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DAUGHTER-IN-LAW.



'Oh yes, you are amazingly clever! replied the Lady, with a scornful smile.'

THE
DAUGHTER-IN-LAW,

Her Father, & Family,

By M^{rs} Hofland,

AUTHOR OF

Affectionate Brothers.

Blind Farmer.

Barbadoes Girl.

Clergymans Widow.

Good Grandmother.

Merchants Widow.

Panorama of Europe.

The Sisters.

Young Northern Traveller.

Young Crusoe &c. &c.

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THE DAUGHTER-IN-LAW.



CHAPTER I.

*Each lonely scene shall thee restore,
For thee the tear be duly shed.*—COLLINS.

"I am afraid, my love, you find yourself worse than usual this evening," said Mr. Franklin to his wife, as he approached the sofa where she was sitting.

"On the contrary, my love, I am rather better than usual, and find myself able to sit and chat with you a little," replied Mrs. Franklin, while a faint smile played on her pallid features.

"What can be the matter with Louisa, I wonder? her eyes were very red when she bade me good night on the stairs, and I concluded the poor child was distressed on your account; though very happy to find myself mistaken, yet I wish I had inquired a little further into the cause of her uneasiness."

"Sit down my love, and I will satisfy you. Louisa has been crying, in consequence of our conversation, which has been of a nature to affect us both; but she is no longer distressed, and will eventually be no worse for the pain a sense of duty urged me at this time to afflict her with; she will never forget what I have said, and we shall both be spared the necessity of renewing the subject."

"You surprise me, my love; the child is in general so tractable and good, that I had no idea she could do any thing to offend a mamma she loves so fondly, at such a time as this especially."

"Nor has she, my dear, *offended* me in any way; I have only awakened her feelings, by pointing out a few errors she may escape, and a few duties she ought to practise, in a situation she will probably find herself placed in by-and-by, where her conduct must, in a great measure, determine not only her own happiness, but that of her dear father also."

"You are very considerate, my love," said Mr. Franklin, as, with a shrinking eye he gazed on the altered form of his beloved wife, "you are very considerate to guard our poor little girl from the errors you speak of so very long beforehand; but it will be something wonderful indeed, though she is an extraordinary child, if at nineteen she should remember the lectures you gave her ten years before, and regulate her conduct in the choice of a husband, by precepts given at a period when the choice of a doll is her principal concern."

"Very true, my love," returned Mrs. Franklin, with a look of great tenderness and anxiety; "but the advice I gave Louisa did not respect her own marriage (for that would indeed have been somewhat premature); it is probable that of her father may take place a great deal sooner."

"My God! Louisa, what do you mean? my love, my *own dear* love, why will you tear my heart by such a cruel supposition?—if—if I were so very wretched as to lose you, which God in mercy forbid! do you think I could ever think of any other woman supplying your place? Oh, Louisa! surely you cannot think me capable of it! I have not deserved such an opinion as this, from a wife so fondly, so constantly beloved."

Mr. Franklin threw himself on the sofa, and, overcome by his feelings, wept aloud.

Mrs. Franklin hoped that she should have had strength to bear this trial, but she found her nerves exceedingly shook, and her own tears would spring to her eyes; but she endeavoured to lift up her heart to Him from whom cometh all consolation; and as soon as she perceived the violent emotion under which her husband suffered gave way, she thus addressed him:—"I am convinced, my dear Charles, that the time will come, when you will see, that without doubting your love, your constancy, or the propriety of your conduct in any respect, I might yet conclude it a very possible thing, that you would, at some future period, make choice of another wife, in case my present disorder terminates in the way we have both reason to expect."

Mr. Franklin was unable to speak, and after a short pause, she proceeded:—"I do not wish, further than is necessary, to advert to an hour so awful and so painful to us both; I trust that our Heavenly Father, having called us to this trial, will give us strength to bear it; and shall only add, that my opinion on second marriages being somewhat different from those of the world in general, and founded on experience and observation, rather than abstract reasoning and feeling, I cannot help concluding, that you will one day marry again, though I am well assured at this moment your heart abhors the very idea. I have observed through life, that those men who have been most happy in their first connection, are the most

desirous of forming a second, or at least the most liable to be led into it; and therefore, that the wife who is the most sincerely lamented, is much the most likely to meet with an early successor. You have been happy with me, Charles; you will find a loss of my society, when you have ceased to bewail my person, and that loss must be supplied to you in one way or other; it is more likely and more natural that a worthy and amiable woman should supply it, than any other kind of acquaintance."

"No, no, you are quite mistaken; I shall never, *never* forget you!" said the husband, vehemently.

"*Forget* me you never will, my dear, nor ever cease to love my memory, nor even to regret my loss; but grief is a passion, and it is the nature of all passions to subside in time, and frequently to be exhausted by their own violence; and you must allow me to say, I know so much of your temper, your habits, your wants, that I am certain, when your mind ceases to feed on its sorrows, it will be naturally led to look for some one on whom to bestow those tender attentions, and participate that affectionate companion, whereby you have for the last ten years made me the happiest of women."

"Have I not my child?"

"A child affords much to the heart, but little to the mind, especially to a man, and more especially when that child is a female; the prattle of Louisa will often divert a languid hour, I hope; but when you are harassed by the cares of business, vexed by men of one description, puzzled by those of another, or allured by a third, a little girl can neither assist your reasonings, soothe your troubles nor guard your virtues; and some female acquaintance may then rise to your mind, not in the odious light of a rival to her you have lost, but of a pitying friend who can console you for the misfortune; thus friendship may ripen into that tender regard which produces a connection less vivid, less dear, than a former one has been, yet salutary in its effects, as providing a companion for declining life, and "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Look round the circle of our acquaintance, my love, and you will find men of warm and tender hearts, whom we know to have made excellent husbands, and to have sincerely lamented their wives, and you will find them all married again, though, perhaps, at very different periods, according to their different characters; the most impetuous having been married soonest, but the most melancholy and sentimental coming in time to the same conclusion; whereas, the men who, either from their own levity, the faults of their deceased partners, or any other cause, were precisely the characters of whom superficial observers said—"Oh, he will soon be married again!—he has forgot his wife already!" and you will find them yet widowers, and likely to remain so. The warm and generous heart of a man of sensibility, who is called to this trial, though *blasted*, is not *destroyed*; and so surely as the hand of time, and the more blessed power of religion, heals its wounds and renovates its powers, so will the feelings it has been accustomed to cherish and to exercise, revive. In supposing you, my dear Charles, subject to the feelings common to human nature, do not think I impeach your love, or doubt your faith, but consider me as desiring your happiness, and capable of loving her who shall hereafter contribute to it; and in regulating the heart, and directing the conduct of my dear child, in a situation of the most trying importance, consider me as extending my cares and my love beyond the limits of my existence, and thus, in a great measure, continuing the companion of *your* future years, and the guardian of our mutual pledge of eternal affection."

Exhausted by her great exertion, Mrs. Franklin was ready to faint, and her husband, in great alarm, intreated her to speak no more; and assured her—"that although it was impossible for him to be convinced of the possibility of his heart ever being given to another, yet that her solicitude for his welfare, and the liberality of her opinions on a subject most women treated with abhorrence, must add, if it were possible, to that unbounded love and perfect esteem he now felt for her."

Mrs. Franklin, conscious that she had injured herself by this evening's conversation, yielded to his entreaties, and promised that she would not attempt to renew a subject to which she had been led to expatiate far beyond her first intentions, and which she found too much for her enfeebled frame to support.

This amiable woman had been married in her twenty-second year to Mr. Franklin, who was four years older: he was a merchant chiefly engaged in the Spanish trade, and connected in the way of business with her father, whose full consent was given to a marriage every way suitable in both parties. Mr. Franklin, in addition to his patrimonial fortune, which was considerable, (but being personal, was all engaged in commerce), was the heir to a fine old family estate, on the mother's side; but whose present incumbent was so little likely to leave it soon, that it appeared more likely to become the possession of his child than his own. Unfortunately it was entailed on the male heir, in default of which, it passed to a different family. Louisa, the eldest child of Mr. and Mrs. Franklin, whose humble memoirs we propose to relate in this volume, was born the first year of their marriage; and, though under the circumstance above-mentioned, there is reason to conclude, a son would have been more welcome, yet she was received with joy, and nourished with unbounded love by both parents.

Mrs. Franklin had no other child for three years, when she presented her husband with another girl, which caught the measles a few months after its birth, and died. This disappointment was not made up for the space of near four years, when the birth of a boy completed the happiness of Mr. Franklin; and for near two years this lovely blossom grew beneath his eye as the fairest flower in the world's wide garden; but, alas! about that time, the severe pain occasioned by cutting his teeth, brought on a fever, from which no power of medicine, no attention of parental solicitude could save him; and after much severe suffering, experienced during many weeks, he expired in the lap of his afflicted mother.

The sufferings of Mrs. Franklin on this occasion were not wholly mental; the dreadful nights she underwent with her little boy, especially the habit of jumping out of her warm bed and running into the nursery, which she had practised before he was so ill as to require her constant care, had given her a bad cold, which, being neglected (in the general and overpowering interest both herself and husband had felt for their precious boy) had fallen upon her lungs, and soon produced every symptom of pulmonary consumption. Ignorant of the nature of the complaint, those around imputed every little ailment she mentioned to grief alone; and when the prevalence of the disorder threw that hectic bloom into her pale cheek, which is the most fatal criterion of the complaint, poor Mr. Franklin began to hope she was recovering from the stroke of sorrow; and perhaps his fatal security might have continued still longer, if little Louisa had not said one day, as she stood earnestly looking at her mother,—“I wonder that mamma's arms should grow so very thin, when her cheeks are so rosy; now Betty's cheeks are as red as mamma's, but then her arms are fat and red too.”

“People look thin in black, my love,” said Mrs. Franklin, “from an effect of the light you are too young to understand.”

“Yes; but, mamma, your arms are white, and they are thin too, and your neck and face is quite thin, for all that red colour comes after dinner so.”

“The child is perfectly right,” said Mr. Franklin; “you are ill, my love, I am sure you have a slow fever, or something of that kind; I must see Dr. Jackson directly.”

The Doctor prescribed Bristol; and the alarmed and deeply-afflicted husband bore his wasted treasure to the reviving spring; a temporary amendment appeared to take place; and on their return to their residence in London, they received the congratulations of their friends, on the supposed restoration of Mrs. Franklin's health; but in a few weeks every consumptive symptom re-appeared; and they were ordered to return to Bristol, or set out for the Devonshire coast, with all speed.

Mrs. Franklin knew that the presence of her husband in London was not only necessary to his own affairs, but to those of his partners and their families. She felt the hand of death was upon her, not to be removed by mortal help, and she resolved to await the awful moment, in her own house, where she was surrounded by domestics who loved her, and friends who esteemed her, and where her husband's distress would admit some alleviation, from that diversion to melancholy inevitable to a man of business, in the scene of his engagements, and which could not take place at a distance from home. Her mind, deeply imbued with that blessed religion, whose precepts alone can support the mind about to be torn from every earthly blessing, when, rich in all, now sought in a peculiar manner for strength in the hour of need; and those hours in which the languor of disease abated, were spent in securing, by earnest prayer and meditation, an inheritance in that land, “where the moth doth not corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal;” and in communicating to her darling little one, as far as she was capable of understanding them, the great truths of Christianity, and with advising and impressing on her yielding mind, the necessity of carrying the precepts contained in the gospel into every part of her actual conduct in future life. She was particularly anxious to make her daughter understand the difference between humility and meanness; and to ground and settle the former in her mind as a rule of action, while she avoided the other, not only as contemptible, but sinful; nor was she less solicitous to show her the difference betwixt extravagance and generosity, so often confounded by young people; and to teach that the true groundwork of charity is a liberal economy. These precepts the wise mother inculcated by familiar examples, drawn from the objects and persons around them: for she well knew, that however desirous children may be to retain rules, given by those they love, and to treasure sentences uttered by dying lips, yet the natural volatility of youth, and the variety of pursuits they are engaged in, render it next to impossible that they should retain the spirit of a moral precept, unless it be embodied by example.

The reader must not suppose, that because Mrs. Franklin was now particularly anxious as to the state of her Louisa's mind, that she had been negligent in times past; on the contrary, she had ever been the most active and tender governess of her little girl, and had, till after the birth of her son, been herself the sole instructor of Louisa; after that time she had become a day-boarder in a neighbouring boarding-school, where she had made considerable proficiency in the usual

avocations of her age and situation in life; but at the period we are now speaking of, all other education, save that of the heart, appeared comparatively insignificant in the eyes of the dying parent; and though she continued to send Louisa to school, as an amusement very necessary to divert the mind of a child of great sensibility, yet she seldom enquired after her progress in music or drawing, farther than to recommend industry in pursuing them; for her heart was full of higher subjects, and she felt every moment as a treasure, of which she was on the eve of being called to give a final account. She was truly thankful, that, although oppressed by a sense of weakness, which rendered far the greatest number of her hours useless, yet that she was not afflicted by severe pain or rendered unequal to bearing the company of her husband and child.

The most severe exercise her mind ever felt, arose from the idea that Louisa might one day be subject to the control of a step-mother, who might possibly be unfit, though perhaps not unworthy of the situation; she knew the mind of her child to be endowed with a more than ordinary understanding, and a sensibility unhappily so acute, that she would be but too apt easily to perceive the errors of those around her, and deeply to lament them. She trembled lest her talents should subject her to the dislike of a vulgar mind, who might contemn what it could not relish, and repress the scions it knew not how to cultivate, or warp the branch it could not rear.

Under these painful impressions, there were moments when she was almost tempted to ask Mr. Franklin for a promise she well knew he would make with avidity, that of never engaging in a second union; but the recollection of all she had observed in other men, who had been strongly attached to their wives, and who had yet (with scarcely a solitary exception) been in the course of a few years married again, the consciousness that he was a man peculiarly fitted to enjoy and adorn the connubial state, and that his person, manners, and station in life, were such as render it probable that many women would endeavour to gain his affection, deterred her from engaging him in a promise, which she was convinced he would keep, however painful, and which, the moment it became so, would defeat her wishes, which were as ardently desirous of *his* welfare, as they could be even of Louisa's.

Accustoming herself to look much on this subject, Mrs. Franklin at length beheld it without dismay; and by directing her judgment to the investigation of the good as well as evil, which might arise to her child from such a connection, she was enabled in a great measure to secure the one and ward off the other, so far as it was likely to affect the mind of Louisa; and though it was (with the utmost caution) yet almost impossible to revert to the termination of her life, without awakening grief, even to agony, in the throbbing heart of the poor child, yet she contrived so to bring forward examples and exhortations, that, long before the evening alluded to, a ground-work of obedience and friendly confidence had been laid in the breast of Louisa, when circumstances should call it into action, the happy effects of which were found long after the lips which uttered them were mouldered in the dust.

As Mrs. Franklin was truly solicitous to save her beloved partner from every unnecessary pang, she never again adverted to a circumstance, which, in the present tone of his spirits, appeared impossible to him, since every day, as it increased her weakness, seemed to increase his tenderness, and to bind her to his heart by tenfold cords. Her meekness and resignation, her unabating love and tender consideration, which induced her, under the extreme debility she now experienced, still to address him with cheerfulness, and conceal her fears and her pains, lest they should wound him, had the effect of rendering her an object of equal esteem and veneration; with affection he looked upon her almost as a being of superior order, which had been lent him for a time, from her native heaven, which she was about to revisit; and he never approached her but with sentiments in which devotional gratitude for past happiness was mingled with agonizing grief for its departure.

Those who have felt that bitter sorrow of attending the sick room of a consumptive friend, and have witnessed from day to day the fluctuations of this most flattering, though, in fact, most hopeless of all diseases, know that there are times when the patient appears to suffer so little, and appears so essentially relieved by some change of medicine or regimen, that those around them, who are not particularly conversant in their complaint, cannot help believing that a kind of miracle is wrought in their favour, and that they are about to receive them again from the very jaws of the grave. Hope, when nursed by affection, is rendered doubly sanguine, and the illusion she presents in this case is generally increased by the patient, whose meekness and tenderness throws a veil over suffering he forbears to communicate, lest it should wound the feelings of those most dear to him, while it enlarges on every agreeable sensation and temporary amendment. These various emotions were felt by poor Mr. Franklin, who veered between the incertitude of hope and fear, in a manner those only can conceive who have drank the same draught of sorrow with himself; he loved, most *fondly*, most *tenderly* loved his wife; she had been his early, his only choice, and his esteem for her character, which had increased with increasing knowledge of her worth, and was now, by her patient submission to the Divine will, and by her generous

fortitude towards himself, rendered perfect in his eyes, tended every hour to make parting more painful, and force him to take refuge from the agony such thoughts inflicted, in any hope or expectation that relieved him, however improbable or fallacious such promise might appear to the eye of dispassionate reason.

Mrs. Franklin dreaded lest the fatal stroke should fall on him during these moments, and yet she found it impossible to repress the little pleasure thus snatched between long and melancholy intervals, although at times, as we have seen, she endeavoured to prepare him for the change, which, however it might be delayed, she felt to be inevitable.

As her end drew nigh, the painful struggles she had mentally endured for her husband and her child subsided; she was enabled, by a firm faith and a hope full of immortality, to cast all her cares upon her blessed Redeemer, and trust, not only her own eternal welfare, but the earthly comforts of those most dear to her, to Him who "ordereth all things aright;" and in the humble hope, that, according to her abilities, she had laid the foundation of good in *one* heart, and been in her day the minister of good to the *other*, she quietly resigned *both* to heaven, and awaited the call of her Heavenly Father, with pious confidence for the future and gratitude for the past.

The cares of business necessarily occupied a considerable portion of Mr. Franklin's time; and though the very sight of him might be truly said to do his wife good, yet she rather sought to increase his engagements, than request his company, aware of the pangs which followed every visit to her apartment. It was, however, happy for them both, that the evening was generally the period in which she was less incommoded by her cough and fever, than any other period of the day, and therefore the husband still found those hours so long and so sweetly dedicated to her society, still employed in her service, and devoted to an intercourse more interesting and endearing than any in which human nature is ever called to suffer or enjoy. This sacred hour was generally partaken by little Louisa, though it was her accustomed hour of retiring; but what mother, so situated, could deny herself the gratification of looking another and another time at the dear being on whom her eyes must close so soon for ever.

These were not melancholy evenings, though they were sometimes serious ones; each party repressed some feelings for the sake of the other, and both parents felt especially for the happiness of their child; and dreading lest an impression inimical to her peace, and inconsistent with her years, should be made on her mind during so long a period of solicitude, they endeavoured to divert their own views, for the sake of directing hers from too close or frequent reflections on the subject of her mother's illness, each inwardly trusting, that when the moment of separation did indeed arrive, strength would be given them from above, proportioned to their wants. So fully did Mrs. Franklin feel the truth of the poet's assertion, that

"When such friends part, 'tis the survivor dies,"

that she felt it her duty, as far as she was enabled in so weak a state, to amuse, console, and cheer her husband, as the one whose lot in this severe dispensation was infinitely the harder of the two; and notwithstanding the conviction she felt, that in time he might, like other men, be induced to make a second choice, yet her heart trembled for his more immediate sufferings, and her feeble lips breathed many a silent prayer for the mitigation of his impending sorrow.

One evening as she was thus employed, with little Louisa reading the Blind Child on a stool beside her, they were interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Franklin before his usual time.—"I have been so lucky, my love," said he, eagerly, "as to procure you a few oysters at last, and I hope you will allow me to open them for you; I fear they are not fine, but I am sure they are sweet."

"They will be very sweet from *your* hand, Charles: for though it is continually feeding me with good things, its power of adding to their flavour does not diminish."

As Mrs. Franklin spoke, she half rose from the sofa where she lay, and Louisa springing up, caught the pillows, and shaking them as she had seen the nurse do, placed them behind her mother's back, and then put the stool on which she had been sitting under her feet. Mr. Franklin gave an approving nod to her exertions, at the same time he said—"I have forgot my knife, Louisa; I have not my wits about me as much as you, child, as young as you are; I must confess women are the best nurses by far."

"Yet I have made a very good one of you, my dear," said the invalid with a cheerful accent; "you seldom make a noise with the door, or break the fire, or throw down a physic bottle now-a-days, and no one moves me half so easily as you do; there is no lesson affection cannot easily learn."

"Then learn to eat this oyster," returned the husband playfully, as he presented one to her parched lips.

Mrs. Franklin had been very fond of oysters, and with the sickly desire common to her complaint, had lamented they were not in season, under the idea that they would greatly relieve her; she ate several at this time, declaring they were very good, and the only food she had taken for a long time which tasted as it used to do. After making what she considered a very hearty supper, to the great satisfaction of her husband and Louisa, she laid down again on the sofa, observing, that she should rest better if she heard them engaged in conversation, than if they remained silent; for though desirous of obtaining composure, she had no inclination for sleep.

Mr. Franklin taking Louisa on his knee, observed that her mamma looked much cooler and better than usual.

"Yes," returned Louisa, "but that is no wonder, for she has never coughed once since five this morning; and though her fever was very bad after dinner, yet it was gone down charmingly before you brought the oysters."

"Indeed!" said the anxious husband, and his eyes again turned to heaven, illumined by thankfulness and hope.

"Move me a little, my love," said Mrs. Franklin; "I think the other side will be easier."

She was removed most tenderly several times, but no side was found more easy than the last.

"You will not think me capricious, Charles, though I do give you so much trouble; I find I cannot lie; I must sit up now, and rest on your shoulder."

This change of position was quickly effected, and Louisa's good offices again called into action, though the servant was in the room; for her solicitude to prove her love had taught her a method of paying every little attention in such a silent and efficacious manner, that few attendants on a sick chamber could excel her in those offices where activity rather than strength was required. Mr. Franklin called her a good child, and said—"When I am a gouty old man, Louisa shall wrap my flannels round my legs, she is so handy."

"Louisa will nurse you," said Mrs. Franklin, "not only because she *loves* you, but because she will remember how much her *mother* owes you."

There was a difficulty in the pronunciation of these words that affected and somewhat alarmed her auditors. Louisa, starting from her father's knee, took her mother's hand and silently pressed it to her lips.

"You will remember this, my dear child, I am *sure* you will," still more faintly articulated the languid mother.

Louisa, unable to reply, pressed the cold hand with redoubled ardour to her trembling lips.

Mrs. Franklin, as she withdrew it, gently raised herself, and clasping both her hands, for a few moments seemed, in silent devotion, to be begging blessings on the head of her child and her husband; as if exhausted by the effort, she fell back into the arms of Mr. Franklin, and Louisa partaking her feelings, dropped on her knees before them, while her father's streaming eyes looked up to heaven for blessings on both. In the silent pause which ensued, the faint breath of his beloved wife ceased to play upon his cheek; he listened, but no sound was heard; alarmed, he cried—"Louisa, your mother is fainting; give me the salts;" but Louisa gazed, unable to move. Betty flew to his assistance, and from her lips the dreadful truth found utterance—if that truth should be called dreadful, which proclaimed the emancipation of a soul thus purified from earthly sorrows to heavenly bliss; snatched in the very moment of adoration, and with a look of humble confidence, still stamped on its lovely features, that spoke the divine composure which illumined its departing moments. Yet death is ever found awful, even under its mildest form; a kind of horror, which suspended grief, seized on the faculties of the astonished child, and for a short time absorbed every other emotion, but the bitter anguish of her father awoke her to a sense of her incalculable loss, at the same time that it called her to pity his stronger sense of acute suffering; and the first words she uttered, were—"My father! oh, my poor, *poor* father!"

That father clasped her to his aching heart, and while his tears first freely flowed with hers, felt that heaven had left him one jewel from the wreck of former happiness, which, though unequal to bestowing comfort, yet ought to save him from despair.

As we do not wish to dwell on scenes which would recall sensations of severe anguish to such of our readers as have lost near relations, and cannot be readily conceived by those who have not, we shall pass over a few succeeding days,

and observe only, that, on the morning preceding Mrs. Franklin's funeral, at a very early hour, when even the eyes of the widower were sealed by the short and broken slumbers which visit the pillow of the afflicted, Louisa stole from her chamber, and, creeping on tiptoe to the housekeeper's room, she took thence the key of the chamber where her mother lay, and carefully opening the door, she entered the room, and sitting down by the corpse for the last time, earnestly and fondly contemplated those features so soon to be consigned to their last abode. Her mind, naturally vigorous, had soon recovered from its first emotion of terror, and was now enabled to feel a melancholy but sacred pleasure in gazing one moment on the faded ruin before her, and the next, in lifting her heart towards that divine mansion, where she believed the spirit of her beloved mother was now rejoicing in the presence of her God, and where she ardently desired to partake her felicity. Her little heart, new to the world, and a stranger to its blandishments, felt simply a desire to join her beloved parent; and she knelt down by the coffin, earnestly praying that herself and her father might soon be permitted to join her mother in heaven; when recollecting how often that mother had informed her that obedience and patience were the duties to which, as creatures and Christians, we were more immediately called, she changed the nature of her request, and besought the great "Giver of Good" to imprint on her mind every precept of the departed saint before her, and make *her* a blessing to her father, that she might be worthy of her mother.

As Louisa rose, a sweet and tranquil sense of the Divine goodness spread over her mind, and composed the agitation of her heart; she audibly pronounced a resolution of always obeying her dear mamma, and beseeching God to direct her in all things; and then, kissing the pale cheek of the corpse, and carefully covering the face, she departed unseen, with a heart afflicted but devoutly resigned to heaven, and sensible of its support and mercy.

CHAPTER II.

How every-heart-string bleeds at thoughts of parting!—BLAIR.

As soon as Mr. Franklin was enabled to see his friends, or rather, as soon as his friends concluded that it was proper that they should intrude on his privacy, and endeavour to divert the sorrow they could not cure, he was assailed on all sides with advice respecting his little daughter, of whom it was observed, that she must inevitably be ruined if she were not sent to a good school at a distance from home; that it was natural to suppose that an only child would be spoiled by an indulgent father, under such painful circumstances; and therefore it was his duty, for her sake, to consent to a removal, which was the only way to procure her a good education, and save her from being completely ruined by indulgence.

As Mr. Franklin perceived that Louisa was quite as forward in her education as any child he was acquainted with, and her mind, in fact, more cultivated than those of many much older; as her manners were extremely mild and unassuming, and her temper very amiable, he could not perceive the necessity of depriving himself of his only pleasure and solace, which was her society. He knew, though they did *not* know, that what they justly called his long melancholy evenings, were to him inexpressibly dear, notwithstanding their sadness; for he loved to sit with Louisa and talk of all her mother *said*, and *did*, and *wished*, and to plan with her the means of fulfilling all her mother's intentions, either towards the poor she was accustomed to relieve, or as they regarded the establishment and improvement of her household or her garden, in which, though small, she had taken great delight, and where she had formed a little greenhouse, adorned with the choicest exotics, in which Louisa had received many a lesson of love.

The interesting evenings thus spent with his child might have been rendered equally beneficial to both, if the father had been as judicious as he was tender; but the suavity of Louisa's manners deceived him into the belief that no mode of indulgence could be prejudicial to so good a disposition and excellent an understanding as he believed his Louisa to possess; he therefore indulged himself by never refusing any thing she desired, thinking the loss they had mutually sustained, gave them both a kind of right to possess every other good. Like most other children, Louisa was fond of sitting up at nights, and as this was the time when her father most needed her innocent prattle, the habit, begun from a kind of necessity in her mother's last days, increased to a very blamable degree; and as their conversation generally took a turn, which, by adverting to their departed friend, opened anew the avenues of sorrow, the natural sensibility of poor Louisa's mind was rendered still more acute, which, combining with the nervous weakness inseparable from improper hours, rendered her in a few months a delicate pining flower, more likely to wither beneath the eye of her indulgent parent, than refresh him with perennial fragrance.

This change had come on so gradually, that it would have continued imperceptible, if Mr. Franklin had not been under the necessity of taking a short journey; on his return, he felt shocked at the pallid looks, and the extreme agitation of joy discovered by his child, but on his questioning the servants, he could not find that any person thought her altered during his absence; he began to perceive that something was essentially wrong in his system, and concluded but too suddenly, that because he was wrong, the friends who had so strenuously insisted on the necessity of sending her to school must be right; and he determined that his duty should rise paramount to his inclination, as soon as he should be able to reconcile Louisa herself to the task of parting with him; but this he was well aware could be no easy task. Warm to impetuosity in her attachments, naturally endued with too great a portion of sensibility, which had been nurtured by circumstances, he knew that her love to him at this time amounted to a species of passion, which it was equally necessary and difficult to allay for her own sake, though it was to him the dearest tie of existence. He again lamented the loss of that wife, whose attempered spirit would have directed the ductile mind of his delightful but suffering child to the medium in which Virtue presides, and Happiness is her attendant. When, however, he pointed out to Louisa the necessity of removing her to some country situation, where change of air might restore her strength, and young companions enliven her, he found that her mother's precepts had indeed sunk deep into her heart; though he had suffered them to lie dormant there so long, an uncomplaining obedience to his will, a severe struggle with the tears that rose to her eyes, evinced her resolution to act right, while the pain it cost her affected him exceedingly; and, unequal to the task he was exacting, he declared that it should be put off for another month or two, at all events.

In the course of that time, the housekeeper told him, "that she thought if Miss Louisa wasn't sent somewhere, it would be all over with her, for she scarce eat as much as a sparrow, and she would cry at a feather; she was just fretted to death because a geranium was dying, and had been making a sort of song on her sick linnet, that was enough to break her heart, poor little creature! for her part, she had always thought her a deal too good, to be long for this world; but still she

thought it was right just to try what the country might do for her."

To the country it was determined she should go; and after many consultations, the anxious father at last set out with his darling to a school where only ten pupils were taken, flattering himself that she would, from this circumstance, be under the more immediate eye of the governess.

He was received by that lady with an air of polite gravity, which induced him to hope he had met with a person of feeling, who would appreciate the situation of his child justly.—"This little girl," said he, "is my *only* child, madam, and she has no mother."

The lady bowed.

"Her health has of late been delicate, but I believe my foolish indulgence has been the sole cause of it."

The lady bowed.

Mr. Franklin arose, for his voice was lost, and it appeared the lady's was in the same predicament; but his motion to depart, induced her to enquire rapidly, what he intended the young lady to learn?

"Whatever she—that is, whatever *you* think proper."

It was right to shorten these painful moments, and the fond father, clasping his trembling child in his arms, after one farewell kiss, rushed out of the house, scarcely less affected, than in the dreadful moment when her mother's lifeless head dropped on his aching breast.

Louisa struggled hard, but sorrow would have vent; and she sat down on the window-seat, whence she had caught the last glance of her father, and wept bitterly.

The governess took up her knitting, to which she applied herself with great diligence; she had probably read Sterne's assertion, "that consolation ever comes too soon or too late," and therefore concluded it would be foolish to offer it; when after getting to the end of her cotton, however, she looked up, and saw the new scholar, she said coolly—"If you have done crying, Miss, I will take you to the young ladies, for I want some more cotton, I find."

Eager to atone for her apparent deficiency in the confidence she ought to have had in her new friend, Louisa hastily rose, and, smiling through her tears, followed the steps of her governess with alacrity to the school-room.

As Miss Saunders, her new governess, advanced to speak to the teacher, Louisa closely followed her, hoping she would be introduced in a manner that would ensure her protection and consolation; but how did her little heart sink, when, in the half-whispered address of Miss Saunders, she distinctly caught the words "little puling pet," as applied to herself!

This inflicted a pang she was not prepared to expect; and though she strove to hide it, a kind of dismay, far more powerful than even her first sorrow at parting with her father, came over her mind and absorbed her faculties; she was, however, somewhat relieved by the governess hastily quitting the room, after informing the pupils—"That they might now go to play in the garden, and take Miss Franklin with them, if she would *condescend* to go."

The word 'condescend' operated like an ice-bolt on the warm hearts of the youthful group; and after viewing their new companion with eyes askance, one after another, dropped out of the room, without offering her any attention.

Louisa had been used to very different treatment at the school in town, where she had been a daily, though of late not a constantly daily visitant. She tried to persuade herself, that, perhaps ladies in the country accustomed themselves to such manners, and her spirits recoiled at the rudeness as well as unkindness of country ladies. As these things passed her mind, a little blue-eyed girl, with flaxen hair, returned into the room with a small garden-hoe in her hand, and, running up to Miss Atkinson, the teacher, asked her, in that tone of confidence kindness alone inspires, for the flower-seeds she had promised her.

"I will give you them, but it is too early to put them in the ground, I believe. I am not much more of a gardener than yourself, but I think I have been told that lupins should not be set till May."

The tone of voice in which this was uttered, though addressed to another, reassured and comforted poor Louisa; and as the speaker gave her opinion with an air of great *doubt*, on a subject on which she knew herself equal to speak with

certainty, she advanced towards her with a timid and deprecating air, saying—"I believe, ma'am, as the weather is so open, the lupins may be planted *now*, though it is too early for several other flowers."

The teacher smiled graciously at this innocent advance to better acquaintance, and inquired—"How a little girl, whom she understood came from London, should know any thing about gardens?"

"My mother," said Louisa, and her colour flew to her cheek, while her lip quivered with emotion—"my mother taught me a little about flowers."

"Then you and I will take a turn in the garden," said Miss Atkinson, laying down her work, "and you shall teach me."

This act of kindness, at a moment of such deep despondency, quite overcame Louisa; she gasped for breath—she gazed on the teacher—ran towards her—checked herself, and then burst into tears.

Miss Atkinson rose hastily, and caught the poor child to her bosom, with an emotion almost as vivid as her own; but while she twinkled away the tears that sprang to her eyes, she exclaimed—"Here's a pretty piece of work truly, for me to get over! Yes, yes; this is sensibility and genius truly: but, come, child," said she, trying to put away Louisa as she kissed her, "you must get the better of all this, and then you will find yourself very happy amongst us; Caroline here will let you share her garden, and——"

"Oh, I will give it her *all*, and she shall work with my hoe, and skip with my rope," exclaimed the little blue-eyed girl, as she drew Louisa's hand away from the neck around which she clung.

Anxious to show her gratitude, and perceiving it would be more acceptably evinced by conquering her feelings than expressing her affection, Louisa struggled with, and overcame them. She took a hand from each of her new friends, and soon found herself in a spacious garden, where cheerful voices and busy faces were seen on every side; her knowledge of flower-seeds was instantly proclaimed by Caroline; and she was soon surrounded by all the young group, who were solicitous to atone for their late inattention.

In a short time she became acquainted with their names, their gardens, their rules, and their occupations; and, on their being called to supper, she proceeded with an air of so much modest familiarity to take her appointed place, that, although the traces of tears were yet seen on her cheeks, Miss Saunders herself observed, that she hoped she would be a good girl *in time*.

Louisa was again shocked to perceive that this lady had taken a prejudice to her, and appeared to think that she had taken a spoiled, unmanageable child into her family; she began to examine how far it was possible that she could deserve that character, and the result of such self-examination was, that though she could not accuse her heart of wilfully offending any human being, yet she was sensible that her father's indulgence had led her into habits, and induced her, perhaps, to adopt manners similar to those she had heard attributed to spoiled children; she therefore concluded, very justly, that Miss Saunders had been given to understand, that in her she had undertaken a very difficult charge, and that it would probably be some time before *she* could effect a change in her opinion.

Louisa sighed bitterly as these thoughts passed her mind, but she recalled her mother's advice, to be always humble, but never despairing; and, with a resolution to deserve the good opinion of her governess, and patiently to await its attainment, she breathed a fervent prayer to her Heavenly Father, for help in all her distresses, and blessings on her father; and then, fatigued with her ride, and somewhat stupified by weeping so much, she dropped into a sounder slumber than she had enjoyed for many months.

Miss Saunders, though a woman of fine understanding and elegant manners, was not well calculated in many respects for the delicate and arduous situation in which she was placed, for she was a person subject to be governed by the impulse of the moment, and apt to take what are called likings and dislikings, without any reason for her choice or rejection; and though she was by no means of that stubborn cast of character which is generally found to accompany those who are subject to idle prejudices, yet, as she frequently went from one extreme to another, there was equal danger in both, to those who were placed under her guidance. These bad effects were less experienced in her seminary than was usual at this time, owing to the meliorating influence of Miss Atkinson, her teacher, who was an amiable good girl, and who endeavoured, by every means in her power, so to balance favour as to produce general happiness.

A very short time served to establish Louisa in the good graces of all the masters who attended the school, and their

praises in some measure atoned to her for the cold glances and haughty salutations of her governess; but it was a source of deep uneasiness to her to observe this stubborn prejudice. Ever accustomed to receive the kindest attentions from every one around her, and feeling in herself a constant disposition to be obliging and affectionate, her heart sunk, and her hopes withered beneath this cruel blight; and her natural timidity, by preventing her from displaying the excellent qualities of her heart, unhappily increased the evil which afflicted her; and she daily saw those around her receiving the most flattering proofs of tenderness from a warm and generous heart, without being enabled to throw herself into the way of receiving the slightest share of such envied distinctions.

The dominion of the governess of a boarding-school over the hearts of her little subjects is absolute. Parted from their natural connections, and taught to look up to her with reverence, not unmixed with fear, the least attention she bestows on the little train around her is received with unbounded gratitude, and cherished with lively affection; a kind word is received as a great benefit, for it is considered a great honour, and a trifling indulgence becomes an unspeakable obligation. The power of giving pleasure and inflicting pain with scarcely an exertion, is apt to mislead the person so situated into an undue influence over the feelings of others; but, as it most frequently happens, it becomes beneficial to children, by exciting them to praiseworthy endeavours, we can scarcely wish it to be decreased. To this must undoubtedly be attributed principally, the superior progress in learning, which children in schools are generally observed to make above those who are privately educated, even in cases where the latter appear to have many more advantages.

While Louisa was combating the new difficulties of her situation, her father was not less painfully employed; his mansion was now indeed bereft of all that could render it interesting or agreeable to him, and the melancholy loneliness of his supper-hour was particularly irksome: books no longer lent their wonted solace, for his Louisa was not there to listen to and admire them, or her little representative to be instructed from their details. His friends, who had been received rather as intruders than guests, during the first months of his mourning, again returned to condole with him for the loss of his late companion; they now were received with gratitude, and welcomed with pleasure: in a short time their visits were returned, and an intercourse once opened with the world, increased with rapidity; so that when Louisa returned home at her first vacation, she was surprised to find her father keeping more company a great deal than she remembered to have seen during the period of her mother's highest health and activity. She rejoiced to see her dear parent looking so much better than when she parted with him; but she could not help sighing at the disappointment she felt at finding not a single hour in which she could sit with him as she used to do, to read her French lessons, to listen to his description of the stars, or to be told how dear she was to the heart of her fond father.

That father read the feelings and the wishes of his child, and, as far as he was able, in the multiplicity of his engagements, checked their course, and devoted his time to Louisa; in her society he found himself as happy as a man can be in that of a child; it taught him to see that dissipation, even when most correct, could never make him happy; but it taught him likewise, that the chasm in his comforts could only be supplied by a wife.

His friends, having made the discovery first, accounted for the pains they had taken to leave him no time to meditate upon her he had lost. Louisa's presence gave him both time and recollection; he saw her mother again in her, and wondered how he had ever ceased to see her: the thorns of grief were renewed and sharpened; and while he most regretted the loss he had sustained, he was most sensible that that loss could never be repaired: though his grief was no longer violent, yet it appeared more settled; and the langour which stole over his mind, and was observable in his countenance, forbade all expectation of his forming, or even thinking of a second choice: by degrees he withdrew himself from the hurry of that company, which had occupied rather than amused him; and before the time for returning to school commenced, he had become nearly as much devoted to his child, and decidedly as fond of domestic scenes as ever; and those young ladies, who had a few weeks before considered him in the light of an interesting mourner, whose sorrows they were anxious to console, or a gay widower, whose pleasure they were willing to extend, now concluded he was a very stupid creature, of whom it was impossible to make any thing accommodating or agreeable.

Miss Saunders was not of this number, for when Mr. Franklin returned with Louisa, she was exceedingly struck with the difference in his person and manner, which, though tinged with sadness, was no longer sorrowful; his visit was considerably longer, and enabled her to see how truly agreeable he was; and as Louisa was now enabled to part with him in a manner which did equal honour to her fortitude and sensibility, Miss Saunders, flattered by her exertion, kindly transferred her admiration of the father to the daughter, whom she declared to be amazingly improved during her absence; and from that time discovered so many good qualities in her, that Louisa shortly became that envied and generally unfortunate being—a favourite; but she bore her new honours so meekly, and retained so much humility in the

day of her power, that her young friends rejoiced in her advancement, rather than envied its progress.

In every necessary attention to her school duties, her attention increased as she grew older, and her mind became more matured; so that, at the next vacation, even those acquaintances who had most confidently pronounced on her being completely ruined, observed, "that really Louisa Franklin was a clever child, considering how timid she was, and what a long time she had lost by living at home with her sick mother and her doting father."

Another, and another, vacation passed, and Louisa remarked with pleasure, that her father regained his spirits, but retained for her the same affectionate tenderness, and for her mother's memory the same lively esteem, which had ever marked his conduct. During each recess, he generally contrived to accompany her for a few days to visit her maternal grandfather, who resided in Essex, and who was extremely fond of her, as the representative of his only daughter.

Louisa was eleven years old, when, on her accustomed return to her father's house, she was requested to pay a visit to Mr. Hartop, her father's partner, for the purpose of forming an acquaintance with two young ladies of the name of Debrett, who were, with their mamma, visitants at Mr. Hartop's house: they were both older than Louisa, and neither of them the companions she would have chosen; but as friends of Mr. Hartop, they had a right to her polite attention; and, without being guilty of insincerity, by professing more friendship than she really felt, Louisa treated the young ladies with a degree of civility which appeared to win their affections, and to make a remarkable impression on those of their mother.

Mrs. Debrett was the widow of an officer, and had resided since his death in the neighbourhood of Exeter, from whence she was drawn to London by the adjustment of some pecuniary concerns, in which the assistance of Mr. Hartop, who was her cousin, was of use to her. She was a fine woman in her person, showy rather than solid in her attainments, but highly pleasing in her manners and general deportment, keen in her remarks, and warm in her temper; she had the unfortunate faculty of making either positive friends or enemies, in the common acquaintance of a day: thus, while one person was crying up Mrs. Debrett in one company as a most fascinating woman, whose warm, generous heart, and interesting manners, ought to afford her a universal passport, another person, in another company, was condemning her as a specious encroacher, an insolent satirist, or a passionate scold; and though both parties coloured the subject too highly, yet neither were devoid of truth, for Mrs. Debrett was liable to both interpretations ten times a-day, because she was subject to act from the impulse of the moment, and allowed feeling to predominate over reason, whenever it was strongly excited; and the immoderate fondness she testified for Louisa was rather the effect of a predisposition to admire her, than any real elucidation of the virtues she knew her to possess.

Maria Debrett, the eldest daughter of this lady, was tall, thin, and somewhat awkward in her person, indolent in her habits, and uninformed in her mind, but her temper was good, and her heart as affectionate as is consistent with idleness; such persons wish well to those around them, but have not the energy required by active friendship; they will do no harm even to an enemy, but cannot do good for even their dearest connections.

Ellen Debrett was scarcely one year younger than her sister, but she was considerably less in her person, had a very pretty face, and was agile, smart, and lively in her gait; while a pertness mixed in her manners, that proved to a stranger how much superior she conceived herself to be to her plainer sister, a circumstance to which her mother's ill-judged partiality greatly contributed, as the beauty of Ellen was her darling theme continually, and had evidently had an equally bad effect on both her daughters, as it had caused the youngest to rest satisfied with very moderate attainments, and by sinking the spirits of the eldest, nearly incapacitated her from making any attainments at all: thus, two girls, who were both blessed with very tolerable understandings, by this improper treatment were alike injured, the elder being a listless hoyden, and the younger a forward chit.

Mrs. Debrett was a woman of too much discernment not to perceive that Louisa Franklin, young as she was, could appreciate the defects of her eldest daughter, and must sometimes feel wounded by the airs of superiority assumed by her darling, since even her own partiality could not always render her blind to them; and the mild courtesy which she displayed towards both, appeared to win the affections of the mother; and her display of regard was met with the fondest cordiality by Louisa, who became so attached to Mrs. Debrett, that, on her return home, she was never weary of relating to her father something said or done by that lady, which appeared to her likely to place her kindness in a pleasing point of view; and as he always listened to her artless eulogies with patience, and often with pleasure, Mrs. Debrett became naturally the chief subject of her conversation, in places where the auditors were less inclined to listen: and one day when she was visiting an old lady, who was the intimate acquaintance of her family, and who had insisted on receiving a farewell visit from her, previous to her return to school, she was surprised to hear a visitor address her good friend,

Mrs. St. Aubin, in the following manner—"I wish you had been at Mrs. Hartop's last night, and this little girl with you; you would then have seen how amiable Mrs. Debrett was: she played off more airs than became her, all the evening, lost a great deal more money than she could afford to do, and being worked up into an ill-humour, went into a most outrageous passion at her eldest daughter, who, to be sure, is a stupid child, but by no means deserved the treatment she met with."

"Notwithstanding all *that*," said another visitant, "Mrs. Debrett is certainly a very charming woman; she has been used, in her husband's time, to mix with the very best company, which accounts for what you call *airs* in her; and though she is hasty in her temper, yet when her passion is off, she is very good-tempered: we all have our faults, and she is so free to confess hers, there is so much generosity in her nature, and frankness in her disposition, that I confess I cannot help liking her very much; and the style of her manners you must allow to be very superior; she is indeed a perfect gentlewoman. I never met with a person so calculated to bring out young women to advantage; and I have no doubt but her daughters will, in a few years, find the advantage of having such a chaperon as their mamma."

"And somebody else's daughter too," said an old gentleman, nodding significantly towards Louisa.

"Yes, I rather think so," said the first speaker; "one should be careful what they say. I suppose, my dear," turning to Louisa, "you have been a good deal with Mrs. Debrett during your vacation?"

Louisa answered in the affirmative; and looking at the second speaker with great complacency, added—"And I like Mrs. Debrett exceedingly—she is so kind to me: she was very fond of plants, and she——"

"Ay, ay," interrupted the gentleman, "so fond, child, that she will transplant some of hers into your garden very soon, take my word for it; but, however, as Mrs. Tweedle observes, least said is soonest mended—little jugs have long ears."

Louisa blushed exceedingly; she saw that "more was meant than met her ear," by the knowing nods and winks of the party; and, for the first time, she wished Mrs. St. Aubin had not asked her. She was aware that she was a party in some way unknown to herself, and yet that her presence imposed restraint on those around her; this was a new sensation to her, and so anxious was she to escape it, that she was casting about in her mind how she could leave the room, without doing it in so pointed a manner as to show the company how much these inuendoes affected her, when Mrs. St. Aubin, who loved her very much, and was hurt at the inconsiderate manner in which her guests had wounded the feelings of a child, who was treated as an automaton in the first place, and a spy in the second, drew her near to her, and said, in an open but kind manner—"There have been so many reports respecting my friend Franklin's marriage, not one of which have had the least groundwork, that it is probable the match talked of with Mrs. Debrett may pass off like the rest; so, my dear Louisa, don't allow it to give you a moment's uneasiness; most probably it is all idle chitchat."

Louisa, at once enlightened and wounded, not so much by the intelligence as the manner in which it reached her, saw that Mrs. St. Aubin did not believe her own assertion of the reports being a mere fabrication, and she felt that her father ought not to have left a communication of so much importance to be made by a stranger; this want of confidence, as she deemed it, caused the tears instantly to spring to her eyes, and she involuntarily sunk for a moment on the bosom of Mrs. St. Aubin; but the affected pity of those around her, expressed by "Poor child!" "God help her!" "I wish I had been more cautious," &c., roused her as quickly; and the moment she fancied that those feelings were read, which had dared to arraign a father so beloved and respected, she became to the greatest degree anxious to destroy the impression her own emotion had awakened; by a determined effort, she repressed the choking, which rose almost to suffocation in her throat, and shaking the tears from her cheek as she raised her head, said to her friend—"I do not think my papa is likely to marry Mrs. Debrett *soon*, because I think he would have told me of it, for he knows that I am very fond of Mrs. Debrett, and would rather have her for a——I would rather, if papa *does* marry, that he should marry *her* than any other person."

"You are a good girl," said Mrs. St. Aubin, kissing her forehead; "I am sure you will try to make your mother-in-law happy, let her be who she will; but we are summoned to dinner."

Thankful for any circumstance which drew the attention of the company to any other object than herself, Louisa withdrew from the side of Mrs. St. Aubin: but she was too little accustomed to veil her feelings, though ever taught to suppress her passions, to appear the thoughtless little girl she had done on entering the house, for a train of serious reflection succeeded the late conversation, which it was impossible to banish, either from her heart or her countenance.

On her return home, she was informed that her father was gone to Mr. Hartop's, but had left orders that he should sup at home, and that she might sit up, as it was the last evening she would be at home.

The *last* evening sounded melancholy in the ears of Louisa, and the recollection of all that had passed at Mrs. St. Aubin's came over her mind with additional force,—“Perhaps it is the last supper we shall ever eat together *alone*,” said Louisa internally; and the last supper of her dear mother rose full upon her mind, and with it all her mother's virtuous precepts, and her happy end: her tears flowed freely, and her heart was relieved from the burden she had endured so many hours; she knelt down, and fervently prayed that the advice imprinted on her mind by the parent she had lost, might become her guide, in the new and interesting connection which might call her to trials she had never yet known, and difficulties she could not foresee; and that she might be enabled with duty to honour the mother she must receive, without ceasing to regret the mother she had lost.

Scarcely had she risen from her knees when a rap at the door announced the return of her father; fearful of giving him pain, she forced a smile into her countenance, which, though no longer marked by sorrow, was pensive from its late depression, and met him at the door; but as the redness in her eyes could not fail to be visible when they approached the supper-table, he remarked it, and inquired if she was well?

“Quite well, papa, but——”

“But what, Louisa? Something must be the matter with you—you would not cry so much at parting with Mrs. St. Aubin, as to make you such a figure, child—perhaps she has——” Mr. Franklin hesitated, and turned towards the fire.

“My dear father,” said Louisa, running to him, and putting up her hands to embrace his neck, “Mrs. St. Aubin has said nothing to make me cry, I assure you; though she *did*, at least her company *did*, tell me you were going to marry Mrs. Debrett.”

“Well, child, go on; I thought you loved Mrs. Debrett.”

“So I do, papa, and I told them so; but when I got home, and indeed when I was there, I could not help thinking that—that ——”

“What do you mean, Louisa!”

“That you would have told me yourself, if I had deserved your kindness; and I couldn't help crying.”

“My dear child,” said the father, pressing her fondly to his bosom, “I would have told you *all* before we parted, but people are so meddling with the concerns of their neighbours, that they have denied me the satisfaction of announcing my intentions to you; besides, there was no hurry in the affair; it *may* take place some time, or it may *not*. Mrs. Debrett is a very charming woman, and I trust we shall be very happy in case she does become one of our family.”

Louisa had perpetually heard this word charming applied to her mother-elect, and did not well know what it meant; she concluded, however, that it was what she meant, when she attributed kindness to Mrs. Debrett, and felt that she loved her for the expression of it; she therefore assured her father, that she was certain she should be very happy with that lady, and would do her very best to merit her good opinion; and she hoped in time to be able to love the Misses Debrett as much as she now did their mother, for she thought Maria was a good girl enough, and Ellen played very prettily; and then innocently added—“I suppose most children grow like their mothers in time, papa.”

The father caught her to his breast, and the tears rushed to his eyes, a thousand tender recollections flowed on his heart, and the beloved wife he had lost rose again in the child she had bequeathed him; his mild and tender partner, the object of his first affection and his sincere regret; she, whose love had indeed extended beyond the grave, in thus forming the infant mind of his delightful child to receive a connection usually so dreaded and repulsed, again claimed the tribute due to her piety and his own fidelity; and the lamentations now given to this excellent woman, if less bitter, were as fond, and as sincere as those felt in the first agony of separation. Time never fails to ameliorate the acuteness of anguish, for we could not long exist under a sense of exquisite sorrow; but there are periods when memory will restore the image of our griefs in colours as vivid as ever, and make us feel that the love which was cherished by virtue, whether filial or connubial, is a part of the soul, and like it, can never die.

Louisa partook the sensations of her father too much to be able for some time to restrain her tears, but when they were subsided, she endeavoured, by every attention her affectionate little heart could devise, to restore him to his wonted cheerfulness, or at least to divest his melancholy from any pain or self-reproach on her account; and though a mind, recently agitated by sorrows of so tender a cast, could not soon regain its wonted temperament, yet the melancholy thus

imposed is not displeasing or unprofitable to the heart; and, in the devout resignation to the Divine will, which followed this renewal of regret, Mr. Franklin and his child experienced a calm composure, and a renewed sense of affection, favourable alike to virtue and to happiness.

CHAPTER III.

*Gay Hope is theirs, by Fancy led,
Less pleasing when possessed.*—GRAY.

Louisa returned to school, and did not hear any thing more of the affair which had so greatly interested her for three months, farther than her father mentioning, in his first letter, the circumstance of Mrs. Debrett's return to Exeter; and afterwards sending her love to Louisa, from which it appeared that he regularly corresponded with that lady. At the end of that time, however, a bridecake and gloves, directed to her, were ushered into the school-room, with all the *eclat* due to an occasion of importance, and Louisa, with great trepidation, awaited its unpacking—"There must be a letter; I am quite certain my papa would write."

"One, two, three pair of beautiful silk gloves, and such a handsome cake, but no letter or note whatever can I find," said Miss Atkinson.

Louisa shrunk back from the admiring group, and endeavoured to twinkle away the tear caused by her disappointment; but fearful again that blame should be attached to her father for this apparent neglect, she summoned her spirits, and received the congratulations of her young friends with complacency, if not with gaiety.

At the hour of retirement, she endeavoured to account, in every possible way, to her more intimate companions, for the apparent omission in her father; and they who had ventured to condole with her on the omission, and advert to the circumstance as an act of diminished kindness, met with her most marked displeasure, which for ever prevented their pity, and saved her from combating the usual arguments and prejudices which are generally vented against step-mothers.

Louisa now endeavoured seriously to recall every word her mother had spoken on the subject, and to weigh those words with the attention her increased understanding taught her to consider due to them, not only on account of the lively affection she ever felt towards her invaluable parent, but because she saw the real excellence of the advice, and the great consequence it derived from her present situation.

In the course of a few days, she had the satisfaction of receiving a few lines from her father; and a postscript was added by her new relative in a very affectionate manner: she cherished this letter as a proof of her father's goodness; and, returning to her usual avocations, did not, for the present, perceive that any change had taken place in her connections, that could affect her happiness; and returned home, at the following vacation, without a cloud upon her brow or her heart, prepared to give and receive the pleasure usually diffused through a family, when a material branch of it returns to the paternal mansion.

Perhaps Louisa had never been received with so much apparent joy, at any of her former periodical visits, as in the present instance; for her father, delighted with the ingenuous affection of her manners, felt obliged (if we may use so strong a term) to her for so far overcoming her feelings, which could not fail to be awakened on seeing another occupy the place of her mother; and the lady now in that place could not help, for the same reason, to be pleased with a child whose sincerity she could not doubt, and whose affection must be an honour to her. The young ladies, who had been elated with the round of visiting produced by the marriage, considered Louisa's return as the signal for renewed amusements, and therefore welcomed her as the harbinger of joy; and the whole party sat down to dinner in that frame of mind which taught the child to believe "her presence made a little holiday," and that "every face was dressed in smiles to greet her;" and, as her power of bestowing pleasure was now more diffused than formerly, of course it became more gratifying to her.

But another day came, and another still, and Louisa found, not only that her power of communicating pleasure was fled, but that she was for the most part either forgotten, or considered an intruder by part of the family at least; for Ellen Debrett frequently lamented that she was now shut out from visits and rides she used to enjoy; for though it was possible to take *two* girls, mamma said it was completely out of the question to take *three*; and therefore they were all left at home together; and it was rather hard that two girls, like Maria and her, should stay at home on account of a *little* girl like Louisa.

To these complaints, the *little* girl, who was two years younger, could only reply by observing—"That she was always willing to stay at home alone, as she could employ herself during the time they were absent in drawing, of which she was extremely fond."

"Then tell my mother you had rather stay at home by yourself," said Ellen bluntly.

"I don't think that would look handsome or kind towards *you*; but if Mrs. Debrett, I mean if your mother, wishes to take you out, I will request her not to disappoint you on my account," said Louisa, going towards the dressing-room of Mrs. Franklin.

"There she goes," said Ellen; "what a little fool it is!"

"You might be ashamed of yourself to say so," said Maria, roused by a sense of justice from her usual apathy; "you ought to remember it is her father's coach in which you ride, and her father's friends you want to visit; and that it is very hard if she may not go out a little now, after being confined at school so long; in my opinion, we ought to stay at home *now*, and let her go out, poor thing."

Ellen catching the last words, with avidity ran to her mother's dressing-room, and interrupted Louisa's witless harangue, by an assertion directly the reverse, saying—"That Maria was desirous of staying at home with Louisa, if her mother would have the goodness to take *her* out."

As Mrs. Franklin could have no objection to an arrangement perfectly consonant to her wishes, she of course made none; Ellen became her companion, by a kind of implied consent, in Maria's case, and habitual obedience in Louisa's; and as the latter always appeared occupied and happy, Mr. Franklin made no observation on the arrangement, until the vacation had nearly expired, when he one day said he had engaged himself and Mrs. Franklin to dine in a family party, where they must contrive to take Louisa, as his friends had not seen her for a twelvemonth, and were anxious to do so.

"We cannot *all* go in the carriage," said Mrs. Franklin.

"I think we cannot *all* go with propriety," said Mr. Franklin, "for my friend's rooms are small; to be sure, the young ones might sit at a side table; but it struck me, that as Ellen has been out so often lately, and is your constant morning companion, she might stay at home."

Ellen began to pout—she had rather go to Russell-square, than any place; she had never been to Mr. Benson's in her life; and——

Mrs. Franklin should like to take Ellen to Mr. Benson's, for she thought Mrs. Benson's nieces very genteel girls, and being just her age, would be very eligible acquaintances for her.

"So they would for *me*," interposed Maria, "and I have staid at home with *little* Louisa ever since the holidays; so it is full as likely I should go as you, Miss Ellen."

"You staid at home," observed her mother, "with Louisa, because you were both fond of it; now Ellen likes society; she is of a different disposition to either of you, she loves company as I do."

"I love Emily Benson dearly," said Louisa, innocently looking up.

"Then you wish to visit her, I suppose, Miss Franklin? Pray why did you come with such a sanctified face to my dressing-room, and say you should always be happy at home alone, if I pleased to take out your sisters; I hate hypocrisy!" said the lady in great wrath.

Louisa, terrified with the idea that she had committed some great, but to her, indefinable error, rose to explain, but the contemptuous glance of Mrs. Franklin rendered her utterly unequal to it; for contempt was a passion she had never met before, as directed to herself; and conscious she could not merit it, her sense of injustice led her to look for protection from her father; she turned towards him, but instantly recollecting this kind of appeal was one of the things her mother had particularly told her would distress him, and be unworthy of herself, she checked the imploring eye, and, by a strong effort, conquering her awakened indignation, sat down again, still trembling with the idea that she had been, however unconsciously, the cause of awakening the first family feud she had ever witnessed in her own circle.

Mr. Franklin was not slow to mark the progress of her feelings, and his heart yearned to treat her with the fondness he was wont to display, when any circumstances called forth those virtues he had delighted to inculcate; but aware of the delicacy of his situation, he contented himself by observing, in a general manner, that although Maria and Louisa had both alike been willing to resign the pleasure of accompanying their mamma, when it was improper, yet it by no means

followed that they had not a pleasure in going out when she could take them with convenience; for *his* part, he had concluded Ellen would have had a pleasure in seeing their enjoyment, and was still loth to believe he was mistaken; half an hour's consideration would convince her that his expectations were reasonable, whether justly-founded or not.

The calmness and self-control of this speech showed Mrs. Franklin in a moment the glaring folly and impetuosity of her own; her feelings, ever quick and warm, instantly took an opposite direction.—"My dear Franklin, you are perfectly right!" she exclaimed, and rushing forwards, clasped Louisa in her arms, while, with tears in her eyes, she said—"My sweet child, I have been unjust to you, very unjust; but you will forgive me, my good child, I know you will."

"Oh dear, pray, *pray* do not say such words to me," said Louisa, sobbing on her bosom; "it is true I have not deserved your anger, but I do not like to hear you say so, indeed I do not. Pray let us all go together."

This reconciliation, though very sweet at the time, and sincerely intended to be kept by all parties, yet appeared to lay a foundation for new disputes, as Ellen thought proper to conclude that her mother loved Louisa better than her own children, and endeavoured to inspire Maria with the same idea.

Ever indulged to excess by the doting parent, this poor child, whose overweening passions made her really an object of compassion, became wretched from the imagined slight; and Mrs. Franklin, unable to see her suffer, redoubled her injudicious indulgence, which she could not refuse to extend to one so much more deserving as Louisa; so that she was again in danger, when the commencement of her school avocations happily restored her to that regularity of occupation so serviceable to children, and in her case, much happier than the mingled scene of disquietude on the one hand, or dissipation on the other.

Louisa now corresponded occasionally with Maria, who accounted for her father's having seldom, favoured her with a letter of late, by saying he was much engaged with business: in the course of the autumn, she found that the whole family were for some time at Brighton; but when Christmas came again, she was at once delighted and disappointed, by receiving a letter from her dear father, informing her that he judged it best for her to remain at school during the vacation, the weather being so cold as to render travelling disagreeable; and that, as the Misses Debrett were going to a finishing school for one year, their mamma was too busy to make an addition to the family convenient at this time; though, he added, that before Louisa's return, he hoped to inform her of a very pleasant one.

Tears would spring to Louisa's eyes as she read the mandate of her banishment; but a short period of reflection sufficed to convince her, that it was indeed very probable that Mrs. Franklin was extremely busy, and that it was better she should remain where she was; but she could not possibly help wishing to see her father; the distance was no object in a carriage, "at least we used to think so," sighed Louisa.

Letters from home became now more scarce than ever, and there were moments when the fondled pet, whose every look had been an object of attention, and every wish prevented by gratification, almost fancied she was forgot; but she always endeavoured to chase the idea, the moment it intruded; she recalled her father's steady affection, and the undeviating justice of his character—she recollected the love Mrs. Franklin had expressed for her; and believed, that although, as the lady had said, she was rather passionate, yet that she was very sincere; and she flattered herself, that by-and-by some sufficient reason would be given for the silence they observed; other little girls were in the same predicament with herself, and therefore she had no right to complain of present neglect, although former attention had made her more sensible of it than she had a right to be.

"So you have got a little brother, Louisa," said Miss Saunders; "I wish you joy of him."

"Oh dear, ma'am," said Louisa joyfully, "have you had a letter from my father?"

"No, child, I have had no letter of late; I saw the birth of your father's heir in the newspaper; 'tis a matter of consequence to your family; and some day, when the hurry is over, they will tell *you* of it, I apprehend."

Louisa coloured, and observed—"She was very glad to hear it; she remembered her little brother, and that she was very fond of him."

"Most likely, my dear; he was your *own* brother."

"My mamma," replied the child, colouring more deeply, "told me, that all my papa's children must be to me *own* brothers and sisters, and that I must love them as I did little Charles."

"Undoubtedly," said Miss Saunders, correcting her tone; "they bear your father's name, and should be very dear to you."

"I hope I shall *love* them," said Louisa; "I am quite certain I shall be *kind* to them."

In a few days Louisa was repaid for her anxiety, by an affectionate letter from her father, together with a little present from Mrs. Franklin, which were sent by their own servant. Louisa seized the opportunity of conveying to her mother-in-law a pretty little cap, which she had purchased with her own pocket-money, and worked neatly during play-hours; and which she accompanied by a most affectionate note, addressed equally to both parents.

Midsummer was again hailed by the juvenile inhabitants at Miss Saunders's; but they had nearly all departed, before Louisa received any intimation of the will of her father. During this state of suspense, she endeavoured to prepare her mind for what she deemed the *worst*, as she was not only extremely anxious to see her father, but desirous to embrace her little kinsman, about whose amusements and comforts she had already made many arrangements, and only regretted that he was such a very little boy, she was afraid the nurse would not permit her to handle him. Her fears were soon relieved on the former head, as her father's servant came to escort her home; and she had the satisfaction of being most kindly received by her father, who went with her himself into the nursery, and with sincere delight witnessed the effusions of her love towards the little innocent, whose birth was esteemed by the father an inestimable blessing.

Louisa found that the young ladies, Maria and Ellen, had been at home some days, and were now gone with their mother to make some purchases, preparatory to visiting their friends.—"*You*, my love, will want many things," said Mr. Franklin; "it is a long time since you were at home, and you are grown prodigiously."

"It *felt* a very long time, papa, indeed."

"I hope, my love," said the father, evading the fond gaze of his daughter, "it will never be so long again; but we were busy, you see, and Mrs. Franklin thought—that——"

"It was a great deal better, my dear papa, I am certain; but you might have brought my mamma over—though, to be sure, it was too far for her in winter—so 'twas all very well."

Louisa's self-offered apologies were interrupted by the arrival of the ladies, who all, with one accord, exclaimed, on the sight of Louisa, how prodigiously she was grown—a compliment, if it was one, she could return in Ellen's case, as her person, always pretty, was much improved during the twelvemonth they had been parted; but Louisa's chief attention was given to the baby, and Mrs. Franklin observed—"It was very odd, but she thought Louisa was as much delighted with the boy as her father."

"Yes; but though I love him very dearly, I hope *you* will not be so very fond of him; not so very, *very*, as to——" She hesitated, and the tears sprang to her eyes.

"I don't understand you, child: why am I not to be very, *very* fond of my little boy? do you think I shall love you the less?"

"Oh no!" said Louisa, and she looked tenderly on her father.

"I comprehend you, my good girl," said Mr. Franklin, advancing to his child: "she fears," said he, turning to his wife, "that your attention to the child may injure your own health; she recollects an instance very near to *her*, in which a mother's constitution was ruined by a blameable attention in such a case."

"So you would have me take care of myself, would you, Louisa?" said Mrs. Franklin, kissing her as she spoke; "you are *really* a most excellent child; I question whether either of those great girls have ever given my health a single thought since my confinement; I shall, however, take your advice, child, and have some consideration for myself."

Of this assertion no one about Mrs. Franklin's person doubted the truth. Though extremely pleased with becoming the mother of a son, whose birth so much increased the happiness of his father, and even the consequence of his family, yet Mrs. Franklin had been so long out of the habits of nursery cares and employments, that she could not be said to fulfil *all* the duties of a tender mother; and the difference between her conduct in this respect, and that of his late wife, had often surprised and wounded Mr. Franklin. He did not consider that the present Mrs. Franklin was at this time considerably older than his Louisa had been, when her tenderness had been called upon in the discharge of maternal duties, and that of course her habits were more fixed, and her taste as well as feelings assimilated to different objects of pursuit; although

extremely anxious to procure every advantage to her daughters, which could further their advancement in life, or render them happy in their situation now, yet Mr. Franklin might have recollected, that as the wife of an officer, subject to frequent removals, his lady had been under the necessity of intrusting each of her daughters to the care of a nurse, and therefore could not possess the knowledge which arises from experience, nor the patience which results from habitual attention to the little helpless beings, who claim not only the tenderness, but the skill of those to whom they are committed.

During a widowhood of seven years, Mrs. Franklin, though living in a confined circle, from circumstances considerably contracted, from the death of Colonel Debrett, had yet been much in the habit of visiting; and being fashionable in her dress, pleasing in her manners, and furnished by her distant and more splendid acquaintance with those fashionable anecdotes of high life which are ever carefully sought after by the little great, who reside at a distance from the metropolis, she had become a kind of queen in her own party, to whom she was ever necessary. The circle being changed did not change the habit, and though attached to her husband, who was not only extremely amiable as a man, but possessed those superior attainments which rendered him a more engaging companion than any she had been accustomed to meet, and highly gratified by the elegant home to which he had introduced her, yet a larger circle was necessary for her happiness; naturally hospitable, she rejoiced in her increased powers of displaying this virtue, not unmixed with the errors which are too frequently its concomitants; and in a very short time after his second marriage, Mr. Franklin found himself, he scarcely knew how, immersed in a round of engagements, not quite consistent with his commercial duties, by no means agreeable to his ideas of domestic comfort, and though not too expensive for his situation in life, yet more so than prudence warranted, in a man whose family was increasing, and whose commerce was impeded by the political derangements which now agitated Spain, and threatened more violent convulsions.

Now the children were all at home, Mr. Franklin concluded that his lady would spend more time there; but on finding that the very circumstance gave rise to an increased circle of visits, as the Misses Debrett had made many acquaintances at their school, who now swelled the list of their mamma's visitors, he thought it his duty, though in the mildest manner, to inform Mrs. Franklin, that it would perhaps be advisable to contract their engagements, lest the young ladies should be led to imagine, on their return home for good, that the present system of dissipation awaited them, in which case they must necessarily be disappointed, as it was but too likely that circumstances would oblige them to contract their expenses, which he observed, were now greatly exceeding the expenditure he had marked on their marriage, as the boundary which could not be exceeded.

Mrs. Franklin had too good an understanding not to perceive the justness of this caution; but loth to curtail the enjoyments or advantages of her daughters, as she thought proper to deem them, she observed—"That, to be sure, this was an expensive year, because there were three girls at boarding-school, but the next would bring things round; she only intended her daughters to remain at school one year, though they were certainly, in point of real knowledge, considerably behind Louisa, and therefore might stay a second with advantage; but as their fortunes were certainly inadequate to the expense, she did not wish to load his generosity too far, and should curtail their stay."

From this time, however, Mrs. Franklin made up her mind to lessen the expense of the family, by keeping Louisa at home: she was instigated to this by other motives equally urgent; the first was a perception, that since her daughters had been at school, their friends appeared to expect to find them improved so much, as to place Louisa at a distance proportioned to her years; whereas she was still so much forwarder than they were in her attainments, that the difference was still more conspicuous; and the second was, that she found, in the gentleness, docility, and affection of Louisa, so useful a partaker in her nursery cares, that, young as she was, if she was left at home, Mrs. Franklin could not only go out herself with perfect ease, but perceive that Mr. Franklin himself got the better of that solicitude for his boy, which she denominated the fidgets.

When, in a happy moment of compliance, this system was offered to the consideration of the father, he naturally objected to it, as inconsistent with the welfare of his daughter; but on being assured it would add greatly to the happiness of his wife, by cementing the affections of Louisa for her boy, and was told that she was really so clever, and so steady a little girl, that she might be trusted to pursue her studies at home, under the eye of a judicious friend, there was no resisting a plea so flattering; and Louisa was informed the next day, that her return to school was suspended for half a year at least.

This recess, though exciting the congratulations of Maria, and the upbraidings of Ellen, who again declared Louisa was her mother's pet, did not produce any change indicative of pleasure in Louisa. She had been happy at school, and her employments there had become extremely agreeable to her; and she foresaw, that notwithstanding the permission to

remain was attended with an exhortation to neglect nothing she had been accustomed to do, yet the power of so employing her time as to be beneficial, would probably not be consistent with the numerous petty sacrifices of that invaluable time which she had lately been impelled to make; for what with just helping Ellen to make her hair decent, and teaching Maria how to put on her spencer, and holding the baby while nurse got her breakfast, or preparing its cap, because nobody made the cockade so neatly; or filling up a few cards, because she wrote so pretty a hand; or garnishing the dessert, because the old housekeeper liked to see her, she was "so cheerful and handy, and like her poor dear mamma," Louisa found no time to pursue her drawing, of which she was so fond; could scarcely snatch it for the practice of a lesson; and as to reading, it was quite out of the question.

When, however, Maria and Ellen returned to school, her engagements were somewhat less numerous; and Mrs. Franklin appeared for a short time to relinquish the routine to which she had of late been so much devoted; but as it was done in compliance with the wishes of her husband, and from a conviction of propriety, which forced itself on her judgment, rather than subdued her inclinations, it had the useful effect such sacrifices have upon the temper; one part of the day was a prey to *ennui* and languor, the other to disquiet and anger. Her spirits naturally ardent, and her mind active, when no scheme of pleasure was presented, shook off the stupidity which pervaded her mind in the first instance, to look after her servants, and inquire after the management of her household; and when this search penetrated abuses, or discovered faults, a temper prepared by discontent to be irritable was easily roused to passion; and his hours which Mr. Franklin spent in the counting-house, were too frequently dedicated by his lady to scolding her servants, or lamenting her misfortune, in being obliged to manage such a number of them, although it was an evil in a great measure brought on by herself.

In all these troubles Louisa bore a full share; for though she was not often numbered with the transgressors, yet she was constantly condemned to listen to the recapitulation of their offences, and find herself called upon for a justification of the lady's conduct, more especially when she could not obtain her own, which was not unfrequently the case; for Mrs. Franklin had so many good points in her disposition, that she was often condemned to self-reproach, for errors which she always promised herself in the hour of reason to amend, though that of passion too often broke the engagement.

When Louisa had been at home about three months, she had the happiness of seeing her grandfather, who had promised to visit Mr. Franklin ever since the birth of his boy, but had been prevented by repeated attacks of the gout, to which he was subject. His real regard for Mr. Franklin had induced him to feel satisfaction in his second marriage, as a means of increasing his happiness; but he had likewise felt considerable anxiety on account of Louisa, for whom he felt all that fond regard and indulgent tenderness peculiar to the relationship in which he stood, and in which it may ever be remarked, parental affection appears to relinquish authority, only that it may redouble tenderness.

CHAPTER IV.

Blessed are the dead, that die in the Lord.—ST. PAUL.

Mrs. Franklin was too fond of any thing that produced a change in her family, not to receive Mr. Havell, the father of her predecessor, with some degree of pleasure, which was considerably increased by the urbanity of that gentleman's manners, and the particular respect with which he treated her, notwithstanding his overweening fondness, as she deemed it, for Louisa. She paid him every possible attention consistent with her own notions of procuring him happiness; and every friend he had left in London, and every descendant of those he had lost, were invited to meet him, and treated with a splendour more suited to her notions of fashionable elegance, than to those of an old English merchant; so that while he thanked her zeal for such a manifestation of good-will, he gave a sigh for the expense of its exhibition. Though long since retired from business, he still took too much interest in the concern he had quitted, and the general situation of his country, with regard to its political and commercial situation, not to know that Mr. Franklin must be struggling against the tide at this time, and for some years must bend to the pressure of the times.

From the character he had heard of his present wife, as a widow, who having a narrow income, had prudently retired to a cheap place, where she educated her daughters at home, and by dint of good management, still kept up a respectable acquaintance, without involving her income, or seeking aid from her relations, he was led to conclude that the second choice of Mr. Franklin, though not lucrative, was prudent; and as he knew the generosity of his son-in-law, and was capable of it himself, he hoped that a connection, which had given permanent advantages to a worthy woman, had given also a most desirable helpmate to one who merited every blessing connubial friendship could bestow.

On revolving these things in his mind, he was induced to believe that Mrs. Franklin had adopted her present style of magnificence out of compliment to him, under a mistaken idea of its being agreeable to his wishes; and he recollected having heard much of late years of the rigid economy adopted in some families in general, in order to make grand exhibitions at particular times; and though it was a system he abhorred in itself, yet he concluded that every person had a right to spend their money in their own way; and as Mrs. Franklin might have been used to it in her line of society, he had no right to object to it, especially when made subservient to his entertainment. The good old man therefore gave up his first idea of remonstrating with Mr. Franklin on the subject, as he had intended to do; but fully impressed with the desire that Louisa should be removed from sharing in extravagance her fortune would give her no right to adopt, or imbibing meanness equally unnecessary to one who had a right to expect a genteel independence, he determined on requesting that she might reside with him altogether, proposing her education should be finished under the care of a private governess.

When Mr. Havell made this request to Mr. Franklin, it naturally induced them to advert to the past, and from thence to the present situation of the affairs of the house; and Mr. Franklin informed his father-in-law, that at the time of his marriage with Mrs. Debrett, he had settled twenty-five hundred pounds upon Louisa—"Not, my dear sir," added he, "that I considered *that* by any means as an adequate fortune for Louisa, with whose mother I received three times that sum, and who was—(here his voice faltered exceedingly)—who was in herself a jewel above all price; but that it was quite as large a sum as I could with conveniency vest in the funds, it being now so difficult to get money from the continent; and besides, as Mrs. Debrett's daughters had not quite two thousand pounds a-piece, the interest of which they will receive for themselves when they attain their eighteenth year, and I was desirous of saving my family from those little bickerings which are apt to arise from competition or jealousy, I thought such an income sufficient for Louisa, while she remained a girl in her father's house, especially as (like her mother) she has little pleasure in spending money, except in helping her fellow-creatures."

"Very true," returned Mr. Havell, "and the wants of a charitable woman are the most moderate of all a wife's expenses: my Louisa was——"

"What was she not?" exclaimed the husband, with enthusiasm, while the tears sprang to his eyes. "Believe me, sir," added he, grasping the old gentleman's hand, "that not a day passes over my head in which I do not gratefully bless the memory of Louisa, and ever thank her for the happiest hours I pass with my present wife, who, I can assure you, is very sincerely attached to my daughter, and will regret parting with her exceedingly."

"I believe it all, Charles," said Mr. Havell, softened and gratified, while the tears of fond remembrance coursed his furrowed cheek; "and when I come to recollect how you have been situated, and that I never in any way gave you a hint that I wished you to settle any thing on Louisa, I think you acted with very great consideration. May I ask if you hold the

fortunes of Colonel Debrett's children in your hands?"

"No, sir, I positively declined it."

"You did perfectly right; but must, I am certain, have experienced great inconvenience. It has always been my intention to leave Louisa five thousand pounds under your guardianship; and when I came up to town, it was with the intention of purchasing stock for that purpose; but I will lend it to you instead; in a little time the present difficulties may blow over; and I shall take care that, in case of my death, you are not called upon for it, in such a manner as to distress you."

Mr. Franklin thanked the good man, with that unembarrassed air with which the generous ever receive favours they know themselves equally capable of bestowing. The present relief was of most essential benefit to him, and therefore made the loan doubly valuable; and as he mentioned the circumstance to Mrs. Franklin, at the same time with Mr. Havell's request for Louisa's company, it was not possible for her to make any objection; and she was told to prepare for her journey into Essex immediately.

The morning before her departure, Mrs. Franklin took her out to purchase a new bonnet and other necessaries; and Mr. Franklin being engaged in the city, Mr. Havell having looked over the papers, sauntered into the housekeeper's room, intending to make her a farewell present; she was then packing Louisa's things, but proud of his attention, left the portmanteau to itself, and addressed him with—"Dear me, sir, I be very sorry, though to be sure I be very glad for *some things*, you be going to take Miss Lucy away; I hope it'll do her a deal of good, poor thing—that I does."

"I am afraid she will be dull, Mrs. Johnson, at the first, because she has been used to so much gaiety at home; but at her age habits are not bad to break."

"Gaiety, sir!" screamed the housekeeper: "gaiety indeed! I'm sure and sure, she niver knowed a bit of that till you comed; to be sure you have made a famous change for her for this week past."

"So much the better; such weeks should not come often; I have made a great deal of trouble, Johnson, in the house."

"Oh, no, sir, for matter of that, we keeps it up pretty well at all times; but poor Miss Franklin, it be nothing to she much, for the nursery be her place; there she sits from morning to night, work, work, at mistress's trimmings, or else nursing the babe; and though, to be sure, so much gadding, and dressing, and visiting, as some young ladies have, ben't no better for them, yet still there's a medum in all things, thinks I."

"Mrs. Franklin seems very fond of Louisa," said Mr. Havell thoughtfully.

"Ay, to be sure, she may well be fond of her; she has eyes in her head; though to be sure, one would think she was blind sometimes, to see how she goes on with Miss Ellen; but, howsomdever, she sees plain enuff that Miss Franklin is worth a hundred of her girls put together, at every thing, as one may say; and when she begins of her tantrams, always replies so meek and gentle-like, that she cannot help but love her as it were; but what signifies love, if it does not teach us to do as we would be done by? not but there are many worse women than mistress; she has a noble spirit of her own in many things, I must say that."

Mr. Havell withdrew, ruminating on this account, and more pleased than ever that he had secured his darling from the evils of her situation, whatever they might be.

In a few days he had the pleasure of seeing her established in his own household, and perceived, that from either its novelty, or the circumstances mentioned by Mrs. Johnson, she certainly appeared in much better health and higher spirits than during her residence in London, though she was by no means deficient in cheerfulness there.

Louisa had left her parental home with regret, and especially her little brother, whose smiles had begun to be intelligent to her, and whose helpless state had given him an interest in her affections; but the liberty she enjoyed, and the unbounded indulgence with which she was treated, very soon made her grandfather's house a paradise to his servants, who were all, like their master, far advanced in life, and who were strangers to the plans of modern education, in eliciting, or rather forcing, the powers of children; every thing she said and did appeared a species of miraculous excellence; and it was impossible for her to help conceiving herself a prodigy of talent and wisdom. She began to study how to preserve the reputation so suddenly bestowed upon her, and was, by this tide of prosperity, not only losing all the uses of past subjection, but urging fast to an affected character, when the introduction of a pious and sensible young woman to her grandfather's mansion, as her governess, restored her in a short time to her native simplicity, and engrafted

actual virtues upon amiable propensities: from her she imbibed anew the precepts of her invaluable mother, and was enabled, with more accuracy, to apply the dying advice of her parent to the situation in which she now found herself.

Miss Layton, the governess of Louisa, was a person of meek and gentle manners, but of firm and vigorous mind, combining mildness with energy, and simplicity with dignity; her mind was richly cultivated, her knowledge extensive, and her taste refined; she would have been an excellent governess to a child at any age, but much of her treasure must have been wasted on a child in an earlier period of education; she was at that happy age when the groundwork of knowledge being laid, and an interest acquired in it, the pupil is enabled to push forward with zeal and activity, in the tract a more enlightened mind prescribes. In the first rudiments of learning, emulation is ever necessary, as strong stimulants must be applied ere the infant can overcome the labour required in all exercises of the opening faculties; hence it will be found that no *private* tuition is equal to a school; but when the rudiments are already acquired, and aversion to study subdued, the delight of pursuit precludes the want of any other, save that a companion and guide increases pleasure and alacrity in the most flowery path.

The period in which Louisa lived with her grandfather, although his occasional fits of sickness sometimes distressed her, might be justly called the "Sabbath of her life," for it was a period of rest, in which piety and peace united to bless the present scene, and prepare her for the future; for although the indulgence of her venerable parent might have had a tendency to enervate her mind, yet the prudence of Miss Layton wisely obviated that evil, by keeping her perpetually employed; and the suffering state in which she so often beheld her worthy relative, who endured it with that Christian fortitude which was the best comment on the pious principles with which her mind was now deeply imbued, enabled her to preserve at once a sensibility of heart and equanimity of temper, favourable alike to her virtue and happiness.

Louisa had been nearly two years thus comfortably situated, during which time she had only paid one short visit to London, on the birth of a little sister, when one morning her grandfather was seized with the gout in his head, to a degree which became truly alarming: unfortunately Miss Layton was then visiting her friends, and the distress of Louisa was much increased by the illness of that servant who was Mr. Havell's principal nurse on these occasions: collecting herself in the best manner she was able, and conscious that if her dear relative retained his senses, he would have pleasure in seeing her about his bed, she exerted herself to the utmost, agreeable to the directions of his medical attendants, and had the satisfaction of hearing him speak before morning, and assure her that her kindness consoled, and her efforts relieved him; but scarcely had she congratulated herself on this happy change, when the insidious disease seized on his stomach, and the symptoms of danger were of course more aggravated. Louisa now dispatched one messenger to Miss Layton, and another to her father, and then instantly returned to the bedside of the invalid.

Though now in great agonies from the acuteness of the pain, yet he appeared capable of relief from the medicines administered by the hands of this affectionate child, who was the only one of his offspring near him at this trying time, his sons being engaged in commercial pursuits on the continent. Yet, much as he was comforted by her attendance, he was not unmindful of her youth and inexperience, and was fearful that if his dissolution took place at this time, she might suffer from supporting a scene ill suited to her years, and calculated to alarm as well as grieve her; but when, in the few broken accents which pain allowed, he besought her to leave the room, and alluded to the reason, she replied—"No, my dear, dear grandpapa, I cannot leave you; the God whom we serve will support us both—his blessed will be done!"

"Amen," returned the sufferer; and, reassured by that Divine Goodness, who heard his unuttered prayer, he continued to hold the hand of his young nurse, and to regard her as the only thing on earth which had yet a claim on his dying eyes.

Towards midnight his severe pains abated, and hope, the constant companion of life, at Louisa's season of it, was again buoyant in her heart; every moment she expected Miss Layton would return, and with her some beneficial plan would be adopted, some *régime* altered, which would dispel the symptoms, and restore the invalid; and while she now listened in breathless suspense towards the door, and now gazed with fond solicitude on the object of her cares, a livid hue stole over the features of the dying man, and the hand she held no longer strove to return her gentle pressure; faint sounds of prayer issued from the quivering lips, but no articulate sound met her ear; she motioned to the attendants to be silent, and dropping on her knees, fervently, though silently, besought the Father of Spirits to receive the soul of his departing servant. The dying saint seemed conscious of help from above; a sweet smile illumined his languid face; he made an effort audibly to bless his child, and with that effort closed his pious life.

Deeply affected, both by awe and love, for many minutes Louisa continued to kneel by the bedside, till urged to withdraw by the weeping servants; but scarcely had she risen from the solemn contemplation, when her father entered the room, and in his arms she freely shed the tears of sincere affection for the loss she had sustained.

Mr. Franklin was truly sorry that he had not arrived to soothe the deathbed pillow of a man so sincerely beloved and esteemed; but he was truly happy to find that his child had supplied the place of her mother to her pious grandsire, and in her whole conduct had evinced the magnanimity of pure affection, which, while it partakes with genuine sympathy the pains of those we love, enables us with unrepining fortitude to bear the burden which it shares.

The following morning Miss Layton arrived, and in a few days the good man was deposited in the house appointed for all living. His faithful servants received an advance of the annuities his goodness had provided as the support of their declining years; his house was disposed of until the return of his eldest son; and Mr. Franklin returned with his daughter and her governess to his house in London, where the latter, finding no farther occasion for her services to Miss Franklin, took up her abode with another family; but her parting from her late charge was attended with real sorrow to them both.

Louisa was now nearly fifteen; she had attained something more than the middle height; and although very slender, was finely formed; and from habits of constant exercise, was become agile and graceful in all her motions; and her face, though delicate, indicated health and good-nature; the deep mourning she wore became her very much, as she happened to be very fair; so that many people, on her return, expressed themselves very much pleased with her person, a circumstance that never failed to throw a gloom over the countenance of Mrs. Franklin; for as her daughter Ellen was now seventeen, and considered very handsome, and the fond mother had indulged in dreams of future greatness for her darling, she could not bear any thing in the shape of a rival crossing her path; and forgetting the youth and gentle character of Louisa, she saw only in the elegant young creature before her a formidable opponent to her wishes with regard to Ellen.

Ellen herself had by this time imbibed such a portion of vanity, that she was too much intoxicated by the subtle draught to see danger from any competitor, and she felt pleased with the return of Louisa, from a recollection, that if she still retained the disposition and the powers of obliging she once possessed, that she would be a very desirable inmate, especially as Mr. Franklin had lately curtailed his establishment, and an assistant in her toilet cares was requisite for Ellen's comfort.

The quiet retirement, and the confined but truly desirable society Louisa had lost, could not fail to be subjects of sincere and frequent regret to her; compared to the life she had led in the country, her father's house appeared a round of dissipation; and though she soon perceived it was carried on with more system and less expense than formerly, yet the sober habits of life were equally perverted.

As however all young people are fond of society, and naturally attached to the glitter which plays on the surface of things, most probably Louisa, had she been permitted to join it, would soon have made one in the gay circle; but Mrs. Franklin, with so much good sense, pointed out the impropriety of taking so young a person into public, that Mr. Franklin, who easily acceded to a line of conduct agreeable to his own judgment, was led to assure Louisa it would be better for her to remain at home, to which she gave not only unqualified obedience, but cheerful consent.

Her little brother was now at a most engaging age, as he began to prattle; and pleased with the affectionate attention she showed, became so fond of her, that he was her constant companion; and as his little sister was likewise beginning to distinguish persons, and never failed to hold out her little arms when Louisa entered the nursery, her affectionate heart gave them the place her revered grandfather had lately occupied, and found, in their simple expressions of affection, and in many offices of friendship they claimed at her hands, much of her time was employed in a manner she judged profitable to them, and not unpleasant to herself; but she soon found, that by little and little, her services in this way multiplied on her hands till they became burdensome, since they denied all time for the elegant pursuits her taste dictated, and her fortune justified.

Mrs. Franklin found so much advantage from the cares of Louisa in her nursery, not only because of the ease it gave her own mind, but the pleasure which was communicated to her husband by the affectionate attentions of his eldest child to his second offspring, that she cast off her own share of the burden, and entered with new avidity into parties of pleasure, assured that home was rendered comfortable to Mr. Franklin, and he would therefore bear her absence with more patience than he was wont to do; for the concerns of his counting-house had regularly grown more oppressive for the last two years; and though he seldom troubled her with any detailed account of his grievances, yet there was a gloom on his brow which indicated a heart ill at ease, and he seldom took up a newspaper without regretting some circumstance which threatened distress. He had made one reformation in his household by the dismissal of two servants, previous to Louisa's return, for which he gave reasons too strong to be disputable; but when that event took place, as by the will of

Mr. Havell, the interest of the five thousand pounds he had lent him was, from the day of his death, to be appropriated to the "board and instruction of his beloved grandchild, and her benefit and furtherance in life," Mrs. Franklin pleased herself with the idea, that an idle footman and gossiping maid, whose province had been attending on the Misses Debrett, would be recalled; but after waiting some time, and finding that her hints of their necessity did not induce any reply, much less consent from Mr. Franklin, she one evening addressed him thus—"Now the family is increased, my dear, you must see the necessity of getting another servant; I find Jackson is still at liberty, so I think we had better get her to come back; Louisa has a right to a maid, and she can wait upon *her*, and attend to some little matters besides, so as to be very useful."

"Louisa had a right to a governess, in my opinion, yet you positively objected to receive Miss Layton."

"Surely there is a great deal of difference, my dear, between a fine lady governess, with fifty pounds a-year, who herself wants waiting upon, and a common servant; you are continually telling me you cannot afford this thing, and the other thing is unnecessary, and prophesying that the French will ruin your Spanish trade, and all that; so how could I think of your bringing such an increased expenditure into the family?"

"You knew that Louisa's return brought an additional income of two hundred and fifty pounds a-year."

"True, and for that reason I think myself fully justified in expecting an increase to our establishment; she has been used to being waited on, hand and foot, at her grandfather's, you know."

"Certainly; but while she is shut up in her nursery, she cannot want it; it will be time enough to provide her a footman when she goes into public, and a maid when she has to dress for company."

"Well, I shall say no more; you are the most altered man in the world, Mr. Franklin; either I have been so unfortunate as to lose your affection, or else I deceived myself if I thought I ever had it—it is plain you cannot love me now, for you thwart me in every thing: to be sure, I thought you had some regard for your *own* child, though me and mine were unworthy your attention; but I don't know what to think—I declare I can make *nothing* of you," said the poor lady, bursting into tears of vexation.

The husband, with a heavy heart, was beginning a reply, when the little boy broke into the room (though such intrusion was without the pale of the law), to show papa his fine new frock, with buttons before, which sister had made him, and had been trying it on before he went to bed; he was followed by Louisa, who was not a little proud of her first effort at this kind of notability; and not aware that she had entered at an unfortunate moment, claimed the approbation of Mrs. Franklin for having made the dress fit Charles so exactly.

"Oh, yes, you are amazingly clever!" replied the lady, with a scornful smile; "it is a thousand pities you were not brought up to be a mantua-maker; it is really a sad thing that the independence of your fortune should cramp your energies by confining you to the society of gentlewomen."

Equally surprised and wounded, Louisa was on the point of hastily giving utterance to the palpable truth, that she should most probably never have exerted her talents in that way, if she had not been positively requested to do so by Mrs. Franklin herself: but she cast her eye towards her father, in whose countenance she saw an expression of anger towards his wife she had never before witnessed; and not wishing either to retort through him or herself, since a moment's recollection restored her to the remembrance of that blessed precept, "a mild answer turneth away wrath," she merely observed, that she could never blush for any work which proved that she obeyed Mrs. Franklin's wishes; and withdrew, followed by her father, who was led after her by the child.

"You are very kind to this little fellow, Louisa," said Mr. Franklin, "and I hope he will one day be very grateful to you."

"I love him so well," said she, "that every thing I do for him is the greatest pleasure imaginable to myself; but if that were not the case, it would be my duty to increase his comforts, without expecting so strong a return as *gratitude*; that is a tribute due to a parent rather than a sister, I apprehend."

"I am under a necessity, my dear child, of calling upon you very early in life for all that you may think due to me. I wish to be open with you, Louisa, for your affection is not of a common character: I am perfectly aware that your situation is very different in this house to what it was in your grandfather's, and your present privations do not escape me. I hope you will not impute them to Mrs. Franklin, for though she had spoken petulantly to you just now, and but for your example, I

might have answered her in the same way, yet, I can assure you, she is desirous of giving you every advantage consonant to your fortune and habits; but when I tell you, my dear Louisa, that every means of contracting our expenses for a few years is an increase to my comfort, and an establishment of my credit among the thinking part of the world, I think you will perceive, that in thus making you the confidant of my troubles, and an assistant to my relief, my heart confers on you a privilege not often granted to so young a person. I hope, at least, this confession will sweeten the denials my prudence had forced me to make of your rights, though not your requests."

"My own dear father," said Louisa, fondly kissing the hand he had extended to her, "I have no wants or wishes of any kind, but to see *you* happy, and my mother pleased with my exertions. I know you have had many losses in your business of late years, for my poor grandfather frequently lamented such things to me; but he always said you would struggle through them with care; and I hope you will, if that is what you allude to. Pray do not consider me such a child as to want anything inconsistent with our fortune and your comfort, though I do sincerely wish I were a woman, that I might give you what my good grandfather was so kind as to leave me."

Tears flowed freely from the eyes of the fond father, as he kissed the cheek of his daughter, and his heart was lighter than he had felt it many months, from thus sharing its burden with one whom affection had taught what is generally learned only in the school of experience—the power of appreciating his cares.

He returned to his wife with an unclouded brow, and the kindness of his manners recalled her more quickly to a sense of her error than any species of recrimination could possibly have done. She now shed tears of penitence for the unworthy passion she had evinced, and was more profuse in the language of self-accusation than either the father or his child would have allowed their inmost hearts to whisper. She even made many excellent resolutions of economy, and for a short time exerted all the faculties of her energetic mind to circumscribe her own expenses and those of her daughters; but in doing this, contentions arose, disgraceful to themselves and distressing to those around them. Ellen's spirit, nurtured alike by long indulgence and consummate vanity, would bear no control; and Maria, whose only exertion was some frivolous occupation leading to dissipation, was almost equally averse to every species of domestic restraint or employment; so that it very frequently happened that the high-spirited Mrs. Franklin, whose superior mind, and commanding though winning manners, kept the circle of her acquaintance in awe of her powers, or won by her persuasion, was herself baffled alike by the daughter she had foolishly spoiled, or the one she had blameably slighted; and many a time, oppressed by vexation, or wearied with entreaty and remonstrance, she would seek the chamber of Louisa, and bitterly lament the obstinacy and perverseness of her unnatural children. Yet when the storm was blown over, and their obedience to some trifling request purchased by a promise of taking them to some public place, or engaging some party for their amusement, Louisa was again consigned to oblivion, further than as her talents were called on for their accustomed assistance.

As time passed, and her age seemed to give some right to a partial participation of their amusements, this conduct sometimes struck Louisa as hard, for she was not aware that Mrs. Franklin had predetermined never to take her out until she had obtained Ellen an establishment for life; and though that young lady had now attained her nineteenth year, no circumstance had arisen to render it probable that she would soon fulfil the wishes of her anxious parent; every where she attracted attention; but either the consciousness of her own beauty, the affectation of her manners, or the frivolity of her mind, defeated the impression; and with many admirers, she could not yet boast a single lover.

Mrs. Franklin was one evening requested to take tickets for the benefit of a favourite actress, by a lady whom she was anxious to oblige, and accordingly took such a number as would not only treat her own family, but some female friends; and on the morning of their distribution, Mr. Franklin said, he approved the play very much, and would accompany them; Louisa had never seen the new theatre, nor indeed been at a play since she was quite a child, and it was an amusement he should have a pleasure in partaking with her, and one to which not a *shadow* of objection could possibly be made.

The manner in which the last words were spoken indicated a kind of resolution in him, which, when exerted, was decisive, and therefore no comment was made, farther than to say, that, to be sure, a play once a season was no great thing; and Louisa heard the news with all the delight natural to her years and vivacity.

Maria honestly congratulated her on the circumstance, and hoped she would soon begin to go with them every where; but Ellen reminded her that she should want the lace running on her frock, which she mentioned the evening before.

"Then you had better do it yourself," said Louisa; "for as I am going out to-night, I am certain I shall spend the whole day in nursing little Emily, she is so very poorly with cutting these double teeth, and the poor little lamb is a little relieved

when we can do any thing to amuse her."

This observation, though received with a scornful toss of the head by Ellen, who wondered how any body could spend their time with little children, was carefully attended to by Mr. Franklin, who was very fond of his little girl, and remembered the sufferings of his first set of nestlings with their teeth, as a season of great trial to their mother, Louisa alone surviving that trying period.

On adjourning to the nursery, he found the little girl much worse than he had expected; and, surprised that no medical assistance had been obtained, dispatched a servant for the apothecary, whom he waited to see before he went to the city. This gentleman said the child was certainly very ill, as her fever ran extremely high; but if they could prevent her falling into convulsions, to which there was a great tendency, she would be better soon, but lamented he had not been sent for earlier. Mrs. Franklin in great alarm, waited for his opinion, holding the child in her arms, and rocking it about with great emotion, and scolding the nurse-maid and Louisa for not informing her of its danger; but as soon as the child ceased to cry, and its father was departed with the doctor, her fears were entirely over; she consigned it to Louisa's care, assured her the worst was over; and then stepped out to purchase a turban for the evening.

CHAPTER V.

*Happy the babe, who privileged by fate,
To shorter labours, and a lighter weight,
Receiv'd but yesterday the gift of breath,
Ordered to-morrow to prepare for death.*—POPE.

When Mr. Franklin returned to dinner, his first steps were directed to the nursery, where he found Louisa dressed for the play, but attending her little sister, whose appearance indicated great fever, but who was at that time asleep.

Several young ladies, companions of Maria and Ellen, dined with them; and as they were all pleased with the suavity of Louisa's manners, they united in paying her an attention, which, by flattering her, called out her spirits, and made her enter with uncommon avidity into conversation on the gay scene she was about to witness. She was the more inclined to indulge her cheerful vein, because Mrs. Franklin had consoled her with asserting repeatedly, that if Emily slept, she would be quite well in the morning; and as she had stepped out the moment the cloth was drawn, she satisfied herself in that particular, and enjoyed anticipated pleasure without a drawback; but just as the carriage drew up to the door, Mr. Franklin stepped into the nursery the very last thing, and returning with consternation in his looks, said the child had awoke in a strong convulsive fit, and though she was now recovered, yet there was so much reason to fear a relapse, it was quite impossible to leave her to the care of servants only.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Franklin, flying to the door, "send for doctor Jackson immediately—what can be done?"

"My dear Maria," said her husband, "do not alarm yourself so much; I gave instant orders that doctor Jackson should be sent for, and I trust he will administer some lenitive which may allay the suffering that produced convulsion; but without dreading any immediate danger, surely you must admit that some one of the family ought to remain, to see that Peggy does her duty, and receive the doctor's orders."

"Peggy is a very *good* girl," said Mrs. Franklin, whose fears were allayed with the same rapidity which had marked their rising.

"True; but we cannot expect a servant to forego the temptation of a little chat in the house, or any other apparently trifling act of neglect, at the time we are ourselves engaged in pursuing amusement at a distance; though I do not imagine I can do much good, yet I shall certainly stay at home myself, rather than Peggy should be left sole nurse on so momentous an occasion."

"*You*, my dear! that is impossible; we cannot go without *you*, nor is it possible for me to stay at home; it must be one of the girls.—Maria, you are the eldest."

"But I never nursed Emily since she was born, and I know she won't let me come near her."

"That's true enough—more shame for you; in fact, there is nobody that can do any good but Louisa; but really," said Mrs. Franklin, looking round, "I can't ask *you*, child. Oh, Louisa is gone out of the room, I see; it appears she is as fond of pleasure as the rest of us, when it comes near her."

One of the visitants observed, that Miss Franklin left the room the moment her father entered it, and had not heard any part of the conversation, except his first declaration respecting the child.

Mr. Franklin and his lady now passed on to the nursery together; they found Louisa with the sick child on her lap, exhorting the little boy to be still while Peggy undressed him.—"Really, my dear Louisa, I am hurt at leaving you," said Mrs. Franklin; and she spoke the truth, for though she had not wished for her company in the first instance, yet she was really affected with this proof of self-command, and her love to the little one.

Mr. Franklin was at once proud of her virtues, and pained at her disappointment; and while he praised her care, he also blamed himself for submitting to its present exercise; when he looked at the placid face of the little sufferer, for her sake he became reconciled; and after giving strict orders to his servants to come and acquaint him if the slightest return of the convulsions took place, he complied with the reiterated entreaties of his wife, and set out with the young party to the play.

Mrs. Franklin had never known the sorrow of parting with a child, nor ever experienced any of those fears of such an event which agitate less fortunate parents. She had not received either of her daughters from the distant places where they were nursed, until they had passed the ordeal of infantine diseases, and her son had hitherto been a remarkable healthy child; she therefore saw in Mr. Franklin's fears a kind of weakness she thought unworthy of him; and when, after his arrival at the theatre, he continued to express his solicitude, she imputed his interruption of her enjoyment rather to a wish to vex *her* than any other cause, and determined to thwart the ill humour which she could not contend with in such a place as that.

Mr. Franklin had ordered the carriage to come at the end of the play, and was surprised to find his servant ready to the very moment: on praising his punctuality, the man said he had been waiting a quarter of an hour, for Miss Franklin had said he had better be too soon than too late, for she wanted them at home exceedingly.

On repeating this message to Mrs. Franklin, agreeably to the idea she had adopted, and the resolution she had formed, she replied—"That as the latter part of the entertainment was a new pantomime, and was what she had been most desirous of seeing, she should certainly not go home, merely because Miss Franklin was desirous of abridging the entertainment she could not share."

Mr. Franklin quitted his wife, with a look of such marked and deep displeasure, as she had never seen him assume since the hour she married him. Like all passionate people, she quickly repented the warmth and ill-timed petulance with which she had spoken; she saw the extent of her unkindness, in wounding the heart of a fond father, at the very moment he was suffering under fears, usually appertaining more to the maternal character than his own; and her conscience told her, that so far from seeking to abridge her pleasures he had endeavoured in the first instance to soothe her fears, and had never hinted at keeping her at home, which, alarmed as he had evidently been, he might have done with the greatest propriety. The image of her lovely babe, at that moment perhaps writhing in agonies, next presented itself to her view, and her ardent mind became anxious to the extremest degree to return: she expressed her wishes to the young people, and the exquisite sorrow which marked her features, inspiring them with an idea of her illness, made them readily coincide with her wishes. But alas! her servants were not returned—there was no gentleman with whom she was acquainted near her; and she was compelled to wait, in all the torment of awakened fear and distressing suspense.

The most wearisome attendance for days and weeks by the sick couch of her child, could scarcely have comprised such keen regret and bitter anguish as that which agitated the breast of Mrs. Franklin for the following hour; the stage, the actors, and the company, all swam before her eyes, unseen save when they awakened remorse the most cutting, and self-reproach the most vindictive.

Her mind was scarcely relieved by the bustle of concluding the pantomime, for the agitation of doubt had given way to the stupor of terror, though its object was scarcely definable to herself; but the certainty of having incurred most justly the anger of a husband, whose indulgence rendered such a circumstance doubly criminal, was an evil of which she was *certain*; and how much sorrow might follow in the train of this, it was impossible to foresee, or at present to guard against.

By degrees the overflowing house grew empty, the contending coachmen ceased to jar, and the lobby had yielded those most weary with waiting, yet still their carriage was not announced. Mrs. Franklin, roused to exertion, now regretted she had not looked out for the assistance of some friend, before all her acquaintance had left the place; and conceiving that Mr. Franklin's irritation had prevented him sending the carriage, or even the footman, she was proceeding to request the doorkeeper to procure a hackney-coach, when her servant, to her great relief, appeared, and told her the carriage was drawing up to the door.

"You have been shamefully late," said she, losing a sense of sorrow in vexation at the negligence she conceived him guilty of.

"We had to go to Princes Street to fetch the doctor, just at the time we were coming for you, ma'am."

"Is the child worse?"

"It be in a fair way to be better soon, madam, being not likely to see morning, as far as I can hear."

The insolence of this speech was not lost on Mrs. Franklin, who was a proud woman, and very tenacious of respect; but she was unequal to notice it now; her own heart smote her more than the words of any other person could do; and,

ordering the driver to be quick, she flung herself into her carriage in silent confusion.

As the young ladies who accompanied her were each set down at their respective homes, it was near three quarters of an hour before she reached hers; the hall was dark on her arrival, and contrary to the bustle she expected, a cold and solemn silence pervaded the house: leaving her daughters to make the inquiries her trembling tongue refused, she snatched the light from the housemaid who attended, and ascended the stairs with all the haste her trepidation permitted. All was still! the voice of moaning had ceased; nor could she hear the doctor's or her husband's voice, as she expected, in the breakfast-room; but as they were secondary objects now, she proceeded to the nursery, and softly pushing open the door, beheld her husband leaning against the chimney-piece, his eyes covered by his hands, and his attitude expressive of severe though repressed sorrow. Louisa was kneeling by the bedside, with her eyes fixed on the child in the bed: not a breath was heard; and the long snuff of the candle, as it twinkled in the socket, denoted the total absorption of the afflicted pair before her.

Mrs. Franklin now trembled violently; but as well as she was able, trod on tiptoe to the bed; a single glance assured her the precaution was useless. The severe sufferings which had terminated, by successive convulsions, the life of her little innocent, had set the mark of death in its most terrific form on its distorted features; and the mother, overwhelmed by the sight, dropped senseless on the floor.

Mr. Franklin at this sound first started from his painful reverie; at this afflicting spectacle, his heart, already softened by suffering, forgot every other sensation but that of pity for the wretched mother, whose sorrow, he well knew, was as acute now, as her carelessness had been reprehensible; he assisted Louisa to restore her, with the utmost tenderness, and omitted no means of soothing and consoling her, as soon as returning reason enabled her to appreciate his cares; but to a heart so smitten, the language of affection inflicted new wounds; and turning from the husband she had injured, the abashed wife sunk on the bosom of Louisa, and there freely shed the tears of repentance and sorrow.

The extreme grief she experienced for some days wholly incapacitated her from attending to the remains of her babe, and the care of the funeral devolved upon Louisa, as the young ladies were both so shocked by the circumstance of a death happening in the family, that even the small degree of exertion they usually evinced, appeared entirely to forsake them; they carefully avoided going near the room where the corpse was deposited, and were observed to be never parted during the time it remained in the house, fear thus effecting a union the general dissimilarity of their habits had hitherto prevented; for although they were alike fond of dissipation, in *one* it was produced by the activity of vanity, and in the *other* by the love of idleness; so that till now they were seldom observed to pass their time together in the house.

A decisive proof was given, in the conduct of these young people, of the difference between that true sensibility which is the offspring of Compassion and the sister of Fortitude, and of that weakness of mind which shrinks from suffering, and is overwhelmed with the first approaches of sorrow. Maria was particularly at this time a proof of the latter, for Ellen's mind, ever occupied in selfish cares, felt little beyond the first surprise, except what her fears suggested at the idea of death as an object of terror; but her sister, who had really loved the child, though her indolence had taken no share in its welfare, for some days sunk under the pressure of grief from its loss, and could never see her mother without bursting afresh into tears, and thus awakening with new force the poignancy of the mother's feelings, already too acute; whereas Louisa assumed a look of composure in the presence of Mrs. Franklin, and transacted every circumstance relative to the interment of the child, in such a manner as to save her from painful reflection and unavailing regret; though she was not sorry to find that an impression of thoughtfulness was left upon her mind, after the violence of grief had subsided, as she hoped it would have a tendency to produce a taste for domestic enjoyments, even when the necessity for seclusion no longer existed.

Mr. Franklin was desirous of using to the happiest purpose the new power which his forgiving tenderness had now given him over the softened feelings of his wife; but conscious that as the sense of grief subsided, habits of dissipation would return, and too probably with increased avidity, as many kind visitants had insisted upon it—"That poor Mrs. Franklin ought to get out again: really her poor nerves would be irreparably injured, after such a shock as she had received; she ought to seek amusement," &c., he wished, in a particular manner, by rendering her own house agreeable, to make other scenes unnecessary for the restoration of her peace. In this arduous undertaking, Louisa most gladly assisted, by exerting herself with unremitting diligence to procure amusement at home; and as she was now more at liberty from nursery cares than she had been during the life of little Emily, and Charles was at an age the most endearing, sometimes by the help of his prattle, at others by little musical performances, made up by the three girls, with Mr. Franklin's accompaniment, and at others by well-chosen books; the evenings had of late been got over so pleasantly, that it appeared a very possible

thing to go forward in the same way. Maria was particularly improved by this plan, as it called out powers she was not conscious of possessing, and awakened tastes which had hitherto lain dormant; so that her mother could not help very frequently praising her for possessing more talent than she was aware of. This young woman's heart, as we have already said, was naturally good, and she loved her mother as much as it was possible for a child to do, who had been for many years subject to the painful idea that her sister was preferred; affected with maternal praise, and increasing every day in affection towards Louisa, whose superior faculties were borne so meekly, that while they excited admiration, they forbade envy, she now endeavoured to apply herself to the practice of some neglected accomplishment, or the acquisition of some useful branch of knowledge. Mr. Franklin applauded her exertions, and advised her regularly to give some hours in every day to reading and drawing—a system that could be now easily practised, as Louisa had undertaken to give little Charles the rudiments of education, and had converted the nursery into a school-room.

The party was soon increased by Ellen, who had a little taste for music, and was extremely desirous of learning to sing as well as Louisa, it being a qualification which she had observed made even plain girls much run after, and must be positively fascinating when it accompanied personal charms; and as an attention to every species of learning induces some degree of solidity, and Ellen was under the necessity of being at least civil, during the time in which she was receiving instructions from her monitress, she was not a disagreeable inmate during the time she joined them; and a general improvement in her manners was soon visible, as she had conquered her haughtiness, in order to gain the instruction she wanted, since Louisa, though mild and forgiving to the greatest degree, would not have submitted to grant those favours to insolence, which so well merited entreaty. Ellen, thus constrained to be civil, acquired the habit of watching herself, and restraining her humours: she was obliged to see much of her little brother, and his innocent endearments touched the chord of affection which self-love had so long caused to lie dormant in her breast; and by degrees she learned to *love* the little circle she had in the first instance barely *endured*, and found herself happy in the home it had ever been her study to fly from; being obliged to consider Louisa as far her superior in the only accomplishment to which she had attached merit, and finding there were difficulties in the attainment she had not apprehended till she encountered them, she conceived a very superior idea of her youthful preceptress; and Louisa's taste and opinion began to be consulted beyond the compass of a song, and were in the high road to lead her active, though uncultivated mind, to higher attainments, when an important circumstance engaged the attention of the family.

About two years before this period, Mr. Franklin had been requested by a country gentleman to take his eldest son into his house and counting-house, not so much for the purpose of instructing him in the art of managing a business, as to give him a general knowledge of the commerce of his country, and introduce him to genteel society; for his fortune was perfectly independent, and the general state of mercantile concerns not promising, more than general knowledge was unnecessary for him; and as his father, since the death of his mother, and the marriage of his sister, had led a life of extreme retirement at his own country-seat, he wished his son, then eighteen, to look a little into the world, but through the medium of a friend, on whose care and respectability he could depend. His knowledge of Mr. Franklin's character, as a merchant, ensured him such an insight as might be sufficient for him in the way he wanted, without subjecting him to any species of drudgery or degradation; and the manner in which Mrs. Franklin was mentioned, as a lady whose society was extensive, elegant, and fashionable, promised precisely the introduction Mr. Egerton wished for his son; and the manner in which he sought for this advantageous situation being equally flattering and liberal, Mr. Franklin had agreed to accept the charge, and was in expectation of receiving Charles Egerton, when unfortunately the worthy father, from an accidental fall from his horse, was so much injured as to be confined for a considerable time to his bed; and as this was succeeded by a decline, the duteous son had never quitted him till the awful period of his sufferings, which had terminated at the same time Mr. Franklin buried his little girl.

The young man having paid the last duties to his much-loved parent, and meeting in his views the entire approbation of his guardians, now again offered himself as an inmate with Mr. Franklin, during the remaining year of his minority; and the very respectful and ingenuous manner in which he made his wishes known, added to the affectionate and pious manner in which he adverted to the memory of his father, rendered Mr. Franklin so much interested in him, that he instantly coincided with his wishes, and prepared his family to receive him with the regard due to his merit.

When Ellen had first heard this gentleman mentioned, she had declared that such a country squire's son must be the greatest bore in nature; but when she found that he was in actual possession of a very fine estate, from the recent death of his father, and could, in her ideas, afford to throw away money upon any thing, she conceived that he would be a most desirable acquisition; and, by a violent exclamation of joy, evinced her expectations that Mr. Egerton would be "a dashing youth:" but her expectation was checked by the information from Mr. Franklin, that Mr. Egerton would not be put

in possession of his estate till he was three-and-twenty, and that he had professed an intention of regulating his present expenditure entirely by his (Mr. Franklin's) wishes and directions.

"Then it will be *moderate indeed*," said Ellen, sneeringly.

"It will be consistent," returned Mr. Franklin, "with his real welfare and his situation in my family, not one of whom could be any way benefited by its increase, since I shall never allow either presents or treats of any kind to persons under my protection, to constitute the expenses of a young man so situated. I had hoped that you, Miss Ellen Debrett, had given me credit for generosity as well as prudence; but since that is not the case, I am determined that you shall be compelled to do justice to my delicacy and honour, with respect to Mr. Egerton, whom, you may depend upon it, I shall guard with the discretion and penetration of a father."

Mrs. Franklin was extremely hurt with Ellen's conduct, and reproved her severely, a circumstance so new, that she resented it with her usual asperity; and, conceiving Mr. Egerton to be the cause of her disgrace, she took an aversion for him before she had seen him; and apprehending, from the manner in which her mother had expressed herself, that she would be happy in seeing her united to a man of Mr. Egerton's description, she determined to thwart her wishes, should it be in her power to refuse him.

To be scolded by a mother, who had hitherto excused her every foible, and indulged her every wish, was a kind of insolence she had no idea of submitting to; all she owed her for past kindness was at once obliterated, and sullen resentment indulged, as an act of justice towards a cruel and refractory parent; so true it is, that the surest way to render a child ungrateful, is to spoil them by unqualified indulgence.

Louisa saw this renewed petulance in Ellen with sincere pain, and regretted that any circumstance had occurred which broke the harmony that had been so happily gaining ground in the family of late; but she was aware her father knew better than she could possibly do the propriety of admitting a stranger.

From this time, however, she was compelled to remark, that Mrs. Franklin treated her with less cordiality than she had done since the death of Emily; and as she could not divine the cause, her mind was oppressed by solicitude, especially as she observed, the more she exerted herself in her usual avocations, the more cold and unfriendly Mrs. Franklin appeared; yet she never let slip a word of blame on any subject; so that it was impossible for Louisa to apologize for error which was not imputed, or expostulate on unkindness, which, though keenly felt, was not embodied in a questionable shape.

This was a source of trouble Louisa had never contended with till now. Mrs. Franklin, naturally impetuous and passionate, had often severely hurt her by assertions and blame in her angry moments; but she had now learned to understand the nature of the person with whom she had to do, and she knew that a hasty speech was often followed by an ample concession, and that in some shape or other, sorrow was expressed for injury, which she amiably endeavoured to persuade herself was in a great measure involuntary; but that cold, repelling manner, which threw her at the heart-chilling distance she now experienced, was indeed cruel, and the consciousness that she did not merit such treatment, appeared, on a first view, to render it more intolerable, as she could have amended a fault, or have gained pardon for a transgression, and have been restored to favour; but where no crime was alleged, no reparation could be made; where no breach was formed, no reunion could be cemented; and the partition, begun by shyness, though slow, seemed final: but a further recollection taught her to look to Him who judgeth righteously, and commit herself to that love which beameth on the hearts of the humble, and cheers their spirits when all the world looks cold around them.

From prayer and meditation on the Divine goodness, Louisa was enabled to sustain the altered manners of Mrs. Franklin, without even by a single look appealing to her father for sympathy or redress, although the internal conflict she sustained so far affected her health, as to induce him to make more particular inquiries respecting her feelings than he had ever done at any preceding period of her life, and she could not at times help fearing that he understood the nature of her sorrow; though, happily for them both, he was at this time so much engaged in a commercial affair of importance, as to preclude observing much of any thing that passed in his house, where preparations were now making for the constantly-expected guest.

CHAPTER VI.

Nothing can detain affection, or fix esteem, but that kind of beauty which depends not on flesh and blood.

SERMONS FOR WOMEN.

On the morning preceding that on which Mr. Egerton had fixed for his arrival in London, Louisa informed Mrs. Franklin at the breakfast-table, that she thought little Charles very far from well; he did not complain of any particular pain, but was restless and feverish, often asking for water, and unable either to eat or play.

Mr. Franklin flew to the nursery, and returned with the child in his arms, who, in reply to his mother's inquiries, said his forehead hurt him sadly, and something pricked him all over; but it only began after Louisa left him.

Mr. Franklin smiled at this account; but as Mrs. Franklin was now soon alarmed, they agreed to send for Dr. Jackson, who said, on his arrival, the little fellow had given a very good account of his sensations, as he really believed he was beginning the measles.

"The nurse always thought he had the measles when very young; and as he had since then been exposed to them without being infected, they had concluded that nurse was in the right," Mrs. Franklin observed.

"That conclusion may be very just," said the judicious physician; "in which case we must take care of ourselves, for there is every reason to believe this complaint will turn out to be the scarlet fever, which has been very prevalent of late."

A general cry of terror rose from the breakfast-table, for several instances of the fatality of this fever, not only in children, but adults, had been lately read, and commented upon by Mr. Franklin, in the morning papers. The child, though not comprehending the emotion those around him expressed, yet partook its alarm, and as in all cases of trouble he looked to Louisa for comfort, he instantly stretched out his arms to go to her.

"Not for the world, my good little fellow," said the doctor, interposing; "the *young* are ever liable to infection; your nurse is the best person we can have, and she must be separated from the family."

"Oh, my God, this is too much!" said Mrs. Franklin, in great agitation, falling back in her chair, while a death-like paleness suffused the face of her husband, and he pressed his only son to his aching heart with trembling agony.

The terrified child held out his arms, with vehemence calling—"Oh, take me, Louisa, and I will be well; indeed I will."

"My dear doctor," said Louisa, "if he has got a fever, I have already run all the risk I can; for when I heard him moaning, I fetched him from his own bed to mine in the night, and I must, indeed I *must* attend him; I will observe all you say, and take every care to guard myself and every body else from infection; but to abandon him is impossible."

The extreme anxiety evinced in her manner, united to her pallid looks and heavy eyes, induced the doctor to think that it was but too probable she was indeed infected already, and he no longer opposed her will; and, as with trembling steps she withdrew with her precious burden, he gave a sigh to both the interesting victims; at the same time he expressed a hope that, as the fever was taken at its earliest stage, a favourable issue might be expected.

Ellen inquired with impatience if it would be advisable to leave the house, receding as she spoke from the breakfast-table.

Doctor Jackson thought, in so large a house, it was possible to remain with safety.

Maria declared, that whether it was or not, she would not quit it—"Should Louisa have the fever," said she, "pray who must take care of *her*?"

"A nurse, to be sure," said Ellen.

"In case I find any symptoms of the fever, in my next call, have affected Miss Franklin," returned the doctor, "I shall then recommend you not only to get a nurse, if possible, but to leave the house; and as you, Miss Debrett, can do your excellent young friend no good, I would advise you to keep out of the way. I perceive an exhortation to this effect is

unnecessary to your sister; but as every period of life is liable to the infection, I must insist upon it, that both Mr. and Mrs. Franklin place the confidence in Louisa she is, I am certain, most fully entitled to, and abstain from venturing to visit my little patient as much as possible."

As soon as Mr. Franklin could arrange his ideas, and in any measure command his feelings, he procured lodgings for Mr. Egerton, justly concluding it would be the safest course he could take.

The poor child grew regularly worse, and agreeably to the directions of his medical attendants, no one entered the room save Peggy, who divided the care of attending him with Louisa, who, on her part, devoted herself to her charge, and to her God, devoutly believing, that whatever might be His will concerning her, that as her path of duty was that of danger, He would order all things aright. She, however, neglected no means whatever that could enable her to escape infection, and was the better enabled to practice them, from the pious resignation which, by keeping her spirits in a composed frame, prevented her from sinking into that state of nervous debility, which is favourable to feverish irritability. It was, however, impossible for her to communicate her own resolution to the servant, who, being extremely fond of the little boy, was incessantly lamenting over him; and being deeply imbued with the belief, according to her own expression, "that what is to be, is to be," could not be prevailed upon to take the necessary precautions.

To Mr. Franklin's great relief, he was informed the second day, that Miss Franklin exhibited no symptoms of fever; but this joy was cruelly damped in the evening, by a declaration that the little boy was in the greatest danger.

Extremely attached to every child he had, yet it will be readily conceived that this boy had a hold still stronger than any on his heart; and as it was now upwards of three years since Emily's birth, he had no hopes of a farther addition to his family; and the expectation flattering to every man of seeing his name descend to posterity, in possession of an independent property, was again wrested from him; and, at a period when the many troubles with which he was contending made his visions for futurity the only happy ones he could enjoy, his extreme solicitude can only be *conceived*; for when we remember to his fears for his son was superadded the consciousness that Louisa's life was also in jeopardy, all *expression* must fail to point out the acuteness of his sorrows, the anguish of his suspense: hour after hour he slowly paced along the passage adjoining the nursery, listening to the low murmurs of his son, or the soothing voice of his daughter, as she endeavoured to cheer or console the little sufferer; informing her when it was the hour appointed for a medicine to be given, or from time to time lifting up his heart to God to implore a blessing on them both; then seeking his wife, he endeavoured to bend her mind and his own to the dispensation that awaited them, sometimes yielding to her entreaties, that he would not go again to the infected apartment, and at others returning, with still stronger interest, to the scene of his anxiety. With him it was impossible to attend to the arrival of their guest; he could barely grasp his hand, and bid him fly from the house, where Danger had taken up her abode, with Sorrow in her train. As, however, Mrs. Franklin considered Mr. Egerton as one whose future situation in her family would lead him to partake its pleasures and its pains, and the manner in which he received her husband's information evinced the sympathy he felt for them, she pressed him not to go to his lodgings till the evening, saying, that as the dining-room was on the ground floor, no possibility of danger could occur, and his society would certainly afford considerable relief to Mr. Franklin.

The young gentleman professed he had no fears, and very gracefully accorded with her invitation, to the satisfaction of both herself and daughters; but Mr. Franklin, though he exerted himself to do the honours of his table, was incapable of more.

On the third day Peggy gave evident signs of fever, which being communicated to the family, increased the alarm of the ladies exceedingly; but when towards night she became delirious, their terror knew no bounds; they considered the habitation as infected with the plague; and Mrs. Franklin declared, that sleeping another night in the house was impracticable.

It was in vain that Mr. Franklin urged the impropriety of Peggy's conduct, as related to him by Louisa, and cited Louisa herself as a proof, that with care infection might be avoided; both mother and daughters insisted upon it that they must instantly remove or die.

Mr. Egerton was present at this declaration, and offered to give up his lodgings immediately, saying, that he was quite confident any room distant from the nursery would be perfectly safe for him, because he had no fears to operate against him; but as the ladies had many, their safety, under similar circumstances, might be doubtful.

Mr. Franklin, grateful for this generous and delicate offer, instantly accepted it; and the carriage was ordered to convey

the ladies, Mr. Franklin proposing to Mr. Egerton to be their escort, with which he readily complied, saying, he should return at a very early hour.

"And I hope, my dear," said Mrs. Franklin, "you will come to me as soon as possible, after you have received Mr. Egerton; I am sure he will excuse you."

"But I am not in the habit of excusing myself," said Mr. Franklin, solemnly, "from any known duty; surely, you cannot suppose I shall leave my house to-night—a night on which perhaps I shall be called to seal the eyelids of my only son, and prepare for death my first-born child."

"Oh, my God, Mr. Franklin, how can you talk so, and yet refuse to go with me; if you catch the fever, what will become of *me*? oh, for pity's sake, consider *me*! surely you have some regard for the living, as well as the dying? I cannot possibly leave you, unless you promise to follow me," cried Mrs. Franklin, throwing her arms around him, and weeping excessively.

The distressed husband strove to soothe her, but was firm in his resolution to watch on this eventful night the progress of the disease; and she at length departed, with the promise that she should hear from him often in the course of it.

When Mr. Egerton returned, he was charged in the most particular manner with numberless directions how to avoid the nursery, so that had all the plagues of Egypt rested there, and all the horrors of Bluebeard's chamber been ready to open on him, he could not have been better warned against them; but he forgot all the interdictions as soon as he beheld Mr. Franklin, whose benevolent countenance, for the first time since he had beheld it, was lightened by a chastened smile: he informed him, that during his absence he had been comforted by Doctor Jackson's assurance, that the fever was approaching its crisis, without any symptom of increased malignity; and that in the morning he flattered himself with being able to give more decisive encouragement.

Mr. Egerton sat up very late with Mr. Franklin, and by entering into various subjects of conversation, beguiled the hours, and opened such an insight into the excellency of his own heart, and the cultivation of his mind, that at any other time Mr. Franklin would have been absolutely delighted with that, which even now consoled and amused him; but the more he contemplated this young man, the more precious did his own boy become in his sight, and he felt as if he had never till now known the full worth of such a connection; and the moment he had wished the amiable stranger a good-night, he turned to the nursery door, and inquired with unusual solicitude, how Charles was going on?

Louisa, who had heard his step, instantly opened the door, and with a congratulatory smile, assured him the child was doing well; but added, in a tone of the tenderest compassion, that poor Peggy was still raving, and, she feared, was not likely to be better soon, since it was impossible to prevail upon her to swallow her medicines.

Mr. Egerton was just ascending the second stairs, and so situated as to look down on the nursery door, when Louisa opened it; her address to her father made him immediately comprehend who she was, and the nature of her office in the proscribed room. She looked so pale and haggard, that he did not for a moment consider her as a rival to the beautiful Miss Ellen Debrett, whose face had struck him as the prettiest he had ever seen; but he was not the less affected by the softness of her voice, the intelligence of her countenance, and the superior conduct she evinced by her attendance in the sick room of her little brother; and he felt, by still stronger ties, drawn to participate in the sorrows of a man who had such singular treasures at stake, and who manifested an affection proportioned to their worth.

The morning gave increased hopes for the child, which continued through that day and the next; so that on the evening of the latter, Mrs. Franklin ventured to visit her own house, to hear the happy tidings confirmed, and (if she *dared*) venture to take a peep at her boy. But the groans of poor Peggy, whose room was contiguous to the nursery, effectually terrified her from approaching the place; and she departed, satisfied with Louisa's assurance (which was given at a considerable distance,) that the dear child was slowly but regularly recovering.

In the course of this night, the faithful servant who had divided the cares of Louisa with her little nursling breathed her last; in consequence of which, Mrs. Franklin declared it was impossible to re-enter her own house for some time, and proposed, as the season was not quite concluded, that the family should remove for a month to Bath.

As the housemaid had shown symptoms of fever, Mr. Franklin was of opinion that it might be some time before the house could be deemed completely safe; he made no objection, further than to say, that he hoped in another week the child could be removed with safety, and the change of air would then be equally beneficial for him and Louisa, who was so

much reduced with the extreme fatigue she had undergone, that he was extremely desirous that something might be tried as a restorative; but to this Mrs. Franklin objected, on the score of Bath being a place totally improper: and added, that it was quite out of the question for either her or little Charles to accompany them, as the infection would hover round both for some time; for her own part, she was wretched till she could press them both to her heart; but she conceived it would be madness to lose all the fruits of her flight by such an indulgence.

As this apology was perfectly reasonable, Mr. Franklin made no reply, farther than to observe, that as Bristol was not liable to the same objections with Bath, he should take his children there as soon as Charles was able to bear the journey, an arrangement which would leave Mrs. Franklin at liberty to pursue her plans, without interference from the suffering part of her family.

As soon as the journey was determined upon, Maria expressed a great desire to remain with Louisa, and partake her charge, saying—"That now Charles was getting better, he would take more waiting upon than he had done when he was too ill to want amusement; and she thought poor Louisa could be ill able to go through the fatigue of being a nursemaid, after all she had undergone in watching over him both night and day so long."

To this her mother did not object; and as Mr. Franklin undertook to guard her from all infection, she returned home with him; and Mrs. Franklin, after assuring Mr. Egerton that she hoped and expected he would make one of her party, was proceeding to give orders to Maria to send her such clothes as were necessary for her at Bath, when she was interrupted by her husband informing the young gentleman that he wished for his company for a few days at home, as he had been so much and so painfully engaged of late, as to have neglected his business, and should be glad of his assistance to set things a little to rights.

Mr. Egerton professed himself ready to attend his wishes, observing, that it would perhaps be as well for *him* either to remain in London during the whole absence of the family, as it was a plain case he was now fever-proof, or accompany Mr. Franklin, when he escorted the rest of his family to Bristol.

Poor Mrs. Franklin, who, in pursuit of one darling object, had ventured to forsake the path of duty, and incur losing the affections of her excellent husband, and who had even stooped, by various innuendoes, to insinuate various charges derogatory to the character of that exalted girl, who merited her highest gratitude, and would have possessed it, but for the jarring interest she now held with the undutiful but still idolized Ellen, in the eyes of Mrs. Franklin (and which had neither entered into her own mind nor that of her father), now saw all her nourished project snatched from her grasp, at the very moment of its realization; and resolved by one bold push, either to obtain her object, which was the *undivided* attention of Mr. Egerton to her darling, or relinquish her plan altogether of removing to Bath; for although she could not hope to keep the young gentleman from becoming acquainted with Louisa in time, yet she flattered herself she could manage to keep them asunder, until Ellen's beauty had made such an impression on his mind, as to render him indifferent to any other person; not considering, that young as he was, the excellence of his understanding was likely to act as a complete preservation from the effect of mere personal attractions.

Fraught with this idea, she declared, that although she was more than ever convinced of the necessity of removing, she would not do it unless accompanied by her husband or by Mr. Egerton, in whom she felt the confidence of a son, since the amiable attention he had shown the family, in the short but eventful period of his acquaintance with them, had proved he merited the place of a son in her heart.

The word *son* revealed at once to Mr. Franklin all that had appeared of late mysterious or defective in his wife; and although shocked that her generally ingenuous character should be capable of plotting to catch a husband for her daughter, yet when he considered how blindly she had ever been attached to Ellen, and the greatness of the prize she was now angling for, he pitied and excused the conduct he could not approve; and feeling assured that the young man would be in no eventful danger from a girl so little assimilated to himself in disposition, he gave way to the wishes of his wife; and in a short time she had the pleasure of mixing in the gay circles at Bath, with a daughter she idolized, and a youth of whose person and fortune she had great reason to be proud, though his virtues far exceeded both.

CHAPTER VII.

Man proposes, but God disposes.—BAXTER.

Whilst Mrs. Franklin was engaged at Bath in the pursuit of an object which became more and more necessary to her happiness, the nearer she imagined herself in possession of it, her husband was watching with anxious tenderness the bloom of health revisit the cheek of his lovely boy, and lamenting its complete desertion of his amiable daughter. Supported by her affection, Louisa had appeared almost invulnerable to the common sufferings of fatigue during the severity of Charles's illness; but as he got better, she evidently declined; and the still afflicted father found he had only changed the object of his solicitude, not lost the sensation.

As soon, however, as it was deemed prudent to remove the little boy, he set out to Bristol, as had been proposed, having procured lodgings at the beautiful village of Clifton, in that neighbourhood, and sent a servant before them to ensure a comfortable reception.

To Mr. Franklin this was a journey of much painful interest; and as he looked at the fragile form of his daughter, he trembled with future anticipation, as much as past sorrows.

On their arrival at Bath, he committed the care of his double treasure to Maria, while he stepped into Gay Street, to visit Mrs. Franklin. She pressed him exceedingly to remain with her; but, as she could not deny there appeared a necessity for attending to the young party he was escorting, consented to release him. While the point was debating, Mr. Egerton came in; and Mr. Franklin being glad to see him, and having little time, as he meant to sleep at Clifton, proposed to take him down to the inn, to which the young gentleman gladly acceded, on which poor Mrs. Franklin again appeared in alarm, saying—"It was by no means safe for him to go near the invalids."

Mr. Franklin could hardly repress a smile, but reassured her by saying—"Maria would be happy to see him; the rest of his party were unequal to paying their respects to a stranger."

"I shall have great pleasure in seeing Miss Debrett," said Mr. Egerton; "she always appeared to me very amiable, and her present conduct has given me an idea of her worth, which is only exceeded by that of Miss Franklin herself, which, in my opinion, is above all praise."

Such things as these had occasionally dropped from Mr. Egerton before they left town, and had rendered Mrs. Franklin more than usually anxious to draw him away from the sight of a person whom she considered as capable of exciting affection by her manners, as completely as she had won esteem by her conduct; for although she had not failed to insist upon it, that as Louisa had been subjected to the infection in the first instance, before she was aware of it, which lessened the merit of her risk, and had even endeavoured to insinuate that her attentions were intended as the medium of gaining an undue ascendancy over the father, and thus lessening his affection for his wife, yet so many simple truths had from time to time escaped the lips of all the ladies, which tended to show Louisa the excellent and unaffected character she really was, that Mr. Egerton could not avoid yielding her the respect she merited.

Mrs. Franklin was not a cunning woman; her passions were too warm, her heart too open, to be capable of habitual insincerity, or the subtlety necessary for carrying on any regular plan of deception; in the attack she now made on Mr. Egerton, she had mistaken her own powers, and involved herself in the guilt of deceit, and incurred the pain of self-reproach, without any probability of obtaining her end. Thus maternal love, the most amiable and praiseworthy affection that expands the human breast, by an undue ascendancy and improper association, led an ingenuous and hitherto noble-spirited person into a mode of conduct equally blameable, ridiculous, and inefficient, precisely what she would have despised and condemned in another, and which no sophistry she was mistress of could justify in herself.

Mr. Egerton's short visit to the inn did not produce the evils she feared; and she had the pleasure of seeing him dance the first two sets with Ellen at the Upper Rooms that very night, with more satisfaction than either of the parties, whose conduct, by the most ingenious misinterpretation, could not be deemed favourable to her wishes. Though Ellen was proud of being escorted by so fine a young man, of whose fortune and independence the usual exaggerated reports, common to watering-place fame, had been sufficiently circulated, yet she had repeatedly told her mother he was by no means the man to please her, for there was not "sufficient style about him;" and the penetrating eye of her mother, though willing to be blind, frequently whispered her that Mr. Egerton's countenance said—"There is too much style in Miss Ellen Debrett for me."

Mrs. Franklin's plan of operation was now suspended, by a letter which Mr. Egerton received from her husband, informing him, that it was now ascertained beyond a doubt, that Louisa was beginning the scarlet fever; and, as he found it impossible to leave her in her present situation, he entreated that young gentleman to set out for London immediately, and, as far as he was able, supply his presence there. He added, that though Maria's affection for Louisa made her decline leaving Clifton, he had placed her with Charles at a neighbouring house, so that Mrs. Franklin might remain easy on her account; and he promised to take as much care of himself as the nature of the case admitted.

On reading this letter, Mr. Egerton professed an intention of immediately returning to town; but observed, that if Mrs. Franklin wished to visit Clifton, he would escort her thither in the first place.

Ellen declared roundly, no circumstance should induce her to leave Bath, or suffer her mamma to do such a mad thing; it was the only place where they could stay with safety.

"I hope you will ensure its safety to *you* by taking my advice, Miss Ellen, when I am gone," said the young gentleman, in a very pointed manner to Ellen, with which Mrs. Franklin was a good deal surprised; but her mind was so struck with the circumstance of Louisa's illness, the departure of Mr. Egerton, and the distressed situation of her husband, that the impression she had received soon vanished from her mind; and after bidding him a friendly adieu, she sat down to look over the circumstances that agitated her spirits, with more particularity, and weigh her own wishes and conduct under them.

"Mr. Egerton," said she, mentally, "cannot marry, it appears, with propriety, for three years, and in that time many circumstances may arise to prevent a union with Ellen; but he might marry sooner, if any friend would advance him a few thousands, to begin the world with a little *eclat*. If Louisa should die, Mr. Franklin can do this undoubtedly; and as his son will be nobly provided for by the time he is of age, I do not think he will object to it; in that case Ellen will have a house in town, and her friends will convince themselves of the splendour of the connection: what is the use of marrying well, if nobody knows it? When she comes to have a family, she can then retire (just to please him) to their country seat; she shall have one of the new carriages from Hatchett's; Egerton's family livery is, I understand, rich and becoming; how beautiful she will look in white satin, with a Brussels lace over it, and pearls! though diamonds would have a better effect, if we can persuade poor Franklin to consent to it, after all this expense. Dear, how unfortunate! the whole family will be in mourning three months at least. Poor Louisa! there never was any creature fitter for heaven than she is, to be sure—but if she *must* die——"

As Mrs. Franklin uttered these words, her heart told her, in language that would be heard, how unworthy this soliloquy was of her, and bade her remember the feelings of that dreadful night when death had claimed her own offspring, and apply the lacerated sensations of that evening to the present situation of her invaluable husband. Franklin's unbounded love and tenderness rose to her mind, accompanied by all he had felt since that time; and she was forced to acknowledge that his generous forgiveness and active consolations had been ill repaid, during the late time of trial to them both, in which, while his half-broken heart was torn by the sufferings of his children, he had yet never lost sight of his care for her person, and consideration for her comforts. A new source of anxiety arose from this contemplation; he was himself in danger—at this very moment, perhaps contagion had seized on him—she might be again a widow!—the thought was terrible, and every selfish consideration vanished before it. Hastily rising, she summoned her servant, and ordered her to pack a few necessaries, and tell William she wanted the carriage for Bristol immediately.

"Miss Ellen is out, ma'am," said the maid.

"Then send Dalton to find her immediately, for I have not a moment to lose; all—*all* may be over before I can fly to his assistance."

The servant, struck with the impetuous manners of her lady, lost no time in obeying her; and just as the carriage drove to the door, Dalton, the footman, returned, saying he had seen Miss Ellen, who told him she should only stop at the library a few minutes, and then return home.

"Drive to Hazard's library," said Mrs. Franklin; "I will take her up from thence."

Somewhat calmer since she found herself actually on the road to her husband, Mrs. Franklin thought she would alight herself at Hazard's, and purchase some little books for Charles. On entering the shop, she first ordered her little package, and then stepped forward to the reading-room to call Ellen, whom she found in earnest conversation with a young man, whom she had remarked at the rooms a few evenings before with surprise, as he was then at cards with a very genteel

party; and she knew him to be a clerk whom Mr. Franklin had dismissed from his service about a year before.

Coolly replying to his bow, she immediately summoned Ellen to the carriage; and before that young lady had time to comment upon her precipitation, or express her dread of its consequences, inquired—"How she happened to be engaged so seriously in talking to a person of whom she knew so very *little*?" as Mr. Gossamer was the only person in Mr. Franklin's service who had never, upon any occasion, visited in his house; and as there were times when he kept up the custom of having all his people about him, she thought it a proof that he did not hold him equally respectable with the rest.

Ellen observed—"That was very probable, for Mr. Franklin liked nobody but humdrum quizzes, and Mr. Gossamer was too much of a gentleman to be shut up in a counting-house; he was now in his proper sphere, as he was the heir to a title, and associated with nobody but people of rank. He won two hundred guineas," added she, "of dowager lady Dollarip only last night."

"More the pity," said Mrs. Franklin, "for she can ill afford to lose it; he is, to be sure, a fine, genteel figure of a man, with very good address, and seemed well received at the rooms; but I am not sorry I interrupted your *tête-à-tête*, for I am certain Egerton is a very particular man as to the conduct of young ladies; and this circumstance explains to me the caution he gave you at parting, which at the time surprised me a good deal; but I have had so much to think of, that it had escaped my memory till this moment."

"Mr. Egerton may save himself the trouble of pestering me with his sapient remarks," replied Ellen, sneeringly, "for *he* will never have a right to question my conduct, let who will; I am full as old as him, and I think myself as wise."

This disobedient retort produced an altercation, which ended in tears on the part of the mother, and sullen silence on that of the daughter; so that when they arrived at Clifton, Mrs. Franklin appeared little less agitated than the husband she met, and who was so truly affected by this mark of her tenderness, that all her past coldness was forgotten, and he received her as the partner of his sorrows, and the friend on whom he could yet lean for comfort, at an hour when every other support was on the point of failing him.

Restored to comparative calmness, by a conduct which had the approbation of her own heart, Mrs. Franklin was on the point of running again into extremes, as she insisted upon attending Louisa herself; but this Mr. Franklin as strenuously refused: it was, however, a gratification to him, to find that her late apparent deficiency did not proceed from selfishness, which is the surest way to make the heart habitually callous, but from that attachment to a favourite scheme, which, when once either fulfilled or overthrown, would leave her the power of returning to the more enlarged duties of her station, and the offices of affection which each of her family might then hope to partake with Ellen.

The progress of the fever was more gradual, but less violent in Louisa's case, than it had been in either of the preceding instances; she was seldom delirious; and the happy temperament of her mind, and her patient acquiescence with whatever was proposed for her relief, had the most beneficial effect upon her system; so that in a short time Mr. Franklin had the satisfaction of hearing her pronounced out of danger, and of being enabled to sit by her bedside, and inform her of the interest her *mother* had taken in her, during the period when she was at the worst part of her fever, and the difficulty he yet found in keeping her out of the room.

Louisa expressed great gratitude for this kindness in Mrs. Franklin, but intreated him to continue his cares for the safety of one who was of so much importance to them all, and who had hitherto escaped, through the care she had been *forced* to take of herself.

The feeble voice of Louisa was at this moment interrupted by an audible sob, and in the next she found Mrs. Franklin's arms thrown round her neck, and heard her exclaim—"Oh, Louisa, you are too good to me!—you have saved my boy—you have sacrificed yourself—and yet you would save me, who—who—"

She could say no more, overcome with emotion; and Mr. Franklin, in great terror for the consequences of this rash act of impetuous feeling, tore her from the bed, and forced her into another apartment, where he obliged her to take a portion of the medicine which had been prescribed to him as a prevention of the infection, and by every means in his power sought to soothe and restore her mind to its wonted tranquillity; in which, after some time, he was so happy as to succeed: he now learnt, that at the time when her acute feelings and awakened passions had thus led her to the bedside of Louisa, she had been exchanging high words with Ellen, on the subject of her attention to Mr. Gossamer, with whom she suspected that imprudent and self-willed young woman had commenced a correspondence; and that Ellen's want of affection and

consideration towards her, by presenting the contrast with Louisa, which even her own blind partiality was forced to acknowledge had led her precipitately to follow him into the room of her daughter-in-law, as the person to whom she ever appealed in cases of distress or perplexity; but the silence Mr. Franklin observed there checking her impetuosity, induced her to enter on tiptoe, and by that means she learned the kind sentiments of Louisa towards her, in a manner which, by affecting her still more, had awakened her feelings to a degree equally injurious to the invalid, and dangerous to herself.

On this conduct Mr. Franklin remonstrated with his usual gentleness and good sense, and she promised to be more guarded, saying—"That she must ever feel happy that his calm wisdom offered an antidote to her blameable irritability, and that she wished he would advise Ellen with the same fatherly kindness he had ever done, respecting her connection with this Mr. Gossamer, to whom she really feared she was attached;" saying, "do pray, my dear, persuade her that Egerton will be far the better match, and that it will be madness to refuse him, even for the prospect of a title."

"I shall have no difficulty in persuading your daughter to abandon all thoughts of the man you speak of, my dear, for he is too decidedly worthless for her to think of him for a moment, after I have told her *who* and *what* he is; but unless I had some right to suppose Mr. Egerton had serious thoughts of proposing himself to Ellen, I should think it wrong even to use his name to her, when speaking on the subject of marriage, lest I should in my turn be the means of misleading her, though not as wickedly, yet as decidedly, as even the scoundrel Gossamer."

"Scoundrel! did you say *scoundrel*, my dear?"

"Indeed I *did*; for as I dismissed him from my own counting-house for nefarious practices, which pity to his youth induced me to pardon, and now find that he is a gambler by profession, and has even dared to practise upon the credulity of one of my own family in the most shocking manner, by representing himself as a gentleman, and the heir to a title, which is a mere farrago of lies, invented for the vilest purposes, I can have no hesitation in pronouncing him a *scoundrel*, and that, too, of the very deepest dye."

Mrs. Franklin did not leave the elucidation of these facts to her husband, although she had requested his interference, which was ever mild and friendly, and therefore generally salutary: on the contrary, she burst upon Ellen with a recital of them, so broken by the angry epithets and bitter reproofs her fear and anger dictated, that Ellen believed the whole she said to be the dictates of her angry resentment towards herself, rather than the just assertions of truth against her lover; and she received her admonition with silent scorn, and a determination in a very short time to show how completely she disbelieved the accusation, and despised the accuser. Ignorant of the world, she could not conceive it possible that such a man could mix with the society she had seen him in; and she was too proud to inquire of Mr. Franklin, on whom she could have placed implicit reliance, because she knew that he never suffered passion to distort truth, or to warp his opinion of either men or things.

Mrs. Franklin was too well read in her daughter's countenance to flatter herself that Ellen would be a willing convert to her views; but as she was now nearly of age, her fears were on that account the more distressing; and by turns she was agitated by the fear of losing Mr. Egerton, and again, by the far more dreadful idea of gaining for a son-in-law a wretch she despised. A thousand times she regretted ever having set out on an expedition which, invented for an unworthy purpose, involved in a great measure a dereliction from principle and duty, and threatened to produce consequences equally distressing and derogatory. Many ladies, who carry daughters to watering-places with similar views, are, we fear, doomed to similar disappointments; but few, we are persuaded, feel their own folly so sensibly as poor Mrs. Franklin, for with her this line of conduct was too novel to be attended with that *nonchalance* which veterans in such practices may be shielded with.

In the mean time, Maria, who seldom had drawn a thought of her mother since the commencement of their western tour, had attracted the regard of a very respectable young gentleman, who lodged in the same house to which she had been removed on the appearance of Louisa's fever. He was led to the Hot Wells for the purpose of visiting a friend, who was ordered there for a pulmonary complaint, and who had lately been sent to Clifton for the benefit of a purer air. This gentleman was struck with the attention which he saw Maria evince for little Charles, and the sorrow in which the subsequent danger of Louisa involved her rendered him anxious to relieve her by every little attention in his power. As Maria was of necessity much left to herself, he found means of frequently conversing with her, and as she was communicative, good-tempered, and appeared desirous of improvement, he conceived a preference for her, which ripened into love; and as his situation in life, though not splendid, was equal to her wishes, and superior to any claims she could have on the score of fortune, he did not hesitate to make her an offer, which Maria very ingenuously accepted,

at the same time she referred him to her mother, as one whose consent was necessary to her happiness.

As Mr. Aldridge (the gentleman in question) had become tolerably well acquainted with Mr. Franklin, he preferred speaking to him; and was assured by that gentleman, that he should have a speedy, and, he doubted not, a very happy introduction to his lady.

When Mr. Franklin, after this conversation, went into the drawing-room, he found, to his great pleasure, Louisa laid on the sofa, and his wife reading to her, while little Charles was sitting very quietly at her feet.—"I congratulate you and myself, my dear," said he, with a gay air; "we have two children restored to us, and we are going to have one taken away, under circumstances equally happy."

"Oh, my dear," cried Mrs. Franklin, throwing down her book, "how delighted I am! Has he then wrote? I always thought he would speak at last."

"You were perfectly right, for he has spoken, not written, as you first suggested."

"Oh, Heavens! when did he arrive?"

"Arrive! I don't understand you; he has been here the last two months, I believe.—Mr. Aldridge has been here ever since you came, Louisa, hasn't he?"

"Mr. Aldridge! dear, how you have deceived me, Mr. Franklin! I was in hopes—but, dear heart I was born to be disappointed, I believe. As to this Mr. Aldridge, he is very respectable; I knew his mother: they are worthy people; but I don't believe Ellen will think of him—I don't believe she will indeed, so it don't signify talking about it."

"Mr. Aldridge told me he only wanted your consent, for your daughter had given hers."

"Impossible! Ellen has scarcely seen him."

"And have you no child but Ellen, my dear?"

Mrs. Franklin started and blushed.—"Is it possible," she exclaimed, "that Mr. Aldridge will really marry poor Maria?"

"Very possible; for it is a fact, that he will not only marry Maria, but double her fortune in his settlement. I wish with all my heart your other daughters may do as well, for I have inquired much, and find him a very worthy young man."

"How very singular," said Mrs. Franklin thoughtfully, "that Maria should be married first!"

"It is only so in the eyes of those who have been used to set too high a value on extrinsic charms; but if even they were to look into the world, they would find more maiden ladies on the wrong side fifty, who had been beauties, than plain women: for where neither the heart nor the talents have been cultivated, few men allow themselves to marry, even the person they admire, unless there is a large fortune thrown into the scale."

The entrance of Maria interrupted Mr. Franklin: she received the consent and congratulations of her mother with modesty and gratitude; then turning to Louisa, said—"I am certain if there is any thing in me worthy of Mr. Aldridge's regard, it is to you, Louisa, I am indebted for it, and so I shall think to the last moment of my life. I am shocked when I reflect on my past folly and stupidity; but as you have succeeded in awakening me to some reflection, and the society of a sensible man must be a stimulus to future exertion, I hope I shall one day be more worthy of the friends I am blessed with, than I have hitherto proved myself."

Louisa would have disclaimed this praise, but Mrs. Franklin united with Maria in asserting that she had spoken only the truth; and little Charles joined most manfully in "being quite sure Louisa was the best sister in the house, because she nursed both him and Peggy, when nobody else came near them; and kneeled down by poor Peggy, and prayed till they came and took her to heaven; and why," added the child wistfully, "why did they not take me, papa, for I was ill all the same as Peggy?"

"You were spared, my love, I trust, to be a good man, and to make your parents happy."

"Then I *will* be good," said the prattler, clasping his father's knees, "and I *will* make you happy; but I dare say the same angels would have taken me away too, if Louisa had not begged them to leave me."

As soon as Louisa was able to bear the journey, the whole party returned to town, accompanied by Mr. Aldridge, who was now considered as one of the family; and although Mrs. Franklin did not soliloquize on the greatness of Maria's marriage, or the beauty of her bridal habiliments, yet she took much more interest in her than she had ever done before; and began to discover that her neglected daughter had more latent virtues and qualifications than she had ever given her credit for. She was grateful to that Providence which had given a Protector to one to whom she had been a very inefficient guardian, and gratitude has ever a beneficial effect on the heart, so that hers was warmed towards all around her; and she had never appeared equally worthy, or amiable, in her own family, as on her first return to London: but, alas! soon after their arrival Mr. Egerton was regularly established in the family, and she dreaded lest the pale and altered countenance of Louisa should attract his attention; and though it was impossible to observe more in his manners than the common attentions of a polite man, with a compassionate heart, yet even these awakened her jealousy, and gave her a sensation towards Louisa, which, though she endeavoured to suppress, was yet sufficiently indicated to render that poor girl (weak and nervous as she yet was) very far from happy. Sympathizing, however, in the better prospects of Maria, Louisa enjoyed that reflected pleasure which never fails to illuminate the heart of benevolence. With the first powers of returning strength, she endeavoured to improve Maria still farther in the little accomplishments she possessed, and to imprint upon her mind a just sense of the important duties in which she was about to engage; and had the satisfaction to see that her labour was not in vain, for Maria was solicitous in every way to improve herself.

The marriage of Maria with Mr. Aldridge took place about three months after the family returned to London.

Agreeably to the still dear though hopeless scheme of Mrs. Franklin, she contrived that Louisa should officiate as bridesmaid to Maria, instead of her own sister; for as Mr. Aldridge resided at Hampstead, she considered her, Ellen's only rival, as more effectually removed; and Louisa, to whom a perception of this weakness in her mother-in-law had become very distressing, most gladly accepted the invitation of Maria to remain with her during the autumn, being very fond of the situation of her house, and much attached to the worthy young couple who inhabited it.

CHAPTER VIII.

This is the round of a passionate man's life: he spends his time in outrage and acknowledgment, injury and reparation.—JOHNSON.

During the time that Louisa remained a visitor at Mr. Aldridge's, she received an offer of marriage from his particular friend, Sir John Allenson, which all her family earnestly wished her to accept. Even Mrs. Franklin, though generally so ambitious for Ellen, desired to see this match take place; for she had so earnestly set her mind on securing Mr. Egerton for her darling daughter, that she was willing to give up to Louisa the advantage of rank, though it was one very dazzling in her eyes. Louisa firmly, but modestly, declined the offer; and, fearful that she should deprive Mr. Aldridge of his friend, immediately prepared to return to London.

This resolution on Louisa's part was exceedingly painful to her father, who naturally desired to see her the wife of a respectable man, whose situation in life would increase her influence and her happiness; and he questioned her on the subject, with somewhat of severity in his manner.

"Sir John is a man of many good qualities," said Louisa, "but I could not honour, though I might obey him; he is so passionate, that he would make me tremble like a slave, rather than love him like a wife."

"But it is soon over, and he always apologizes."

"I should of course forgive him, father, but how could I respect him? the head of a family ought not to be a man in the habit of excusing himself for an error it will be his duty to correct in others. I have not hastily resolved on this step, and I am compelled, as a Christian, to see that I ought to persist in it."

Mr. Franklin, perceiving that tears were trickling silently down Louisa's cheeks as she thus spoke, did not press her farther; and he soon became aware, from reflection, that no situation could repay a young woman, of her principles, for the misery of passing her life with a man of violent temper, since she must condemn him in private, and blush for him in company, every day, even whilst she, perhaps, forgives him and loves him. Mr. Franklin was, however, soon called from contemplating this disappointment, by another of a more alarming nature.

Mr. Franklin, in common with many other merchants, had sent out a large venture of goods to Buenos Ayres, under the conduct of a very worthy man, who had been his servant many years, named Larkins; whom he now heard had died of a fever immediately after his arrival, but not before he had disposed of a considerable part of the property. The bad success of our arms in that quarter, at the same time, led to the conclusion that all was lost; and Mr. Franklin, who had already experienced those sufferings which belonged to the political convulsions of the times, and whose lady could never be prevailed upon to diminish her expenses, began to be seriously alarmed for the stability of his house, and called his family together, to consider what was to be done.

Mrs. Franklin, like most people of very buoyant spirits, became alarmed to the greatest degree, when she found the evil was of the magnitude specified; and, in her agony, declared "that all was over—they were inevitably ruined."

"Pardon me, madam," said Mr. Egerton, "if I differ from you entirely; much of the property will be lost, but much also may remain. I will set out immediately for Buenos Ayres, with Mr. Franklin's permission, and I hope to save a part at least."

This generous offer Mr. Franklin was not in a situation to refuse; though it grieved him much to expose his beloved young friend to the evils consequent on a residence in the country, after what had occurred. Mrs. Franklin was compelled to submit, though, in a great measure, it defeated her views for her daughter, who had, by various hints, given her to understand, that she should choose for herself, and had hopes to establish herself much more highly than even Mr. Egerton could promise.

As, in a very little time, Ellen would come of age, there was therefore little hope of her waiting his return from the new world; and, indeed, nothing less than the blindness which ambition bestows on its votaries, could have misled poor Mrs. Franklin in this matter at all; since in no one instance did Mr. Egerton show that he had any admiration of Ellen, and in many little matters, a discerning person might have perceived, that for Louisa he had profound esteem, and even warm affection, though it never passed his lips; he set out with the good wishes of all, except the beauty, who, it is certain,

rejoiced in his absence, because her mother's continual entreaties, that she "would not do this foolish thing, or wear that improper dress, lest it should disgust Mr. Egerton," had rendered his presence disagreeable to her.

When Mr. Egerton had sailed, Mrs. Franklin appeared to dismiss the cause of his departure from her mind; and making herself certain that he would secure all the money, and more, which had been sent out, she prepared to give her usual entertainments, asserting the necessity of keeping up appearances, lest their late misfortunes should gain wind, and injure their credit.

Alas! misfortunes seldom come single; on the very day when Ellen completed her minority, and received from her good father-in-law her little fortune, which he had improved to the utmost in his power, he received an account of the failure of a bank in Madrid, by which he was a loser to such an amount, as to render all his hopes of weathering his troubles unavailing.

With deep sorrow in his countenance, he instantly repaired to Mrs. Franklin's dressing-room, where she was closeted with the girls, making some splendid decorations for the evening; his pallid looks and trembling hands told half his tale, before it was revealed; and his wife and daughter eagerly sought to console him, before they learnt the nature of his misfortune; whilst Ellen scarcely removed the flowers from her hands in the first instance, though she soon afterwards glided out of the room.

"My only consolation in this hour of agony," said Mr. Franklin, "is the circumstance of having this morning settled with Ellen."

"Yes! thank God, my poor child has it in her power to help you, though but by a trifle; you have been the best of fathers to her, and she will be proud to show her gratitude."

"I will not take a shilling from her; but if she will help you, my dear, during my long absence——"

"You will not leave me, Mr. Franklin? I can bear all things but that. I have been a foolish, thoughtless, expensive wife, but surely an affectionate one. I will suffer any thing for you, but do not leave me. Ellen, Louisa, kneel with me to him—make him promise that he will never forsake us——"

Ellen was gone—Louisa wept, but she did not speak.

Mr. Franklin explained his situation; he told his wife, that the Spanish bank, though it had failed, was believed to be possessed of considerable property; and if he were on the spot soon, it was probable that he might come in for a considerable dividend, which would enable him, together with the sale of his effects, to pay his creditors.

"And will you go thither for *their* sakes? will you leave your wife and children in distress and poverty, for *them*?"

"Certainly, my dear; they have trusted me, and I owe them my utmost exertions."

"But will you come back in poverty?"

"Most probably I shall come back, as to my own personal situation, the same as I go out; but I shall thereby keep poverty from many others: and surely I shall be *rich*, in the approval of my own conscience—*rich*, in the approbation of those for whom I make this venture—and rich, I hope, in the sight of my wife; for with your regard for me, how could you bear to see the finger of scorn pointed at me?"

Louisa saw clearly, that every word her father uttered was right; therefore she determined to endure with fortitude all the ravings and complaints of Mrs. Franklin. As the poor woman was now in strong hysterics, she consigned her to the care of her maids; and whilst her father retired to the counting-house, to call a meeting of his creditors, she sent messages to all their expected guests. When this first pressing care was got over, she reflected, with much pain, on the circumstance of her own minority, envied Ellen the power of helping her father, and hoped that he would not persist in refusing the cash necessary for his personal accommodation, as he must be aware that she would be able to repay it.

CHAPTER IX.

Mr. Franklin's offer was gladly accepted by his creditors, who being all well aware of his integrity, readily agreed to accept the property he offered them; and promised, that until his return, they would pay Mrs. Franklin two hundred a-year, for her support, and that of her infant son. They also made him an offer of the money requisite for his travelling expenses; but this he declined.

"I did so," said he, in relating the matter to his wife, "because I thought, on the whole, I had better take a hundred from Ellen."

"Run and fetch her this moment," said Mrs. Franklin.

But Ellen was nowhere to be found. After a long search, it was ascertained that Ellen had taken a coach, soon after she left her mother's dressing-room in the morning, into which she had put several boxes, and drove, no one knew whither. In the course of inquiry, they learnt, that a large box of hers had been taken away the preceding day; so that it was plain the removal was preconcerted; and that her proceedings had not been remarked, in consequence of the bustle in the house, made by that very entertainment of which she was the object.

For a time, the agony of the mother superseded the sorrow of the wife, in Mrs. Franklin's case; nor could any peace be afforded to her, until she learnt that Ellen had driven to church, where she was barely in time to be united to a young naval officer, with whom she had set out to the East-Indies. This communication changed her sorrow to anger, and her invectives against her late darling were bitter and severe. Mr. Franklin did his best to console her, by telling her, "that he found the young man was generally thought of a good disposition, and that Ellen would like to live in Calcutta;" but to this she only replied by saying, what was indeed very true, "that she was selfish, ungrateful, and worthless; and since she could not remember her with patience, she earnestly desired to forget her, and confine her thoughts to Maria, who now showed her the truest tenderness, and to Louisa, who must henceforth be her companion."

Mr. Franklin departed; his house, carriage, and furniture, were disposed of, and lodgings in the Hampstead Road were taken by Louisa for her mother-in-law, brother, and self, as they all declined the offer of Mr. Aldridge to reside in his house, though they desired to live near him, and share his protection. In all their arrangements Louisa was the sole actor; for, from the time of her husband's departure, Mrs. Franklin sunk into a state of such despondency, that she was nearly as helpless as a child. She seemed to think that she was in a state of positive want; and since it was certain that she had given up her first year's income to her husband, and that therefore they were all three supported entirely by Louisa's income, this might account for the dread of poverty she experienced, and which proved too fully, that those who are the most gay and thoughtless in prosperity, are the greatest cowards in adversity.

By slow degrees, Louisa drew her into employment, awoke her former cheerfulness, and at the same time, engrafted it upon that resignation which is the gift of religion, to which Mrs. Franklin now looked, with all the eagerness natural to an afflicted, humbled, and regenerated heart. She also felt, that her duties as a mother forbade her to indulge in melancholy, as the sweet boy, whom Louisa delighted to instruct, was deeply affected by the silence and sorrow of his mother, and one day very innocently said—"I wish I was at school, as other little boys are: I can see twelve go past every day, and they always look merry; but we are never merry at home."

Mrs. Franklin was much struck with these words, as she said, with a deep sigh, "I wish, child, you were one of them."

"That might be managed, dear mamma, if we went into the lodgings of the people opposite, which I perceive are to let."

"But they consist of only two rooms."

"True; but they are handsome and airy ones."

"You cannot suppose, Louisa, that we can all sleep in one room?"

"No, my dear ma'am, but I will tell you my plan:—the lady who keeps the excellent preparatory school just above us wants a teacher, and would be glad to accept my services in lieu of Charles's board; that is the true reason why I mentioned the smaller lodgings; turn it over in your mind, and if you can reconcile yourself to parting with him, I will do all the rest."

"I must be a very weak woman, if I did not in a moment see all the advantages such a scheme offers to my child, Louisa; but can I suffer my dear husband's only daughter to enter this degrading situation for my sake, when I am at this moment supported by her income? no, no, I cannot do it."

Nevertheless, Louisa, by gentle perseverance, and reiterated assurances "that she should be very happy," prevailed upon her to consent; and in a few days all the parties were removed accordingly. The little boy soon became wonderfully improved in health and spirits; and Louisa certainly appeared rather better than worse, for she did not find the labours of her situation, though they were considerable, prey so much on her mind, as the complaints and low spirits of her mother-in-law. Mrs. Franklin herself, after the first week, appeared better also, for since she had no person to listen to her lamentations, she ceased to make them; and as she twice a-day hoped for the pleasure of seeing her dear boy and Louisa (who was scarcely less dear), as they took their regular walks, it became an employment for her to calculate on the time of their return, consider the state of their clothes, and by degrees busy herself with mending or making what each might want. The small expense at which she now lived, enabled her to purchase those things which each required; and the sense of being useful to them, was a source of pleasure that soothed her feelings and tranquillized her mind.

It was very difficult at this time for any letters to be received from abroad; but in the course of the following winter they heard twice from Mr. Franklin, whose accounts were on the whole very satisfactory; but from Mr. Egerton they did not hear—a circumstance of which Mrs. Franklin often dilated, whilst Louisa silently deplored it: and after a time it affected her so much, that Mrs. Franklin insisted upon it, that her health was injured by the toils of the school, and eagerly insisted on her leaving it.

One Sunday evening, which was the only time in which they enjoyed each other's society, whilst they were discussing this important point, the door opened, and Mr. Egerton was suddenly announced. Mrs. Franklin sprang from her chair, and in her overwhelming joy, threw her arms around him, whilst Louisa, pale and trembling, sank fainting on the sofa on which she was sitting.

The fears and terrors of the traveller thus awakened, revealed all his long-treasured feelings; and when Louisa recovered, her heart was comforted with that innate assurance of his love and respect, which is so dear to every woman of sensibility, when she has made the discovery of its attachment to a worthy object; and poor Louisa's late anxiety had rendered her but too well aware of the state of her affections.

When Mrs. Franklin declared the situation of Louisa, it was evident that Mr. Egerton was exceedingly hurt to find her in it; yet it only raised his conceptions of the greatness of her character in his mind; and he did not for a moment hesitate to offer her his hand and fortune, on his reaching that period which his father had prescribed for his minority. Louisa gave her full consent to his wishes, as she trusted that within that period her father would return; but she forbade all conversation on the subject till that arrival.

Mr. Egerton had rescued considerable property, by his journey, from the gulf into which it had been plunged; and the creditors were all loud in their praises of his exertions, and even pressed him to write and recal Mr. Franklin—a measure which it may be supposed his wife warmly seconded; whilst Louisa thought it better to leave the matter to his own discretion, assured that he would be impatient to return, and that it would add to his uneasiness to urge him.

In fact, a few weeks only had elapsed, when one evening, as Louisa and her young charge were taking their usual walk, she perceived a hackney-coach draw up to their former lodgings, and her father himself alight. Forgetful of every thing but joy and gratitude to Heaven, she sprang forward, clasped her arms round his neck, and called out to Charles to "come and welcome his papa." When she had given his now blooming boy to his arms, she hastened over the way, to break the tidings to Mrs. Franklin, who received them with a flood of tears. Having seen the parties met, she then conducted her young charge home, where she soon obtained permission to rejoin them.

She now perceived that her father had grown very old in his journey, for his skin was brown, his hair white, and his form spare and attenuated; but he looked nevertheless in health and spirits; and he hastily told them "that he had recovered sufficient of his property to satisfy all his creditors, and probably leave some little matter on which himself and wife could subsist in humble independence."

When, on the following morning, Mr. Egerton arrived, and with unfeigned delight welcomed his paternal friend, these observations were necessarily repeated before him, when he had himself given that happy account of his own stewardship, so welcome to all; on which Mr. Franklin observed—"Well, my dear, Egerton's pains and mine, have, it

seems, rescued enough for a bare living for us. Can you be content to resign the world, and live with me in retirement, or must I venture once more into the busy vortex of trade? What do you think, my dear?"

"Not on my account, Mr. Franklin; I can live with you happily, thankfully on a single hundred-a-year, or less."

"That I am sure you will, my dear madam," said Louisa; "but there is no occasion to try, for next week you know I shall be of age, and then you will have better than another hundred, as I have taken the liberty to order a deed of gift, presenting that to you."

"My dear Louisa, why did not you make it the whole? when we talked together on the subject, I advised you to do so."

"Because Mr. Egerton, I choose to give the other half to my little brother, in order that no future casualties might deprive him of the advantages of education."

"You are the best of all good girls; such a disposition of your fortune gives me the utmost satisfaction."

"My child, or I might say, my children (for I now perceive that the fondest wish of my heart is fulfilled,) I cannot permit this. I thank you, *fondly* thank you; but neither myself nor my wife would consent to enrich ourselves by such a medium."

Mr. Franklin's observations were cut short by the arrival of a country-looking man, who was the bearer of a letter and a box, the former of which, he said, "could only be delivered to his honour Franklin," whose faithful servant he professed himself to be; and the latter, "he could give into no hands but those of madam," for whom he declared "he had been looking all over Lunnun."

After Mrs. Franklin had sent him to get refreshments, she began to unpack the parcel, but found the key was enclosed in the letter, on which Mr. Franklin had been for some time looking in silence; at length he put it into Mr. Egerton's hands, who, at his request, read as follows:—

"ONNERED SIR,

"This comes with my sarvis to tell you, that my poor master, 'Squire Batson, be dead; and the last thing he ordered, was for John Larch to carry his desk, and 'liver it with his own hands; also to say, the last thing as he did eat, was the cake as madam did send him. He said as how he had remembered and provided for me, and John, and Towler, and his ould mare; so if you please to luck in his will, I hops you'll find it, and do that is honnest by us, as all your kith and kin did afore yoo. We all knows as you comes to this estate, but we takes it madam will have moast of his money, which he was main fond of seaving of late years; so no more from your umble servant,

HANNAH GREEN."

"So it seems your poor cousin Batson is dead! dear me! he was younger than you, my dear," said Mrs. Franklin.

"True, my dear; but he was an invalid from his infancy, and it is a wonder he lived so long; by an accidental fall, he was deformed in body, and in consequence weak in mind; but he was a simple, well-meaning, and piously-inclined man, who had nothing in life to regret, and much to hope for in a change."

After Mr. Franklin had thus spoken, silence for a time sealed the lips of all the little party, for how could they help ascending in their thoughts to Heaven, and offering up praises to God, for giving the blessings of competence and abundance to the declining days of him whose integrity had merited it, and whose industry had enabled him, in the last effort of his life, to repay his creditors fully, and by that means transmit the estate unimpaired to his son, whose education, by this means, was fully and properly provided for.

After a short time thus occupied, Mr. Franklin proceeded to open the will, which was deposited in the first portion of the desk. It was written by the testator's own hand, but regularly witnessed by three attornies, who vouched to the sanity of the deceased. After opening with the observation—"That his cousin Franklin was his heir, and that he rejoiced in giving him the family estate greatly improved in value," he specified annuities to his two oldest servants, his horse, dog, and

three aged parishioners, together with a handsome bequest to the parish school; and went on to say—

"And whereas the wife of my said cousin did, many times, send unto me, whom she had never seen, barrels of oysters, twelve cakes, Stilton cheeses, &c., even continuing such presents after the death of my gamekeeper, when I could send nothing to *her*, thereby shewing her kind remembrance and good heart; I do hereby give and devise to her, my own writing-desk, heretofore described, in the which is many pigeon-holes, filled with tokens of my gratitude, as she will find; and the which I give to her, solely and separately, to be disposed of according to her individual will and pleasure."

Mrs. Franklin, on hearing this, looked anxiously for the opening of this treasure; and on pressing a spring, soon saw a number of little deposits, each of which was dated and labelled in the most curious way, as thus—"For my birthday, a capital Yorkshire goose pie:" "August 6th—a beautiful pot of preserves," &c.

"Of the many who have ate of your good dishes, my dear," said Mr. Franklin, "I fear few retain so grateful a sense as poor cousin Batson has done; but is it possible that you continued this custom down to the present time?"

"I left it off when I was first involved in distress, but renewed it when Louisa left me, as I had then money and leisure, through her kindness: but before I look further at my treasure, let me tell you all, that I do not mean to renounce my share of the money she so lately offered us—no; I will have the half of her fortune."

"So you shall, if you wish for it," said Louisa.

"And by the same rule, I insist on your sharing half of mine. This affair is between ourselves; and neither father, lover, nor brother, have a right to interfere."

This was allowed to be true; and as all the party could afford to be merry, many jokes were passed on the contents of the pigeon-holes: for some time, they were found to contain only five, seven, or ten golden guineas: but as the dates approached nearer to the last, the places were stuffed with bank-notes of great value. Four or five hundred pounds was the reward of a turbot, and a thousand pounds put for a basket of choice confectionery; so that when the whole was counted, to the surprise of all present, there was found upwards of eleven thousand pounds, together with several valuable caskets of jewellery, which appeared to have been in the family for centuries.

Mrs. Franklin divided both equally, and then said, "Now, Louisa, you see I take you at your word—we will divide."

"But my dear madam, remember your own daughters."

"I do remember them; and at my death will divide this sum, and that which you give me, betwixt them: in the mean time, Maria wants nothing from me, and Ellen deserves nothing: the interest of this money shall be my store, with which to feed the hungry, not the extravagant—to clothe the naked, not adorn the vain. Henceforward I hope to become the Lady Bountiful of the village where I shall reside, not the proud expensive woman, who vies with the great in their follies, but cannot imitate them in their charities."

Louisa took the bills as frankly as she could have given them; and, whilst she kissed the donor affectionately, said, "It is so pleasant a thing to give to those we love, that I sincerely thank you for enabling me to imitate your example. It will be always a sweet recollection, that Mr. Egerton was not only willing to take me without a fortune, but assisted me in disposing of my own, to the parents who wanted it; but it is also very delightful to give him one, and most sincerely do I thank you for it."

When mourning was provided, and a carriage, the family (after fulfilling all their pecuniary obligations) journeyed down to the Hall, of which they took possession, amidst the congratulations of the tenantry and servants. Although every thing within the house was old-fashioned, yet it was in excellent keeping with the venerable avenues, formal gardens, and noble rookery; and all was so delicately clean, that the ladies were never weary of praising Mrs. Green's good management. So far from affecting to be the woman of fashion, or to seek a display of her taste, Mrs. Franklin sought only to discover what were the duties of her present station, and to prove that the lessons of adversity had produced their due effect on her heart and her conduct.

In about three months after their arrival, Mr. Egerton having taken possession of his fortune, married Louisa, and removed to his own estate, which, happily for all parties, was within twenty miles distance of her father's abode. Mr. Franklin gave his daughter with pleasure to the worthy young man who had been a friend to him in the day of adversity, and proved, in a thousand ways, the soundness of his principles and the excellence of his disposition; but his wife could

not conceal the sorrow she felt at parting with one whom the experience of every year made her deem more valuable. As the marriage was kept in the former manner of the family, many guests were invited to breakfast, and their poor neighbours feasted on the lawn; so that the mistress of the mansion was compelled to recal the energies for which she had formerly been so celebrated; and she charmed all the company by the warmth of her welcome and the gracefulness of her manners; and divided the admiration bestowed on the young and lovely bride. All went on well, till the carriage was announced which carried that bride away, and then the long-suppressed trouble of her soul broke forth in a flood of tears.

Louisa, already exceedingly affected, as every young woman of sensibility must be, however attached to the man of her choice she may be, earnestly besought her to be calm, saying, "My dear mother, you must support me; at this awful moment I look to you for help."

Mrs. Franklin struggled with herself, and after fondly pressing her to her heart, resigned her to her father, who led her to her carriage, along with her husband, endeavouring, though with a faltering voice, to assure her of his happiness in her future prospects.

Whilst this was passing, Mrs. Franklin again wept freely in the arms of a valued neighbour, who sympathized in her feelings, but somewhat blamed their excess, by saying, "That she had herself parted with three dear daughters, without allowing herself to weep thus, though they were all her own children."

"So did I part well with my own child," said Mrs. Franklin; "I was affected, but not to tears, for my pleasure in the marriage balanced my pain in parting; but in losing this dear child, such recollections are recalled, as few people can comprehend. She has endured my pride and folly, in the day of prosperity, without a murmur; she has supported my spirits, in the day of adversity, without a sigh for that of which I deprived her. She has led my sick heart to the fountain of grace, as revealed in the word of God; and she has strengthened my wavering footsteps in the moral government of my conduct. In short, I have found in Louisa, a mother as to guidance, a friend as to support; and you, my friends and neighbours, may be assured, that if you ever observe any thing praiseworthy in my present or my future life, it will be owing to the love, the wisdom, the goodness, of my dear "DAUGHTER-IN-LAW."

THE END.

J. BILLING, PRINTER, WOKING, SURREY.

Transcriber's Notes:

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

Page 6, revive. "In supposing ==> revive. In supposing

Page 7, frame to support ==> frame to support.

Page 18, likely to effect ==> likely to affect

Page 26, so strenuously insisted ==> so strenuously insisted

Page 27, Miss Louiy ==> Miss Louisa

Page 50, returnedt home, a the ==> returned home, at the

Page 61, spoke; you are ==> spoke; "you are

Page 66, and anger, Her ==> and anger. Her

Page 83, futherance in life ==> furtherance in life

Page 90, Mrs. Frankin ==> Mrs. Franklin

Page 91, Several youg ladies ==> Several young ladies

Page 105, of a father. ==> of a father."

Page 123, she always appeared ==> "she always appeared

Page 124, probability ==> probability

Page 136, we have two children ==> "we have two children

Page 150, Mr. Franlin ==> Mr. Franklin

Page 161, can comprehend She ==> can comprehend. She

[The end of *The Daughter-In-Law, Her Father & Family* by Mrs. Hofland]