother filled with tears, which the mother answered with reciprocal emotion; they both felt at this moment the same union of opinion. William, though deeply affected, and actually repenting that he had not consulted his mother in the first movements of his inclination for Letty, yet forgot alike his fears and his feelings, when he next beheld her, for she was very pretty and engaging, and he a young and ardent lover.

In a very few days, poor John Morton breathed his last, in the arms of that affectionate youth whom he considered his son. The overwhelming grief which William had apprehended, did not, however, afflict his daughter—a circumstance which the lover interpreted in his own favour; had he been more deeply read in the human heart, he would have known that indulgence, although it sometimes arises from affection, never leads to it; rarely has that parent known the dutiful attentions, or the warm affections of a child, who never claimed obedience, or manifested the right of exacting it.

In fact, by the death of the old man, Letty might be called rather frightened than hurt, since, although she cried for an hour after his death, yet her principal trouble seemed to arise from pity for herself, and at being left in the house with a dead corpse. This trouble a goodnatured neighbour quickly removed, by inviting her home, and undertaking to see every thing necessary for the funeral settled.

Shortly after, a cousin of her mother desired her to come and spend the winter at his house; and thither accordingly she removed, escorted by her faithful William, who deemed it his duty to inform the farmer how matters stood betwixt him and Letty. The cousin was glad to hear it, shook him heartily by the hand, and begged he would come to see his sweetheart every Sunday, adding, "she'll be noa worse, my lad, for seeing a little o' my woife's management: and country air, tho it be sharp, will do her good, and brisken her up a bit."

Letty could not object to this, because she had no other home; and William, though in an humble station of life, had a mind imbued with such a sense of propriety, that he could not press her to marry him just at this time, and he was also sensible that there were indeed many ways in which his beloved Letty might improve herself; and he was desirous that he might be able so to present her to his mother, as that she might not only win her approbation, but ensure her happiness, by inducing her to rejoice in his prudent choice.

When Letty made a second removal, she felt more poignantly than she had hitherto done, the loss of that tender father who had sheltered her under the same roof ever since she was born, and provided her with abundant means of comfort, and something not very unlike anger mixed with her sorrow, at the consciousness of her deserted state: it did not occur to her, that her father's life might have been prolonged, if he had not for her sake exerted himself beyond his strength, and suffered frequently from want of those little comforts necessary to an invalid, whilst she had been occupied in some frivolous pursuit, or idle amusement.

The neighbour who had been so kind to her, seeing her in tears, endeavoured to console her, by pointing out the advantages she would enjoy, in being rendered a little notable and stirring, before she came to be a wife, especially before she was introduced to William's mother, who was "a very particular sort of a person, being, as it were, rather over and above good."

"Is she a methodist?" inquired Letty.

"Why no, not a positive methodist; but one of those people who go to church or chapel, whether it rains or shines; and then she never says nothing to nobody, but goes on work, work, till she's as thin as a lath, all the while her ragamuffin of a husband sits drinking in an ale-house, or idling at a bowling-green or cricket-ground; that's what I call nonsense. If I had a bad husband like her, I'd teach him another story; howsomdever, she's not a kind of mother-in-law I should quite like, though I never heard any harm of her."

This idle, and in fact, cruel observation, coming from a woman who had been certainly kind to her, made an unpleasant impression on Letty's mind; but she observed only, that "she should not have cared much if Mrs. Harris had been a real methodist, and made her one too; for she thought, when people were fair, the little half-plaited borders of methodists' caps were very becoming, and certainly their singing at chapel was much prettier than the great roaring organ at church."

Her friend had not much more reflection or knowledge than herself; yet she certainly thought the observation proved Letty to be very nearly a fool; so she said no more on the subject.

When Letty got into the country, she found the bustle around her, which the honest couple she visited supposed would be beneficial and grateful, exactly the reverse; and never having accustomed herself to learn any thing she did not like, or do any thing that required exertion, every day increased her disgust. The sweet air of a mild October, the various hues of a changing foliage and the wide expanse of hill and vale, lawn and pasture, a herd of fine cattle, or a flock of sheep, could ill compensate for a window that looked into the street on a procession of gay volunteers, or a military parade. The country was to her a hateful prison, presenting not one object on which she had been wont to gaze with complacency, or contemplate with interest.

Under these circumstances, no wonder that William's weekly visit was waited for with an impatience, and received with a delight, which in its effects resembled the fondest attachment, and completely succeeded in rendering him not only happy in her love, but convinced (as all lovers are) that her very affection would render her the "virtuousest, discreetest, best," of all human beings. This young man, as well as his own father, and that of Letty, were inhabitants of a large manufacturing town, famous for the excellency of its silver-plated wares—a branch of business in which they had all been engaged. This line is particularly beneficial to the workmen; so that a person of tolerable skill and ordinary industry, will frequently earn from one hundred to one hundred and fifty pounds per annum, which, in a place where house-rent and coals are remarkably cheap, affords not only the power of living decently, but saving a considerable share of their earnings. A circumstance of this nature is, however, seldom found among the higher order of workmen; for as plenty generally produces profusion, it is too well known that the highest wages frequently entail want, rather than insure a competency.

William had served a regular apprenticeship to this business, and was so improving a workman at this time, that few men bade fairer to accumulate such a sum as might one day enable him to form a partnership with his master—a circumstance which never fails to take place, sooner or later, with the really meritorious. Though only entering his twenty-third year, he had realized the sum of forty pounds, with which he was now furnishing a small, but neat house, which he delighted to prepare under the superintendence of his mother, for that sweet girl, who always appeared in his eye as the emblem of modesty and innocence.

William did not know that it is possible to be bashful with a very small portion of modesty, and innocent (negatively) with very little virtue. Poor Letty's character was farther formed by habit than he had an idea of; but the greatest mistake he made in her character, was that in which he viewed her conduct as actuated by the same principle which governed his own affection. Little did he think, when he pressed her hand at parting, and caught the tremulous sigh which accompanied her farewell, that it was not so much for him she sighed, as for that scene whereon she had been used contentedly to waste her early life. Persons of her disposition in manufacturing towns, are apt to pass their time as she had done from day to day, in gazing at a bridal party, or a military show, in listening to a ballad, or in joining some group of idlers, who discussed the news of the day, whilst their children screamed in the cradle, or their husbands called in vain for their dinner.

To Letty it appeared surprising, that William could listen to her cousin the farmer's history of his crops and cattle, or nurse the little sunburnt children, who pressed around him to share his notice and his gingerbread; but as she was too indolent to express that surprise, he remained unhappily a stranger to a difference in their sentiments, which might have admitted explanation and improvement. It soon, however, became plain, even to a lover's eye, that Letty had ceased to be welcome; and in fact, it was with difficulty the farmer's wife could prevent her husband from informing William what he every day repeated, that "his intended bride was either sugar or salt, and would melt either in rain or sunshine; and that to his mind, 'twere a thousand pities any honest lad should trouble himself with a pet lamb, for better for worse."

In consequence of these observations, William hastened the removal of his fair bride to that comfortable home his care and industry had provided; and in presenting her to his mother, felt an assurance that she could not fail to approve the object which she must admire; and as Mrs. Harris was as willing to be pleased as he could wish her to be, she undoubtedly felt some accession of happiness, in the contemplation of her beloved William's felicity.

The father of William had been for many years a confirmed drunkard; and under the influence of this degrading vice, had sunk into every species of brutality. With the power of giving decent support to a family, he had doomed them to all the misery of want, and frequently added the sting of cruelty to the depression of poverty. Many a time had his children been beaten when they cried for bread; and often had the untasted morsel been snatched from the lips of his famished wife, when she was fainting for want of nourishment.

For many years the mother of William had struggled to support her family under these circumstances; but one after another, all her darlings had sunk into the grave, except the eldest, who, having shared her sufferings and witnessed her patience, forbearance, industry, and good management, naturally felt towards her an affection surpassing the common tenderness of the most amiable sons towards their mothers. Naturally docile and sensible, he had grown up beneath her eye, the delight of her heart, the reward of her exertions; and to see him happy and prosperous, constituted all she hoped on earth.

In the contemplation of his mother's past sufferings and constant prudence, it had always struck William, that if his father had placed his weekly wages constantly in her hands, all the evils under which his family suffered, and even the degrading vice in which he was constantly indulging, would have been completely obviated; and he therefore, unhappily, determined on doing this himself, without either considering the difference of his own character, or that of his young wife; or, that he was actually in receipt of considerably more money than it had ever been in his father's power to earn. He remembered only his promise to her father, which he considered binding to the very letter. He felt only how sweet it is to lavish all on the object of love, and by unbounded confidence to claim unbounded tenderness; and again, omitting to consult his mother on an object of so much moment, from week to week he committed all he gained to his young wife, making only one condition, "that his purse should always be open to the necessities of his mother."

CHAPTER II.

The lapse to indolence is soft and imperceptible, because it is only a mere cessation of activity; but the return to diligence is difficult, because it implies a change from rest to motion, from privation to reality.

DR. JOHNSON.

It would have been well if William, at the time he charged Letty to hold her purse ever open to his mother, had requested that she should keep it so stocked as to be able to answer her claims. This he did not do; and as his father had now so completely ruined his constitution, as to be unable to work, Mrs. Harris opened a day-school, which, by degrees, became a support for them both, and enabled her to refuse frequent offers of assistance from her son. This refusal proceeded in part from her conviction, that poverty alone could restrain her infatuated husband from continuing the vice from which she sought to wean him; and the desire she had, that the abilities and industry of her son should eventually obtain the reward he so well merited, by securing independence and respectability of situation, from a proper but not avaricious accumulation of his savings.

It had frequently struck William, that since Letty left off mourning she dressed very smartly; but she looked so pretty in her gay trappings, and blushed so deeply when he hinted at it, that he forebore either inquiries or remarks that might hurt her; and it was not until the time when she was confined on the birth of her first child, that he learned, with much surprise and some sorrow, that he was not a guinea beforehand in the world, although he had, every Saturday evening, given between two and three into the custody of his wife.

Taking, however, into consideration his dear Letty's unavoidable expenses, and delighted with the sweet child, which first awoke in his feeling breast the emotions and tender cares of a father, he would not sully the happiness of these moments by painful inquiry or indirect reproof; he concluded that Letty had got a stock of clothes which would never need renewing, and looked forward to the future, as insuring her care and industry equally with his own, for the sake of that infant for whose welfare he felt so much solicitude.

For some time Letty's health was rather delicate, the indolence of her youth having prevented the establishment of a sound constitution. The tenderness and indulgence of William was unbounded; but when at length she appeared really well, and was pronounced so by her attendant, he thus addressed her one evening, on coming from his daily labour.—"My dear Letty, I really wish that——"

"So do I really wish," returned she, with a somewhat petulant air.

The wishes of the wife were ever paramount with the husband, and he listened with the utmost complacency.

"I *wish* very much, William, that you would never call me again by that odious name Letty; my name is Letitia, and I wish to be called Letitia. Did I ever say Will or Billy to you?—No, that I never did."

"Well, my dear, I'll try to oblige you; and I hope by the same rule, Letty—I mean Letitia, you will be so good as to lay down that dirty book, and let us have a little talk together: to my mind, that book takes much more reading than Cook's Voyages did, with which you were so weary last winter, when I read them for our amusement at nights, while you made baby-clothes."

"Why surely you don't imagine, William, I have been reading *one* book all this time. No, I have perused 'Memoirs of the Black Forest,' the 'Midnight Hour,' the 'Warning Bell,' and the 'Mysteries of the North Tower,' since my confinement."

"Whu w—w—w—w—w—," whistled William.

"And I intend to begin next the 'Horrors of the Dungeon,' and the——"

"No more, no more, my good girl, or you will be confined for life, take my word for it—no one head can possibly stand out against such a farrago of terrors and nonsense."

"Nonsense, William! *nonsense*, do you call it?"

"Ay, nonsense, Letitia; arrant nonsense; especially for people in our condition, who, having little time for reading, ought to be careful to employ it well, so as either to teach us our duty, assist us in our devotions, or increase our knowledge. Now I should be glad to know, if, in all the books you have been reading this last fortnight, you have gained one single idea?"

"Yes I have found a name for the child."

"So have I, without their assistance: she shall be called Mary, after my mother, as I have told you many a time."

"She shall be called Maria-Juliana-Letitia."

"Mary, Mary—plain, good unpretending Mary—my mother's name, and your mother's also, my good girl; remember that."

"I never knew my mother, and I care not for her name."

"But I do know mine; and I, therefore, care even for her name."

"Oh, yes! you make fuss enough about her on all occasions; but there are people who think other people quite as good as Mrs. Harris; and that it is rather hard that a poor young woman, who has no friends to take her part, should be continually thwarted and kept down by a *mother-in-law*."

William, though the best-tempered man in the world, was now completely angry, for his mother was indeed a tender subject; and when he recollected his wife's extravagance, as opposed to the care and kindness of that mother, who, whatever she might have observed, had never censured *her*, even by the slightest hint, his vexation and resentment increased. He had, however, the self-command necessary—he left the room; and when he had overcome his passion, in order to check at once the ridiculous vanity and romantic folly of his wife, and gratify himself by what he deemed an act of duty to his mother, he called the nurse; and as it was the hour of evening prayers, he accompanied her to church with the child, and got it baptized by the name of Mary.

When Letty found what had taken place, she went into such a paroxysm of angry grief, as to occasion a long expensive illness, during which her alarmed husband a thousand times repented of that conduct which he had believed was only praiseworthy resolution; and the errors of the wife were rivetted by the same chains which were now firmly bound round the unfortunate husband. As, however, he now kept the purse from necessity, he was enabled to see with how much less money he could have produced more comfort than his wife.

When Letty was restored to such a degree of health as to admit her to the management of her little household, she did not claim a privilege he was perhaps little likely to have granted; for she was well aware that her expenses had involved him, and she had no inclination to share in the cares and contrivances to which he was compelled to attend.

From this time, all the blameable smartness of Letty disappeared; and, unfortunately, an utter disregard to all decency of appearance succeeded: so liable are all ill-directed minds to extremes. Seeking only for her own selfish gratification, she neglected alike her house, her infant, and her invaluable husband, to pursue the pernicious practice of devouring, rather than reading, whatever came in her way in the shape of a romance, and with peculiar avidity choosing all those whose horrible combinations and unnatural events were most likely to stimulate her spirits, and irritate the morbid sensibility of her enervated mind.

In the course of the three following years, Letitia became the mother of two other children; but the increase of these claimants on her love and her energies, so far from making any improvement in her conduct, served only to find her an excuse during this period, for an increase of indulgence. If ever she were in any manner reproved, or remonstrated with, she became ill. The natural kindness of William's heart rendered him peculiarly liable to become the easy tool of a woman, whom he still loved, under these painful circumstances; but, in a short time, the dejection of spirits, arising from disappointment, contributed also to render him a passive spectator of the sluttishness he abhorred, and the idleness he found to be constitutional from habit, and deficiency alike of principle and practice.

Upheld by the counsel, and soothed by the tenderness of his mother, William still continued to labour with unceasing diligence, and to receive those higher rewards which arose to him from prosecuting, with extraordinary taste and skill, the branch of his art to which he was attached, and which he had the less inclination to leave, because he generally found his workshop a more comfortable place than that house which he had formerly taken such pains to adorn, and which

might at this time have been made every way agreeable to him, since he was so much attached to his children, that he would never have desired any higher amusement, than that which their innocent caresses afforded him.

For a considerable length of time William submitted to add all the labour of the house to the regular toils of the manufactory: after working for two or three hours, he sometimes returned to his house, made his fire, and then took his two eldest children out of bed, dressed and fed them before he awakened the lazy wife, who, having wept till past midnight, over some imaginary heroine's sorrows, had crept to bed, languid and nervous, to dream of horrors the rest of the night, and then dose till noon to recover her faculties.[2]

During this period, William had continued to hope, that, either by shame or affection, by kindness or reproof, Letty might be brought to exert at least the little power she appeared to possess, and to act as became a wife and mother. This hope proving vain, he at length procured a servant; and she, presuming on her usefulness, forgot her situation, or, imitating her mistress in sloth, increased his expenses, without administering much to his comfort. He was thus situated, when the death of his father released his mother from her constant attendance, and gave some relief to the gloom which had so long surrounded him.

Trade had long been bad, and William's master, a good-tempered but improvident man, unwilling to turn off his men, had continued to employ them, until his own ruin and theirs was the consequence; he became a bankrupt, and the stroke fell like a thunderbolt upon poor William.

His mother, conscious how little comfort he could derive from a wife, whose sympathies were exhausted on ideal miseries, by every argument and entreaty in her power, roused him from the stupor of despair, and led him to look round for support for those dear little ones, whose innocent inquiries at once wounded and comforted his heart.

We have already observed that William had extraordinary skill in executing the finer parts of ornamental workmanship. In his present distress, this very excellence operated against him, for it must be concluded, that he never could have attained it but by so close an application, as to forbid a more general knowledge. Conscious, however, that he could soon make himself master of something which would at least find bread for his children, he applied to various manufactures for employment; but the general state of trade was so bad, and the offer of hands was so general, that he could not find any employment; and it was universally recommended to him to try husbandry, as, at this time, farmers were the only persons who could be said to *live* in the country.

Although conscious of his total ignorance on these subjects, and aware that such a mode of existence would unfit him for resuming the lucrative employment he had lost, yet William would gladly have submitted to earn a scanty subsistence by this means, if his wife, rousing herself from the inertness of her usual manner, had not most vehemently protested against it; declaring that it would entirely ruin her constitution, and break her heart, to go into the country—an assertion which appeared the more ridiculous, as her poor children were half dead for want of air and exercise, and she herself was bloated, pale, and looking older, by at least ten years, than she really was, and the country might give the restoration she evidently wanted.

As old Mrs. Harris, anxious to soothe the affliction, or direct the researches of her son, would now frequently look in, after her own labours were over, Letty began so far to rouse herself, as to stuff the novel she had been reading under the dirty squab on which she usually sat, and to bid little Mary—"Bring the brush, and sweep the hearth;" and as the child, naturally lively and active, had little pleasure in the society of a mother, who seldom spoke, except to command silence, and rarely moved, save to give a heavy blow to the disobedient, it was no wonder that, although only five years old, she was desirous of pleasing her grandmother, or that Billy, her brother, imitated her, in winning a little praise, or an affectionate smile.

As positive necessity now compelled William to part with the girl who had assisted them, poor Mary became her sole substitute, and many a time would a tender tear follow the father's smile, when her various efforts to procure him some accommodation were exhibited. Invention, with Mary, supplied the place of strength, and affection quickened the powers of invention—thus, although she could not set a kettle of water on the fire, yet she could, with great exertion, put on the kettle when empty; and having already stationed Billy close by with a pitcher of water, she could thus pour some in. By extraordinary labour, and an incredible number of journeys around it, she even contrived to make her mother's bed; and having undertaken to wash her father's shirt, when the skin was rubbed off her little white hands, and the smart became intolerable, she had the resolution to sing at the wash-tub, lest he should notice her situation, and compel her to relinquish her object.

Happy would her grandmother have been to have taken such a child under her own care, and to have communicated to her all the knowledge she possessed; but as she was the father's sole comfort, she could not make the proposal at this time: besides, the long illness, and the funeral expenses of her husband, had thrown her a little behindhand in the world, and she was a woman of such strict integrity, that until she had paid her debts to the uttermost farthing, scarcely could she allow herself the comforts of life, and, of course, she dared not venture to treat herself with such a companion.

Time, instead of removing poor William's difficulties, seemed to increase them; for although he was ever seeking work, and willing to put his hand to anything, yet as he only procured occasional jobs, and those out of his own line, though he worked very hard, he was poorly paid, and a few shillings now constituted the earnings of the week. His wife, unwilling to forego her wonted indulgences, and having totally lost that pride of appearance which she had once carried to excess, proposed parting with those articles of furniture, which had decorated the pretty parlour which William had, with laudable ambition, prepared for her bridal reception. This was agreed to with a deep sigh; but alas! it was found, that long neglect and abuse of the furniture had so far abated its value, that no rubbing of little Mary's, or even her father's, could restore it to a decent appearance; and the poor man had the mortification to accept from a broker the sixth part of that sum which he had worked so hard to procure, in order to gratify the wife who had so soon ceased to administer to his comfort.

When, however, this money was in his hand, he informed his wife and mother that he could now, with a very trifling addition, repay a sum owing to his late master.—"You know, mother," said he, "that, agreeably to your advice, I determined never to be in debt; but the long illness of my wife, and the cheating of one of her nurses, having thrown me behindhand, I chose rather to borrow money of my master to pay the doctor and the rent, than owe it in any other place, thinking I could work it out; but circumstances prevented this; of course it still hangs over me, and at times troubles me sadly, for I would rather want bread than be in debt."

"More fool you," said the wife; "for out of the large sums owing by your master, who will ever think of ten pounds due from a workman?"

"I would nevertheless pay it as soon as possible," observed the mother; "a debt of this kind is a sort of disease, which wears a man out, and which, in times of trouble, it is more particularly his duty to get rid of."

"I dare say then," observed little Mary, "that when mother is so bad, it is with thinking of what she owes for the——"

A tremendous box on the ear stopped the artless communication of the child from the enraged mother; but the father's suspicions were awakened, and a rigid inquiry taking place, it was found that all the sum in his possession was due for sugar and tea, of a finer quality than that which he had lately purchased, with which his wife chose to regale herself during his absence, thereby adding to that state of nervous debility into which the indolence of her habits had plunged her; to this also was added a debt to the circulating library, for two sets of books spoiled by the youngest child, who had been permitted to tear them, to keep her quiet when she was cutting her teeth, to save the trouble of nursing her.

William paid these debts, as considering them the more pressing and disgraceful; but so much was he hurt by the disingenuous and thoughtless conduct of his wife on this occasion, that he declared, "another novel should never enter his house," and he forbade the master of the circulating library from sending one. He also animadverted so strongly on the long-cherished indolence of his wife, the forlorn state of his children, and above all, on the shocking appearance which idleness and dirt had given to the person he once thought so lovely, that the sleeping vanity of Letty was once more roused, and she determined to let him see, that when she chose to be smart, she could look as well as ever she did.

As it was not smartness, but cleanliness and tidiness, which the unhappy husband wanted, he could not help gazing with astonishment, when on the following Sunday he beheld his wife, stuffed, as well as she was able, into the showy gown and smart bonnet which she had worn in the first year of their marriage. This was now six years since, and in that time dress had undergone a complete revolution; so that even the wife of a working man, who had no pretension to being fashionable, was yet under the necessity of varying the form of her clothes to a certain degree—the short waist was now exchanged for one of moderate length, the full skirt robbed of half its materials, and the showy riband exchanged for plain white, or simple drab. The idle wife, who had been dozing and crying away her time, noticed none of this, and roused by ill-humour and pride, instead of resolution and penitence, into a temporary exertion, she once more pulled out those treasures her extravagance had purchased, and appeared at once superfluously and yet ridiculously apparelled, "willing," as she said, "once more to go to church with her husband."

William was glad of her exertion, and desirous of encouraging her to persevere; but a sense of decency compelled him to declare—"That he could not go out with a person who was unlike every body else, and, in short, very *improperly* dressed."

"Improperly! I have got my very best gown on."

"True! the gown is too good: these are not times for journeymen's wives to wear silk gowns."

"I did not buy it *now*, you know."

"No; but we should not at *all* times wear even that which costs us nothing: to be plain and decent is always becoming, especially to the poor."

Letty had expected admiration, and she could not brook reproof; she replied with bitterness, and her husband, flinging out of the house in anger, went straight to his mother's lodgings, resolving to accompany her to the place of worship she frequented; and Letty, seeing she had so far awakened her energies as to dress, and remembering that she had no amusement at home, actually went to church by herself.

Great events frequently arise from small causes—the oddity of her appearance, increased by the waddling gait, and the uncouth gesture which long seclusion had induced, occasioned many people, as they came out of church, to turn and look at Letty; and one gentleman was so much struck by her apparent exhibition of finery, and the circumstance of her green and orange shot silk trailing down the dusty steps of the churchyard, that he could not help inquiring, "who she was;" and heard, with symptoms of disgust, "that she was the wife of a journeyman silversmith called William Harris."

This person was one of the assignees of William's master, and he instantly recollected the debt due to the concern. In consequence of this, he called at William's house during the evening, to inform the poor man, "that if the debt were not immediately discharged, he might expect to be arrested."

This terrible threat completely finished the state of gradual distress to which William had been long sinking, and for some hours he was stupified with despair; he paced up and down his house, looked wildly around, as if he were already imprisoned, and longed to escape; he then gazed on his children, and clasped them one after another to his arms, with an emotion which almost terrified the little innocents; and at last, bursting from them all, he fled from the house, with the air of one whom distress had rendered frantic.

In going up the street, he was met by an old man who had been his fellow-workman, but in a far inferior situation to himself: this person noticing his pale looks, inquired, "if he were well?" which he noticed not, but stopping short, and looking earnestly at him, he said—"Pray, John, in your line of work, could you ever make more than fourteen shillings a-week?"

"Never, but I did not often get more than twelve or thirteen—in bad times about ten shillings."

"Umph! but you have a large family?"

"I have seven children living, and have had the sorrow to lay three sweet babies in the earth."

"Yet you never had any help from the parish."

"Oh no! thank God, I was always above that: when I had the fever, my club helped me; but that is all the assistance I ever had, except, as I may say, from my wife—God bless her! she always did her best, and so pulling together, we got on; and bad as times are, here we are yet, you see, and don't owe sixpence to any one."

"And how do you get on since our place was broken up?"

"Oh! I have got into decent employment, for as soon as my wife saw how things were, she took in washing, and that made people know her, and hear how I was situated, and so they made friends for me; besides, my children are getting up and work hard; so that one way or other, though we find the world a rough master, yet we can live in it, and with thankful hearts too, for we know that many are much worse off than us."

Every word the honest man uttered was a dagger to William, who, with not half the family to maintain, had yet expended more than four times what had supported that family. He could not help asking himself, "how much better off am I than

my father was, who never worked more than half his time?" and when he recollected how many days he had worked harder than his fellow-labourers—how often he had denied himself even apparently innocent recreation, and how constantly he had resisted all the temptations to conviviality which he might have been led to after his father's example, he could not help exclaiming, "that he owed all his misfortunes to that ungrateful wife, from whose selfish heart he had constantly endeavoured to remove every cause of sorrow."

Whilst these thoughts passed his mind, he was sometimes led to resolve on quitting for ever that home which might soon be exchanged for a prison, but the thoughts of his mother and children alike forbade that determination: leaning over some railing which overlooked a meadow on the edge of the town, he stood some time in deep contemplation, and it is probable would have remained longer, if two men passing close to him in earnest conversation, had not obliged him to hear them.

"Surely," said one to the other, "it is better to be a sailor than a soldier; he sees far distant countries, gets much better pay, is fed by the king, and in case of a battle, has much better chance for escape; besides, every one loves an honest Jack Tar."

"But he has not so much bounty-money to begin with," replied the friend.

"Not so much, I grant, but still there is a very handsome sum now offered; and if a man is really a decent fellow, and has a trade in his hand, why, dear me, he's quite a prince as it were on ship-board, and can afford to send his wages to his wife, or any thing else he gets."

William darted forward, with eager but tremulous enquiries; he learnt the place where volunteers of this description were accepted, and having received his directions, he lost no time in placing himself beyond the power of retreat; and when he re-entered his own dwelling, he was relieved from the dread of that arrest which had drove him to madness, but yet agonized by the idea that this was the last night he should spend with the children on whom he doted, with that wife whom he had loved with only too much tenderness.

Whatever may have been the cause of our anger, and however justifiable may be our estrangement from one with whom we have been long and tenderly connected, still there is something inexpressibly affecting in the idea of seeing them no more—of tearing asunder those sacred and endearing ties, which time has ratified and mutual suffering or enjoyment entwined; and many, many times, did poor William gaze on his sleeping wife, with looks of love and meltings of tenderness, as fond and as sincere as when he received her from her dying father, an artless blooming girl. He reviewed his own conduct towards her, and remembered how far he had kept his promise, and bitterly lamented that his power could go no further; consoling himself with the recollection that his conduct was still, even in leaving her, the reverse to that of his father, who had for several years lain a heavy burden on the industry of *his* wife. He then thought of his mother, and soothed himself with the belief that she would be a stay and support to his children; but when he thought on all she must inevitably suffer in losing him, who had been the comfort of her heart, during the whole period of his life, all his hopes seemed at once to forsake him, and he wept with infantine weakness.

In this situation Letitia found him on awaking, and in answer to her inquiries, he unfolded by degrees that terrible truth which it was no longer in his power to conceal, softening it by the information that she would constantly receive every shilling of his wages; and that as it was probable that he might be fortunate enough to secure prize-money, she had a right to look forward to better days.

For some time the wife appeared overwhelmed with the stupor of amazement, from which she recovered only to reproach him with bitterness, for what she termed, "deserting his family," and to lament over her own misfortune in marrying at all, since, before she married, she never knew a sorrowful hour.

Language so unjust would in all probability have divested the husband of all the pain he had so lately experienced on her account, but the entrance of his mother, who had dreaded the threatened arrest, once more dissolved him in anguish.

When William was able, he gave to his mother a circumstantial account of the feelings under which he had laboured, the conduct he had pursued, the provision he had through this medium made for his family, and his earnest request that she would take his wife and children under her own care and protection; at the same time, he earnestly besought her to pardon the rashness of an action dictated by his necessities, and every other in his past life, in which, during the forwardness of infancy, or the impetuosity of youth he might have grieved or offended her.

"There is no other error," said the fond mother, overpowered with emotion.

She turned her eyes on her son, she saw the agony of his soul, she considered his situation, and perceived how necessary was fortitude to him at this trying moment, and recovering her voice, she added—"Nor is *this*, my son, to be considered an error, since I really know no better means that you could have adopted in the present times, either for paying your debt or assisting your family; the hardship is your own, and I trust your children will be one day grateful for a sacrifice, which few men at your time of life would be willing to make."

The self-control of his excellent mother, and the consolation her praise gave him, somewhat re-assured the afflicted man; he placed in the hands of his wife the remains of that money which he had received from the officer who engaged him, and giving her a tender kiss, replied not to the observations she had so recently made. His children, alarmed by the action, and partly understanding the preceding conversation, crowded round him, and besought him, with all the innocent endearments of which they were capable, "not to leave them." Again his heart was rent, his eyes overflowed, and the sorrow of his soul enervated his trembling frame; the grandmother drew them gently towards her—"Mary," said she, "do you not see that you are just killing your dear father? yesterday you read in the Bible these words—'What mean ye thus to weep and break my heart?' and you said—'it was cruel in people to do so.'"

"I did," said the sweet child, sobbing; "but, grandmother, I will not be like them—I will not break dear father's heart."

So saying, she disengaged her arms which had clung round him, and snatching one last hasty kiss, she ran and hid herself and her tears; her little sister, whose chief nurse she had ever been, followed her.

As poor Mrs. Harris took little William from her son's arms, she threw her own round him, and pressing his cheek, she cried—"The God of battles be with thee, my son! May thy mother's blessing be thy shield and thy comfort."

William, conscious he could endure no more, sprang away as fast as his trembling limbs permitted; the eyes of the mother looked forward, and beheld him no longer; the wife sunk back, fainting, in her chair, conscious now all was over, that she had lost the best of husbands, and the most faithful of friends.

CHAPTER III.

Feelings of terror these for evils past,
Feelings of hope to be receiv'd at last.

CRABBE.

When that acute sense of sorrow, which now distressed this humble family, had so far subsided as to enable them to consider on the circumstances in which they stood, old Mrs. Harris proposed, "that the house in which her son had lived should be given up, and as she was obliged, on account of her schoolroom, to take one larger than she had otherwise occasion for, they should, agreeable to the desires of her son, henceforward live together."

But the moment Letty ceased to grieve, she ceased to reason; she had now a well-stocked purse, was free from debt, and had the promise of a small but certain stipend; she therefore did not hesitate to say, "that although very miserable in being left in her poor weak state, yet she would not increase her misery by putting herself in the power of a mother-in-law." Mrs. Harris then proposed taking one or more of the children—"she wished for her namesake."

"I can't spare *her*; I have nobody else to take care of things, and to wait on me."

"Well then, I will take the boy; I can teach him to read with my children, and improve him in many things," said the grandmother.

"No, I will not let him go; but you may take the little one if you like."

Although nothing could be more inconsiderate, than to lay the burden of a child which could not take care of itself upon this poor woman, yet she did not refuse it, because she was truly solicitous really to benefit the object of her kindness. This little girl, who was a beautiful and engaging infant, had been christened "Matilda Theresa," by the infatuated mother, with whom her poor husband had become tired of contending this point; but from this time, we shall designate it by the name of "Matty," which the prudent grandmother now thought proper to adopt.

From the time poor William went to sea, all that had been wrong in his household naturally became worse. The mother having an excuse for sorrow, sought again her only comfort, in a sorrowful story and a cup of good tea. Her little boy being at too great a distance from his grandmother's school to take the advantage of attending it, passed his time in the streets; and little Mary, being made a perpetual slave in the house, by doing work beyond her strength, lost that degree of mental improvement of which she was capable, and which it had been the pride of her fond father to inculcate.

By the time William had been absent three months, not only had the money been expended which he left, but every extra article of household furniture, and even the silk gown of his thoughtless wife, was sold, and the produce expended. As, however, the accounts received from him were good, no change took place in the conduct or prospects of Letty; between her and her mother-in-law there was very little intercourse; but the latter, during this period, by dint of great care (for the profits of her humble establishment were very small), not only maintained her grandchild, but paid off the arrears of debt contracted on behalf of her husband: and she now held herself in a kind of awful expectation of the trouble, which in the very nature of things must shortly befall her, endeavouring, by every opportunity that offered, to imprint on the minds of her grandchildren, those lessons of religion and honesty, which could alike fit them for this world, and that which is to come.

Alas! the threatened storm descended too soon. In one of those naval encounters, in which the battle is "not always to the strong," poor William had the misfortune to be severely wounded and taken prisoner. Under the circumstance of the affair it was so generally believed that he must have died, that he was considered as gone, and of course his pay ceased from this time; and although romantic hope or fond affection might search into probabilities, with the distant expectation of seeing him again, one thing at least was certain, that his widow and children were deprived of all support, and thrown on the mercy of a world by no means inclined to favour them, or admit of their claims on its bounty.

This was indeed an overwhelming stroke to his wife; and a stranger might have concluded, from the grief she manifested, that there never had existed a more affectionate wife, or one more devoted to the welfare of a husband. Those who feel nothing for others, feel the most for themselves, and Letty's sorrow on this occasion was indeed severe; it awoke all that was left of good in her character, and she now appeared so sensible of the worth of him she had lost, that poor Mrs.

Harris, who had now seen the last wreck of her earthly hopes destroyed, subdued her own sorrows, to console those of the woman who had caused her misery.

The constitution of Letitia had been completely undermined by her own idleness, and further injured, since her husband's absence, by the unlimited indulgence of every prejudicial habit; still the change was so gradual, that she was not aware of it herself; she had complained, until she was neither believed by others, nor did she believe herself to be in the state she spoke of; but the loss of her husband, and with him the loss of all her comforts, really effected that change of which she had talked so long. Mrs. Harris soon perceived that she was now really weak, that her appetite was gone, and that she was as unable to work as she had formerly been unwilling; she therefore once more, with the utmost kindness, proposed that she should remove to her house, saying, "that she did not doubt, but when all together, they should be able to do something for a living," adding, "my school increases so much, that I have need of help."

"I hate teaching children," said Letty.

"I have plain work offered me in abundance," replied Mrs. Harris; "but I cannot take it in, and do my duty to my scholars; besides, my eyes are getting bad; you can take that business therefore."

"I never liked sewing in my life—it is so very stupid, in my opinion," said Letty.

"I named it, because there is no labour in it—otherwise, I could procure you clear-starching."

"*That* I abhor of all things; clap, clap, clap—I should be sick of my own noise."

"Well, never mind, if you could get into the air, and recover your appetite, and gain strength, you are yet a very young woman, and I don't fear but I could procure you an easy service; in case we can, I will take all the children, and struggle as well as I can with them."

"Service! I go into service! no, I will die first. I never was a servant, nor I never will be one."

"So much the worse for you," thought Mrs. Harris; "for since you were born in that state of life which demanded it, your father ought to have placed you in it. Service would have subdued your temper, taught you your duty, showed you the value of money, and made you a happy wife, instead of a wretched widow."

Although Letty was ready to exclaim, "she would die before she would do many things," yet she soon found this was sooner said than done. Death at a distance is a summer cloud, which we invoke as a friendly shadow; but death near us, is a tremendous rock, whose fall we deprecate. Letty did not, however, hesitate to accept the offer of her good mother, and as she now removed to a considerable distance from her late dwelling, where her habits and conduct were entirely unknown (for her husband's mother had never complained of her conduct, even when it grieved her the most), she soon made many friends. Her appearance was highly interesting; she was yet young, and her paleness appeared to be the effect of sorrow; so that many considered her as dying of a broken heart, and sought by every means in their power to alleviate her sufferings. She is not the first woman whose selfish sorrows have been thus dignified by a misjudging world, while the real mourner has pursued the path of duty unnoticed.

So long as there was any way to avoid exertion, Letty continued her enervating practices, and by this means, indeed, her disorder was confirmed, which might otherwise, by change of air, novelty of scene, and the prudent nursing of her kind mother-in-law, have been removed. That poor woman had now indeed burdened herself beyond even her powers of endurance, and but for the sweet temper, innocent prattle, and useful activity of little Mary, she would have sunk under it; for hard indeed did she find it, after spending many hours in the distracting noise and incessant occupation of her school, to listen to complaints she could not remedy, entreaties she could not comply with, and wants she had no power to satisfy; but, alas! to this was shortly added, the actual labours, and the sleepless nights of a regular nurse.

When Letitia began really to consider her life in danger, the alarm she felt greatly precipitated the event she feared; and as her illness increased, her conscience awakened, and she, with great earnestness, entreated Mrs. Harris one evening to fetch a clergyman to pray with her, saying, "she should die before morning." As they lived at the outskirts of the town, Mrs. Harris could not go so far, but she fetched a dissenting minister who lived near, and whom she knew to be a good man, and one that often visited the sick in his own congregation, of which she had lately constituted one. When this gentleman came, he fell into conversation with the invalid, and as Letty had obtained from her reading a mode of expression somewhat above her station, he was induced to pay more than common attention to her; and as he soon found

out her character, he repeated his visits. Strict, and even severe in his investigation, both from conscience and habit, the minister did not hesitate to lay the sinfulness of her conduct, in the clearest point of view, before the dying woman, and to say in effect—"Repent, or thou shalt in nowise enter the kingdom of heaven;" neither did he for a moment allow her to suppose that she would recover from her illness: believing her to be a dying woman, he told her so; and although he himself contributed, as far as he was able, to assist her in obtaining food and medicine, yet his great object of care was to prepare her for that awful state she was now called to enter.

Deeply affected by the precipice on which she stood, and seeing clearly the errors she had committed, the dying penitent endeavoured, when it was too late, to retract many a vain speech, and atone for misconduct she could not repair, by a full acknowledgment of error. By the affecting confessions of her faults, and the tender advice she now gave her poor children, their grandmother, who was a woman of the truest sensibility, was worn out by these pathetic appeals to her feelings. All day long she worked to procure bread for them all; during the night she administered to the invalid; and if, worn down by fatigue, she crept into the little bed she had for conveniency laid by the side of her daughter, she was not unfrequently called out of it to pray beside her, or to read some portion of scripture for her comfort; so that it was at length justly observed, that if Letitia had not left this world when she did, Mrs. Harris must have died, for she was worn to a skeleton.

The last closing scene had indeed nearly robbed these unfortunate children of their only support, for poor Mrs. Harris, in consequence of her kind exertions, was afflicted with a rheumatic fever, in which she lost the use of her limbs; and when at last she slowly recovered, she found, to her severe mortification, that in a great measure the use of her fingers was irretrievably lost, and her power of sewing, or teaching others to sew, was gone for ever.

During this season of affliction, poor little Mary had exerted herself in the most extraordinary manner: imitating her grandmother's care of her mother, she had made the gruel or broth necessary for the invalid; fed her with an adroitness, and waited upon her with an activity, which astonished all who beheld it. The poor are generally kind to each other in times of sickness, and Mrs. Harris was a woman too much beloved for her many virtues, not to be esteemed highly by her neighbours, who took in turn to watch with her during this severe affliction; but little Mary was her only nurse in the day time, and she had taught William to take charge of their little sister, who had also some employment given her, which at once amused her, and kept her from mischief, agreeable to the instructions of the good grandmother.

When poor Mrs. Harris was once more able to look round her habitation, she perceived a melancholy change; all her goods, save the merest necessaries, were gone, to provide for the demands of her illness and that of her late daughter: she was in arrears to her landlord, and her little school was dispersed, while three poor children, who depended on her for support, shewed, by their pale faces and shrunken flesh, that want was already wasting their strength and destroying their energies; even the cheerful smile and beaming eye of little Mary was gone, and though her goodnatured countenance retained its character, yet its engaging liveliness was lost.

"My dear child," said the grandmother, "you shall go round to the parents of all the little boys I used to have, and tell them I shall begin again on Monday—'tis of no use to tell the girls," added she, with a deep sigh, "for I cannot teach them to sew."

"Nor I," said Mary, with a still deeper sigh, for she, poor child, had never yet been taught—from her father she had learned not only to read, but write a little; from her mother she had learned nothing; and since she came to live with her grandmother, she had been only a nurse and a servant to her sick relations.

Mary put on her bonnet, and crawled, rather than ran (as she was wont) to the houses of several of their old friends; most of whom gladly promised the return of their children to that good dame, whose care they had never found equalled. Among others, Mary addressed a butcher's wife, who was standing at her husband's stall, and who immediately consulted him upon the subject.

"What!" exclaimed the butcher, "is the poor soul got better? I am heartily glad of it; ay, ay, let the boy go back to her, by all means: and here, my girl, take her this neck of mutton, with our regards, and tell her that any time when she wants a basin of broth, just to send me word by Tom, and she'll be welcome to a bit o'meat for it."

Mary, with glistening eyes, and thanks faltering on her tongue, prepared to take the meat, but before she could receive it, sunk fainting on the floor, overpowered, as the bystanders supposed, by the smell of the shop, but in fact, by long fasting, walking farther than her strength permitted, and excessive joy at receiving a gift, which might save herself and family

from famishing.

The poor child was immediately carried into the house with great care, and as soon as she recovered, was presented with a little bread steeped in some hot elder wine, which had soon such an exhilarating effect upon her, that the good-natured couple agreed she should take the bottle home with her.—"Indeed," said the husband, "I think Sam had better set out for the sheep now; he can take the bottle and a basket of turnips for dame, and see the child safe home, all at once."

Mary cast an anxious glance to see that her valuable present of mutton was still secure to her, and as she did so, a deep blush overspread her countenance, fearing lest her solicitude had betrayed her necessities, which she desired to conceal, not from pride, but delicacy and tenderness, trembling lest her grandmother should suffer the pain of knowing, that for many days herself and brother had subsisted on a small portion of potatoes, of which she had taken the least share for herself.

Mary, with feeble but joyful steps, now went home, accompanied by the butcher's man carrying his master's welcome present; and there is little doubt but the nutritious food thus bestowed really saved the life of this amiable child, who was now reduced to a state of weakness little suspected, even by that tender relation who observed her with so much kindness, since she could not suppose that a child of scarcely six years old would have displayed so much affection and forbearance. Mary had been early taught to *taste the cup of sorrow*, and to find her sweetest pleasures in the exercise of her affections; the faults of the mother had assisted to form the virtuous dispositions of the child, by inuring her to self-denial, and compelling her to exertion.

In a short time, all the little boys who used to constitute Mrs. Harris's school, were again found under her mild but efficient government; and many of their parents being led to observe her pale looks and emaciated frame, recollected her long sufferings, and by many little presents assisted in restoring her health and strength. That sorrow which meets the eye, soon gains a strong advocate in the heart. Many of those persons who, after they had beheld Mrs. Harris, felt unhappy until they had contributed to her comfort, would yet have permitted her to die for want of help, and never have reproached themselves for negligence, if they had not beheld her.

From this trait of human weakness, it is evident, that every system of charity which takes the rich into the dwellings of the poor, must be particularly efficacious and beneficial; it improves the condition of one party, the feelings of the other, and the virtues of both.

Little Mary now became particularly anxious to bring Billy forward, under the idea that he could assist her grandmother in the school, as being a boy; and it was soon apparent that he was really of use, and that even little Matilda could do her share; for many boys that were too idle to apply themselves to learning, became ashamed of their ignorance, when a child that could scarcely speak plain was yet much forwarder than themselves. It grieved Mrs. Harris very much to think that she had it not in her power to teach such a good child as Mary was, how to use a needle, and do many other things suitable to her age and sex; and although the good child was willing to exert herself in the lowest drudgery, and do any thing that was desired by her grandmother, yet she was very sensible of her loss in this respect, and made many pretty successful attempts to remedy her deficiency of instruction.

When things had continued in this state some months, and when poor Mrs. Harris had begun to regain her strength, and overcome her more immediate difficulties, she was one day informed by a neighbour, that "there was a vacancy in a girl's charity school in the town where she lived," and advised to apply for it for Mary.

Although Mary was not only the greatest pleasure and comfort of her life, but of much real use to her, and the only one of the children that could be said to earn her bread, yet she did not hesitate for a moment to try every possible means of procuring so desirable a situation for her; and as she was highly respectable, notwithstanding her poverty, many people gladly promised her their interest, and she ventured to entertain the most sanguine hopes of success, when on the day fixed upon for deciding this important point, she was, to her utter mortification, informed by the mistress of the charity school, that her petition was rejected by the trustees, on the ground that herself, and of course her grandchild, were dissenters.

Poor Mrs. Harris was in the first moment so disappointed and distressed, she knew not what steps to pursue; and she felt it the more severely, when she perceived a silent tear of grief and mortification steal down the cheek of little Mary. On the following day her mind was more composed, and still trusting the rejection was not final, she summoned all her fortitude to her aid, and determined on venturing to petition the rector of the parish in person, being sensible that she had

not committed any error that ought to exclude her from this favour.

The rector of a church in a large town is a person of very great importance in the eyes of people in dame Harris's station; in country places, the parsonage-house is generally open to the parishioners; and the respect, and even awe, in which his office is held, does not prevent them from a knowledge of his person and manners, conducive to their comfort. In fact, the ties between a minister and his congregation are the most serious, yet the most endearing that subsist in society; and it is greatly to be lamented that this holy and happy union is not at all times rendered as useful and intimate to both parties as it ought to be; but in large towns, where the population is widely scattered, and composed of members of various descriptions, and of little general similarity of wishes and pursuits, there is scarcely a possibility of even the best-disposed clergyman becoming the father as well as the priest of his congregation. He must wait until he is sought for, in a great measure, and be content, by his public preaching and private conduct, to prove that he is ever ready to obey the calls of his duty, by administering in every possible way to the wants and wishes of his people.

Many times did poor dame Harris, with her grand-daughter by the hand, pass the door of the Rev. Mr. Mortimer, before she gained courage to give the gentle tap, which at length announced her. She was shown into a back parlour, where the gentleman in question sat reading to his wife;—he laid down the book as she entered, and rose to hear her business; he was a portly and somewhat stately-looking man, but his countenance was open and benevolent, so that even little Mary though very timid, ventured to look in his face.

The good grandmother briefly related her anxious desire of placing the little girl in the charitable institution, and her great disappointment in the refusal she had met with, which yet not deeming conclusive, she had ventured to intrude on his reverence, in the hope that he would have the goodness to interfere in her behalf.

Mr. Mortimer was pleased with the frankness and simplicity of this appeal, coming, as he thought, from one of a sect whom he had hitherto considered more unsocial and impracticable than any other; but he was obliged to deny the suit, and therefore answered in a soothing voice—"I am really sorry I can do you no good on this occasion; but as it is a fact that the children of dissenters are excluded by the laws of the institution, you see nothing can be done."

"But, sir, the child is my son's daughter, who was a good church-going young man, as all his neighbours can tell you: and for myself, I was one of your congregation, and the minister who went before you, for upwards of forty years. When I went to my present house, I was thrown at so great a distance from church, that, on account of my rheumatism, I could not go thither, and so I went to Mr. Pritchard's, because I thought wherever God had a house open, it was a Christian's duty to enter it, and join in public worship, rather than stay at home, and, as it were, refuse to keep the Sabbath."

"You were right, good woman, perfectly right. Religion has too many enemies in this day to afford losing a single friend, under whatever denomination that friend may be ranked: but allow me to inquire, did you find any difference in the two communions which struck you in a painful manner?"

"When I first went to chapel, the prayers being spoken extemporary, instead of being read, was very uncomfortable to me, for I said, 'how do I know what this person may presume to ask of the Almighty for *me*?' and my mind was busied in examining his *words*, when (God forgive me!) I ought to have been lifting up my heart with the petition; but in time, as I knew more of the minister, and got intimate with his manner, why I got easier; for you know, sir, seeing he was truly a good man, I could trust him; and besides, every public preacher, I take it, gets into a form of his own in time, which is as well known to constant hearers as if it were printed."

Mr. Mortimer turned to his lady with a smile on his countenance, which conveyed to her his high approbation of the good woman's sentiments; he was one of those men who relish good sense and sound piety wherever they meet it, and as it happened that he had lately been conversing on this very subject with his wife, he was tempted to examine how far the simple, untaught sentiments of a woman like this, accorded with those high authorities he had been so lately consulting. It was plain to his lady that he was pleased, and as she felt herself very much so, she began to consider how far it was in *her* power to make up to them the situation which she was well assured was really lost to Mary.

"I apprehend," continued Mr. Mortimer, addressing Mrs. Harris, "you have frequented the chapel so long, you would not like to go to church now, even if you had an opportunity."

"Yes, indeed I should, sir, for at my time of life, habits of any kind are not easily changed. I consider myself a church-woman, as such I have presumed to petition your reverence, believing myself to be a proper candidate for the charity I seek. But while I have thus ventured to do myself and the child that service to which we have an equal title with the rest

of our town's-people, I yet beg to be fully understood, that I by no means shrink from being considered a hearer of Mr. Pritchard, one who considers herself under the highest obligation to him for many acts of Christian kindness and charity, and who, in considering him a minister of the gospel, has never presumed to examine those points of doctrine in which he differs from my own people. It was enough for me to hear that which was good, and endeavour to profit by it, so far as I understood."

"I wish, with all my heart, that all hearers, both in church and chapel, were of your description, good woman, since I am certain you neither listened with indifference, nor prayed with coldness, and was willing to accept your teacher in the name of his great Master. I am really sorry it is still not in my power to benefit you, for I have no doubt but the election is already made; but depend upon my future services, whenever an opportunity may occur, for I approve heartily the openness and sincerity of your conduct, and the gratitude of your disposition."

"In the mean time," said Mrs. Mortimer, "I will so far assist you, as to send your grand-daughter to a good day-school, where she will be taught to sew, and as soon as she can work tolerably, I will supply her with shirt-making, for which I will pay her the regular price."

Thanks, heartfelt thanks, broke from the lips of Mrs. Harris, and glistened in the eyes of her grand-daughter; and the good rector, who had long considered his wife one of the wisest and best of women, felt obliged to her for having done that service, which he felt anxious to perform, but did not exactly know how to effect, within the bounds of that prudence it was his duty to remember.

It was immediately settled, that on the following Monday, Little Mary should enter on that branch of education, which, however insignificant it may appear to those in the higher walks of life, was to her of the utmost importance, since it enlarged her sphere of action, and might involve the means of existence for the future, not only to herself, but her sister, towards whom her warmest love, and tenderest solicitude, were always shown. In tracing, with the minutest detail, the early acquirements of this poor child, we trust the reader will follow us with the pity and patience demanded by her situation, observing how the bent of the mind made progress with the acquirement of the hand, and that the virtues of the heart expand with the energies awakened by poverty, when aided by instruction.

Mrs. Mortimer, with the most considerate kindness, provided Mary with two neat frocks, a pair of new shoes, and a bonnet, which she was expressly told were to be worn at school, for as the pupils were in general the daughters of the higher rank of tradespeople there, it was proper that her appearance should be such as not to discredit the mistress of the school. Mary scrupulously obeyed this injunction; she was ever delicately clean in her person, and the mildness of her manners, the promptness of her obedience, and the gratitude she evinced towards her instructors, soon rendered her a favourite with all around her.

Mary had only learnt to sew three months, when she was declared competent to taking any common work her good patroness might think it right to trust her with; and she waited upon her early one morning for the purpose of receiving it. Mrs. Mortimer told her, "to stay till she had cut out some nightcaps by a new pattern." Mary stood by the table, and perceived that the lady took an old newspaper, and pinning it close to the nightcap of which she wished to have the pattern, she doubled the paper in the most exact manner, all around the edges of the cap; then unpinning and taking it off, she cut the paper in the crease which she had thus made, and afterwards laying it over the muslin, which was spread upon the table, she cut out each particular part of the cap, in such a manner that nothing was wasted, contriving, where a little bit was wanted, to put another *little* bit to it, so as to avoid injuring a larger. Mary stored all this in her mind, and determined to put it in practice, whenever she had an opportunity. Reasoning on the subject, she saw not only the utility of this particular business, but concluded that it was by acts of care and good management, that her benevolent friend was enabled to do such deeds of generosity and charity, as she furnished in herself an example of; and she determined, to the utmost of her power, to imitate her, so far as a poor child could imitate a rich lady.

Mary's performance was altogether so much superior to what Mrs. Mortimer had expected, that she was soon induced to give her plain sewing of the best sort; and after a time she allowed her to take it home with her, and work out of school-hours, which was considered by the industrious child as a very great favour. Mrs. Mortimer was by no means one of those managing ladies, who appear to put a poor child to school from charitable motives, (and who really do benefit the child from the opportunity of learning which they thus bestow,) although the *true* motive for their conduct, is the expectation of getting a great deal of work for a very little money. On the contrary, Mrs. Mortimer set down every thing Mary did for her at the ordinary price, and at the end of the quarter, she paid her fifteen shillings for it, saying at the same time, "you must take this to your good grandmother, for it is your duty to give her every farthing you earn; but here is

sixpence, which is my gift to you, and which you may spend as you please."

Mary could not help blushing, and even feeling ashamed as she took the money, for she thought it would have been only right to have given all her little services to so kind a lady, but yet her heart was very glad, when she gave the money to her dear grandmother, and heard her say, "this will help to pay my rent;" but she put the sixpence by, secretly hoping, that in time she should be able to add another to it; for her ambition was awakened; she had a purpose to fulfil, and could neither spend the money upon herself, nor even do that which was much more congenial to her nature—spend it on her brother and sister.

CHAPTER IV.

Each heart was anxious till it could impart
Its daily feelings to a kindred heart.

CRABBE.

In the school where Mary was taught, there were many great girls, who learned embroidery, and various other fancy works. Towards these elegant employments, the little girl frequently cast an eye of admiration and desire, after she became a proficient in her own work. Some who noticed her attention and good conduct, would at times call her to them, and allow her to look over them a short time; and even when the school-hours were over, would permit her to put in a stitch or two. She was always so willing to hold a skein of cotton on her hands, or do any other kind office for them, that they had a pleasure in making any little communication to her in general, although some were very proud, and treated her with haughtiness, as a kind of interloper in their society, as one whose inferior situation in life rendered her the proper butt of pride and ill-humour.

The perpetual sense of business, the consciousness of having much to learn and much to do, preserved the feeling mind of our little friend from many a pang, which these thoughtless children intended to inflict, and her good humour, slow to resent, and quick to forgive, in time subdued many, and rendered the rest ashamed of their persecution; so that by the time she had completed her first year at school, she was surrounded by so many who loved and helped her, that there was scarcely one kind of work going forward, of which she had not a smattering, and many of which she might be termed the mistress.

At the time when she entered on the last quarter, she was possessed of three shillings and fourpence, which had been partly the gift of Mrs. Mortimer, who now paid her grandmother nearly double what the first quarter's work had produced, and partly from little presents given from time to time, by those girls to whom she had made herself useful at school. Possessed of this treasure, which she felt to be justly her own, she hastened to execute the scheme, on which, for a whole year, her grateful heart had brooded; and after calculating, again and again, the purchase she contemplated, at length, on receiving twopence in addition, as a reward for extraordinary attention, from her mistress, she ventured into a linen-draper's shop, and bought a quarter of a yard of cambric, at fourteen shillings a-yard, a purchase of great importance.

It was in the evening when Mary made this purchase, and when she came out of the shop, seeing no creature near her, she sat down on the step of the house-door nearest to her, and unfolding her cambric, she took the paper, and drawing from her pocket a tattered baby's cap, which had been worn in turn by all her mother's children, she began to take the pattern of it, in the same manner she had seen Mrs. Mortimer do by those of larger dimensions. As it was nearly dusk, the linen-draper and his wife came to stand a few minutes at their shop-door, and the latter turned her eyes towards the place where Mary sat, who was now far too deeply engaged with her undertaking to notice them. Astonished to perceive the adroitness with which a girl, scarcely eight years old, went through a business which she had ever found difficult herself, Mrs. Haywood could not help stepping up to her and inquiring, "what she was going to make?" adding, "but indeed I see it is a child's cap—is it for your mother?"

"I have no mother," with a sigh replied the little girl.

"Who is it for then?"

This was a question Mary did not like, nor indeed choose to answer, and the confusion which appeared in her countenance, gave the person an idea which was by no means improbable. "Perhaps you are going to work it for hire?"

"Not for hire," said Mary, "but certainly it is for——because——"

"Oh! I see you will work, and then sell it if you can; what pattern will you do it in?"

Mary with pleasure took a little bit of muslin from her pocket, which was intended by her as a pattern, being copied from a habit-shirt that one of her school-fellows was working.

"Dear me, how pretty! well, you are really a most ingenious child, and when you have completed the cap, if you will bring it to me, I will purchase it, and trim it with handsome lace, and probably get you an order for another or two; you

really are a clever child, and deserve encouragement; step with me into the house, and I will give you some thread and cotton."

As a more welcome gift could not have been devised at this moment, Mary, with hilarity in every gesture, obeyed the summons; and thus possessed of the implements of her industry, she returned home happiest of the happy, resolving, with the first dawn of day, to begin her long-projected task.

In order, however, to give herself time for the undertaking, and indeed, to complete her own pleasure, it was necessary that her brother should share her secret; to him therefore she shewed the cambric, informing him what it was for, and concluded by saying—"Now you see, Willy, that as I shall do this all at spare times, before grandmother wakes, you must learn to make the fire and sweep the room, and do my morning work."

"So I will, sister, and make the pottage too, the same as if I were a girl; you know poor father used to do everything, and why should not I?"

This amicable bargain being concluded, the joy of working something very difficult, but very pretty, went on apace; and in about two months the finishing stitch was put to this wonderful cap, at which poor Willy had alone been permitted to look from time to time, as a reward for the readiness with which he had supplied her household offices. In doing this, his mind had received an indelible lesson of gratitude and integrity, for this little cap, attained with so much difficulty, and on which so much labour was expended, was designed for the gift of gratitude.

It was now winter, and the weather had set in with so much severity, that poor Mrs. Harris dreaded the return of that rheumatic fever which had heretofore disabled her; she complained much of the coldness of her clothing, and observed repeatedly, "that if she had a large warm shawl to sit in, when she taught the children, it might preserve her from the further loss of her hands, which were already contracted."

"In another fortnight," said Mary, "you will have the money for my work, grandmother, and then you can buy yourself a shawl."

"True, my child, but in less than a fortnight the rheumatism will be settled in my shoulders, and then nothing can take it out—but no matter, I must submit to it."

Mary's blood rose to her cheeks, and her heart for a moment leaped with joy, as she remembered that it was possible to gain her beloved grandmother the shawl, by the sale of her treasured cap to Mrs. Haywood, the linen-draper; yet a sigh as quickly succeeded the idea of making such a sacrifice; for it was not in nature, that even the most affectionate child could not help feeling it a sacrifice to change the destination of an object so long treasured, and ruminated on so much, as the little cap had been.

A consultation with Billy, however, decided the matter; for although younger than herself, and ever taking the lead of his opinions from her, he said, shaking his head—"You know, Mary, though other people have been good to us, yet grandmother is best of all."

Mary, with tears in her eyes, confessed "it was very true;" and her innocent heart heaved with a pang of self-reproach, for having for a moment hesitated in performing every possible act of kindness to such a relation as this.

Mary, folding up her cap in silence, proceeded to the linen-draper's, and thought herself fortunate in finding no customers in the shop, but Mrs. Haywood standing alone behind the counter. She immediately recollected the little ingenious child, and when Mary handed her the cap, declared she thought it prettier than she expected, "because she had not supposed that it could have been worked so very full, yet kept so clean."

"Well, child," she continued, "so you bring it to me, it seems, and what must I give you for it? have you fixed on a price?"

"No, ma'am; but if you please, my grandmother wants a shawl; if it be worth any kind of one, so it is but warm, I shall be very thankful to take the shawl for the cap."

"Well, child, that is very pretty of you, I must say, and I will look you out the very best I can afford for it—here is one that is a little damaged, but a very comfortable one; you shall have it, you are a good child."

Mary received the shawl, which was indeed the very thing she wished for, with a low courtsey, but in silence; for the last look of her little cap, and the remembrance of its different destination, affected her. As she was departing, Mr. Haywood entered, and his wife shewing him the cap, induced him to say—"When you bought the cambric of me, child, did you then intend to part with it for the shawl?"

"Oh no, sir, I meant it for—I mean I hoped it would belong to—to——"

"To whom?"

"To Mrs. Cutlet, the butcher's wife; I worked it for her little Susy."

"How ridiculous! she has no right to have any such thing as this."

"She has a right to every thing," said Mary, bursting into a flood of tears,— "Oh yes, every thing—they both have—they saved me when I was starving—they raised my grandmother from sickness. I would—I would give them twenty caps if I had them."

This sudden burst of grateful feeling from a child so diffident, affected the worthy couple, while it enabled them at once to comprehend the reason of her first silence.— "And so, child," said Mrs. Haywood, "you have been saving your money, penny by penny, and spending your time and eyesight on this thing, as a mark of your gratitude; well, I declare I cannot find in my heart to take it, for I have no immediate want of it; you shall work me another instead."

Mary flew back to take the offered cap, but as she held out her hand, she recollected the wants of her grandmother, and drew back.— "No, ma'am, no, thank you," said she, still sobbing, "I had rather have the shawl, indeed I had."

"You shall have both, child," said Mrs. Haywood, "both at *this* time; but I will give you a piece of cambric, and you shall work it for me, to pay me for the shawl; don't you understand it now?"

"Oh yes! yes!" cried the joyful child, "and I am so much obliged to you."

The piece of cambric was immediately given, and away the child bounded, in the first place to her grandmother, to whom she could now disburthen her mind of its secret, and rejoice in her success.

"Poor little thing, how happy she is!" said Mrs. Haywood to her husband.

"Yes, she is happy to-night; but you have done a foolish thing, my dear, notwithstanding, for if she is honest, you have burthened her with a debt; if not, you have thrown away a shawl, and a piece of cambric after it."

Mary caught these words, and for a moment she felt hurt; but her pleasure overbalanced her pain, the moment she had resolved to let Mr. Haywood see how quickly she would fulfil her engagement.

When Mary had received the warm kiss, and witnessed the self-congratulations of her grandmother, had doubled the large shawl, and walked twice round the wearer to adjust the corners, and admired her on every side, she departed, accompanied by Billy, to present her innocent acknowledgment of kindness. She found the family sitting round the fire, and the pretty infant, for whom she designed her present, on the lap of its mother, and her eyes sparkled with delight, as she placed the offering in that mother's hand, although she uttered not a word.

"Well, for sure and sartain, Mary, this be the prettiest thing ever I seed; and is this done for some friend of madam Mortimer's?"

"It is for you," said Mary, almost breathless, the tide of feeling rushing again to her eyes; "I worked it myself to give little Susy."

The butcher rose, and taking up the cap, put it upon his great red hand instead of the child's head, and declared, that though he didn't understand such matters, it appeared to him as fine as a cobweb, and as delicate as a sweetbread. "I shouldn't wonder," continued he to his wife, "if Mary were to come to be a great milliner, or something in that way, for you see she has, as it were, a genius and genteel notions which helps young women forward wonderfully, when they take the right way; and I'm sure she'll do that, for her father was as honest a lad as ever trod on shoe-leather; and if ever she should come to be that, this child, if it lives, shall go 'prentice to her."

"That it shall, pretty lamb," said the mother, at once pressing her baby to her heart, and gazing on Mary with a look of smiling kindness.

Mary's enjoyment on this eventful evening had fully repaid her for the privation of her money and all her labour, but that which ensued, she soon found to be indeed a burden on her hands; days were now at their shortest, and her grandmother could ill afford her those candles which were necessary to expedite her work, which she was yet so anxious should be finished, not only for its own sake, but that her lessons on the subject might make a lasting impression on the minds of her grandchildren, that poor Mary felt the task altogether a severe one. Happily came a week's holidays, which, as there was no secret in this business, were entirely appropriated to the affair; so that at length the cap was actually brought to Mrs. Haywood, a full month before she had allowed herself to expect it.

Mrs. Haywood, with a look of triumph in her eyes, handed it to her husband, who, from the nature of his business, understood such things quite as well as herself.—"Umph, very neatly done, and I declare the child has put four more rows of hem-stitching in it than there was in the other;—how happened you to do that, my girl?" said he, turning to Mary with a smile.

"Why, sir, I did it because I had only one shilling towards paying for the cambric."

As Mary spoke, she laid the shilling on the counter. Mr. Haywood did not appear to notice it, but he told her to stop; and after bustling about the shop for some time, he put the shilling and a parcel together into her hands.—"In this parcel," said he, "you will find various remnants, out of which you may make a few things fit for the purchase of poor people, and I have no doubt but you will sell them readily: with the money, you may purchase such materials of me, as being somewhat better, will fetch a higher price; I shall have pleasure in making you a bargain; continue to be a good girl, and doubt not your success; it is never too soon for people to strive for a living honestly."

With equal pleasure and gratitude, although less violently expressed than on her last visit, Mary again left the considerate and benevolent linen-draper; and opening her treasure, the produce of her industry and integrity, consulted with her grandmother on the best way of turning it to account.

Mrs. Harris was by no means sorry to perceive that the materials of this present were coarse, because she was fearful that more fine work might have injured the eyes of poor Mary, which could not yet have attained their strength, and because she was desirous that Matty, who was now five years old, should begin to sew. As Mary had now completed a year's learning, and had made such progress as would enable her to improve herself, and they had modestly concluded that a year would be the boundary of Mrs. Mortimer's kindness in this particular, Mary did not offer to go again to school until she was sent for by Mrs. Mortimer, and told that she should go for another year, after which she would do very well; as, during this period, it was determined that she should learn more difficult works than any which it was supposed she had undertaken.

As fine work could only be carried on under the eye of the mistress, Mary now dedicated her evenings to the instruction of her little sister, and to the making of such necessaries as were likely to find ready sale among the decent sort of poor, but respectable people, whom they were connected with by means of their school. These articles were principally women's night-caps, children's tippets and pinafores, common baby-linen; and to these were added garters, which poor Mrs. Harris with some difficulty contrived to knit.

The profits on these articles were so very trifling, that it would have appeared to an examiner into them, as if they were made for the benefit of the purchaser rather than the seller; but yet from these slender means, Mary was enabled to find some clothing for herself and the other children, and even to send William to a night-school, where, emulating her industry, he soon rendered himself master of writing and accounts, and was highly in favour with his master for the excellent example he gave to all his school-fellows, though the youngest of the party.

Every thing Mary did in this apparently separate business, was under the immediate direction of her grandmother; yet she was permitted to dispose of the little gains it afforded, as a reward and stimulus to her industry, and a means of drawing the ties of affection still more closely in the family, by showing them how much they were calculated to benefit each other in future life, from mutual exertion and love for each other.

When Willy came home at night, eager to show his neat writing-book, or exhibit his knowledge of arithmetic, and little Matty displayed such hemming and seaming to her grandmother, that sister Mary herself might have been proud of it, whilst this sister, at once motherly and childlike, tractable and pliant, yet considerate and judicious, sat cutting out and

contriving how to make the most of her little stock—at such moments, the good grandmother would lift up her eyes to heaven, and thank God that he had spared her for so good a purpose, as that of rearing these amiable children; yet would a tear too frequently visit that eye, as she remembered their worthy father, whose youth, like theirs, had been soothing to her heart, and promising to her hopes; nor could she help earnestly wishing, that he had been permitted to witness the growth of those virtues, in which he would have so much delighted.

On his final doom silence yet rested, but of his death there appeared little doubt in fact; yet as the war still raged, as it was very possible that if he had been exchanged, he should have been hurried to some distant part of the globe, exposed to new climates as well as new battles, there still appeared a great many reasons to flatter expectation with some undefined hope respecting him. On these hopes his prattling children loved to dilate, and his mother could scarcely forbear at times to dwell; but her real views were directed to a far different meeting. She trusted that in another and better world, she should be permitted to enjoy that beloved society denied in this, and where even the erring but repentant wife might also be a partaker of eternal felicity, the gift of eternal goodness.

CHAPTER V.

All is the gift of industry; whate'er exalts, embellishes, and renders life delightful.

THOMSON.

When Mary had completed the second year of her instruction, she had the satisfaction of taking home a beautiful muslin dress, which she had embroidered round the bottom for a lady of Mrs. Mortimer's acquaintance. It had occupied her school-hours for more than eight months, and the money she was to receive from it being nearly four pounds, was an object of such great importance, that Mrs. Mortimer sent a message, desiring Mrs. Harris to come and take it herself.

As the good woman was prevented from doing this by her complaint, which returned with the returning winter, Mrs. Mortimer called at her house to give it her. She was struck with the order, neatness, and regularity, in which she found every thing, and so much pleased with the youngest child, that she promised to give her a year's schooling also; and took Mary home with her, for the purpose of giving her a cotton gown, which might be converted into a couple of frocks for the little girl.

When Mrs. Mortimer arrived at home, she began immediately to speak of all she had seen to the good rector, and to inform him, that she had engaged to send little Martha to school.

"But I shall do a better thing for her," said the good man with a smile—"I have got a promise that she shall be admitted at the charity school, where she will be supported for seven years, and taught every thing a woman has occasion for."

Mary clasped her hands together, exclaiming—"Oh, sir! oh, madam! I don't know what to say."

"You are a good girl, Mary; and seeing you turn out so well, I am quite as glad you were disappointed in the first instance, as it was not likely that two should be admitted out of the same family; but I am to send her name to-night—Martha Harris. Let me see, I must write it down."

"Her name is not Martha," said Mary, hesitatingly.

"What then, child? You called her Matty, I thought?"

"Her real name is Matilda Theresa, sir; but grandmother, thinking that fine names are very foolish for poor people, never lets her be called any thing but Matty; only I thought, sir, if the name was to be written, it should be written as it really is."

"You are right, child, in your conclusion, and your grandmother has been so in her conduct; nothing can be more ridiculous than lofty names and low pretensions. I am thoroughly sick of them; I never go through the streets without meeting with Julias and Marianas enough to fill a circulating library. Yesterday I christened the eldest son of a petty chandler by the name of Orlando. How fine it will sound by and by, when the mother bawls out—'Orlando, come and serve Sophonisba with a farthing candle.'"

"Yet this folly," said Mrs. Mortimer, smiling, "is better than the political one, which a very few years back made the houses of our manufacturers swarm with little Tom Paine's, Charlotte Cordet's, Barras's, and Robespierre's. I know a clergyman who had a child named Buonaparte to baptize one day, and on his observing mildly, 'You choose a very singular name, friend,' he was asked by the father, fiercely,—'May I not choose what I please?'—'Yes,' replied the clergyman, 'you may say Beelzebub.'"

As poor Mary was made a partaker in this discourse, from the looks, as well as words addressed to her, she now ventured to say—"My grandmother thinks a fine name very bad for pretty girls, and she expects Matty will grow up pretty, and very like my mother; so she is very careful to keep her from being *romantic*, I think she calls it—I—I mean conceited and vain."

As Mary spoke, her cheeks became dyed with blushes—a sense of having indirectly exposed her mother's errors to animadversion struck her; but as the good people knew not her failings, no observation arose from her confusion; and Mr. Mortimer observed in reply, though addressing his lady while he spoke—"My dear, in every thing this dame Harris

does, there is so much good sense, as well as good principle, so much modesty and simplicity, yet united with prudence, that I frequently wish she lived nearer to us; if one were in the country now, she would be exactly the person to teach children in a village. I am sure, if our son Francis should get a living in the country, at such a place as Tiverton, for instance, I would immediately try to get her settled under his eye; she would be a blessing to the place. I think I see her in summer-time, sitting under an oak tree, with her little flock around her, enjoying the warm breeze and the cheerful prospect, and——"

"Ay, my dear, these are but pleasant dreams; the incumbent of Tiverton is old, 'tis true, but Mrs. Harris is nearly as old as he; besides, were he to die, I know no chance that Francis has to succeed him, for we have no acquaintance with the patron. I believe in all cases, it is rather foolish to allow ourselves to hope for improbabilities, since it frequently prevents us from enjoying the blessings we have."

"Very true," said the rector; "yet hope sweetens life, and the hope of seeing my dear Frank settled some time, is the dearest that I enjoy; but, however, let us dispatch this child home, with that good news which in her case is the crown of hope."

Delighted as Mary was to take this pleasant information, she yet could not help seeing her kind friends had also in some way a certain share of the troubles of life, and those anxieties for the future, which had pressed upon her from her very entrance into it; and her heart, penetrated with their kindness, and thankful for their goodness, rose to heaven, and ardently petitioned blessings on the heads of those who had blessed her.

Little Matty scarcely knew how to be glad, when informed of her good fortune, because it would be the means of removing her from the grandmother and sister she so dearly loved, and who, with her brother, might be said to constitute the whole world to her; and even the grandmother was observed twice to take off her spectacles, and wipe away the tear that bedimmed them, when she thought of parting with her little darling. She was, however, not only a tender, but a firm friend, and she was well aware that the change would be most advantageous to the child; for this little girl, although active and obedient when under the immediate guidance of any other person, was yet, naturally, of a listless, idle disposition; and therefore the best situation for her could not fail to be one in which she was always under the eye of a superior, until her habits should become fixed, and her principles, as well as her necessities, would tend to render her industrious.

Mary, dearly as she loved this child, to whom, though not four years older, she had ever been a mother, was desirous of seeing her placed in a situation which not only promised eventual good, but bestowed many comforts actually wanted at this time, since not all poor Mary's mending and patching could keep the poor child above the appearance of poverty; and although she had just received what, to her, was a large sum of money, yet she knew that it was all nearly due for rent; and the first and only debt she had ever contracted, in the affair of the shawl, had given her a just dread of falling into that state of anxiety and dependence again.

It was therefore a true feast of feeling to this sensible, industrious child, when, on the following Sabbath, she went to the church, accompanied by her brother, and perceived little Matty, dressed in her neat blue stuff gown, with cuffs and tippet as white as snow, walking up the aisle, and, as they supposed, looking already both plumper and happier than she had ever done before. Never had more sincere praise to God ascended from the lips of any human being, in this house consecrated to his glory, than that which now flowed from the hearts of these amiable orphans, who had been so constantly led by their grandmother to look to Heaven, both in their joys and sorrows, that it was very natural for them to be particularly thankful now.

In the evening of this memorable day, the new scholar was permitted to visit her family for an hour, and they had the satisfaction of finding her as cheerful as they wished; nor did one tear now bedew her blue eyes, even when she gave her grandmother a parting kiss—the affectionate brother and sister walked on each side of her, as she returned to the school, proud and delighted with her; and although fully aware that she had many advantages and comforts which they must continue to want, yet no thought of envy intruded on their youthful contemplations; they felt as if the youngest was entitled to indulgence, and they were happy that she had attained it.

This removal, together with the payment of their rent, made them somewhat easier, but as Mary was now obliged to seek work for herself, there were still numerous difficulties to contend with; and she worked so hard in making up the cheap child-clothes, which were her staple employment, that there was a difficulty in disposing of them. William too began to be a great boy, and he was necessarily an object of much care to the good grandmother; for although he was too young to

go out in the world, he was yet so forward in his learning, and so willing to do something, that it was really a pity he should not be employed. During the first year or two of his residence with her, his grandmother had found him really useful; for as he could read much sooner than children do in general, the little ones whom she taught were emulous of being like him, and even the great ones had no objection to having their lessons taught to them by little Billy; but now he was of the same age with themselves, and his attainments apparently stationary, his authority was not submitted to; and the poor boy was kept in a hot room, unable to read or write for his own improvement, without the consciousness of helping his grandmother in her arduous employment.

There were some children to whom it became necessary, after they were turned of eight years old, to take from their books, in order to render them robust and active, and among them was William. Accustomed to see his eldest sister strain every nerve for their support, and to consider himself as an orphan dependant on the bounty bestowed by a relation, sinking into years and subject to disease, the good boy would have worked for ever at any sedentary employment, if he had not been invited to join in the sports of his companions, or rewarded with the power of increasing his knowledge. The highest gratification William had known in the latter pursuit, arose from studying the only books his grandmother possessed, besides those used in her school; these were, her family Bible, a large edition of Culpepper's Herbal, a hymn-book, and a torn copy of the Gentleman's Gardener.

From the perusal of these (to him inexhaustible treasures) the poor boy had gained an idea, that the happiest life on earth must be that of a person who in any way pursued agriculture, and especially the higher branches of it; and a gardener, who could cultivate the various plants and flowers described in the books he studied, and that could understand their qualities, appeared to him a paragon of knowledge. His ideas on this subject were confirmed by his knowledge of scripture history, which was in every part deeply engraven on his memory, not only from his repeated readings, but by his conversations. It was the custom of Mary, when she came home in the evening, to inquire "what he had been reading?" and from him she attained that knowledge which her own perpetual avocations forbade: to her the boy conveyed not only his knowledge, but his reasoning and desires; and when he succeeded in fully convincing her that—"As Adam was a gardener in the first instance, and Noah in the second, at least it was plain that the world never had done or could do without gardeners, and that if he was one, he would both earn money for himself and for all his family, why, of course, he must be a gardener."

"But there are no such things in a town," Mary would say, "and there are so many manufactories, in which you could learn to get more money; my grandmother says, that really——"

"Yes, but then she says too, that people spend their money, so what good does it do them? Besides, there is smoke, and dust, and swearing, and singing, the noise of people and machines, all buzzing together, as it were to distract you; so that if you get ever so much, it makes you pale, and trembling, and old. Oh, Mary! how different this is to working under a bright blue sky, with birds singing, and bees humming about you, and sweet air blowing in your face, and all the time you keep digging, and thinking on the fine hymns which I can repeat to myself."

Mary shook her head, and wished sincerely that the enthusiasm of her dear William could be indulged; and her mind reverted to the time when the good rector had wished his own son might get the living of Tiverton in the country; for she knew of no other country friend she was ever likely to obtain: her heart ached with the thought, that in spite of all his dislike, Billy must, sooner or later, be compelled to apprentice himself to a manufactory: she was, however, called from this contemplation by an appeal to her humanity, which, like her sisterly affection, was never looked to in vain.

The only one of her neighbours with whom Mrs. Harris held any intercourse, lived at the next door, and was, like herself, a widow, and childless. This person endeavoured to support herself by letting lodgings to persons in her own station of life, and taking in washing, so that she was too busy in the world for gossiping, and her visits were very rare; but as she was a good-natured, decent woman, she was always received with pleasure, although a person of very different manners to those of her neighbours; at this time she broke in with abruptness, exclaiming and entreating at the same moment—"Oh, deary me! well to be sure! I never was so sorry in my life!—pray ye, Mrs. Harris, do be so good as to slip on your cloak, and come into my house—only for five minutes."

"What is the matter, neighbour? you seem quite in a flutter."

"Flutter! ay, deary me, so I am; why you see, I couldn't go to refuse taking them in, poor creatures! how should I? she might a died in the streets, and I should never have got over it. If she dies in my house, why, I can't help it, you know—and if I do lose my money, why so much the worse for me—I can't help that neither; but as I say, 'tisn't a Christian act, to

see one's fellow-creatures in distress, and not do one's best for them."

"I wish, Betty, you would just tell me who you are talking about."

"Oh, deary me! why, to be sure, I'm talking about that poor Tallian as lost all he had by the boat that was sunk last night, and so he came to me, with his poor wife almost drowned, and very ill, and begged me, for God's sake, to take 'em in, seeing nobody else would; so there you see, she's been ill the whole day, and is this minute brought to bed of as fine a baby as ever you beheld, with not a rag to wrap it in, and neither money nor meat, as one may say, and *me*, dear heart, as poor as them; and I really do think she'll die; I do, indeed, neighbour Harris."

"Set some gruel on the fire this moment, Mary, and make a nice toast, and follow me with it," said Mrs. Harris, going out immediately with her neighbour, who continued to lament her guest.

The moment Mary perceived the gruel boiled, she ran to her little stock of childbed linen, and selecting every thing which she supposed necessary for the unfortunate little being which had just entered life under such melancholy circumstances, she carefully aired them all, and then wrapping them in her apron, obeyed her grandmother's injunctions. As she entered the house she met the poor Italian, who, with thankful avidity, seized the gruel; Mary placed her little bundle in his other hand, saying, in a gentle voice—"They are well aired, sir."

"Ha! vat is dis? oh, I see vat is here, but, helas! I have no monies! here, chilt, take back, take back, I have no monies; I am ruin—undone—all lost."

"They are my own," said Mary, earnestly—"indeed they are; pray take them; I—I give——"

"Oh, you give me dem—goot!—ver goot! I understant—I take dem wid tanks—you very kind—very goot—I am happy."

The poor Italian, who had been many hours in great agitation on his wife's account, had soon the comfort to learn that she was in a safe way, and to receive, with the joy of a father, his first-born child, wrapped in the comfortable clothing presented by the charitable hand of a child, who could only by hard labour make up what she had taken from her little property. The poor man had repeatedly asserted, "we will not be lost in England," by way of comforting and supporting his wife, and he now exulted in his prophecy; as, however, all his worldly goods, which consisted of a pretty large stock of artificial flowers, was inevitably gone, the elevation of spirits he experienced from the safety of his wife, was the next morning exchanged for bitter complaints of his irretrievable loss.

It appeared that poor Piedro had expended every shilling he had long been accumulating, in making up a beautiful assortment of flowers, which, from offering variety as well as cheapness, might tempt the ladies who would be assembled at D—— races; in doing this, he had reduced himself to the necessity of travelling by water, and a violent storm of rain and wind coming on, had driven the boat in which he voyaged on shore, destroyed the card-boxes in which his treasure was deposited, and so terrified his wife, as to precipitate her illness, and the birth of a child.

A few shillings in his wife's nutmeg-grater, and his own tools, which were always in his pockets, were all that remained to him; but when he became able to reason calmly, he declared, "that if the mistress of the house would permit his stay, he should yet be able to pay her honestly;" and so fully was the woman convinced of this, from perceiving his anxiety to work, and his love to his wife, that she willingly consented; and the Italian, contenting himself with sharing his wife's gruel and a potato, immediately expended the little money which remained to him, and recommenced his business on new materials.

Mrs. Harris continued every day to visit the poor woman; but Mary was fortunate enough to gain a little work at this time, of a tolerably profitable nature, her friend, the linen-draper, having employed her to work some caps, on common muslin, for his country customers; so that she was obliged to deny herself the pleasure of witnessing poor Piedro's operations, which her grandmother frequently spoke of as very surprising, and which she had so far facilitated, as not only to lend him half-a-guinea, (which was a great sum for her), but also to have represented the hardness of his case, in a little petition which she had drawn up, and which was neatly written out by William, and which had been the means of procuring clothes for his wife and infant, together with various little matters, which his talent turned to account in his profession.

In about three weeks, the poor man had accumulated a little stock, which though far inferior to what he had lost, was yet sufficiently respectable to be offered to sale; and as the races to which he had so unfortunately journeyed were over, he

determined to dispose of them, if possible, in the town where he was. His disaster being known, he soon obtained admittance wherever he presented himself; and the flowers were all disposed of, without poor Mary ever having once allowed herself to see them by stepping in.

If any thing could have moved the temper of this good child, it was such an incident as this; especially as at the very time when her grandmother came home from her usual visit of charity, saying—"That the honest flower-maker had returned her half-guinea, having disposed of his stock," she had put the finishing stitch to the work over which she had been so hurried.

"It is very hard," said Mary, the tears springing to her eyes; "and I think, before he sold them, he might just have shown them to me."

"Poor creature! he hurried himself so to get them done before the assembly, that he did not remember you, my dear, or he would have done it."

Mary was soon appeased: she carried her work home, though it was late, and conscious of the real utility of her labours, went to bed, and slept soundly. She had scarcely risen the next morning, when their neighbour came in, saying—"That Mr. Piedro desired she would step in."

"I suppose he is going to Bath," said Mary, "now he has got a little money to take him, poor man; for I understood he came from thence."

When Mary entered the chamber, she saw a table covered all over with bits of various-coloured silk and wire, with scissors and crimping-irons of different descriptions.

"Ah, my good littel friend, come in—I vant you very much; I have great locke in sell my flowers, and now it is time for me to prepare my winter stock for my customers; but I vill no leave this town till I have teach you my art, so far as I can in a littel time. No, no, no, me do best for show de gratitude."

Thankful and delighted, Mary sat down, all eye and ear, to attend to his instructions; but scarcely could she believe her own senses, when, from the heterogeneous mass of shreds and clippings before her, she perceived a beautiful flower was formed, with such skill as almost to rival nature. The simplest forms were of course selected by the Italian for her instruction; but such was her solicitude and adroitness, that in a very few days she was enabled to become a good assistant to him, and capable of entirely finishing several of the more easy specimens. When he perceived this to be the case, he determined on setting out the next day, saying—"it was high time for him to be at home."

Mary felt as if the new talent she had thus acquired could hardly fail of rendering her rich, so much was she delighted with the proficiency she had made; and she began to imitate the Italian, by laying out the money she had earned by working the caps, in purchasing materials for her new business. Ever looking to Mrs. Mortimer as her patroness, she pleased herself exceedingly with the idea of surprising that lady by her acquisition; and she worked both night and day to complete the little assortment of flowers she meditated, insomuch that her grandmother began to fear her health would be seriously injured by her exertions.

CHAPTER VI.

In every single act of progression, a short time is sufficient; and it is only necessary, that when that time is afforded, it be well employed.

DR. JOHNSON.

Poor Mary had at length the satisfaction which she had so unremittingly sought—that of beholding her intentions fulfilled. She arranged her pretty wreaths and little bunches of flowers in the best order, and having rendered her person as neat as possible, she set out with a pale face, but happy countenance, to the house of Mrs. Mortimer.

Mary was under the necessity of waiting some time in the hall, during which, many hopes and schemes connected with her new acquirement passed through her mind, and golden dreams for the future, congenial to the youthful and inexperienced speculator, naturally presented themselves; from these flights of fancy and affectionate intention, she was called to the presence of her benefactress.

Mrs. Mortimer was indeed surprised and pleased with the active mind and ingenious industry displayed by so young an artist; and as she took one flower after another out of Mary's box, she said—"Very well done, very pretty indeed, child!" but still the poor girl perceived that her work was not by any means decidedly approved of; she looked wistfully in the face of her kind patroness, and inquired, with a tremulous voice, "if it were right that she should make such things?"

"It is not wrong in you to do any thing whereby you can honestly help yourself," replied Mrs. Mortimer; "but really, child, I do not like to encourage the sale of cheap flowers, because I think we have too many fineries of that kind amongst us already—however, there is certainly one way of disposing of them harmlessly. Well, child, leave them with me; I will endeavour to sell them for ornamenting the table, which is at present a very prevailing taste; I would have you to pursue your general plan of work, in preference to *this*; but at the same time, I really admire your ingenuity, and would wish you to preserve your knowledge in making such things."

Mary, dropping a silent courtsey, withdrew; her heart was very full, yet she did not permit it to question the justice or the kindness of that sentence, which appeared to sink her lately buoyant expectations in oblivion. When, however, she arrived at home, and beheld her dear grandmother, who awaited her return with no little anxiety, her feelings could no longer be suppressed; and, bursting into tears, she lamented her ill success, and bewailed particularly the circumstance that she had expended all her earnings in the purchase of materials, which had turned to such poor account.

Mrs. Harris perceived that Mary, like all disappointed people, over-rated her own misfortune, and although she partook it, yet she would not increase Mary's sorrow by showing her own, but said to her in a soothing voice—"My dear child, you must not conclude that, because your endeavours are to a certain degree frustrated in the present instance, that the pains you have taken, or the money you have expended, are therefore lost; no, no, take my word for it, your knowledge will be of use some time, and your former industry justifies you in spending your money upon your own improvement, and upon a likely scheme of helping you to more profitable work."

Mary wiped her eyes, and was consoled. "I don't wonder," continued the grandmother, "that Mrs. Mortimer, as a good housekeeper, and a clergyman's wife, is afraid of encouraging servant maids and journeymen's daughters to dress themselves out in flowers, for it is quite certain they go to great extremes now-a-days; when I was young, things were quite different, for if we got ever so good a gown, we never presumed to have it in the same form with those worn by our betters. I am sure, child, you have been a sufferer by the *new* ways, for your poor mother injured her family, and destroyed herself (as one may say), by throwing away, first, money on fine clothes, and then time on foolish books, neither of which poor people have to spare. I am sure, my dear child, you will soon see this matter in the proper light, and not suffer it to sink your spirits, and prevent your future endeavours."

"I see it all now," replied Mary—"yes, I am certain it is all right, and I thank you for talking sense to me, as if I were a woman, and not a silly child."

Under this happy impression, Mary again sought her materials for sewing, and returned to her usual employments; but she was not many days at work before she received, from the kind exertions of Mrs. Mortimer, payment for such portions of

flowers which she had sold for her, as not only repaid her the money she had expended for materials, but left a surplus of seven shillings as profit.

Mary, with that promptitude and exactness which characterized all her conduct in business, having exactly calculated the money, put it into her grandmother's hand, except the seven shillings, with which she immediately left the house.

Mrs. Harris was rather sorry to see Mary go out with this money in her hand, as she had no doubt but she was gone to purchase more materials for the making of flowers; but she was surprised to see her soon return, followed by a man, who, having placed a small barrel of ale within the door, departed, saying—"The little girl has paid for it—all is right."

"How is this, child? said the grandmother.

"When I was at Mr. Mortimer's the last time," replied Mary, "I was forced to wait a good while, because the doctor was with madam; and as he came out of the parlour, he said—'Ma'am, remember to take a little wine every day—wine is sometimes the best medicine;' and so it directly struck me, dear grandmother, how much more you wanted support than Mrs. Mortimer could do; and, as I take it, ale is the wine of poor people, I said to myself, the very first money I get for my flowers shall be spent in buying my grandmother some ale—you know I was disappointed *then*."

"I *do* know, my child, and I see clearly what it was in that disappointment which rendered it so very afflictive to you.—Oh, that your dear father could know with how much tenderness you fulfil those duties he was so desirous of performing, though, unhappily, so unable!"

Mary was never capable of hearing the name of her father unmoved, for all her remembrances of him were of a kind and affectionate parent, struggling with sorrow, which she was too young to comprehend, yet old enough to participate; and she would frequently awaken the still fainter recollections of her brother, by relating circumstances of care and tenderness, which they had shared alike, and which had deeply impressed their infant minds. Willy well remembered sitting on his father's knee on Sunday evenings, to get his lesson; and even Matty had some remote idea of that last agonizing kiss the unhappy man impressed upon her cheek. From these recollections the poor children raised in their hearts an object for love, and a subject of conversation. Their hopes of seeing him again combated with the fears of their grandmother, whom experience and long-continued solicitude had rendered less sanguine.

Mary had the satisfaction of finding, that as the muslin caps she had worked for Mr. Haywood, the linen-draper, sold very well among his more humble customers, he was very willing to give her constant employment; and for some months she continued to earn as much money as enabled her to supply the deficiencies of the little school, which necessarily declined with the powers of its mistress, who, although very capable of teaching tractable children, was not able to undertake those who were of a different description. Poor William still continued a conscious, though unwilling burthen, on their hands, his predilection for gardening remaining in full force, and the means of gratifying it apparently as distant as ever.

The house of Mrs. Harris was situated at the outside of the town, and whenever a half-holiday, or a summer evening, gave William the opportunity of enjoying a walk in the country, he generally repaired to a baronet's seat about a mile off, where he would frequently wait for an hour at a time, for the sake of peeping through the garden doors, as they happened to be opened, and thus stealing a transient glance at those beautiful walks which he vainly wished to tread.

One fine morning in Easter week, he had been thus watching a considerable time, when, at length the door opened, and an object appeared which rewarded his patience, while it awoke his curiosity and stimulated his wishes. An elderly man, of prepossessing appearance, walked out of the garden; he was well dressed, and his grey hair shaded a cheek as ruddy and an eye as bright, as early life could have boasted. He walked with a staff, but his firm step proved that he did not need it, and his whole appearance was a practical comment on the healthfulness of his employment, for he was (as William had already concluded) head gardener to the baronet, and, in the poor boy's estimation, a greater man, or at least a more enviable man, than the baronet himself.

This person was followed by a youth, about eighteen, who was evidently a helper in the gardens, and who walked after his superior with a pot of earth, in which grew an exotic flower, of extraordinary size and beauty, and which was so totally different from all William had seen or read of, that it appeared to him far the most attractive object he had ever beheld. The two persons entrusted with this vegetable gem walked slowly forward, and soon entered a narrow lane, which led to a ladies' boarding-school.

Every person who passed on the way turned to admire this singular production, and it was evident that the old man was not a little pleased with the admiration it excited, and the young one not less proud of his burthen. William continued to follow and gaze, but as the lane was narrow, he observed a very respectful distance, a circumstance he soon regretted, as he perceived an idle lad, with a trip-stick in his hand, coming forward in a direction to meet them, whose head-long gait and rude appearance threatened mischief. The boy passed the old man quietly, when, seeing how the hands of the young one were engaged, with a sudden stroke of his trip-stick he struck the head of the beautiful plant, and ran, laughing, forward.

William saw the blow, and rushing, full of rage, to meet the offender, he struck him with all his might. The young savage was older and stronger than poor Will, and he returned his blow with such interest, that our little enthusiast was instantly laid, with a bloody nose, sprawling in the dust.

The old man had turned at the sound of the trip-stick whizzing in his ears, and the young one had instantly set down the flower, to ascertain and lament the damage it had received; they saw, in the same moment, William's misfortune, and comprehended the cause of it.—"Take my stick," said Mr. Bloomtree to his attendant, "and pay that young scoundrel for both his blows."

It was not necessary to repeat this command; the young gardener flew down the lane, and quickly overtook the object of his just resentment, while William, forgetting his pain in his anxiety, arose, and, with the air of a fellow-sufferer, advanced towards Mr. Bloomtree. To his great satisfaction, he perceived that the head was not broken from the stem, but that many beautiful petals, and shining leaves, were shaken from the flower, and lay scattered on the ground.

The old gardener looked at this devastation with sorrow, which almost amounted to tears, and which induced him soon to unburthen his mind to a boy, who he was confident would sympathize with him. He said he had nursed the plant all through the winter, that this was the first flower it had ever produced, and the only one of the kind in the whole country; that he was going to the boarding-school with it, for his young lady to paint it during its bloom—"But," added he, with a deep sigh, "all is over now, the beauty, and the peculiarity of it, which made it valuable, is all gone."

As William gathered up the fragments, and listened to the old man's lamentations, it struck him that Mary could so far restore it, as to render it fit for the purpose intended; and this idea he accordingly communicated to Mr. Bloomtree.

The solicitude William had evinced, and the sensible and modest way in which he spoke, interested Mr. Bloomtree, and induced him to try the experiment he proposed. Accordingly, when the young man returned, they all went to Mrs. Harris's house; and as Mary had all her materials in order, and her mind ever willing to engage in a good-natured office, she began immediately to repair the flower, as well as she was able.

As Mr. Bloomtree perceived, on his entrance, that the little family had waited for William to share their humble repast, he departed, with his apprentice, to do some business in the town. In two hours he returned, and, with equal astonishment and joy, beheld the unfortunate flower restored, in appearance, to nearly its original beauty, and William looking at it with pride and delight, not less vivid than his own.

Mr. Bloomtree put half-a-crown into Mary's hand, which she was loth to receive, by no means conceiving such to be the value of her work, and being merely desirous of gratifying William. The old gardener, much pleased with all he saw of the family, made many inquiries as to their situation and prospects; and, on departing, told the poor boy, that when fruit time came, he should not forget the blow he had received, nor the trouble he had taken in his service—a promise which by no means comprehended the reward he meditated for him.

CHAPTER VII.

The incident we have related furnished conversation for this affectionate brother and sister for a week, when it was, unhappily, interrupted by a painful occurrence; Mrs. Haywood, the wife of the linen-draper for whom Mary worked, was seized with an inflammation, and died after the illness of a few hours.

The grateful girl was deeply affected with this circumstance, for she loved every person who had been kind to her, and she remembered her early obligations to Mrs. Haywood, with more than common sensibility. She earnestly desired to see Mr. Haywood, and yet felt it was a liberty she could not take; besides, she was well aware that it was impossible for her to say or do any thing which could soothe his distress. As, however, the sympathy of Mary was not of that evaporative quality which "forgets the tear as soon as shed," she continued to muse on the subject, till it struck her, that, bounded as her power was, even *she* might be useful; and with a palpitating heart she repaired to Mr. Haywood's house, and having entered in the most private manner, told the servant—"She would be glad to broad hem the shirt ruffles and cravats of her master."

The offer was a very welcome one, for the family were all in the confusion sudden death, especially of a beloved object, occasions. Mary executed her task with that neatness and dispatch which she always used, although it was the most melancholy one she had ever undertaken; and, seeking to avoid observation, she carried home her work in the evening. The servant to whom she delivered the linen, observed—"That it was a pity she came out in the dark;" and before she was aware, asked one of the young men to go home with her.

Mary was hurt that her name should be mentioned, for she had no desire that her little services should be recorded; and before the maid returned, she slipped out of the house, and was half way home.

Her attention was not however lost, for it reached Mr. Haywood's ear, and affected him exceedingly, considering it (as it really was) the simple tribute of a grateful heart; and he instantly ordered his foreman to present the poor girl with a suit of decent mourning, observing—"That he knew no one who would wear it with a higher sense of respect for the deceased."

This was indeed a valuable present to our poor orphan, who had never been so well clothed in her life. William loved her so entirely, that every good which befel her, seemed doubled as it touched his breast, while she lost the pleasure bestowed on her, by being led from it to contemplate his shabby appearance: but they were alike called from this exercise of their affections, by a message from the ladies' boarding-school of which we have spoken, requiring Mary's presence.

William instantly ran to make himself as decent as he could, in order to attend her. She was glad of his company, for her natural timidity increased as she approached the house, for it was the largest she had ever entered; and she saw at a distance so many fine ladies, that her heart sunk as she approached it.

Mary was shown into the school-room, and the first object that struck her eye, was the remains of the faded flower she had endeavoured to restore; and she was soon informed, that her ingenuity in repairing that flower had been the reason why she was now sent for, and requested to exhibit her artificial flowers, which, by their desire, she had brought with her.

The little band-box was soon opened and emptied, there being no difficulty in parting with so small and cheap a stock, to such a numerous party; but Mary saw with some surprise, that in consequence of a recommendation from the teacher, she was not only paid for her flowers, but each of the purchasers placed in her box some little elegant toy, by way of present. These toys were made by the young ladies at their leisure hours, for the purposes of charity; and they thought them well bestowed on a child, who, under so many disadvantages, evidently possessed much taste and industry, and whose modest manner interested them exceedingly.

"We sent for you, my good girl," said the teacher, "not only to purchase your flowers, but to engage you to give us lessons in the art of making them; we are going to give a ball, and shall want a great number to ornament the room."

The words—"I shall be very happy," had partly escaped Mary's lips, when she suddenly checked herself, and those of—"I fear I cannot—I must ask my grandmother," were heard in their stead.

Murmurs of surprise and disapprobation were heard in the youthful circle, and Mary stood like one condemned, even by her own heart, since *their* wishes for her compliance were not greater than her *own* desire to accede to them—the longer she debated the point in her own mind, the less able she became to give the explanation necessary; and at length her confusion and embarrassment became so distressing, that with a precipitancy unworthy of her, she suddenly departed, overwhelmed with contending feelings.

CHAPTER VIII.

Never trust that man in one thing, who has not a conscience in every thing.

STERNE'S *Sermons*.

The sudden appearance of poor Mary, her face swelled with weeping, her clothes ruffled with the hurry of her walk, and her whole appearance indicating distress, alarmed her grandmother, to whom, as well as she was able, she recounted her story, adding—"They all think me ungrateful; but what can I do? poor Pedro said—"I must never reveal his art,' when he taught me, and, dear grandmother, surely I ought not to give or sell *his* knowledge; it would be dishonest in me, would it not?"

"You should have told the ladies this, my child."

"Oh, dear grandmother, how could I speak amongst so many fine Misses! they are all bigger than me, and dressed so grand—I tried, but the words would not come."

"Poor child," said Mrs. Harris, as she went to her oak chest, and took out the brown camblet gown she wore on Sundays, which having put on, together with her long lawn apron, clean mob, and black bonnet, Mary perceived that she was really about to enter on the serious labour of returning with her, for the purpose of explanation. Mary at this moment felt how blameable that diffidence had been, which cost her aged relation so serious an exertion; but yet she had a pride and comfort in the support thus afforded, which was very consoling. Few people, who saw them walking together, would have guessed from their appearance, how small a portion of the homeliest food had sufficed them, and how many severe trials had conspired to subdue those decencies of appearance which they had yet preserved. When Billy's shoulder had served for his grandmother's support up the hill, he was sent down again to keep school until her return; and poor Mary, with a palpitating heart, though somewhat reassured, stepped into his place.

Mrs. Harris had the good fortune to be received by the head of the establishment, who heard with much approbation, that it was from a scruple of conscience, that a girl, whom a natural desire to oblige, as well as a necessity for earning, had been induced to refuse the wishes of her young ladies. She obviated all Mary's difficulties, by immediately writing to Pedro, and giving him an order, which would make her request the more palatable; and after informing Mary that she would send for her as soon as ever his permission arrived, they returned home, loaded with those presents, which a sense of not meriting had prevented Mary from taking the first time.

When they were about half way down the lane, William met them, and hastily running forward, he cried, in joyful accents—"Oh, Mary! I shall be a gardener at last!"

This assertion called for explanation, and they soon learned, with sincere pleasure and gratitude, that during their absence, Mr. Bloomtree had called at the house, and informed William, that in one month he would be taken into the service of the Baronet, in consequence of the taste he had displayed for plants, and especially on account of the good character of his family.

Poor Mary, full of delightful bustle, lost not an hour in endeavouring so to dispose of her new acquisitions, that she might be enabled to clothe this beloved brother, in that plain, but decent manner, which became his situation, and would save him from the scorn of his future companions. She was soon taken from this task, to the more elegant employment of instructing the young ladies at the boarding-school, in the art of flower-making; having received full powers from her old friend, Pedro, of whom she heard with great satisfaction, that he was now in respectable circumstances. In her new situation, Mary conducted herself with great propriety, being modest, industrious, steady, and obliging; and attained among her new friends a degree of self-possession and unpretending confidence, which had hitherto been wanting in her character; yet so far were her more elegant companions and pleasing occupations from weaning her from her regular pursuits and affectionate cares, that however long the labours of the day had been, the moment she returned home, she would seize with avidity the worsted stocking she was knitting, or the coarse shirt she was making for Billy, truly glad that the employment of the day furnished materials for the labours of the evening.

Small gifts enrich the poor; the unassuming manners, and invariable good humour of Mary, had won her so many friends,

that every one amongst the young ladies in the school was eager to present her with something; and she was loaded with bundles of clothes, of little or no use to the donors, but of great value to her.

When William's wants were supplied, and he had bade adieu to the dear roof of his venerable parent, Mary examined her stores, and finding many things too small, and many others too fine for her own wear, she began so to mend, alter, or in some measure improve them, as to turn all to account, and eventually disposed of them in such a manner, as to procure for her grandmother many little comforts, which she had long meditated purchasing, but which the more immediate wants of William had prevented her from procuring. It was Mary's constant rule, in pursuing any object connected with her business, never to spare any trouble which would make the thing worked upon more valuable; hence trifles, of apparently no value, became under her hands objects of worth; and the habit of consideration, and the power of contrivance this gave her, was surprising. Every part of an old frock or petticoat could be turned to a particular purpose; and the very shreds and clippings, when put together, and quilted into a bit of Billy's old and well-worn jacket, made most excellent iron-holders, which laundry-maids bought with avidity. From three pairs of old stockings, Mary extracted two pairs of good ones; or, when they were too small for this operation, they were dyed, beneath her grandmother's inspection, and became neat and cheap mittens for the mothers and sisters of her little scholars.

Let not the pride of wealth or talent "mock her useful toil;" it sprung from the noblest energies of the mind and heart, and was rewarded by the sweetest feelings that nature can boast; as Mary counted the future demands of the rent-day in shillings and sixpences into her grandmother's caudle cup, spread the old bit of carpet she had purchased under her feet, filled the little tin can which warmed her a drop of beer for supper, or adjusted her new mob, and kissed the pale forehead it shaded, how warm were the boundings of her young heart! how sweet the very tears which dimmed her eyes!

In a short time William had the proud gratification of partaking in Mary's happiness; he brought a sovereign remedy for her rheumatism from the housekeeper at the Hall, and a present of bacon and potatoes for the ensuing winter. Mary too was invited by Mr. Bloomtree to visit the gardens before it was too late; and accordingly she soon went thither, escorted by William, who was happiest of the happy, in pointing out the beauties of that place, which he deemed an earthly paradise.

Old Mr. Bloomtree met the young people in the walks, and after presenting Mary with some choice flowers, desired her, for the present, to retire, as the family were then entering the garden.

She obeyed, but did not escape observation, and being seen by Miss Willis, the baronet's daughter, she very naturally related to her parents those circumstances which introduced Mary to her observation at the boarding-school. They were much struck with the conscientious honesty, industry, simplicity, and ingenuity, which these anecdotes displayed; and Lady Willis declared that she would endeavour to place Mary as an apprentice with a Miss Stansfield, who was a reputable milliner in the town, and one whom she had liberally patronized.

Young people are ever eager in their pursuits, and Miss Willis did not suffer her mother's benevolent purpose to lie dormant. In a short time the matter was settled between the principal parties; and Mary was summoned to the Hall, to be informed of the good fortune which awaited her. With modest joy and sincere gratitude she heard of this great change in her situation, venturing to entreat only that she might be permitted to sleep with her grandmother, which was readily acceded to. She then returned in haste to inform this dear and revered relation of her altered situation, who, almost overwhelmed with joyful surprise, did not allow herself to make one inquiry or comment, till she had most solemnly thanked the Great Disposer of events for this unlooked-for blessing.

Mary was in a short time placed under the protection and in the service of Miss Stansfield, whom she found a sensible, pious, and amiable woman, in pretty good business. But, in fact, it was purely to oblige Lady Willis, that Miss Stansfield had received Mary at this time, because she was aware that some months must pass before she should have sufficient work to employ more hands than those already in her service. This unpromising circumstance proved eventually a benefit to our little friend, for, as she was never idle, and had been accustomed to every possible mode of female industry, she was enabled in various ways to exhibit her acquirements, for the advantage of a mistress to whom she felt herself greatly indebted, out of the general routine of business. This, to her great joy, she was also soon enabled to increase, for the young ladies at the boarding-school, learning her situation, all repaired to Miss Stansfield. Mrs. Mortimer also recommended her friends, and Mr. Haywood very strenuously endeavoured to assist her, as he had never lost sight of poor Mary, who, since her removal, had become his neighbour.

Ingenious, as well as diligent, and rendered more happy from the consciousness that she was the means of supporting in a

measure the hand which had raised and cherished her, our grateful orphan now exerted herself with such energy and success, that her abilities became every day more apparent; and when at the end of three years, Matilda left the school where she had been so long and happily fostered, Miss Stansfield, as the reward of Mary's exertions, proposed taking her also as an apprentice, on the same easy terms on which she had accepted her sister.

This offer was of course gratefully accepted, as it relieved the poor grandmother and Mary also from many anxious cares for the future, and placed a young, pretty, and thoughtless child, beneath the eye of tender watchfulness and mild authority. The poor child entered on her new situation with great pleasure and thankfulness, but some share of pride, as it placed her far above her late companions; this Mary endeavoured to check, by frequently reminding her that they were ever likely to remain in a state of dependence, and that their present situation could only be retained by superior vigilance and modest obedience.

CHAPTER IX.

Although Mrs. Harris felt the loss of her dear offspring, yet she was truly thankful for the situations in which they were now so happily placed, and was enabled greatly to lessen the toils of that life, to which she had been so long accustomed. William frequently visited her, and he seldom came empty-handed; he grew up strong and healthy, greatly resembling his father both in person and disposition, and of course he was the joy of her heart and the delight of her eyes. Between him and Mary there still existed the most ardent affection; and the greatest pleasure she enjoyed, was that of being sent on some errand to the Hall, where she was always treated with kindness, and permitted to enjoy the society of her brother.

Mary had entered the last year of her apprenticeship, when she was summoned to the Hall, for the purpose of taking orders for the bridal dresses of Miss Willis: an occasion of so much importance, and which involved various consultations, necessarily detained her long; and as William was engaged, so that he could not accompany her home, she set out under some little perturbation of spirits; but was soon relieved, as she was overtaken by Mr. Haywood, who appeared glad to join her, as he professed a great desire to have a little private conversation with her.

Mary had a very sincere esteem for him, and her manners assured him that she was happy to attend to any thing he wished to say.

"When you recollect, Mary," said he, "how happy I was with the excellent wife whom I had the misfortune to lose five years ago, you will perhaps not be surprised when I inform you that I wish to marry again—that I consider Miss Stansfield as a very suitable partner—and that I wish very earnestly that you (young as you are) could give me such information as may enable me to judge of her temper, since you must know her disposition far better than I can."

Mary, with animation, replied, that Miss Stansfield was a good and amiable woman, who would deserve every blessing he could bestow on her. Incapable of any selfish feeling, in her desire to see the mistress she loved placed in the affluence she merited, she forgot how far her removal might be prejudicial to her own views; and she was proceeding to expatiate in Miss Stansfield's praise, when a separation in the road occurring, Mr. Haywood appeared about to leave her, just at the same moment when a person, who had already passed them twice, again made his appearance. Mary suddenly stopped, and, in a hurried and somewhat complaining tone, said—"Are you going to leave me, sir?"

"Certainly not, Mary, if you wish me to continue your guard; I perceive Mr. Willis is watching for an opportunity of speaking to you, and I knew not how far I might be an intruder."

Mary endeavoured to speak, but she could only stammer out—"Not to speak to me, sir—or, at least, I don't wish—Pray don't go."

"I will not leave you, child, be assured; and I am as glad for your sake as my own, that I happened to see you. Be assured, Mary, that Mr. Willis's attentions will soon cease, when he perceives that they are painful to you; and take my word for it, Mary, that even were they tendered on the most honourable grounds, they would never conduce to your happiness. I have seen many unequal marriages, but scarcely ever saw one that was even tolerably happy to the person who was considered the exalted party."

Mary was in the habit of listening to advice, and attending to the sentiments of others, from early infancy; she therefore admitted this to have its due weight in her bosom, and its proper influence on her conduct; and, by avoiding, in every possible way, the young gentleman in question, she preserved herself from further pain on the subject.

In a short time, all her thoughts were occupied with a very different one; Mr. Haywood, the now-declared suitor of Miss Stansfield, having never lost sight of *her* interest, proposed placing her in the business, and declared himself willing to permit as much money as was necessary for carrying it on to remain in the house.

This great offer, for such it really was to so young a girl, could not be refused; but while it was acceded to with every due expression of thankfulness, Mary yet felt that a burthen was imposed upon her, which she had never known till now, and her dread of debt almost amounted to a determination of declining the offer, but when she recollected the imperfect state of Matilda's knowledge, which rendered it impossible for her to procure work on the one hand, and the possibility of offering her good grandmother an easy home on the other, her scruples gave way; she perceived it was her duty to struggle with every difficulty, and she cheerfully entered on the serious charge of undertaking a regular business at

nineteen.

The first and most delightful step in this important affair, was taking from her toilsome occupation that venerable parent whose presence and counsels were now equally dear and necessary; and happy indeed were the orphan sisters, when they beheld her placed in a home superior to any she had ever known, and saw her assume that power which is, perhaps, most dear to us in declining life. So enraptured was William with this change, that he could scarcely allow the propriety of any fear on the part of poor Mary, whom he promised to assist to the utmost, and whom his more sanguine spirits considered as already the possessor of all the good which surrounded her.

Mr. Haywood, though well inclined to be the friend of Mary, was too much a man of business not to settle the affairs of his new wife in the most regular manner; and a young man, on whose conduct he had a just reliance, was dispatched from his shop to assist Mary in taking the stock of the business to which she succeeded, and an inventory of the household furniture. Mr. Deverell was surprised to find in Mary at once the quickness of a tradeswoman, alive to her own proper interests, and a sense of "justice to herself severe," which pervaded her every action; and when to this he added the child-like obedience of her manners to her aged grandmother, and her maternal cares towards her sister, he ventured to prophesy that such a young woman could not fail to be as prosperous as she was meritorious; and her worth and good fortune were the never-failing themes of his discourse, until he left Mr. Haywood, for the advantage of improving himself in his business by a residence in London.

Though Deverell was a good and sensible young man, and estimated Mary's character and prospects justly, yet her success did not immediately appear, and even the more sanguine part of her family were compelled to see that her trials were not yet passed. Two of Miss Stansfield's young people, who looked down upon her on account of the poverty of her early life, left her immediately, and soon set up in opposition to her; and it was found that many who had encouraged her as a poor orphan, now envied her advancement, and withdrew even the support they had accorded to Miss Stansfield, on her account; others withdrew their custom, from an idea that she was too young to be trusted; and for that reason she found it impossible to gain any apprentices, and she was well aware that, unless more hands were employed than her own and Matilda's, the house could not be upheld; the rent-day and interest-day pressed on her spirits; but her obliging manners, and the abilities she displayed, by degrees gained her new friends, in lieu of those on whom she had first depended; and she had the satisfaction of perceiving, that this season of adversity gave stability to the character, and improvement to the talents, of her sister.

The second spring of Mary's residence in her anxious undertaking, made a wonderful change in her affairs. The daughter of Sir Thomas Willis visited her father's house, accompanied by a young lady, who was the bride-elect of his son; and as this gay party employed Mary, and highly extolled her millinery, in a short time she became so busy, as to be under the necessity of employing many assistants. Nor did the tide of business decline, when the first movers of it returned home, because the ladies from London had brought her the newest fashions, and because all who had ventured to employ her were fully gratified in their wishes; so that from this time her business became established, her profits regular, and her prospects clear.

One morning, when with equal ease to herself, and grateful remembrance of past services, she had been paying her debt of interest to Mr. Haywood, and congratulating him on the circumstance of his intended removal to the country, of which Mrs. Haywood had informed her, he said, in reply—"That as it was all very true, and their house was much at sixes and sevens, it was the intention of Mrs. Haywood and himself to beg a cup of tea of her in the evening, and they might bring a friend too."

After his departure Mrs. Harris remarked—"That she was glad they were coming; she would try to get a chicken for supper;" adding, "for, my dear Mary, you are of age to-day."

"So I am," said Mary, recollecting herself; "but it would quite have slipped my memory, if you, dear grandmother, had not recollected it."

"That is likely enough; but I am sure our dear boy will come in the evening, and I am glad our good friends will be here. We must have a little feast, my child, indeed we must."

"As you please, dear grandmother."

"But is there any body you wish for besides?"

Mary started, as if her thoughts had conjured up a phantom; for even while the good woman was speaking, farmer Cutlet himself was seen to stride past the window, and in another moment he entered the door, pulling by the hand a cherry-cheeked rustic girl, who appeared sensible of the uncouth manners of her conductor.

"Well, Mary! I beg pardon—*Miss*, I'm sure I should say—here come I and my child; her mother says as how you be of age this very day; so when I hears that, I makes no more ado, but I claps the pillion upon th' old mare, and off I sets wi' my dowter, to see if you'd stand by our old bargain, and take her apprentice; she's just turned fourteen, and though I say it that shouldn't say it, bating she's summut awkward and bashful, as good a lass as ever broke bread: she's as mild as a lamb, and as stirring as a lark: no grass grows under her feet, I promise you."

Mary, heartily glad to see her old friend, and sensible that his daughter, as being educated in honest principles and active habits, could not fail to be valuable to her, not only readily agreed to his wishes, but expressed herself with so much long-treasured gratitude and friendliness, that the poor man was delighted, and interrupted her continually, by exclaiming—"Didn't I say so?—didn't I always say she would come to this? Take notice, child! I always know what's *what!*"

As a proof of this, he now took from his pocket a long canvas purse, out of which he drew, one after another, thirty guineas, each of which were flung on the counter, as if their sound said—"I would I were double, for your sake."

The sight of so much gold naturally attracted all eyes, and the donor chuckled with pleasure at the sight of their surprise. When all were gone, he cried—"Now you see, *Miss*, all I have to say is, *there* be the money, and *here* be the girl—will you take her for it for five years?"

"I will, Mr. Cutlet, accept of the money as a trust; and I will lay it out in the best manner for your daughter. I shall do my duty by her in all respects."

"That's enough for *me*. Not but if you'd rather have her bound, why, as lawyers mun live, as well as other folks, give 'em a job if you like. And now, child, I have but one word, and I'm off—Fear God—wrong nobody—and love thy mistress."

Although this good advice was certainly as much concentrated as possible, yet it did not leave the father's tongue with all the celerity he appeared to expect it would. He wrung Mrs. Harris's hand thrice, bade adieu to Mary as often, turned to his child, and observed—"That her mother would be all on the fret till he got back again; declared that these raw September mornings were very bad for folks' eyes;" and on perceiving that the poor girl, thus suddenly consigned to strangers, could not forbear weeping, he found what he termed his manliness quite forsaking him; and after once suddenly catching his dear Betsey to his bosom, he turned away to hide the overflowings of a heart as gentle as his manners were rude.

It will be easily supposed that this amiable family soon exerted themselves to soothe the natural grief of the young person thus unexpectedly committed to their care, and whose appearance so strongly reminded them of the sorrows of early life, and led them to retrace those steps by which Providence had brought them "through clouds and darkness to a quiet resting-place."

It was indeed a day of tears and smiles; and the good old woman, though past the period when acute feelings are wont to affect the heart, would have forgot her promised feast, if the young stranger, tranquillizing her spirits, had not presented a basket from her mother, which contained various dainties; at the sight of it, William and his evening visit re-occupied their places in her mind.

Happy, indeed, was this young man, as in the hour of twilight he bounded along towards that dear dwelling where his presence was ever the signal for joy, and where he could especially communicate it on this evening. His jocund steps were, however, checked as he entered the town, by observing a stage-coach, which was overloaded, in imminent danger; and whilst he called out vehemently to the coachman to stop, he set down the little basket of grapes which he was then carrying to his grandmother, and ran to assist the alarmed passengers.

Behind the coach had been seated two travellers of a different appearance; the one was young and active; the other elderly and weather-beaten, and with a wooden leg. The younger of these was first roused to a sense of their danger, and aware that the elder had not *his* powers of extricating himself, he immediately endeavoured to save him.

The moment William perceived this person's misfortune, in the loss of his limb, he applied himself in the first place to his relief, and quickly succeeded, with his fellow-traveller's assistance, in extricating him from all danger, and leading

him to the raised footpath, where he had set down his fruit, some of which he immediately presented to the stranger, observing that his lips were parched, and that he was evidently much agitated.

The poor man had seized hold of the breast of William's coat, and he continued to lean against him, as if he found in that tender posture a relief for some inward pain; this the kind-hearted youth was willing to indulge, and being sensible that the heart of the afflicted stranger had beat more violently when he spoke, he continued silent for some moments, when the other traveller approaching, looked earnestly at him, and inquired—"if he were not so happy as to owe his safety to the brother of Miss Harris?"

"You are right, sir; I am happy to see you, Mr. Deverell."

"Harris! Harris! what Harris?" cried the stranger, with indescribable emotion.

"I am William Harris, my sister's name is Mary; I know of no other Harris in this town."

"You have a mother living, but no father?" cried the stranger, with gasping impatience.

"No, sir—we lost our mother many years ago; God only knows whether our poor father is alive or not—he is dead to us."

"And *his* mother—she—she is dead?"

"Oh, thank God, she is pure and hearty for her age; I hope to be with her in a few minutes."

The stranger now first unclasped his hand from the stronghold he had taken of William; taking off his hat slowly, he discovered hair as white as snow, and a skin withered almost to parchment; slow big drops rolled down his cheek, but his eyes shone bright through his tears, and his features were animated by joy. In solemn, though inarticulate words, he gave praise to God, and a kind of joyful awe and deep sympathy pervaded the feelings of all around him.

He turned, and again seizing the wondering youth, he drew him still more closely to his breast, and in a half-suffocated voice, exclaimed—"My son, my son, my own dear Billy!"

William threw his arms round his long-lost father's neck, he strained him to his heart—in the wildness of his joy and his astonishment, he wept, and Deverell, deeply moved, wept with him.

Never did a stronger contrast present itself than in this father and son; youth, health, and manly beauty, glowed on the face of one, long suffering and premature age were indelibly impressed on the other; yet the hand of nature had formed their features in the same mould, and every eye beheld in the stranger the truth of his assertion, that he was indeed the father of the son he claimed.

When composure was somewhat regained, the wanderer, taking the arm of his late fellow-traveller, dispatched his son to break the amazing tidings of his return to his mother and daughters. The whole account appeared a dream, but the agitation of the relater convinced them of its reality. The poor girls, pressing to their grandmother's side, besought her to sustain her joy, as she had endured her sorrow, and in this affectionate employment Harris found them when he entered.

When the good grandmother had recognised her much-altered son, when again and again she had blessed him, and thanked the great Giver for his goodness in restoring him, she was ready to say—"Now let me depart in peace," for she felt as if she had been spared to this very end, to behold him and die.

When the father had pressed his dear Mary to that heart which had never forgotten the many endearments of her infant love, and had recognised the mother's features in his youngest darling, he looked earnestly at their clothing, and the room in which they were sitting, and asked—"in whose comfortable house he had the happiness to find them?"

"In my grandmother's," said Mary.

"In your daughter Mary's," said the grandmother.

Poor Harris smiled; he was well assured that the house inhabited by his mother must be honestly obtained, and he lifted up his heart in silent gratitude to Heaven, for the blessings poured on those so justly dear to him.

His question led his family to remark on *his* appearance, which, however melancholy in some respects, did not indicate

poverty; and his mother now anxiously inquired—"Where can my dear William have been placed so many years, without the power of acquainting us that he still survived?"

"Ah, where indeed, dear mother! My adventures cannot be related in an hour; for the present I can only tell you, that my seafaring life was short; I lost a limb in the service, was captured, and escaped with great difficulty: for many years past I have lived in South America, and worked at my own business, both to the advantage of my employers and myself. 'Tis true, I was little better than a prisoner, and that I ever returned is almost a miracle; it is enough to say now, that my labours were not lost; I have saved property to the amount of six hundred pounds, and my first care shall be to render you independent with it. I see plainly this will be the first wish of my children as well as myself."

The children, with united voices, did indeed rejoice in his wealth, as offering a quiet harbour for his own retreat from the storms of life; but all declared their grandmother belonged to *them*; and this affectionate altercation continued until the arrival of Mr. Haywood, when the nature of Mary's obligations to that gentleman, and the present productive state of her business, were explained; and it was agreed on all sides, that these long savings could not be better appropriated than in purchasing the stock and furniture for this meritorious child, and at the same time securing a home for the whole family.

One person alone wished to make a change in this arrangement; but as it was one in which the advantage and happiness of our good Mary was considered, it could not be objected to.

Mr. Deverell had returned at this time, for the purpose of succeeding Mr. Haywood in his business; it was his full intention to gain the affections and secure the hand of that upright and amiable young woman; an intention which, in due time, was fulfilled. Matilda succeeded her sister. Mr. Mortimer, the first friend of Mary, officiated at her marriage, and his lady supported her by her presence. It will be readily supposed that her conduct in this new situation did not disgrace the hopes her friends had formed, since her mind was already imbued with that activity, affection, integrity, and submission, so requisite to the happiness of married life.

At a proper time, poor Harris heard all the particulars attending the long illness and death of his once-loved Letty. Often will he now look upon the face of his youngest daughter, and while he retraces her resemblance, thank God that she has not partaken her mother's indulgencies, but nurtured by the cares of her excellent grandmother, and taught by the example of her sister, has become vigilant, prudent, feeling, and affectionate. William, every day increasing in knowledge and virtue, is the stay of his declining life, and the comfort of his heart, and in the increased emoluments which his exertions have well merited, already finds their reward.

In thus tracing the history of an humble family, from the depths of poverty and affliction to a situation of comparative competence, we beg our readers to remember, that such circumstances are the natural result of industry and integrity; but prosperity, in a similar degree, will not always result to the pious and virtuous. One thing is, however, certain—those who are idle, extravagant, vain, and presumptuous, never fail to bring down misery on their own heads, and those of their connections: and the wise and worthy, even when they do not ensure a present recompence, cannot fail to attain devout reliance on the goodness of their Heavenly Father, and a firm belief that in another world "all tears shall be wiped from their eyes."

To those who, from humane and religious motives, constantly observe the situation of the poor, and do their best to relieve their wants, and assist their endeavours, it is hoped these pages will prove an encouragement to persist in this "labour of love." They may find in their path many little Marys, to whom instruction will be equally beneficial with her whose industry and talent the author has described; and many a woman in the autumn of life, struggling with poverty and weakness, whom a little assistance may relieve, and render a valuable member of society. And surely there can be no greater pleasure than thus to help the widow and the orphan, to awaken the mind to energy and industry, the heart to gratitude, and the tongue to praise? Not all the pleasures and amusements of life could give, even to the most young and gay of our readers, recollections so sweet as the consciousness of having contributed to help a little family, like that of poor Harris; nor could they enjoy a gratification more endearing, than that of knowing that they had at one time contributed to help their GOOD GRANDMOTHER.

THE END.

FOOTNOTES:

[1]Miss Edgeworth.

[2]This picture of life-consuming folly is by no means over-charged; the author has witnessed such conduct carried to still more disgusting lengths, even in this situation in life.

Transcriber's Notes:

original hyphenation, spelling and grammar have been preserved as in the original

Page 13, thof it be sharp ==> tho it be sharp

Page 37, "Letty had expected ==> Letty had expected

Page 48, became worse The ==> became worse. The

Page 67, herself under under the ==> herself under the

Page 68, will be be taught ==> will be taught

Page 107, eyes; and I ==> eyes; "and I

[The end of *The Good Grandmother and Her Offspring* by Mrs. Hofland]