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

THE
HOFLAND
LIBRARY.

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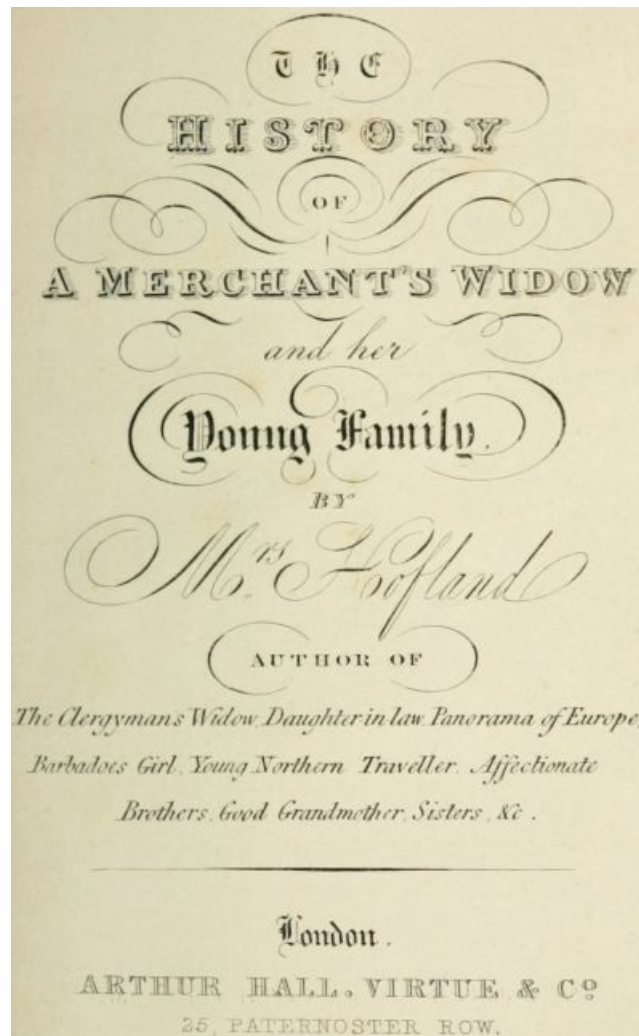
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MERCHANTS WIDOW & HER FAMILY.





THE

HISTORY

OF A

MERCHANT'S WIDOW

AND

HER YOUNG FAMILY.

Mr. Daventree was a merchant in a very extensive line of business, in which he justly enjoyed a high character for probity, regularity, and activity. He had succeeded his father in the concern, so that his whole life had been passed in the enjoyment of wealth, but under such restrictions as taught him its proper use and just value. He had not to contend with those difficulties which arise from narrow means and unformed connexions; he had never experienced the necessity of small savings and perpetual self-denials, such as his good parent had felt before him; but he had been taught by that parent justly to estimate his own advantages, and to know that every business, however well established, requires the eye of a master; and that the most splendid income calls for the boundaries of economy, and the hand of management. His own excellent understanding and education enabled him to see the propriety of dispensing a large income with dignified liberality without affecting the pageantry of rank on one hand, or stooping to petty detail on the other; and as he regarded the character of a British merchant to be justly one of sufficient importance to satisfy all proper ambition, he did not seek to embellish it with ornaments to which it had no pretension: thus he never sought to intrude into those walks of life which he conceived appropriate to nobility; and while his hospitable board was open to all, and frequently surrounded by men of the first talents and highest offices in the country, he yet neither sought celebrity, nor awakened satire, by the splendour of his fetes, or the crowding of his routs; but blending the plenty of past times with the elegance of the present, obtained good-will from all, and envy from none.

Mr. Daventree was enabled to pursue a line of life agreeable to his situation, his judgment, and his principles, by being united to a lady whose disposition and opinions entirely coincided with his own, and whose affections were so entirely given to him and to her children, that in every point where she had formed a wish that did not precisely accord with his ideas, she had a pleasure in abandoning it for his sake. This conduct, while it rendered her inexpressibly dear to him, inspired him with an uncommon anxiety to procure her every blessing and comfort in his power; and he felt as if he could never sufficiently guard one whose tenderness rendered her so entirely dependent upon him; in fact, he considered her as more dependent upon him than she really was, for Mrs. Daventree was not only an accomplished, elegant woman, but (notwithstanding the mildness of her manners, and the gentle timidity which marked her conduct as a wife) she possessed a strong mind, an enlightened understanding, and that sense of power which is derived from the constant exercise of religious principles; her sense of justice and integrity was particularly acute, for it had been early instilled into her mind by her venerable grandsire, who was himself a merchant, and who had been brought up at a period when regularity and order were the peculiar characteristics of men of his description.

Mrs. Daventree had the misfortune to lose both her parents during her infancy; but their loss had been supplied by the parents of her father, in the best manner they were able; and in their declining years she had amply returned their kindness, by an affectionate attention to their comforts, not often supplied by beautiful and rich girls to their aged relatives. The docile temper she cultivated for their sakes, and the patience she exercised towards them, doubtless laid the foundation of those virtues which she eminently practised towards her own family in after-life; for the cares claimed by old age and early infancy are very similar.

This venerable couple had two sons, who were much attached to their niece, and from their care she became mistress of those accomplishments now considered indispensable, but which it is probable the good old couple might consider of little importance; from this happy combination, she imbibed all that is pleasing in modern education, with all that was useful in the days that are past. In her, suavity of manners was grounded on virtue in disposition; she was not taught to appear amiable, to affect placidity, and to look smilingly; but obedience was engrafted in her mind as a duty, and she was permitted the exercise of benevolence, as the sweet reward of extraordinary exertion; she was led to religion, as the solace of all her little sorrows, and the medium of subduing every wrong emotion and rising passion in her heart; and she was continually assured that every human being was subject to such emotions, and could only find favour in the sight of God, in proportion as they subdued the evil propensities of their nature, and nurtured the purer affections divine goodness had likewise implanted there.

With a mind and disposition thus cultivated, and a person highly interesting, it was no wonder that Sophia Gardiner attracted Mr. Daventree, who had formed a commercial connexion with the elder of her uncles: she had several suitors, but greatly preferred this gentleman, because she found him possessed of those principles she had been early taught to revere; and the preference thus bestowed by her judgment was still further ratified by her heart, on their increased acquaintance, especially after the death of her aged relatives; so that every succeeding year had bound her, if possible, more closely to this beloved husband.

Mr. and Mrs. Daventree, at the commencement of the present century, were the parents of seven children. Henry, the eldest, was thirteen, a sensible, steady boy, of good parts, but retiring, timid manners. Charles, his brother, was twelve; he was a very different character, being rather of a turbulent temper, but open to conviction, and generous to a fault. Sophia and Louisa followed: then Edward, a lovely boy, about six years old; Anne and Eliza were pretty infants, the darlings and playthings of the rest.

During the short peace which preceded the late war, Mr. Daventree had endeavoured to make himself amends for many losses experienced during the disastrous period of the French revolution, by sending large ventures of goods to various countries, whose markets were now re-opened to British manufactures. The speedy recurrence of warfare rendered this step extremely unfortunate; and so far from retrieving that which was already lost, Mr. Daventree, in a short time, had but too much reason to conclude that he had injured himself irreparably by the measure.

Mr. Gardiner, his partner, being still a single man, proposed visiting those countries himself where their property principally lay, and endeavouring to make the best of it. When he set out, Mrs. Daventree, for the first time, perceived that some degree of evil was portended; but Mr. Daventree, anxious to relieve *her* from even the shadow of anxiety, took such pains to convince her that this journey of her uncle was only in the regular way of trade, and similar to those which he had frequently engaged in before, that in a short time she acquiesced in the opinion he endeavoured to inculcate.

It was an unfortunate circumstance for this tender husband, that he had never seen the superior mind of his excellent lady drawn out by any of those trials in life which might have evinced her fortitude, which was the only virtue for which he did not give her credit; and he was the more excusable for his concealment of that trouble which preyed on his heart, because at this time her health was delicate, and that of her young family had been such as to require uncommon attention: besides, he flattered himself that the activity and ability of his worthy partner would still retrieve much, and that the storm would blow over without touching her, in whom he was most vulnerable; conscious that his establishment, though noble, was far within the limits of his fortune, he trusted that his affairs might be arranged without rendering an abridgment of it necessary.

Under these persuasions, Mr. Daventree wore "a face of smiles, a heart of tears;" for though he nourished hope, yet his mind was necessarily in a state of great anxiety; and notwithstanding all his efforts to appear cheerful, his faithful partner was convinced that all was not well with him: to her tender solicitations he replied only by attributing the cause to some slight indisposition, and some little derangement of the nerves, which a short time would entirely remove.

Close observation convinced Mrs. Daventree that her husband laboured under *mental* disease; but as she perceived that he was desirous of concealing it from her, she was determined to appear ignorant; yet feeling it to be her duty to lessen the misfortune she feared, by every means in her power she endeavoured, in a silent way, to curtail the expenses of her family; she complained of the inconvenience and fatigue occasioned by keeping two houses, and proposed giving up that in the country, as she could procure better instructions for her daughters in town.

"But your health, Sophia, requires country air," said the trembling husband.

"I think not, my love; for I was brought up in the city of London, compared to which, our house in Russel-square may be considered country, you know."

"But what shall we do with this?"

"Sell it, by all means—with so large a family, we can never want uses for money."

No proposal could have been, in fact, more desirable to Mr. Daventree; yet the very consciousness of its necessity made him for a short time hesitate, fearing that his beloved Sophia should know the necessity of the sacrifice. Though still ignorant of this necessity, her eye, taught penetration by affection, perceived that his heart was a little lightened of its load, and she hastened to fulfil her proposition by an immediate removal; but scarcely had they taken possession of their town house, when the arrival of letters from the Continent threw a still deeper shade over the brow of her beloved spouse, and awakened new anxieties in her bosom.

The distress Mrs. Daventree now felt, but in her turn tried to conceal, brought back the sickly state of health from which she was emerging; and her pale looks were a signal to her husband still to conceal the fatal secret which preyed on his own vitals. Happy would it have been for both if he had dared to trust all his fears and feelings to that sympathizing bosom, which, with all its delicacy and gentleness, would have yielded abundant support to her suffering lord, and

proved to him the friend he so much wanted at this time, both for counsel and consolation.

Mr. Daventree had frequently of late complained of a sense of fulness and weight in his head, which at any other time would have awakened the fears and excited the cares of this tender wife; but she was by this time so fully convinced that his illness was of the heart, that all her efforts were directed to ends more immediately connected with the situation of their affairs; and she concluded, that frequently, when clapping his hand on his forehead he rushed out of the room, that this was a feint for hiding his tears. At these moments her heart ached with very sorrow, yet she dared not follow him, lest she should augment his distress, perceiving plainly that the only comfort he enjoyed arose from the belief that she still escaped the participation of his sorrows.

Thus each party were deceived in the other: he concluded she looked pale from sickness, when, in fact, her illness arose only from silently partaking his solicitude; and she, knowing he was unhappy, was not aware that latent disease was added to his sufferings: thus an excess of generosity was at once destroying two amiable people, who were capable of supporting every evil of life with magnanimity, upheld by each other.

It was Mr. Daventree's custom to go every day from his counting-house to 'Change, and from thence come home to dinner: and he was generally so punctual, that his lady and the younger children frequently took their stand in the window, to watch him come up the square. One morning, as they were thus engaged, Edward observed, "that papa was later than usual, but perhaps he was inquiring what was the matter, as there was a crowd of people at the other corner."

"Probably he is," said Mrs. Daventree, looking towards the place; "ring, my dear; I will send William to see what is the matter—perhaps some assistance may be necessary."

Ever active in the cause of humanity, Mrs. Daventree dispatched the servant, following him with her eyes down the square. The crowd opened for the man, who, on entering it, and perceiving the object of his search, seemed to start back; and the children observed, "William had seen something dreadful." In a short time the crowd moved forward, and one person seemed dispatched from the rest towards the house.—"This person is coming for something they want," said Mrs. Daventree; and, with her accustomed activity of benevolence, she went down stairs to give them the meeting.

William was entering the door, at the very moment she entered by the opposite way.—"Stop, stop!" cried he to the crowd, and instantly exclaimed to his mistress, "'Tis only a fit, madam—indeed 'tis only a fit—don't be frightened!"

"I am not frightened," said Mrs. Daventree; "let them bring the poor man in," still going towards them.

William, in terror, threw out his hands—he was unable to speak; the people either could not understand him, or were incapable of feeling with him; and, pushing past him, they carried immediately, into the presence of his wife, the dead body of Mr. Daventree.

One shriek, one loud, heart-rending shriek, was heard, and then the stricken wife fell senseless as him she mourned; and the affectionate servants who were able to control their feelings of surprise and horror, alike hurried each senseless form into distant apartments, to conceal, if possible, such fearful sights from their unconscious offspring.

CHAPTER II.

The concealed grief of Mr. Daventree had been the remote cause of an apoplectic complaint, which had for some time been threatening him; the morning of this eventful day had precipitated its effects, from his learning on 'Change the failure of a great house in Hamburg, and another at Heligoland, both of whom had been trusted by him to an amount which he was certain would involve him beyond his means of bearing. He felt now the utter impossibility of farther disguise with his wife; *her* distress—*her* altered situation—the blasted hopes of his little ones, all rose to his mind, and overwhelmed him with distress: unhappily, he heard this bad news from strangers; for it is probable, that had one of the many who knew and loved him been near, he might have been led to speak of his misfortune, and to have shed tears, which would have afforded a natural vent to the sorrow that overwhelmed him; he looked round for a coach, but there happened to be none there, and he had not power to call one: a sense of sickness and oppression succeeded the pang of distress which had first wounded him, and he felt himself so ill, as to be doubly anxious, on that account, to reach home. With trembling and hurried steps he pressed forward, and entered the square nearly at the accustomed time; the first glance he had of his house brought on all his agonies anew; and, unable to proceed, he crossed the road with difficulty, and laid his hand upon the iron railing; he then cast one more look towards his dear home, and beheld his wife and little ones at the window—a thick mist fell upon his eyes—he faintly called on God to bless them, and, with one deep sigh, dropped down to rise no more!

In this situation he was found, and conveyed to his own house, as we have already seen; and, though every means were had recourse to, as is usual in such cases, all help was found vain; that form, so fondly loved, was sunk to its original dust—that generous and manly spirit was recalled to the God who gave it!

When Mrs. Daventree awoke from the long, deep swoon into which she had fallen, she felt as if awakened to some new poignant evil, which, though unknown, was yet unbearable; she perceived, in the tear-swollen faces of her attendants, the confirmation of her fears; and, as recollection returned with returning life, she closed her eyes, as if to shut them out together.

But, alas! oblivion of woe is not the widow's portion; she was *forced* to revive, *forced* to believe the dreadful truth which benumbed her faculties, and harrowed up her soul. The medical gentleman who had been called in to examine the body of her husband attended her, and administered such assistance as her case demanded; and, fearful that entire stupefaction of the faculties should follow a shock so totally unexpected, ordered her children to be brought around her, conceiving the poignancy of anguish preferable to the stupor of despair. This means happily succeeded in restoring her bewildered mind; she heard the cries of her children, and once more raised her head; she felt their hands stretched out to her, to give or to receive support; their innocent tears bedewed her face; she raised her arms as if to embrace them all, and, by an effort that bespoke at once her energy and agony, rose from her couch, and dropped on her knees in the midst. The poor babes clung round her with mingled terror and affection; her pale, distracted looks made them believe she too was dying: she groaned aloud—sighs like the last convulsions of nature burst from her overcharged heart—she believed herself dying—she cast a look at her children, and the words "poor innocents!" trembled on her lips; the emotions of maternal pity supplied what the severity of grief had denied—a flood of tears came to her relief—life and reason were restored.

Yet sorrow seemed to increase with time; for the more the unhappy widow reflected on the loss she had sustained, and the manner in which her beloved husband was taken, the more bitterly she lamented her own irreparable loss, and the long-concealed sorrows of him who had in a great measure become the victim of his tenderness to her. To say how she wept over *him*, how she mourned over his last moments, and lamented that they were not consoled by her presence, would be as painful as impossible; the heart only can conceive them, for all attempt to describe the feelings of a widow like this is utterly vain.

When at length the afflicted mother was enabled to lift up her heart to Him who seeth in secret, and who turned not a deaf ear even to those "sighings of the sorrowful soul which cannot be uttered," she began to recover those faculties of the mind which might be said to be suspended; she was aware that her affairs were in a disordered state, and that it was her duty to inquire how far she was justified in continuing her present establishment, though a reduced one? Rousing herself, she sent for the principal clerk engaged in her late husband's service, and inquired of him, "if any letters had been lately received from her uncle, and whether they contained remittances of any consequence?"

This person replied, by lamenting the absence of Mr. Gardiner, and hinting his fears that he was become a prisoner in

France.

This was a new affliction; for on his kindness she had relied for all the offices of parental friendship herself and children must hereafter need: the younger brother of Mr. Gardiner had been many years settled in Spanish America, where he was married, but her husband's partner had ever been a father to her; and the only consolation her bereaved state admitted was, the knowledge of his kindness, and the hope of his protection.

When the widow had a little recovered from this stroke, she again adverted to the state of her affairs.

"I shall be glad to lay the books before you, madam, when you find yourself equal to inspecting them; Mr. Goodwin and Mr. Belton will be happy to wait upon you."

"I have no personal acquaintance with either of those gentlemen, and would rather not see any strangers. Who are they?"

"They are principal creditors, madam, and are appointed assignees of the estate."

"Creditors! assignees! I do not understand you, Mr. Sadler."

"Surely, madam, I am not the first to tell you that Mr. Daventree, my honoured master, my best friend, died insolvent?"

"Insolvent!"

"Yes, madam; the failure of two great houses at the same time completed his ruin, and doubtless produced our loss of his invaluable life, since he died within two hours after he received this heart-breaking intelligence."

"Pray leave me," said the widow, faintly.

Mr. Sadler, deeply penetrated with the sincerest sympathy, withdrew, and the afflicted mother for some time indulged in the tears such reiterated sorrow called for; sinking on her knees, she inarticulately sought comfort from that Almighty Power who afflicteth but to heal, and arose refreshed in her soul, though sensible of much anguish: she rang, and finding Mr. Sadler was still in the house, desired to see him again: on his entrance she thus addressed him—

"Surely, Mr. Sadler, there will be no loss to any one, when our affairs are settled?"

"Very little, madam, if we consider the magnitude of the concern."

"I cannot bear that there should be any; I entreat you to inform me of the worst, my friend—do not fear for *me*; that merciful hand which has sustained me through this great trial, will not forsake me in the less: all other sorrows must be light, in comparison to that loss which I endure in my husband's death."

Mr. Sadler wiped his eyes, as if to look with astonishment on a woman whom he had been used to see nursed with the tenderness of an exotic plant, on whom the softest breeze of spring is not permitted to blow, thus daring to meet the blasts of adversity unshrinkingly; and with somewhat more courage, he answered—"The creditors, well aware of Mr. Daventree's perfect probity and regularity, and justly imputing his misfortunes to those political changes no prudence could foresee or prevent, are perfectly willing to divide, amicably, that which remains, and are by no means desirous of disturbing you in your establishment, until your mind has fully recovered the terrible shock you have received. They rejoice that you have a settlement, which will enable you to provide for your family, though very inadequate to their expectations, and inadequate likewise to *your* fortune, since many of them recollect that your grandfather only suffered half of that fortune to be settled on yourself. It is concluded that you will remove from this house; but until you are *willing* to do so, they do not wish to disturb your quiet possession of it: such are the sentiments of the major part of them, I assure you."

"They shall all, *all* be satisfied—present them my truest thanks for their forbearance, and assure them I will not trespass upon it longer than is necessary to provide an asylum for my little ones: my settlement is eight hundred a-year; come to me to-morrow, my good Sadler, and bring with you a simple statement of our losses; you must assist me in so arranging the plan of my future life, that not even the *shadow* of blame shall ever stain the memory of my husband: it is not enough that justice shall acquit him of wrong—I cannot bear that any person should suffer by one who was ever ready to relieve the sufferings of all—his name shall be remembered only to be blessed. You who have so many years witnessed his integrity, his benevolence, his severity of justice to himself, his unbounded liberality to others, *you* well know how acceptable this sacrifice would be to him; therefore I beseech you to assist me in contriving some means of making it; I

must pay his debts to the utmost farthing, even if I condemn my children to beggary!"

Such was the woman whom mistaken tenderness forbade to share the most sacred privilege of a wife—the power of partaking and soothing the sorrows of a beloved husband.

CHAPTER III.

After this conversation, Mrs. Daventree was for several days closeted with Mr. Sadler, examining accounts, and considering the nature of her future prospects. She found, that notwithstanding all their terrible losses, there were still very considerable debts due to them from many respectable houses on the Continent, which there was reason to believe would be paid some time; in which case, no sacrifice of her own immediate comforts would be called for, so far as regarded her settlement, which was, at the utmost, a very poor provision, in comparison of that to which she had been accustomed from her birth: in the first instant, therefore, she was inclined to adopt Mr. Sadler's advice, and retain it untouched, leaving the foreign debts to redeem her husband's at home; but when she considered that the losses already experienced had been caused by circumstances which continued to operate, she dared not depend upon them as the means of supplying the deficiency; and after revolving the affair fully in her mind, and considering both the claims of her children, her creditors, and what she well knew would be the wishes of her deceased husband, she at length resolved to sequester five hundred a-year out of her income, which, together with the entire resignation of her household furniture, carriages, horses, and plate, would, in the space of nine years, fully liquidate the debts of her husband and uncle.

When she had arranged her plans, she informed Charles and Henry how her affairs stood; the former was too young and thoughtless to comprehend more than that his dear mamma was obliged to leave her house, and go into a worse, which made him sorrowful; but the latter comprehended her motives, and had the good sense to feel their excellence, and feel that affectionate veneration for the memory of his father which she wished him to possess; he warmly approved all which he understood from her was to be done, in order to rescue that father's name from blame, and prevent any one from suffering on his account.

"But are you aware, my dear boy, that in order to effect this good purpose, we must all submit to many privations?"

"Yes, mamma, I do understand *that*, and I am sure I can give up any thing: but I confess it will grieve me very, *very* much to see you wanting any thing."

The affectionate boy fell on his mother's neck as he spoke, and wept abundantly. Charles was affected with this, and declared roundly—"His mamma should never want any thing—he would go to sea, and take prizes from the French, and bring home every thing to her."

The mother, finding that grief only increased by indulgence, and that the longer she lingered in that dear home, where she had once enjoyed happiness beyond the common lot of mortals, the longer she felt herself incapacitated for the task before her, at once roused herself to action; and perceiving that the sorrow of her eldest boy was more deep than is often shewn at his years, she endeavoured, by making him her coadjutor in all her plans, to wean his mind from the indulgence of grief; at the same time, she led him to that active exertion of his faculties now so peculiarly necessary to him.

At this period, all those more intimate friends who knew her resolution, stepped out with offers of service; and it would have been easy for her to have disposed of all her children, in such a manner as to have ensured to each of these dear ones the continued possession of those comforts and luxuries hitherto found in their paternal home; but Mrs. Daventree could not, of course, part with *all* her darlings, and she did not choose to divide their lot in life; nor did she approve of placing any in such a state of present affluence as might render them hereafter dependent on their present protectors, and by enervating their minds, and increasing their wants, unfit them for the exercise of those talents which, if rightly employed, might yet secure them independence; and she therefore thankfully, but decidedly, refused every offer of this description, except so far as related to the future disposal of her sons.

After various inquiries for country situations, she at length chose a house in the village of Conisbro', in Yorkshire, which she saw advertised, and gave it the preference, on account of its vicinity to Doncaster, which being a town remarkable for the number and excellency of its schools, would, she thought, afford her the means of educating her children at a small expense. Having, with Mr. Sadler's assistance, secured this distant habitation, she made her intentions fully known to the creditors, who, for the most part, complied reluctantly with her wishes, as they not only sincerely pitied her for the loss she had already experienced, but considered her as unequal to pursuing the thorny path her high sense of integrity pointed out to her. They were well aware of the many hardships to which she thus subjected herself; and considering that this was the precise period in which her children would be most expensive to her, they remonstrated with her, and entreated her to reconsider the matter.

"I am aware of the truth you have just named," said she; "this is indeed the time when my children's wants are many, but it is likewise the time in which their minds must be formed to diligence and care; they must all be self-dependent, and cannot begin the necessary training too soon: they have now no one to look to for help in future life, except their eldest brother, and not even him, so long as their mother lives; how then can I be kinder to them, than by teaching them to contract their wants, use their abilities, and confine their wishes? It is happy for them that their misfortunes have occurred too early in life for their habits to be formed; and I trust they will be not less happy because they are less wealthy during the days of childhood; and that when they are brought again into the world, their path will be honourable, useful, and happy, though more lowly than they were born to. Who shall presume to say that their change is not for the best? if poverty has its trials, riches have their temptations—"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be His name!"

When Mrs. Daventree came to depart, a task awaited her, more severe than any which arose from leaving her elegant mansion—the parting with her servants, most of whom had lived with her from the time of her marriage, and were so attached to her and her children, as to be led to plead earnestly for permission to continue in her service, each having some peculiar reason why he or she should be preferred: the younger children increased this difficulty, by lamenting their own favourites, and the heart of the kind mistress and tender mother was lacerated in every pore. On this occasion, Henry exerted himself in a manner which proved not less the soundness of his understanding, than the sweetness of his disposition; he reasoned with them all—he shewed them the severity of the trial to which they exposed one who was already overburthened—and proved that it was their duty to imitate the fortitude thus cruelly distressed; by degrees, he succeeded in reconciling them to the inevitable evil, and inducing them to part with their beloved benefactress in such a manner as to spare her feelings. They complied, but each envied William the privilege of seeing what they called the "last of their lady;" for they looked upon her journey into Yorkshire as nothing better than absolute banishment, though all were willing to partake it.

It was settled that this footman should remain with his lady until she should have settled her little household at Conisbro', as she could not possibly do without some active person, to purchase her furniture and arrange her necessaries. The assignees had entreated her to take out of her house whatever she most valued; but this she had declined, not only because she wished to resign the property into their hands, but because she did not wish to retain elegances, which would remind herself and children of what they had lost, and which were inconsistent with that moderate competence which she considered it the will of Heaven she should henceforth inherit; but as her conduct arose from a sense of justice, not of pride, she accepted with pleasure the most useful part of her library, and such articles of plate as were indispensable.

During all this time, Mrs. Daventree had not once ventured down stairs; when the dreaded moment came, in which she found herself called upon, for the last time, to cross that threshold where she had been so often welcomed by the smile of rapture, and the voice of connubial love, and where, three months before, she had beheld that heart-appalling sight which had blasted her happiness, and threatened her reason, her heart fluttered, and sunk within her, as if all her first sensations were about to be renewed. But here again the cares of her dear sons interposed to spare her; at the moment her trembling steps left her chamber, Henry and Charles each seized her hand, and led her by a contrary direction.

"Where are you going, my loves?"

"Down the back stairs, mamma; they are the easiest: the chaises are in Montague-street, just at the corner—'tis a step only, the back-way."

Mrs. Daventree fully comprehended this delicate attention in her affectionate and amiable children; and while the tears rose to her eyes, and her memory recalled the ceaseless solicitude of their beloved father to protect her from every degree of suffering, she yet breathed a devout aspiration of thanksgiving to that Heavenly Protector, who, in the midst of judgment, had remembered mercy; and felt, that although she was indeed a widow, yet she was not childless, and therefore not desolate.

CHAPTER IV.

Perhaps the whole county of York, though always beautiful, and in many places highly picturesque, does not boast one village that can compare with Conisbro'. This chosen spot consists of a number of white cottages, with little gardens; amongst which, in various directions, neat stone houses are interspersed, rising above each other on a gentle green ascent, the foot of which is watered by the river Dun, which meanders through a vale of the richest luxuriance, and whose banks are, for many miles, thickly studded with seats of country gentlemen, farm-houses, and sylvan hamlets. In the middle of Conisbro' rises the village fane, a structure in which simplicity has risen to elegance; and at a short distance, raised on a majestic mound, now covered with the richest foliage, appear the proud ruins of its once magnificent castle, which afford at once a fine finish to this interesting landscape, and a strong contrast to the exquisite beauty and liveliness excited by viewing the white village, bedecked with vernal drapery; for in these turrets appear all that was appalling in feudal tyranny, devoid of those interesting traits which enabled us to consider the ancient English baron rather the father than the tyrant of his vassals; for the Castle of Conisbro' is gloomy and forbidding, and appears the fit haunt of those malignant spirits to which popular superstition has for some centuries assigned it.

It has been said, that in youth "all things please, for life itself is new;" and our little party were a proof of the truth of this observation; their innocent prattle, and innumerable questions, drew their fond mother somewhat out of herself, and the many bitter reflections which pressed on her spoken spirit; and surrounded as she was by all which claimed her tenderness, and called for exertion, she did not feel as if she were that isolated, banished being the world considered her to be. But her past sufferings had greatly weakened her, and she was ill able to bear the fatigue of her journey, and take proper care of such of her party as were unable to take care of themselves; in this charge she was, however, ably assisted by William; and her two eldest girls, urged by their affections, and the example of Henry, occupied themselves in attending to the two youngest; so that she was more relieved than she expected to be; and the mutual love and good offices of her children seemed even now to promise that harvest of virtue which she hoped one day to reap from them.

It was the morning of the third day of their journey when they arrived at Conisbro', and the sun shone delightfully on the rich autumnal landscape before them. The children uttered a cry of joyful exultation, on being told this was to be their future home; for there was to them a novelty in the scene that charmed them—for novelty is ever charming in early life; a smile stole even over the softened features of the widow, as she gazed on the fairy scene before her; and the belief that an overruling Providence had directed her choice to this lovely retreat, gave inward satisfaction to her heart; for whatever strengthens our faith confirms our peace.

When Mrs. Daventree had established herself at the little inn, until such time as she should have furnished her house, her first care was to inquire for a maid servant; and here she first learnt the difficulties ever attendant on changes of scene and manners. The young women recommended to her spoke a dialect so barbarous to her ear, that she dreaded their approach to her younger children, whilst her elder were likely to be equal sufferers, by indulging their propensity to ridicule. She was at length so happy as to meet with a middle-aged woman, who had lived in a gentleman's family many years, from whence she had married, but becoming lately a widow, was glad to engage in her present situation; and she undertook to find some young girl, as her assistant, whose manners should not distress the family by their uncouthness.

"But who will be our cook, mamma?" said Sophia.

"And who will wait on us when William is gone?" cried Louisa.

"Who is to wash me and hear me my prayers, now I have no good Jackson?" asked little Edward.

"How silly you all are," interrupted Charles, "to tease poor mamma in this way! don't you know we are going to be poor people, and to wait on ourselves? For my part, I like it of all things, and I know I can do it better than any body, because papa always told me to do it, and said it was the way to make a man of myself; and that if I meant to be a sailor, I must learn to do every thing; and I remember, one day, when Admiral Bennington was at our house, he told me he could mend his own stockings; and so I shall mend my stockings, my shoes, and all; and I shall——"

"Well, well, you needn't talk so fast, Charles," said Sophia; "I suppose we can *all* do something as well as you: I am sure I will do any thing mamma tells me."

"I will tell you," said Henry, "what we must *all* do; we must all wait on mamma and the little ones, quietly as it were, without pretending to do any thing; because, if we make a noise about it, that will put her in mind of poor papa's death

and all the comforts she has lost; and as every body had better be orderly, and manage *one* thing well, than go bustling about a *many*, Edward, my little man, *I* shall take charge of you, and though I shall perhaps not dress you very handily at first, yet I can teach you your lessons, and hear you your prayers, you know."

"And I will do the same for Elizabeth," said Sophia, joyfully.

"Well then, Anne shall be my child," cried Louisa.

"So," quoth Charles, "you have got each of you your portion of work before me; well, I am glad of it, for I am neither much of a nurse or a scholar; but I will work in the garden, and run errands, and read voyages to mamma on winter nights; and in another year, I hope the admiral will send for me, to go on shipboard, and then all the world will see how I can work."

"And hear how you can talk," said Henry, with a smile.

In a short time furniture was procured, and Mrs. Daventree removed to her house, where she was scarcely arrived, when she received several large packages from her creditors, containing wine and necessaries, acceptable in her present situation, for she had already found that the small sum she had appropriated for her present expenditure was inadequate to it, and she dared not to dip into her income. People who reside in London, knowing that their expenses greatly exceed what would be required in the country, are apt to overrate the difference; and this was, in a great measure, the case with Mrs. Daventree; and she now felt alarmed lest she had indeed undertaken what she was unable to perform. In a short time, however, she became more confident in her powers; and as her family appeared to drop instinctively into that plan of taking care of each other, so wisely recommended by Henry, there was a necessity for fewer attendants, and of course the consumption in her kitchen was abated; and one morning, as she was debating within herself whether the time was not come when she ought to part with William, and combating the natural dislike she felt to speaking on the subject, he entered the parlour, and surprised her by asking, "if she would be so good as to give him a character?"

"Certainly, William—your having lived with me so long is in itself a good character; but whenever you write, or any person who wishes to engage you writes, I will answer their inquiries immediately and satisfactorily."

"But there is no occasion to *write*, ma'am; the gentleman who has hired me will call upon you presently."

"Have you engaged yourself without informing me, William?"

"Pray forgive me, madam; I knew you were going to send me away soon, and I had determined, by God's blessing, I never would lose sight of you and my young master, if I could manage to pick up any sort of a living near you; so happening to hear from Mrs. Martha, that the gentleman who lives on the top of the hill was in want of a servant, I ran there all in a hurry, as it were, to secure the place."

"And you *have* secured it, William?"

"Yes, madam, I believe so, for Mr. Tudor seems quite as well pleased to have *me* as *I* was to go to him; you know, ma'am, town servants are not so easily picked up in these outlandish places."

"I fear, William, you will have small wages, and find many things uncomfortable to you at first."

"As to wages, madam, I can afford to take less than I used to do, for my master taught me how to take care of what I had, therefore I think nothing of that; and my new master behaved handsomely enough in other respects, for he granted me all I asked for—he granted me one whole day in the week, to come down and set things to rights, madam; and besides that, I shall see you every Sunday at church."

The tears gushed into Mrs. Daventree's eyes, at this new proof of attachment in her servant, and she confessed that she felt much comfort from knowing that he would be near her; and this sentiment was more fully echoed by all the young ones, who had not dared to express their fears of losing him till those fears were subsided.

In the activity called for in the management of her domestic arrangements, and still more in the education of her daughters, Mrs. Daventree sometimes lost the sense of that acute sorrow which returned to her heart with every interval of leisure. Compared with the loss she experienced in the tenderness and affection of her husband, all other privations appeared trifling; yet there were times when they would unavoidably press heavy on her heart, especially when she

considered them as depriving her children of those advantages of education it is the highest privilege of wealth to bestow. It was her intention, on her first arrival at Conisbro', to send her two eldest sons to a boarding-school at Doncaster; but finding this would take more than one-half of her income, she contented herself with sending Henry only; and she was the better reconciled to this disposition of them, from finding that the grammar-school at Conisbro' was well calculated for her younger son, who being designed for the sea-service, from the strong predilection he had ever evinced for it, did not call so much for a finished as a rapid education. Charles was a boy whose disposition was so frank and generous, and whose manners were so ingenuous, that he never failed to make many friends, though he was frequently noisy in his mirth, and turbulent in all his amusements; he was tenderly attached to Henry, and was sorry to part with him, but reconciled himself by remembering that all sailors must part with their friends some time or other; and it was the pride of his heart to consider himself a sailor.

As the attachment and society of her children constituted the sole happiness of Mrs. Daventree, there were times when she could not bring herself to reflect on the destination of this noble-hearted boy, without suffering so severely, that she was induced to endeavour, by gentle arguments, to dissuade him from a profession ever pregnant with danger, and prone to suffering. But though Charles doted on his mother, he was here impregnable to entreaty; his mind had, in his father's days, been allowed to entertain this propensity, till it had become a part of his very nature; and as nothing more favourable, in the shape of future provision, presented itself, Mrs. Daventree conceived it her duty to conquer her fears, and concede to the wishes of her child, who was already patronised by an officer of acknowledged valour and high character.

Courage was, from his very birth, the distinguishing characteristic of this boy; and not long after his residence at Conisbro', he gave a proof of it, of which few are capable, since it was exercised on a subject in which many truly great men have evinced fear. As soon as Mrs. Daventree learnt that the Castle was considered haunted, she became particularly anxious to preserve her children's minds free from every taint of superstitious terror, well knowing that habits of terror, on subjects of this kind, continue to harass the mind, even after reason has dispelled the illusion: by sending Henry to school at Doncaster, to the house of an enlightened clergyman, his mind was effectually preserved, as were those of her young family, who enjoyed their mother for their preceptress; but poor Charles was necessarily exposed to hear all the idle chat of the village; and although, in obedience to his mother, he forbore to relate these tales of wonder to little Edward and his sisters, and, in compliance with her reason, affected to despise them, yet he had doubtless some *little* belief in the stories he heard, which renders his conduct the more praiseworthy, as one act of self-conquest is certainly worth a thousand of mere personal exertion.

The stories of wonderful sights and terrible sounds, which had been seen and heard about the Castle, did not prevent rash boys sometimes exploring those tottering ruins, which threatened them with more substantial danger, and which were the true cause of their parents propagating these idle tales. One Saturday afternoon, being a holiday, Charles, now in his thirteenth year, set out, with three other boys, older than himself, to explore the ruins, and bring his sisters some beautiful lichens, peculiar to the place. Mrs. Daventree did not oppose his going, though she cautioned him to take care of himself, in the most effectual manner, by saying—"Charles, if you should slip down, and break a limb, you will never be fit for a sailor."

Each of the party, on arriving at the ruins, ran about the place, climbing and peeping, as inclination or courage led him, till one, more agile than the rest, by dint of great labour, made his way up the broken staircase of a tower, which appeared to those below impassable. When arrived at the top, he shouted in exultation: Charles's ambition was instantly fired, and he began to follow the same dangerous track; but scarcely had he begun to ascend, when his companion called to him, in a feeble voice, to desist, and began to descend with all the precipitation of awakened terror.

"What is the matter? what have you seen?" exclaimed the boys, in one voice.

The youth answered not; he hastened down, regardless of various contusions; and the moment he alighted, entreated them all to return home immediately, for that he had certainly seen something in the ruins which had frightened him.

"What was it like, Simpson?"

"It was all in white—tall and slender, like a ghost."

"My mother says there are no such things as ghosts," said Charles.

"It is of no consequence what *your* mother says, or any body's mother; I tell you I *saw* it, and what is more, I heard it

groan. For God's sake, let us all go home directly!"

"Are you sure it was not a woman?"

"What nonsense! how could a woman get there?"

"How indeed!" exclaimed they all.

"I will go up, I am determined, however."

So saying, Charles burst from the hands that would have held him, and pressing forward with an energy that baffled control, soon reached the dangerous point where his companion had lately stood; he looked around, but saw no ghost, but dangers of every other kind, from the mouldering state of the ruins; and, fearful that he should never be able to descend in safety, he half repented his temerity. In looking round, to see if the tower could be descended from any other outlet, his eye glanced through a loophole to another compartment, where a tall, white female figure distinctly met his eye, though but for a moment, as it appeared to fall or vanish while he gazed upon it.

Charles was astonished; alarmed, but not dismayed, he trod lightly over the fragments around him, and darted through the loophole, or window, where he had seen, or *believed* he had seen, the apparition, and found his eyes had not deceived him: a female figure, with a face as pale as death, lay on the floor, and appeared, for one moment, a ghastly spectre, on whose haunts he ought not to intrude; but in the next he recovered his courage, and, approaching, cried—"If you are a woman, for God's sake speak?"

The ghost answered by a deep sigh.

Charles now came close up to the figure, and taking hold of her arm, convinced himself that a human being was before him; he then endeavoured to raise her, fanned her with his hat, and made use of every means in his power to recal her to life; on her endeavouring to speak, he besought her to eat some peppermint drops, which he luckily recollected Louisa gave him on setting out. The poor girl took them eagerly, and experienced so much benefit from them, as to be able to rise, with Charles's assistance, and endeavour to make her way from this dreadful prison; but when she came to the brink of the tower, her courage entirely failed her, as it had often done before, and she declared she would die where she was. Charles, in the greatest distress, besought her to make the effort; but all he said was vain. He then called out to his companions, beseeching one of them to come to him, especially Simpson, whom he knew to be the most agile; and this youth, reassured by his voice, at length ventured to reascend; and, between them both, the poor famished girl was safely brought to the ground, and conveyed to Mrs. Daventree.

When proper support had been administered to this young person, who was a tall and rather genteel figure, apparently about sixteen years of age, Mrs. Daventree inquired—"How she came to be placed in so dreadful a situation?"

She answered, with some confusion, that she had been so unfortunate as to offend her aunt (with whom she lived), by staying too long at a neighbour's house, where she had permitted her to visit, the Wednesday before; that on her return, her enraged relation had beaten her severely, as her arms and neck still testified, and had used such further threats, that she had fled from her, intending to take refuge with an uncle of hers, at some distance; that, as passing the Castle was her nearest way, she took it, although it was nearly dark; and, that hearing her relation's angry voice pursuing her, at the moment she passed the great tower, she flew up the broken staircase, not aware of the danger. When morning came, her terrors of instant death were such, that she dared not descend: she had remained there ever since, without food, her fear increasing with her increasing weakness.

"What a dreadful lesson on the effects of ungoverned rage does this little history present!" said Mrs. Daventree to her children; "at the same time, it shows the value of despising whatever obstructs our active benevolence. This poor girl appears to me in so weak a state, that had assistance been delayed but a few hours, it would have arrived too late; and had Charles, from the effect of vulgar prejudice and cowardice, descended after his first glance of her, no person in the country would have been found willing to explore the ruins, till the poor girl had actually expired: as it is, my brave boy, your career of glory is already begun—you have, at a very early age, and at very great personal hazard and mental exertion, saved the life of a fellow-creature."

"Dear mamma," said Charles, throwing himself into his mother's open arms, "I hope, when I am a sailor, to save many lives."

"Ever, my child, preserve in yourself this desire of active virtue and lively benevolence; and remember, not only that mercy is the brightest jewel in the crown of valour, but that in our *daily* intercourse with each other we are called upon to exercise, in a certain degree, the same benignant temper; it can seldom occur, even in the life of a brave man, to save a human being from death or misfortune; but it occurs to us *all*, every hour, to contribute to the ease and comfort of those around us."

The young creature, thus snatched from a dreadful death, as if by peculiar interposition, was not lost, to the aunt's knowledge, till the evening of that very day when Charles discovered her, as she believed that she had indeed fled to her uncle's for refuge; that uncle had by chance called upon her as he returned from market, and an explanation had of course taken place: the angry woman was immediately struck with the idea that the terrified girl had thrown herself into the river, which winds round the Castle, as it was not far from thence that she had lost sight of her; and the remembrance of her various acts of cruelty to this orphan combining with this idea, produced remorse as poignant as the anger she had so lately indulged was violent: she ran from house to house, through the village, calling for "her dear child, her pretty Susan!" and blaming herself as the murderer of her darling, every where followed by her anxious brother, who sought to calm the turbulence of that grief he could not pity, and blamed himself, too late, for suffering the daughter of their only brother to have remained under such a guardian.

In the course of their peregrination, they were met by Simpson, who justly claimed some share of praise in the deliverance of Susan, and who informed them of her present situation; in consequence of which, Mrs. Daventree was broken in upon with an extravagance of joy, mixed with self-reproach, by the erring woman, which afforded a practical illustration to her children of the necessity of guarding against all violent passions, for the first sight of her aunt occasioned poor Susan to fall into a swoon, from which it was feared she would never awake; for having fasted for three days and nights, during which time she had been exposed to the air, and though it was summer, had of course suffered from cold during the nights, she was reduced to a state of weakness that rendered her life precarious.

Mrs. Daventree now exerted herself in a way new to a spirit so gentle as hers, but perfectly consistent with the real benevolence of her character; she insisted on the frantic woman instantly leaving her presence and her house, with a tone of command that admitted not reply; and to her entreaties that Susan, on her recovery from fainting, might be carried to *her* house, she answered that "she would not suffer such a thing on any account; that the life her son had saved, his mother would protect; and that little as she was able to bear an addition to her family, the unhappy orphan should find protection there, so long as she wanted it."

This benevolent intention was not carried into effect; for the uncle of Susan, who was an amiable, kind-hearted man, and so situated as to take her with ease and propriety to his own house, removed her thither as soon as she was convalescent; but as the courage and activity of Charles was much talked of in the neighbourhood, the attention of the surrounding gentry was drawn towards this interesting stranger and her promising family, and many little civilities and overtures to acquaintance shewn her, which, though rarely accepted, were in themselves agreeable, and opened the path to respectable society, whenever any favourable alteration in her circumstances enabled her to indulge it with propriety. With the clergyman of the parish, and his amiable wife, she already enjoyed an intimate acquaintance, and they were sufficient for her present wishes and her bounded finances.

CHAPTER V.

During the first year of her residence at Conisbro', Mrs. Daventree had not the comfort of hearing any thing from her dear and worthy uncle; but about the period of that circumstance mentioned in our last, she had the satisfaction of learning that he was alive and well, but little likely to bless her by his presence, being among the *détenú* in France, with whom he was probably fated to remain.

Mrs. Daventree was particularly anxious to convey to this worthy man the knowledge which she knew was the most likely to solace him in his misfortunes, and likewise to convey to him a remittance, of which she was aware he had great need, and which she provided for him by the sale of some elegant trinkets, the boon of better days.

In order to convey this safely, she had recourse to the advice and assistance of her old friend, Admiral Bennington, who, in answering her letter, expressed a desire that Charles might be sent to town in the course of a month, as he had procured him an appointment, and was anxious to receive him.

At length, then, the time was come, so dreaded by the mother, so ardently desired by the son; yet that son never gazed on the pale face of his only parent without twinkling away a tear. His sisters, gentle, affectionate girls, though frequently complaining that Charles disturbed their occupations and interrupted their studies, yet were truly afflicted with the thoughts of losing him; and the little ones lamented the loss of their best playmate; even the whole village participated in the sentiment of sorrow, though all agreed that he was born to be a great man, and an honour to his country.

Mrs. Daventree heard these simple praises, not only with that pleasure which belonged to her as a mother, but with a great degree of regard towards the speakers themselves; she was now become mistress of their dialect, and the expressions which once wounded her ear, as uncouth, now frequently amused her by their united simplicity and strength; and she was enabled, by this apparently worthless acquisition, to read the old poets with an ease and pleasure she had never known before: thus, by degrees, her mind became habituated to circumstances; the exertions of fortitude, the submission of duty, were no longer called for; the exercise of religion, virtue, and benevolence, meliorated the thorns which strewed her path, and even bestowed, occasionally, the sweetest flowers; for though her charities were now grievously curtailed, and her generousities suppressed, yet she found herself still capable of being useful to her fellow-creatures; and the sense of utility is one of the happiest we enjoy.

When Charles left his mother, Mrs. Daventree recalled Henry from school, being incapable of parting with one son without experiencing the solace of the other; she had, indeed, a better motive than even this innocent self-indulgence; she considered that he had now entered his sixteenth year, and that some line of life must be chalked out for him. Of the many friends who, on her first retiring into the country, had abounded in offers of unbounded friendship, very few now corresponded with her: for it is much more natural to the heart of man to be strongly moved, than permanently attached: her situation had awakened the sincerest compassion, her conduct the warmest admiration; but these were, generally speaking, temporary impressions, and lost in the crowd of engagements which occupy the busy and the gay, when the wonder and the sorrow of her sad story ceased to be the topic of the day.

Among the few who still retained her and her little ones in their hearts and their memories, she could not find one who was so situated as to be of any essential advantage to her son. As far as she could learn, in her present secluded situation, the commercial world was still harassed with those evils which had swallowed up her fortune and blighted her happiness; she therefore shrunk from throwing her eldest son on so tempestuous an ocean, especially as he had little prospect but that of servitude in it, during the best years of his existence, for she was well aware that the time was past when great fortunes were raised from small beginnings; yet, should her son incline to a learned profession, how should she be able to support him, pressed, as she already found herself, by the increasing wants of her family?

As she was one day revolving these things in her mind, her eldest daughter approached her, with an air at once timid and important, and addressed her thus—"Dear mamma, you often sit thinking, and I cannot help fancying it is about Henry."

"You are right, my dear, I am thinking about him at this moment."

"You do not know what to do with him."

"Indeed I do not."

"Then, mamma, permit me to tell you that he has a great desire to be a physician."

"Indeed, my dear!"

"Yes, *indeed*; but he is afraid of telling you, lest it should be too expensive, though he has made many inquiries, and finds he could study at Edinburgh for a comparatively small expense."

"The worst of his plan," said Mrs. Daventree, after a long pause, "is *this*, Sophia, many years must elapse, even after he has attained knowledge, before he can hope for practice. There is a vulgar proverb, which says truly, 'a physician seldom gains his bread till he has lost his teeth.'"

"Yes, mamma, that is just what Henry says; and then he gives up his plan in despair: but I hope you will permit him to pursue it, for all that, because Louisa and I——" Sophia hesitated—a deep blush suffused her face.

"Go on, my love: what were you and Louisa thinking of? though not very sage counsellors, I am sure you are very kind ones."

"We were thinking, mamma, that in the course of two or three years we should begin to be clever, and then——"

"*Then* what, my love?"

"We will, if you please, be governesses, or something that will enable us to get money, with which we can support Henry at the University: he is so good, and we love him so dearly, that if you will permit us, it will make us very, very happy."

"My dear child, I do not only *permit* you, but rejoice that your love for each other, and your perception of that which is really good, should be such as to lead you to form such a plan for future life; it has indeed my warmest approbation."

Sophia departed, to communicate this welcome intelligence to her brother and sister; and the fond mother lifted up her eyes to heaven, in thankful adoration to that Power who taught her to see in the virtuous dispositions of her hopeful family, that "sweet are the uses of adversity;" since she could scarcely have hoped to see such excellence of character, produced thus early, in the sunshine of prosperity. As she resumed her work, she cast her eye on Edward, who was drawing at a little table in the corner of the room.—"What must I make of you, my little man, I wonder?"

"Henry says I am not a little man now; I am a great boy, mamma."

"Well, my dear, then there is so much more occasion to consider what you are fit for, is there not? I think drawing is at present the business of your life—come, put it aside—come to your mother, and tell her what she must make of you."

"Dear mamma, make me a Mr. Soane."

"A Mr. Soane, child! what do you mean?"

"I mean I want to be just such a man as Mr. Soane—an architecture gentleman, mamma, to build cathedrals, and banks, and palaces, with arches, and pillars, and all sorts of grandeur and beauty."

"I have frequently observed, my dear child, that you were always employed, to the best of your power, in making architectural designs, but I had no idea that your bent was so strong—Pray, how long have you entertained this fancy?"

"Oh, mamma, a long time—ever since I went with you one morning, in London, to see Mrs. Soane."

"I do not recollect taking you with me."

"Perhaps not, mamma, but *I* do not recollect any thing so *well* in my whole life, except *one* thing—yes, one thing I remember better than even that."

The tear which gathered in the dear child's eye spoke what that *one* thing was; the mother, unable to bear the idea thus awakened, urged him to go on, by saying—"Well, my love, what passed at Mr. Soane's, which has been so singularly impressed on your memory? tell me all you remember."

"Why, you see, Mrs. Soane and you were talking either about poems or routs, or something I did not understand, I

suppose; so Mr. Soane took me by the hand, and led me to a very beautiful place, like the inside of a house, open from top to bottom; and it was full of beautiful tops of columns, and pieces of pillars, and statues, one of which was very large, and exceeding grand; and he told me which of these things came from Greece, and which from Rome, and told me that they were objects of study to him; and so then I remembered that, a little time before, papa had taken me by the hand, when he went into the Bank, and I had said, 'Oh, papa, who built this great noble room?' and he said, 'Mr. Soane built it, and it is worthy of his genius.' I didn't know what papa meant by genius *then*, but I found it out when I was talking to Mr. Soane, and I have remembered *that* too ever since."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, mamma, I thought his genius was someway in his eyes, they were so bright and quick, and yet looked so kind and gentle: but I know better now—I know that genius is in the *mind*; but that is no reason why it may not be seen in the eyes sometimes, you know, mamma."

"But how does it happen, Edward, that you, who prattle so much at times to your mamma, should never have mentioned your inclinations before?"

"Why, mamma, when I talked of it to my brothers and sisters, they always said that painters, and architects, and those kind of people, must either have a great deal of genius, or they were good for nothing; and when I said perhaps I should have it, they laughed at me, so I did not like to say any more; but I have been always thinking about such things ever since."

"And drawing too, as well as you were able?"

"Oh yes, mamma; I have contrived a palace for you, and beautiful villas for my sisters; and a church, mamma, a church for us all to praise God in."

The mother kissed the cheek of her lovely boy; but continuing to muse, Edward said—"I am afraid, mamma, I have *not* a genius."

"Do not be afraid of any such thing, my little modest boy, for you have proved to me, in your artless conversation, that you possess accurate observation and natural taste, which are certainly amongst the best attributes of genius. Happily for you and me, Mrs. Soane is one of those who have not forgotten us in our retreat; and in my next letter to her, I will inquire how far it will be in my power to forward your wishes. I am well aware, that to call on Mr. Soane for generous exertion, or prudent counsel, is to employ his heart and his mind in their proper sphere: in the mean time, Edward, endeavour diligently to improve yourself in every branch of knowledge, and pray to your Heavenly Father to enlighten your mind, and direct your pursuits."

In consequence of this conversation, Mrs. Daventree became more than ever anxious to give the advantages of education to this son, who had been hitherto her pupil only; for as he was neither calculated in mind or person to make his way in a village school, as Charles had done, she had intended to keep him at home until Henry's destination to business should enable her to place him in the seminary her eldest son had quitted. That son's desire of pursuing a learned profession seemed to preclude the younger from those advantages necessary to *him*, since, with the utmost economy, her income would not allow her to support two sons at school at the same time, without condemning herself and daughters to be mere household drudges—a mode of life which not only habit and feeling revolted from, but which sound policy forbade, since the proper cultivation of their talents could not fail, with their persons and connexions, to ensure the means of life in an honourable employment.

About this time Mrs. Daventree was informed by Mr. Sadler, that about a thousand pounds of an old debt to the house had been received, and appropriated as a dividend to the creditors, and of course that her full income would return into her hands two years sooner than she had stipulated to resign it. This news was, in itself, extremely welcome; but yet Mrs. Daventree was hurt to find that the sum was appropriated before she had been informed of its arrival. She felt that she had a right to be consulted on such circumstances, and was surprised that a part of it had not been tendered to her. She perceived that those very men who had been dazzled by her magnanimity, and affected by her distress, and who were solicitous, in the first instance, to shew her every generous attention, had now ceased to consider her continuance in well-doing as meritorious, being not aware that human beings are often gifted by nature with generous impulses, but seldom are capable of pursuing, with unceasing energy and undeviating virtue, the path of unobtrusive duty.

This higher power of self-denial and holy resolution Mrs. Daventree derived from her piety, which was sincere, humble, and efficacious, and which united with her affection for the memory of her beloved husband, and the sense of justice to her fellow-creatures, to produce that line of conduct she had marked out for herself; therefore, as she had not been influenced by the praise of man, in the first instance, so she would not suffer any circumstance which indicated the ingratitude of man to affect her now; yet her children's claims were certainly very strong, and a little assistance, at this period, was of more importance than it could be at the time when her income returned to her: her heart was oppressed with care, and at times found it difficult for her to see what was indeed her path of duty. She had exhausted her means of procuring money for any particular emergency, by sending the produce of her trinkets to her uncle, an action she could not for a moment regret; and though she had many friends still left, whom she felt assured would readily assist, yet the length of time that must elapse ere she repaid them rendered her loth to borrow—on every side she was bewildered and perplexed.

Mrs. Daventree frequently conversed on what was passing in her mind with her two eldest daughters, whose affectionate sympathy consoled, though it could not otherwise assist her. To her son she did not complain, for she knew that such was his sense of duty, and such his warmth of affection for her, that he would have either immediately abandoned his pursuit for any that appeared more likely to relieve her, or have continued it under a pressure of spirits inimical to his health, and prejudicial to his studies. At this period the advice of a sensible neighbour, who knew the world, would have been invaluable to her; but the good clergyman, who was the only one she conversed with, was not of this description; he was devout, learned, amiable, and benevolent, but as "he ne'er had changed, nor wished to change his place," and was not under a necessity of considering how to dispose of his family, having only one daughter, he had no idea of the wants of a family so situated, nor the expenses which had crept into the system of education of late years; still less could he estimate the expenses natural to a person who had lived in such a situation as Mrs. Daventree once held, for he now considered her as a rich woman, and imputed every shade of care he read on her brow to her sorrows as a widow, believing, as he looked in the affectionate countenance of his own beloved partner, that such a loss would plant unfading cypress in his own bosom.

Yet, whilst Mrs. Daventree was thus anxiously debating, within her own mind, how to provide for the immediate wants of her sons, this good man became the medium of her relief; for as she had, one night, sat rather late at his house, Mrs. Bailey (his wife) insisted on her taking a cup of warm elder wine, to preserve her from the effects of the frost, which was just beginning.

Mrs. Daventree had never tasted this beverage before, and she praised it highly.

The good pastor loved to hear the praises of his lady, and he extolled her powers of wine-making with as much warmth as the Vicar of Wakefield could have done, concluding his eulogium with saying—"It was astonishing to him how people could think of giving so much money for foreign wine, when they might brew as good at their own houses: only think," continued he, "they tell me there is a wine, called claret, which sells for half-a-guinea a bottle; they drink it constantly at Aldwark Hall, Ravenfield Park, and all the great houses in the neighbourhood; it is not strong; some men will drink two bottles—only do think of any rational being swallowing a guinea after his dinner."

Mrs. Daventree could not hear the good man utter this exordium without a smile, as he had frequently taken a glass of claret himself, at her house; for although she had purposely discontinued the use of wine to her children, and consumed very little herself, yet as she had abundance, and habit had classed it among her necessaries, her little cupboard was never without; but its value had never been a matter of consideration till now. Pride whispered—"Do not sell your wine; what will the people in the village say? it is quite a different thing to parting with your jewellery in London, for all the country will see it taken away." But affection answered—"My children require this sacrifice," and it was instantly made.

To honest William, who still lived in his place, and whose greatest pleasure lay in contributing, by every means in his power, to the comfort and pleasure of the young family, Mrs. Daventree made known her wishes for disposing of her claret, and any other valuable wines that might be found in her cellars; and by his means she found a willing purchaser in the wealthy possessor of Aldwark Hall, a beautiful seat, above five miles distant from Conisbro'.

The butler, who examined that portion of wine set aside by William for sale, appeared a man who was empowered to act by a liberal master; when, therefore, he offered two hundred and fifty pounds for the lot, Mrs. Daventree willingly accepted it, as it was a sum that freed her from all present cares, and coming at a time when it was so much needed, and from a channel she had never apprehended, it appeared to her an immediate gift from Heaven, and was received with pious gratitude; but she was a little chagrined when informed by Mr. W——'s butler that his master would personally

wait upon her, to settle the account; for a thousand little delicacies, easily comprehended by the feeling heart, induced her to shrink from an interview with a stranger of his description.

But when this interview really took place, the slight degree of embarrassment which affected the parties was evidently on the gentleman's side; the elegance of his person, the suavity of his manners, and the peculiar respect he observed in his approach to Mrs. Daventree, soothed and invigorated her spirits; and so far from experiencing the pain she had feared, she was sensible of a pleasure it was now long since she had tasted.

Mr. W—— was a young married man, the father of three little girls; his fortune was immense, for he possessed not only a noble estate, on which he resided, but was a principal partner in the most extensive iron-works Yorkshire boasts; there was something, therefore, in his situation resembling that which she had lost, and in the excellence of his character, his urbanity, liberality, and politeness, a still greater similitude to that dear husband, whose image, actions, and sentiments were the continued food of recollection. She pleased herself with observing, that he seemed particularly struck with Sophia, who, on his entrance, was engaged with teaching little Anne geography, and felt as if she should be capable of parting with this admirable girl, if she could place her under the protection of such a man as this; and could not help believing but that, at a proper time, he would be desirous of procuring such a governess for his own infant girls.

Soon after this period, Henry departed, to pursue his studies at Edinburgh, and Edward was placed at the Doncaster boarding-school; the house appeared very dull without them, but as the leisure it afforded was necessarily increased, Mrs. Daventree applied herself, with increased diligence, to the education of her daughters, procuring them such assistants as the vicinity of Doncaster and her own bounded fortune enabled her; and the next two years passed without any remarkable occurrence, except the promotion of Charles, who was deservedly a favourite with his patron, and beloved by all his acquaintances.

CHAPTER VI.

At the expiration of the time we have just mentioned, Mrs. Daventree had the satisfaction of receiving a short visit from her "sailor boy," and found him much improved in his person, and every thing her fond imagination had delighted to picture him—open, manly, brave, and generous. He was particularly pleased with Anne and Elizabeth, whom he called the Sophia and Louisa he had left behind him, for those little girls were grown into young ladies; and little Ned, who, on this occasion, was permitted to visit home, was become a fine lad, instead of a minikin boy.

Charles's observations awakened the attentions of his mother to the gradual change which had taken place in her family: she beheld in Sophia a tall, elegant girl, of most prepossessing person, and though less regularly beautiful than Louisa promised to be, was yet singularly attractive; she was remarkable for the fairness of her complexion, and the luxuriance of her light brown hair; whereas Louisa was somewhat of a brunette, but with far finer features, and an expression of archness, in which she resembled Charles; while Sophia, in the meekness of her disposition, and undeviating propriety of her conduct, bore great affinity to Henry.

Charles scampered through the village, to visit all his old acquaintance, not forgetting to inquire for poor Susan, at the house of her aunt, whom he generally designated madam Bellweather, or dame Thunderbolt, and who had, therefore, not much reason to rejoice in his return, though she had certainly been benefited in her temper by the censures of her neighbours, and her own self-reproach at that eventful period. When Charles had seen all his old friends, he lamented the more that his brother Henry was not of the number; but on hearing that Sophia had received a letter from him that morning, and that he was perfectly well, he endeavoured to reconcile himself to the loss of his society.

Charles had brought with him a variety of presents, suited, as he believed, to the various wants and tastes of his young family, in which he had rather displayed generosity than judgment; Mrs. Daventree observed, that while the girls thanked him for them, with glistening eyes, they yet sighed over them as useless toys; and drawing aside, seemed to be turning over some plan, in which Charles's lavish generosity could be rendered subservient to their real wants; as they withdrew into the garden, still conversing, he addressed his mother thus—"I wonder if there is any thing Sophy and Louisa would like better than these fans and jing-embobs, mother. I begin to think, now I see how tall they look, that I had better have bought them shawls."

"It would have been better, my dear; for as I have put them both upon an allowance for clothes, and they are both extremely anxious to make little presents, from time to time, to poor Henry, any thing of *that* kind is of value to them."

"Then, mother, I will give each of them a guinea, for a new bonnet."

"But, my dear, you have been already very lavish of your gifts in the village; you will strip yourself of every thing."

"No, I sha'n't; I have money enough to take me back to my ship, and then I shall want nothing, you know."

"True, my dear, you will want nothing for the present; but whilst I admire your generosity, and especially your brotherly love, I must yet warn you, my dear Charles, against being inconsiderate and extravagant—men of your profession are too frequently so; but when I tell you that such conduct may involve you in the most distressing difficulties, prevent you from being *just*, and incapacitate you from lending any *essential* assistance to your mother and her family, I am sure, my dear boy, you will see the necessity of curbing this prodigality of kindness."

Charles sat a long time thoughtfully revolving, in his own mind, the truths his mother had uttered; at length, looking earnestly in her face, he said—"Mother, do not think me impertinent, when I ask if your income is increased?"

"It is *not*, my dear."

"And yet *we* are all increased, and Edward is sent to school. Henry too is at college!"

"Yes, Henry is a considerable expense to me; but he is so very careful, that my only fears respecting him arise from that circumstance; he is so anxious to save me, poor fellow, that I am seriously afraid he will injure himself!"

"Good Heavens! how foolish I was not to think of all this! when I left London, I spent twenty guineas in toys; now, I dare say, this would have done you good, mother, or, may be, it would have bought my brother something that he wants."

"Yes, my dear, it would have bought him books, paid his admission to lectures, and added greatly to his comforts, and

perhaps to his respectability."

Charles hastily arose, and left his mother's presence, for tears of regret and vexation rolled quickly down his sunburnt cheeks; his honest heart was pained to its inmost core, though folly, not unkindness, was all that he could possibly lay to his own charge; that folly, however, he bitterly repented, and the resolution he formed, in consequence of his present pain, produced from that time the most salutary effects on his conduct; and having made such resolutions, restored him, in a certain degree, to self-respect, and he joined his family at dinner-time, serious, but not sorrowful.

When the day of parting came, many tears were shed on all sides; but Mrs. Daventree almost smiled, as by chance she heard Charles, as he gave each of his sisters a new guinea, mention its destination, and add, with great gravity—"You know we must all be very careful of clothes, and every thing else:" she perceived, however, from this trait, that her words had made the impression she wished. She was well aware that Charles felt, even at that moment, the pressure of straitened circumstances himself, and she gave a sigh to his wants, though the lesson they would convey would not fail to be useful; it was utterly out of her power, at present, to relieve them; and as the embarrassment would so soon vanish in this case, had she been more fortunately situated, it would have been foolish to do so.

The day after Charles set out, as Louisa and Sophia perceived their mamma to be tolerably composed, they asked permission to take Edward to school, as Martha could walk with them conveniently that day, and they could buy several things which they wanted very much, and put a letter into the post-office—"And a many things beside," said Louisa.

"You have mentioned enough, of all conscience," said the mother; "yet I believe the true reason is still kept behind—I see it in Sophy's blush; you want to buy new bonnets with your new guineas."

"No, indeed, mamma; we do not think of the new guineas, at least not in *that* way."

"Well, no matter, you may go; take care to walk slow, for it is a long way; and do not load poor Martha with your packages."

The young party set out, thankful and happy, though Edward's blue eyes often twinkled as he repeated, for the twentieth time, "farewell:" the two little girls were particularly assiduous in attending to their mother, and their affectionate attention succeeded in enlivening the time till the return of their sisters.

When the young ladies re-entered their mother's parlour, she praised them highly for the dispatch they had used, and expressed her fears lest they had fatigued themselves by hurrying home; she had noticed, on their first entrance, that Sophia had entered with a firm step, and a look of pleasure, that amounted to exultation, on her countenance; but when she sat down, her colour came and went, she seemed to breathe with difficulty, and was evidently indisposed, though, on being interrogated, she replied that she "was perfectly well."

Sophia was always a child of such very acute feelings and warm attachments, that Mrs. Daventree doubted not that her feelings were at this moment recalled to the parting with Charles; she therefore, in order to call her mind from the subject, inquired "if they had purchased new bonnets?"

"No, mother," said Louisa; "we could not choose them without you, and, indeed, we don't want any at present."

"What have your purchases consisted of?"

"Drawing-paper, pencils, sewing-cotton, and tape."

"Is that all?"

"No, we have bought a little muslin cap for you; it is quite a plain one, but a pretty pattern."

As Louisa spoke, Sophia slowly pulled off her bonnet, and discovered the cap in question on her own head.

"You are very good, my dears," said Mrs. Daventree, advancing towards Sophia, and laying hold of the cap; "it is really a neat-looking little thing: but, Sophia, what is the matter with you? you tremble, child; I am certain you are ill; this behaviour is so new in *you*, it puzzles and distresses me."

Sophia burst into tears.

"Don't be angry with her, mamma, pray don't," cried Louisa; "but, if you please, you must not take the cap off her head, for she will take cold."

The cap was already in Mrs. Daventree's hand; and, to her utter astonishment, she beheld the luxuriant tresses of Sophia cut off, close to her head, with only a single row of ringlets left straggling on her forehead.

"For Heaven's sake! child, what have you been about? what is become of your hair?"

"Forgive me, dear mamma—forgive me! it will soon grow again—I know it will!"

"I insist upon knowing why you have done this ridiculous thing, and how you dared to do it without my knowledge?"

Mrs. Daventree addressed these words to Louisa, for Sophia was not in a condition to answer them.

"You know, mamma," said Louisa, assuming a very penitent face, "poor Henry, in his letter to Sophia, said that there was a very great bargain of some anatomical books to be sold, which he wished to have purchased very much, but as they cost five pounds, he could not do it, because his quarter's payment for his board was then due, and so——"

"Well, child, go on."

"So Sophia and I considered, again and again, whether it would be possible for us to sell the pretty things Charles had brought us, and so send Henry the money; but we were afraid that would seem unkind to poor Charles, so we gave it up, and very sorry we were, for we had only some silver left of our quarter's allowance; but yesterday morning, when Charles gave us the two guineas, we were very glad, and we thought we could get a two-pound note at Doncaster, and put it into the letter."

"That was very kind of you both: go on."

"Well, mamma, as we went past Mrs. Peat's, the milliner, we saw this cap in the window, so we went in to ask the price, and as it was only seven shillings and sixpence, we thought we would buy it for you, and get her to let us have the two-pound note: now, you know, mamma, her husband is a hair-dresser, and his shop joins hers at the back; and we could hear people talking, and we heard Mr. Peat say to somebody—'Why, sir, a good head of hair is worth from three to five guineas.'"

"Well, child."

"So, mamma, it struck poor Sophia, that if she could sell her hair, then she could send Henry all the money he wanted; so when we came out, she talked about it all the way up the street; and as we were pressed for time, you know, we sent Martha into the shop, to see if nobody was in, and very luckily there was nobody; so we went in, and I asked him 'if he would buy Sophia's hair?' and he said yes, he would, but it would be a thousand pities to cut it off."

"Very true," ejaculated the mother.

"So then Sophia spoke, and she said, 'Sir, if you will give me a five-pound note for this two-pound note, you shall cut it all off this moment;' and so, mother, he did give it her, and I put the note into the letter, and sent Martha with it to the post-office, while he cut off her hair; but when Martha came back, and saw that all her hair was cut off, 'she was in a great fright, and rubbed her head with some brandy, and put this cap on, for fear she should take cold.'"

"Have you not repented, Sophia, since you did this?" said the mother.

"I do repent, now I see I have made you angry, mother; but I *must* tell you the truth—I never was so happy in my life as I was till then, for I thought I had done a good thing."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Louisa, "we were both quite happy all the way home—we thought how delighted Henry would be when he saw the note drop out of the letter, and bought the books, and studied in them; and we thought you would be pleased too."

"But, my dear children, you should not have allowed me to be surprised, as I was: I do *indeed* approve of what you have done, Sophia; at sixteen, such a sacrifice to affection may almost be termed heroic. Come to my arms, my dear girl! be assured every hair you have lost is bound around the heart of your parent and your brother; and you, Louisa, are equally

kind in your intention, since your perception of this was precisely in unison with Sophia's: while love like this subsists among you, my children, you will have a source of enjoyment which wealth cannot procure, and scarcely could increase."

CHAPTER VII.

A few months after Charles had returned to the duties of his profession, he had an opportunity of signaling his courage, in a way not often afforded to so young a man: the vessel against which he fought was made prize of, and of course Charles came in for his share of the booty; on this occasion he did not forget the lesson he had imbibed, but, with a degree of prudent self-mistrust, he requested that the navy agent appointed to pay him would transmit the whole to his mother, who received about the same time a letter from his good friend the admiral, assuring her that the humanity and propriety of Charles's conduct was equally exemplary with the courage he had so strikingly displayed; and declaring that he felt proud of having been the means of bringing a young man into the service who could not fail of becoming an honour to his country.

The relief afforded by the supply of Charles's prize was very great to Mrs. Daventree, for she was really distressed for the means of supporting Henry at Edinburgh. In the course of a few months, she was further assisted by the following circumstance.

When Mrs. Daventree adopted the idea that the gentleman who purchased her wine had conceived a desire of obtaining Sophia for a governess for his little girls, she had not deceived herself; for about the time when she attained her seventeenth year, his lady, through the medium of Mrs. Bailey, made overtures for that purpose: this good girl had become so much the friend and companion of her mother, and was possessed of an understanding so much above her years, and a heart so moulded by piety and maternal tenderness, that it was very painful to Mrs. Daventree to think of parting with her; but the increasing claims of her little girls, who now called for their share of that part of education which could not be supplied without masters, together with Edward's growing expenses, and Henry's continued ones, left her no room to doubt what was her duty in this respect; and as, on consulting Sophia, she found that dear girl had no objection but what arose from her timidity, and retained the same earnest desire she had ever evinced to benefit her family, and lighten her mother's burden, she signified to Mrs. Bailey that herself and daughter would gladly accede to the proposals of so respectable a family.

In consequence of this decision, Mr. and Mrs. W—— soon after called on Mrs. Daventree; and so much was she gratified by the kind and respectful manners of the lady, that although she could not part with her darling daughter without being much affected, yet her judgment approved, and her heart rejoiced in the destination. The terms on which Sophia became an inmate with this excellent family were liberal, and her footing as a gentlewoman completely understood in the family. As her charge consisted at present of two little girls, she did not find the labour to which sisterly affection, as well as misfortune, had subjected her by any means increased, whilst the comforts and elegances enjoyed during her infancy were restored to her; and the modest dignity and graceful ease of her manners proved her well calculated and fully worthy of their enjoyment.

As she was only a few miles distant from Conisbro', her mother had frequent opportunities of enjoying a short interview with her; and she soon perceived, in her improved appearance and cheerful aspect, that the enlarged and more elegant circle of society she now enjoyed had the happiest effect upon her mind, which had hitherto partaken more of the pensive cast than is natural to youth: the gentle timid flower, which bends beneath the shade, expands beneath the genial influence of the solar beam, and returns the ray of kindness by displaying its richest hues, and disseminating its sweetest odours.

One morning, during the first winter Sophia had resided at the Hall, Mrs. W——, entering the school-room, informed her and her pupils that the whole family must set out for Bath the Monday following, adding—"I am now going to make farewell calls in the neighbourhood, and will set you down at Conisbro', to bid your good mother farewell. I am induced to make this sudden removal in compliance with the wishes of my sister."

In less than an hour, Sophia was within view of that dear home from which she had never been comparatively separated till now; her eyes were bent upon it, and her heart breathing prayers for its beloved inhabitants, when Mrs. W—— entreated her attention to an old man, who sat by the road side, apparently very poor and very ill; and at the same time she called her servant, and directed him to offer him relief, and inquire where he was going?

The servant returned to the chaise, saying—"He says, ma'am, that he is only going to the village before him, but the sight of it at this distance made his heart beat so that he could not go on."

"Poor man!" said Sophia; "doubtless his friends live there—yet he seems very old; I fear he has few left."

"He is a very particular sort of a person, Miss; my mind misgives me somehow that he is a gentleman; he said he was shipwrecked off Liverpool; when I offered him the half-crown you sent him, he thanked me, and said his journey was too nearly ended to render your bounty necessary."

The stranger was now observed to rise feebly, and with tottering steps pursue his way; the ladies were much affected with his appearance, for he seemed at once to bend beneath the pressure of age, disease, and sorrow.—"Run, James," said Mrs. W——, "and bring him into the carriage; tell him we are going to Conisbro', and will take him thither."

The aged stranger accepted the offer, in a manner which proved the justice of what James termed his misgivings: he was evidently a *gentleman*; but from the manner in which his piercing regards were fixed on Sophia, it was also evident that his mind was too abstracted to pay Mrs. W—— that attention her truly benevolent courtesy merited.

At length, leaning forward from the opposite seat of the coach, he cried, in a half-suffocated voice—"For Heaven's sake, young lady, tell me who you are?"

Both Sophia and her patroness were alarmed by the earnestness and extreme perturbation with which the question was asked, but the former instantly replied with great sweetness—"My name is Sophia Daventree, friend."

"I know it—I *know* it," said the poor man, wiping his eyes; "thou art, indeed, my own Sophia's child—her eyes, her voice, her very manner—she would have called the poor man *friend*, as thou hast done."

"Who, sir—who are *you* that know my mother?" said Sophia, in her turn greatly agitated.

"I am Edward Gardiner, my child, thy mother's uncle; many a time have I partaken thy childish sports; but it is no wonder I am forgotten—many sorrows have bowed me down."

"Dear, *dear* uncle, welcome! *welcome!*" cried Sophia, throwing her arms around the aged wanderer, and straining him to her bosom, while her streaming tears fell on his white locks and furrowed cheeks.

At this moment the coach drew up to Mrs. Daventree's garden door; and Mrs. W——, whose benevolent spirit sympathized in this affecting discovery, alighted, and, in a few words, prepared Mrs. Daventree to receive her dear and *only* relative, since his brother had been many years lost to them all. Their meeting was tender, painful, and yet joyful; and the kind congratulations of the sweet girls, each of whom renewed to him the days of their mother's infancy, seemed to shed a gleam of pleasure on his countenance, which dissipated the melancholy awakened by his forlorn appearance, and which was easily accounted for, when they learnt that he had been many months in a French prison, having attempted to escape, and that he had suffered incredible hardships since he had effected it, and had at last been wrecked on his native coast, and obliged to beg his bread from Liverpool to Conisbro'.

"Dear sir," exclaimed Louisa, "how could you have the courage to encounter such hardships at your time of life? I tremble to think of what you risked, and what you must have suffered."

"My child, Heaven inspired me with courage, and made me strong to endure, in answer to my constant prayer, that your mother might be permitted to close my eyes: that prayer is answered, and I can now say with Zacharias—'Lord, let me depart in peace.'"

Though worn down by time and suffering, the joy this good old man now experienced seemed to renovate his days; and Mrs. Daventree had the sweet satisfaction of soothing declining life to him, and thus rewarding those cares he had bestowed on her infancy; but over how many tender remembrances and blighted prospects did they weep together! together, too, they rejoiced in the virtues of their dear children, though the clouds which rested on their future lives were still subjects of anxiety.

When Mr. Gardiner had collected from Mrs. Daventree the present situation in which the affairs of his late house stood, he found that many sums of money were still unpaid, which he had no doubt would be honourably remitted to him when his existence was no longer dubious. He exerted himself to write many letters, and gave many directions to the creditors, who, thankful for his assistance, and respecting his character, tendered him such monies as were requisite for his comforts; but he declined receiving any thing from them, until such times as their receipt of remittances should prove the veracity of his statements, being little aware that his niece was then struggling with continued difficulties, and that the celerity with which she supplied his every want in some measure robbed her own of comforts, or increased her difficulties.

The hardships with which Mr. Gardiner had been struggling for the last six years rendered him so satisfied with the comparative luxuries of Mrs. Daventree's comfortable abode, that he entirely ceased to regret the wealthy home he had lost, and the circle of friends he had once enjoyed. Old age asks not for splendour beyond convenience, but it requires attention, and is ambitious of respect; and this Mr. Gardiner enjoyed in no common degree, for his nieces were emulous of imitating their mother's conduct towards him, and his neighbours vied with each other in treating him with cordial friendship and sincere deference. He was a man of cultivated mind, and had seen so much of the world, that notwithstanding some decay of his faculties, and great bodily infirmity, he was yet a person of great importance in this remote, but not uncivilized district; and, as importance is most dear to human nature at that period when its claims are most disputed, it may be fairly inferred, that in his present situation Mr. Gardiner had more real enjoyment of closing life than he would have had in the busy circle where his best days had been spent. In our latter years, the friends of our youth must be expected to drop thickly around us; each, as he falls, claims the tribute of a tear, and the heart of Mr. Gardiner was well disposed to pay this offering at the shrine of every benevolent feeling. By a severe, but perhaps salutary dispensation of Providence, he had experienced a long weaning from all his former friendships and pursuits, and his affections, hopes, and fears, had become concentrated in one family; he felt this family sufficient for his desires, and, at Mrs. Daventree's earnest entreaty, determined to end his days with her.

The arrival of this interesting stranger had rendered the journey of Sophia an event of less importance than it would have otherwise appeared; and her sensible, affectionate letters were a source of great amusement and comfort to her mother and sisters. On her return, she passed through London, and was warmly received by the few friends whose continued attentions to her mother enabled her to call on them with propriety. These visits awakened, to a painful degree, the sensibility she so eminently possessed, but they likewise exercised her fortitude, and abundantly rewarded it, as she found that it paved the way for the reception of her eldest brother, of whom she spoke with that modest warmth of praise due to his virtues, and natural to love so truly sisterly as hers. Respecting Edward, her intercourse was still more satisfactory, as the generous, intelligent friend to whom they looked for instruction and assistance in the branch of art to which the young enthusiast was so completely devoted, treated her with all the tenderness of a father, and evidently intended to become such to her brother, whenever he should be sent to the metropolis. He made delicate but friendly inquiries into every part of her dear mother's domestic arrangements, entreated her to be the medium of enabling him to defray Edward's expenses, from the time that her uncle's return had laid a new, though welcome burthen on her mother. As Sophia, lifting up her modest eye towards his, beheld their expression, she whispered to herself—"Ah, there is something here beyond even the fire of genius!" She did not, however, consider herself competent to act in an affair of so much importance without consulting her mother; but she accepted with frankness and gratitude those presents the considerate kindness of his lady had provided for herself and sisters; and on her return, she dedicated, agreeable to her intention, the first fruits of her service to Henry, entreating him to pay a visit to his family in the autumn, as it was now nearly three years since they had that pleasure, and his good old uncle was anxious to behold him.

Henry had entered his twenty-first year, when he returned to the house of that dear mother whose anxious heart had so long beat for his welfare, and, to forward his views, had forbade herself the enjoyment of his presence. She now gazed upon him with an intenseness of delight she became unable to support; for at the moment he clasped her in his arms, her head sunk upon his breast, and she fainted completely away.

This distressing incident alarmed her family exceedingly; but Henry interposed, to prevent them from adding to her indisposition by their distress, and by his cares she was soon restored. He soon became aware of the particular circumstance which had affected his mother, from his uncle's declaration that he was the very image of his father, at the time of his marriage.

Henry, during his infancy and early youth, had been delicate and small in his person, and, though perfectly healthy, was never robust; but soon after his arrival in Scotland, he shot up surprisingly, and was now a tall, handsome young man, finely proportioned, and uniting in his person elegance and vigour: nor was his understanding less matured; he had passed from the gentle steady boy, to the profound and cultivated man, yet retaining all the genuine humility and dignified simplicity which are the best characteristics of a scholar and a gentleman.

How amply did the fond mother feel herself repaid for every privation she had so long endured, as she listened to his conversation, beheld his kind attentions to her family, or gazed on those features ever dear to her heart, restored in the countenance of her son! Anxious as she was respecting his future success, and fearful that many, many years must pass ere the blooming youth before her would be considered by the world a proper candidate for that favour which is so seldom accorded until age has stamped the seal of wisdom on a wrinkled brow, yet she could not look at him without

believing that all the world must partake of her prepossession, and some degree of success be accorded to so amiable a candidate.

When Sophia joined her family party, and beheld this brother of her fondest hopes, her joy arose to rapture, though it was manifested in tears. Nor was his delight less sensibly expressed, as he was equally pleased with the improvement so visible in her person and manners. She had the pleasure of introducing him to her good friends at the Hall, and seeing him treated by them and their friends with the respect and admiration she felt to be so justly his due.

One day, as he was dining with this worthy family, Mrs. W——, who was now become most tenderly attached to Sophia, and felt proud of everything that marked improvement in her *protégé*, asked him "if he had not perceived a wonderful alteration in his sisters, during his long absence?"

"Certainly, ma'am; the two eldest are become fine young women: Louisa is really handsome."

"And surely Sophia is so too—her figure is elegant."

"I can find no fault with Sophia, who was ever my *dearest* sister, and I perceive that her general appearance is wonderfully improved; but I used to think the expression of her face, which being Grecian, called for classical costume, was rendered more interesting by her long hair, which was wrapped or braided round her head in a manner singularly becoming, and which, I have often thought, would have made it a fine study for a painter."

"That is precisely what I have heard Mr. W—— say; I never saw it myself."

"Pardon me, madam; I concluded that she had adopted this cropped head in compliance with the fashion, during her residence at Bath."

"Oh no! Sophia parted with her flowing tresses in compliance with the fashion of her own heart; she sold her living locks, to enable her to present a certain brother of hers with a set of books about dead bones."

"Wonderful, excellent girl! How I thank you!"

"Well, sit still till dinner is over; the most surprising part of the story is, that you should never have heard of it till now."

"Ah, madam, she who did this would 'blush to find it fame.' I remember being somewhat puzzled with the letter, in which Sophia said—'Myself and Louisa enclose you a *two*-pound note, the gift of our dear Charles;' whereas the note was *five* pounds, and on the back was written, 'this is for the books.'"

"I believe it is only right to give Louisa as much credit as Sophia; but, as she jestingly said, her raven locks would not have been equally profitable."

When Henry returned home this evening, he had the farther satisfaction of learning that, through the information given by his uncle, the creditors of his house had received a small remittance, and assurances, from a channel they could not doubt, that a very considerable one was on its route, by a circuitous passage, necessary to be adopted in the present state of the Continent, and which, when received, would greatly shorten the remaining term of Mrs. Daventree's seclusion; and in the full expectation of it, they enclosed the old gentleman the present remittance, for his own use, it being somewhat more than a hundred pounds.

It is probable that the possession of this money gave Mr. Gardiner more real pleasure than the possession of so many thousands would have done some years before, though he immediately gave it all to his niece. The consciousness of power is ever delightful, and Mr. Gardiner, in reading and re-reading the letter he had received, was happy to find *his* plans and *his* information had produced these happy effects: he now felt himself restored fully to his rank in society; and although self-reproach had not heretofore wounded him, yet the consciousness that some were suffering loss by him, could not fail to be very painful to one who, for a long series of years, had been enabled to dispense benefit, not incur obligation; to be the means, too, of assisting his dear niece, she who had saved his name from obloquy, and now afforded his old age the safe retreat and comfortable repose he wanted, and who, in herself and family, merited and engaged his warmest affection, was the sweetest joy of his heart, and the most merciful answer to his prayers. As, however, agitation is seldom favourable to health, even when it is the agitation of joy, Mrs. Daventree remarked, with much concern, that poor Mr. Gardiner was rendered much more feeble from this ebullition of his spirits; and she took especial care to guard both herself and family from exciting in him any ideas which might tend to injure the tranquillity of his mind, and disturb

that placid serenity of spirit which is the best boon of age, and the most happy precursor of that awful state which ushers the soul of man into the presence of his Creator.

The time now arrived when it was proper for Henry to return to his studies; but as this would be the last time in which it was judged necessary for the young man to make any long separation from his family, this parting was the more easily submitted to.

Although Mrs. Daventree was still very poor in purse, the late supply being swallowed up speedily by the increased expenses of her family, yet, as she was now blest with a speedy prospect of permanent relief, she not only permitted, but entreated her son to relax from the severity of his economy, and permit himself those indulgences consistent with his age, profession, and expectations.—"You know my situation, Henry," she said, "and you know, too, that I live only *in* my children, and *for* them; therefore use your own discretion in the disposal of that little which I am enabled to appropriate to you, remembering your somewhat paramount claims, as my firstborn son."

"Alas, my dear mother, I have unwillingly encroached too much upon you, in that point of view already: when I consider how kindly you have supported me through those years in which our brave Charles has been supporting himself, and even assisting his family, I blush to think of what a burthen I have been to you; but I take comfort in the rectitude of my intentions towards all my family, and the hope that I shall be able to prove, notwithstanding my youth, that your labour has not been thrown away upon me, since I have been so happy as to obtain testimonials in my favour that cannot be disputed; while I most gratefully thank you for your enlarged intentions towards me, yet, be assured, I am too well acquainted with your manifold wants, to intrude upon you farther than I have already done; but in order to satisfy you that I have every comfort you wish me, rest assured I shall draw on our dear Sophia's hoards, whenever I see occasion: when we next meet, my dear mother, I trust we shall not be subjected to this painful discussion."

"I trust that will be in about a year, or little more, my son; life is uncertain, and these long partings are temporary deaths."

"True, my mother, I hope our next meeting will be permanent; but, dear mother, since, as you have observed, life is uncertain, and as we shall none of us go any sooner for thinking about it, will you pardon me, if I——"

"Why do you hesitate, Henry? do you advert to any thing connected with my death? If you *do*, pray speak *on*, my son: it is a subject on which I daily meditate, and on which I can speak with great ease."

"Ay, my mother, *you* may speak with ease; but your children cannot touch on the subject without terror; as, however, I have ventured to do so, I must proceed so far as to say, that I *do* wish you to make a will."

"A will, my dear! I have nothing to leave; my jointure becomes yours, of course, at my decease."

"But this jointure I disclaim, and shall do so, by a legal deed, at the close of my minority; I do not wish my family to thank *me* for a distribution I feel to be their due, but I wish them to owe it to that mother, who has already conferred on them such countless obligations."

"Alas! my dear Henry, you mistake: far from enriching my children, a sense of justice to your father's creditors, love for his memory, and devout submission to that God who, I believed, and still believe, appointed this path for me, I deprived you of the comforts which still remained in my power to bestow: my children owe me nothing."

"Nay, my mother, they owe you every thing: is it nothing that you have preserved the name of our beloved father from blemish, by a conduct that added to its lustre? Nothing, that in the prime of life, the very zenith of enjoyment, you abandoned the society that delighted in you, the friends that would have cherished you, and devoted yourself, in poverty and retirement, to a family too young to appreciate your virtue and alleviate your cares, and whose many wants and petulant complaints have doubtless rent your heart with a thousand pangs it was impossible to guard against? Is it nothing that, for seven long years, you have manifested the same persevering goodness, submitted, year by year, to increased privations and exertions, with the same gentleness of temper, wisdom in your designs, and patience in their execution? *Nothing*, that you have made your sons an honour to their father, and your daughters the models of their mother?"

Overpowered, alike by his tenderness and admiration, the noble youth burst into tears, and fell upon his mother's neck; that mother, in the moment of joyful transport, and gratitude to Heaven, felt all the past repaid, and the future, opened by the hand of Hope, came smiling to her view. Notwithstanding the duteous regard with which her children had ever

treated her, yet there were times when she had feared that they would reflect on their youthful privations, and think that she had carried her ideas of justice to a romantic height, which had fallen hardly upon them; and she was aware that the consciousness of having acted right would not, under such a circumstance, prevent her from experiencing bitter grief from the accusation.

In the kindness, generosity, prudence, and duty of her eldest hope, she foresaw the benefit his example would afford to all the rest, whilst on his faithful protection she was enabled to cast all her cares for the future; she was, however, recalled from this contemplation by the loud sobs of Louisa, who was, at this moment, taking her farewell kiss of Henry.

When the amiable youth bade his venerable uncle adieu, the good man seemed to feel a presentiment that he should see him no more; he embraced him with tenderness, and looked at him with a reiterated earnestness of regard, that seemed to be enjoying its last feast; then wringing his hand, he said—"Farewell, my boy! sometimes think on me with affection, and never forget my parting words—keep innocence, and lay hold on the thing that is right, for that will bring a man peace at the last."

Soon after Henry set out for Edinburgh, Louisa departed on a visit of some months to a family in the neighbourhood. She had always shewn a great taste for drawing, and her mother, after giving the best instructions she was able in that delightful art, had procured her lessons from a skilful professor; the knowledge thus acquired had enabled her to pursue it with great advantage, and she was at this time a great proficient. Some specimens of her talents had been seen at Aldwark Hall, by a gentleman of great taste, whose niece resided with him, and for whom he wished to acquire every assistance in education a retired situation admitted; he therefore seized with avidity the prospect thus afforded, and being introduced to Mrs. Daventree, through the medium of their mutual friends, bore away Louisa, as an inestimable prize.

The mother had too long wished to see this good girl partake her sister's advantages not to yield a willing assent to the proposal; but she found a great loss of her in her household department, for Louisa being a lively, active girl, and less devoted to reading than Sophia, had ever been of the most service in those offices which call for the hands rather than the head, and for the last two years had saved her mother the toils of housekeeping. The two youngest, now grown fine girls of nine and ten years old, did their best to supply the deficiency, but of course were incapable of fulfilling their own wishes: as, however, the family was now a small one, and Mrs. Daventree perceived that Mr. Gardiner became every day more and more feeble, she resolved so far to relieve herself as to engage her old servant, William, to return to them, as she knew that his master, though much attached to him, would yet kindly accord with her wishes in that respect; for as she now enjoyed some degree of intimacy with all her neighbours, he had more than once hinted his willingness to oblige her in this manner, should the increased weakness of her uncle render such an attendant necessary.

William, highly gratified by this arrangement, returned to his service with the same dispositions with which he had left it; and Mrs. Daventree, in the care he took of Mr. Gardiner, and the many little amusements and comforts he contrived, found his service a great relief to her.

The winter of this year set in very severely, and had evidently a great effect upon the health of a person whose residence in warm climates had made him shrink "beneath the northern blast;" and in order to accommodate *him*, the house was kept warm, to a degree injurious to the health of the other inhabitants. The girls looked pale and sickly, and Mrs. Daventree found herself nervous and indisposed; yet she could not bring herself to abridge his comforts, by confining him to a solitary apartment; again her duties appeared to clash with each other, but considering that her cares for this worthy relative could not be called for long, she determined to make him the only sacrifice in her power, by sending her children to school, and obviating the evil to herself, as well as she was able.

While she was debating on the propriety of this measure, in her present circumstances, and endeavouring to reconcile her mind to the loss of her prattling girls, aware, likewise, that their uncle would anxiously oppose the scheme, she heard a cry of joy issue from the parlour, and the words "Charles! Charles!" uttered by Elizabeth. In great trepidation she immediately descended, and with equal joy and astonishment once more beheld her boy, who was, at this moment, respectfully kissing the hand of his uncle.

Charles had again been successfully engaged, was promoted, and the bearer of good tidings; but his time was still more contracted than on his first visit, so that no time could be lost in sending for Edward and Sophia, to partake the joyful emotion his presence excited: in their confusion Louisa was forgot, but he obviated this by saying he would call upon her in his way; but so fast had the tidings of his return ran through the country, so well was he remembered, and so truly beloved, that Louisa heard of his arrival, and being forwarded in the carriage of her kind entertainer, reached her dear

home just as the family were separating for the night.

During the two days that Charles remained with his family, all was joyful bustle and welcome confusion; he had so much to tell, and so much to hear, that tongue rose above tongue, till affection became clamorous, and curiosity bewildered: he was grown stout and handsome, though very brown; he had seen various countries since they last met, and related what he had seen with all the *gout* of a traveller, who lives again through the scenes he has passed, in retracing them to others; hence the most lively interest was kept alive in his hearers and himself.

Mrs. Daventree observed with what eagerness each listened to the detail of adventures in which his own personal safety had been involved, but the moment their fears were released, as to the main object of solicitude, reverted to those subjects dear to their taste, or interesting to their feelings.

"Did you see any paintings at Naples?" cried Louisa.

"Had you an opportunity of hearing any music in Italy?" asked Sophia.

"Pray tell me," exclaimed Edward, with extreme anxiety, "whether you have seen any fine ruins in your travels?"

Yet the girls pressed not with more eagerness to hear of wonders, and to admire the relator, than did his good old uncle to inquire respecting the actions in which he had been engaged, and all the various occurrences of the day.

Charles, standing with his back against the wall, surrounded by his eager auditory, looked like an old soldier, who "shoulders his crutch, and tells how fields were won;" and it excited the astonishment and awoke the gratitude of his mother, to perceive that, amid so many dangers, he had got no crutch to shoulder.

Just as Charles, at his uncle's request, was beginning to relate the story of his last engagement to Louisa, as "she, poor thing, did not hear it yesterday," and as his other sisters, unwearied with the twice-told tale, were crowding closely round him, he perceived poor William, with lengthened neck and eager eye, peeping through the crevice of the door.

"Mother," said he, "I perceive William listening with all his *eyes*—have I your leave for calling him into the room?"

"Certainly, my dear; even in this circle you will not have one auditor more interested in your welfare, more proud of your exploits."

"Come in, William," said Mrs. Daventree, "and hear Charles's account of the battle; I am sure you will be glad to hear any good of *him*, for he has given you trouble enough at times."

"He was a little given to be unlucky, or so, to be sure, madam," said William, advancing with great respect, not sensible that he had been caught listening.

"Ay," said Charles, forgetting his story in other remembrances, "I am sure I ought not to forget you, William; you were always kind, and have helped me out of many a scrape in Conisbro', known to no one present save ourselves, to this very day; I may think of you, and exclaim with Hamlet, 'he hath borne me on his back a thousand times.'"

"You will think still *more* of William, when I tell you, that for the last seven years I have received, every week of my life, services of real importance from him, as he has dedicated every hour of his leisure, in some way or other, to me and mine, without accepting from me even a cup of beer, or for one moment forgetting the respect due to me as his mistress."

"Has he!" cried Charles, brushing away the tears that sprung to his eyes, and seizing William's hand; "has he indeed done *this*? then mark me, girls, so long as my name is Charles Daventree, so long shall my first day's pay in every month be William Nettlethorp's—so, my brave fellow, you may pray for Charles's promotion."

"I should do that, sir," said the honest fellow, greatly affected, "if you hadn't——"

"I know you would, William; never mind what I say; I know you are heart of oak, and while there is a shilling in my locker, you shall never want sixpence: but, however, as I was a saying, the Frenchman hove to, girls——"

"But pray, Charles, do tell us the story in plain English," said Anne, "for we don't understand sea language."

"That's very odd; but it comes of your being girls, of course, so I must do my best for you."

The tale was again wonderful, and wonderfully admired; but the speaker's heart had not yet recovered the tone of tender feeling grateful benevolence had implanted there; and though not less happily, this evening was spent less merrily than the last.

When Charles was departing the next morning, he presented Edward with a fifty-pound bill, the fruits of his savings. His mother gave an approving smile to this present, which he felt to be a sweet reward for his exertions in this way, for it was indeed exertion in Charles to save any thing; but the lesson he had received on his last visit had held a lasting place in his memory, and his conduct had been proportionably improved, since his general humanity, benevolence, and charity, had suffered no diminution, though his prudence and care were considerably increased.

The incertitude of his absence, and the dangers incident to his profession, rendered parting with Charles a much severer task than it had been with Henry; but the dear youth seemed, at this period, to feel it so acutely himself, that each of his family endeavoured to suppress their sorrow for his sake, and he departed amid suppressed sighs and whispered blessings; but the moment he was out of hearing, the smothered grief broke out, and the whole house was filled with lamentation and mourning.

When this sorrow was subsided, Sophia and Louisa returned home; but Edward remained the two following days with his mother, who, during that time, perceived that the late bustle had greatly discomposed her uncle: though he did not seem sensible of it, she was now certain that he was rapidly declining; and though aware that, at his time of life, medical assistance was of little avail, yet being desirous of soothing life to its latest glimmerings, she desired Edward, on his return to Doncaster, to request the visit of a physician, of acknowledged skill and conciliating manners, concluding that his visits would be consolatory, if they were not beneficial.

CHAPTER VIII.

The opinion of the medical gentleman mentioned in our last only served to confirm the fears of Mrs. Daventree; and it soon became plain, that the decline into which Mr. Gardiner had fallen would be rapid in its effects; and as he was now principally confined to his own room, she determined not to deprive herself of the society of her children, at a time when she was so likely to require from their society some relief to her cares. It was delightful to her to find that Mr. Gardiner was fully aware of the great change he was about to experience, and that his hope was "full of glory." He frequently spoke of his past afflictions as the dispensations of a Merciful Father, and considered his present comforts as more than a compensation for them all—"How much happier am I under your tender care," said he, one day, "than my poor brother George could be! though loaded with the riches of Peru, his deathbed was not blest like mine."

"Are you certain that my uncle George is dead?" said Mrs. Daventree.

"I can have no doubt of it, my dear, for he was very little younger than me; and in such a climate, the only wonder is, that he should live so long as he did."

"Do you recollect how long it is since we heard of him?"

"I think it is somewhat between twelve and fourteen years; he was so regular a correspondent, for five-and-twenty years, that I am certain nothing less than death would have stopped his hand."

"I trust, however, he died under kind care; you know he had several children, of an age to understand *his* wants and *their* duties.

"True, Sophy; but as they never wrote to us any account of their father's death, it appears to me very dubious whether they practised what they understood."

"Consider, uncle, how very possible it is that their letters might miscarry; not hearing from us, they might conclude we were unfeeling and negligent towards *them*, and thus mutual coldness has been generated."

"Your account of this silence may be very just, at least it is very charitable, and I believe we ought to adopt it; relations and friends, between whom oceans roll, should be very careful not to harbour suspicions of each other's love, for many circumstances combine to render explanation, in most cases, impossible."

Mr. Bailey, the worthy clergyman whom we have already mentioned, was at this time a truly valuable friend and neighbour to Mrs. Daventree; he spent many hours every day in the sick chamber of her uncle, reading and praying with him at some times, at others conversing with him; he preserved the equanimity of his temper, and the suavity of his manners, uninjured; but there were times when his mind appeared to emanate beyond his usual powers, and to irradiate his conversation on religious subjects, as if a beam of divine glory was lent to enlighten his passage through the valley of the shadow of death. Silently and gently he sank beneath the stroke, "as favoured man, by touch ethereal slain," and when at length the debt of nature was paid, it was so entirely without a groan or struggle, that although Mrs. Daventree was pressing his hand between her own, she was not sensible of the moment of his departure.

Agreeable to his wishes, the remains of Mr. Gardiner were deposited in the churchyard of Conisbro'; his affectionate niece and her young family mourned over him as a parent; and although Mrs. Daventree saw much to be thankful for, in all the circumstances which had marked his closing life, and was truly grateful to Heaven for the part she had been permitted to act towards him, yet it was some time before she could shake off the depression on her spirits; so much had she been of late occupied by attending upon him, that she felt a kind of painful leisure upon her hands, which called for some object of great interest to employ it; and she had so long conversed only with one whose views and conversation were in heaven, that the affairs of earth seemed below her attention.

The final return of Edward from school recalled her mind to its usual routine of cares and duties: this sweet boy was now in his fifteenth year, and prolonged the promise of his infancy. It was the intention of Mrs. Daventree to keep him at home a few months, not only as affording herself a high treat, but because she thought that under Louisa's tuition he would greatly improve in his drawing, especially as the gentleman she now visited had promised some fine engravings of architectural designs, highly calculated to do him service. Soon after Christmas, Louisa returned to her family, and entered on this plan with her usual good humour and avidity; but it was, for some days, too visible to the penetrating eye

of a tender mother, that Louisa was sensible of the difference in her situation, and that though she submitted with good humour, yet it was not without effort: a short time, however, sufficed to restore her; and in her affection and gaiety, Mrs. Daventree recovered the usual tone of her spirits; and her younger sisters, who had found a great change during her absence, were made completely happy from her return.

As Henry attained his twenty-first year early in February, she invited a few of her neighbours to celebrate the day, and of course Sophia was called to join the party. The next morning she informed her mother that the family were now preparing to set out for London, and that she must bid her adieu for the four following months: she added, "that she did not mention the circumstance the day before, because she did not wish to cast a damp on the pleasure of the day."

Louisa gave a very audible sigh.

"My dear Louisa, I shall be back in May," said Sophia, affectionately.

"I am sure I do not wish you to come back so soon, Sophy; I wish you to have all the pleasure you can, and stay as long as you can."

"Then I fear, Louisa," said the mother, "you gave a sigh of envy to the journey, not sorrow for the traveller's absence."

"I confess, mother," said the ingenuous girl, blushing very deeply, "there was a little of both in my sigh. It is, to be sure, a charming thing to see London; Miss Barnet was always talking about London, and was so impatient to set off."

Mrs. Daventree, in her turn, sighed deeply.

"Mother, dear mother," said Louisa, tenderly, "surely, you do not believe, for a moment, that I shall not be very happy at home—*happier* a great deal than anything else; but when one has heard nothing else talked of but London, for three months together, and remembers, too, a many pleasant things, it is natural just to fancy one should like to see it."

"It is very natural, my love, and if it were in your mother's power, you should see it; but——"

"I am sure I would willingly resign my place to Louisa, for the time," said Sophia, "if you thought she would be accepted: what do you think, mother?"

"I think, my love, it would never do: who would trust so important a thing as the education of their children with a young woman who entered upon it for no other view than merely to look at London?"

Louisa, deeply abashed, hung down her head; but her mother restored her to peace, by saying—"Though I totally disapproved the plan thoughtlessly named by Sophia's love, not her judgment, yet I am well aware your desires, Louisa, are very natural; and I promise you, my child, that when it is in my power to treat you with this journey, I will not refuse, as we have many friends there who will be happy to receive you; but you know, my dear child, I must not neglect Edward's real interest, even to give you an innocent gratification."

"Dear, *dear* mother, I know you are ever kind and generous to us all," cried Louisa, sobbing; "pray, pray forgive me, that I have caused you one moment's uneasiness! it was very foolish in me!"

"We will say no more of it," said Mrs. Daventree, kissing her tenderly; then turning to Sophia, she gave her a few commissions and messages to friends: she then bade her adieu with an aching heart; for what mother can send a beautiful girl of nineteen into the world without a heartache, especially when she is in a dependent situation, endued with sensibility, and capable of feeling as well as attracting admiration? There was a steady propriety in Sophia above her years; and Mrs. Daventree certainly felt less alarm on her account than she would have done in sending Louisa; but yet she was aware, that if Sophia permitted her affections to be engaged, the wound would be more deep and lasting than in a girl of Louisa's description. Though aware that Sophia was worthy the love of any man, yet she knew that portionless, dependent girls, are rarely married for love, and even when they are, very seldom enjoy the happiness they may, perhaps, highly merit; the idol of an hasty passion too frequently becomes its victim, and she who was taken from passion is often retained from necessity, and treated with coldness and cruelty; should such be the fate of her gentle and innocent daughter, she felt as if she should be ready to say with the Patriarch, "of what use is my life unto me?"

This subject of inquietude having taken possession of her mind, as it should seem, for the first time, affected it more deeply than any present occasion warranted; and, conscious that she had no right to mistrust that Providence which had

hitherto been so singularly her guide, she exerted herself to shake off the languor that hung upon her spirits, and tried to look forward to the happier part of her prospects. She endeavoured to arrange her plans for future life, and busied her mind with considering what part of her future income should be devoted to Henry's use, and whether it would be advisable for her immediately to repair with him to London, or remain some time longer in the country, in order to save a little sum for Edward's future advantage.

One day, as she was pursuing these cogitations, with her eyes fixed on her youngest son, who was drawing on her work-table, with Louisa leaning over him, she perceived an elegant-looking man, about two-and-twenty in a shooting-jacket, enter the garden-door; she never recollected seeing him before, but she perceived, by the crimson glow on Louisa's face, that he was not unknown to her; but at the moment she was about to question her, William, opening the parlour door, announced, "Mr. Frederic Barnet."

Mrs. Daventree knew that Mr. and Mrs. Barnet had no son; that Miss Barnet, whom Louisa visited, was their niece; but she had never heard of any nephew: that this young gentleman was one, she could not, however, doubt, as he spoke of his uncle and sister in a manner that put her out of doubt; his manners were polite, respectful, but somewhat embarrassed; he presented a note from his sister to Louisa, and whilst she read it, offered the fruits of his sport to Mrs. Daventree, observing, "that the season was over, and the birds were scarcely worth acceptance."

Louisa presented the note to Mrs. Daventree; it was an invitation from the young lady and her aunt to spend a week with them, and a desire that she would signify to Frederic when they should send the carriage; and concluded with observing, that Mr. Barnet was gone to Bath.

"I understood," said Mrs. Daventree, "that Miss Barnet had been going to London."

"She had intended it fully, madam," replied Frederic; "but when my uncle was ordered to Bath, she very properly declined leaving Mrs. Barnet."

"But did not *you* go?" said Louisa, simply and eagerly.

"Yes, I set off the day after you left us, but I only staid about ten days; I found the town very dull, and as I could not employ myself better for some weeks, I came down again."

"Louisa, my dear, write a line to Miss Barnet, with proper acknowledgments for her kindness, but inform her I cannot possibly spare you."

Louisa gladly left the room, and the youth cast a look after her of such extreme chagrin, not unmixed with confusion, that Mrs. Daventree became extremely uneasy; it appeared plain to her that these young people were already lovers, though she believed, *unconscious* ones, for the efforts Louisa had made in conquering her first regrets could not have been so successful, if she had really been oppressed with a secret of so much importance, or had any reserves with a mother who had never used authority in such a way as to injure unbounded confidence. She saw plainly that Louisa had been the sole cause of Frederic Barnet's sudden return into the country; and she had no doubt but his supposed residence in London was the true cause of that emphatic sigh which had first alarmed her in Louisa; but still she trusted this unfortunate attachment might be crushed in time, without subjecting a young man, whose open, ingenuous countenance prepossessed her in his favour, to the anger of his uncle on one hand, or doom her lively Louisa to the sufferings of hopeless love and mortified ambition on the other; at all events, it was her duty to check the progress of the mischief.

When Frederic had departed, Louisa was silent and thoughtful; but the native sweetness of her temper, her habitual sense of duty, and perhaps some consciousness of propriety, in the determination of her mother, prevented her from displaying the slightest trait of anger at what she certainly, in various ways, must feel to be a bitter disappointment. It would be impossible for an absolute stranger not to love such a girl; how dear, then, must she be to her mother, and how anxious must that mother feel for her future peace!

Though Mrs. Daventree's reception of young Barnet had not been such as accorded either with his merit or her own general habits of polite hospitality, yet, in two days after, he called at her house, accompanied by his sister, who was a pleasing, artless girl, and to whom it was impossible for her to appear shy or constrained. They did not press improperly for Louisa's return, though they named it; and there was altogether an air of propriety in their conduct, which, while it endeared them, rendered Mrs. Daventree's path more difficult to pursue. These visits were repeated frequently, during the course of the following month; and as Mrs. Daventree could not escape them by any plea of absence, she was obliged

to use uncommon vigilance during the presence of the parties. At length they suddenly ceased; Mr. Barnet returned, and a hasty note from his niece informed Louisa that she was setting out for London, with her brother, the following morning. In the course of the next day, Mrs. Daventree received the following epistle:—

"MADAM,

"I honour your character, and I like your daughter Louisa very much; but I think it right to tell you, that Frederic Barnet has it not in his power to marry for seven years to come, he being educated for the bar. I therefore warn you against admitting him into your house; at the same time, I beg leave to repeat, that I hereby mean no possible disrespect to you or Louisa, whose conduct under my roof was equally sensible and modest, and whose welfare I consider in this advice.

"I am, madam,

"Your sincere friend and servant,

"BENJAMIN BARNET."

Mrs. Daventree had been accustomed to hear this gentleman, who was a man of large estate, great probity, but somewhat singular manners, generally called the "True Yorkshire squire;" she was therefore more inclined to esteem the manly honesty of his address, than arraign its deficiency in that delicacy which she felt to be her due; for as many persons of softer address might have nevertheless indirectly accused her of design, and her artless girl of forwardness, in a case of this nature, she felt it but just to believe that the squire thought her as honest as himself; and this was a species of praise more dear to her heart than a more refined approach would have been, under a different persuasion.

But in whatever point of view she considered this letter, it was a puzzling one to answer, for a person whose manners were, though gentle, yet dignified, and who, though unwilling to take offence, was yet capable of resenting insult. Whilst Mrs. Daventree, with the pen in her hand, and the letter laid open before her, was musing on the subject, the writer himself was announced, and she was of course spared the trouble.

"I have felt uneasy, madam," said Mr. Barnet, "ever since I wrote that letter; for though I am certain my meaning is good, yet, as Mrs. Barnet says, my manners are blunt, and I am apt to wound where I mean to serve; I therefore thought it best to follow my own letter, and explain to you my reasons for writing."

Mrs. Daventree bowed, and Mr. Barnet continued.

"This nephew of mine, madam, is my younger brother's son, who died about eight years ago, leaving him and his sister with no other provision than a well-furnished house and their mother's jointure, which was handsome; he was in the law, and got a great deal of money; his wife was a dashing town lady, and spent it—poor Frederic! he deserved a better!"

Mr. Barnet here drew his hand over his eyes, and betrayed the tenderness of a feeling heart, under a somewhat harsh exterior: after a stout hem or two, he rallied his spirits, and proceeded.

"Well, ma'am, when he was gone, I thought my sister-in-law would be checked, both by affection and circumstances, in her career of dissipation; and as she was blest with two of the most promising children in the world, she would consider, at length, what was her duty towards them; besides, as her expenses would be necessarily considerably curtailed, I thought she would have a handsome excuse for drawing in, and that is a great matter with people who live *in* the world, and *for* the world: but all my hopes were deceived; in less than six months she was in the old way again, and at the end of four years had become considerably involved in debt. I took the advantage, when I settled her affairs, of begging her daughter, for I could not bear to see the dear child ruined, as she must be by living with such a woman; and for that matter, the precious present was ceded with but little difficulty, for dissipation destroys affection."

Mrs. Daventree sighed, and shook her head.

"Ay, madam, I'm sure you think as I do, though you mayn't choose to say as much. I had, however, one comfort in my journey; I found my nephew a fine, steady, sensible boy, and possessed with a feeling of so much proper shame for his mother's errors, and such lively regard for his father's memory, that I felt persuaded he would avoid the example of one parent, and emulate the ability and integrity of the other: I therefore removed him from Westminster, placed him with an eminent solicitor, where he remained till he became of age, when, for the first time, he came down to spend some time with me and his sister, for I thought it was right that he should see the situation and learn the habits of that place where, I

trust, he will end his days.

"Now, ma'am, you must know, I think it right that young men should, to a certain degree, be independent; and as poor Frederic was not likely to get his bread at the bar on this side thirty, and ought not, with my estate in view, to be left to mean shifts and contrivances, I wrote to his mother, saying, "if she would give him three hundred a-year out of her jointure of one thousand, I would present him with five thousand pounds, which I had in the funds;" and as I had so lately made her a handsome present, set her affairs strait in the world, and took both her children off her hands, I thought she would most gladly have assented to this."

"No doubt she would do so most gratefully."

"No such thing! not she, indeed—she said for answer, that 'what she brought she had a right to spend; that I might have known by experience she was unable to support her children out of her jointure, and that she could not advance a shilling for Frederic's expenses;' yet, such was her maternal tenderness, that she would be glad to receive him at her house, until such time as he was enabled to pay her for his board, free of expense."

"Is that possible?" exclaimed Mrs. Daventree.

"I'll shew you the letter, ma'am; but, dear heart! this is not the worst part of my story. I gave Frederic my share of the bargain, for which the dear boy was very grateful—hem—I call him *dear*, ma'am, because—because I can't help it, I believe; but I am very angry with him, for all that. Now you shall hear how he served me.

"I went to London the following winter, and found him doing as well as I could expect, and his mother apparently as usual; he lived with her, and was very kind and attentive to her, which was the more proper, as she was evidently in very delicate health.

"As I was one day congratulating myself, in the company of an old friend, on his virtues, I observed he looked very grave, and, far from joining in my praises, only shook his head: alarmed with this, I insisted on knowing the cause, and he replied, that he did not know my nephew personally, but had heard his talents highly spoken of, and only lamented that a youth, of whose disposition I had thought so highly, should be subject to a vice which would tarnish and render nugatory all his other virtues—he meant the vice of gaming.

"Alarmed and angry, for you see, ma'am, I am rather warm when I am vexed, I said it was a lie; but he not only asserted the fact, but mentioned the particular time when Frederic sold out of the funds, to a considerable amount, for the express purpose of liquidating a debt of this description.

"I flew back to his chambers, lamenting all the way that he was too old and big to be handsomely caned; but when I entered, I was cooled in a moment, for he was deeply engaged in study, and the air he wore was so diametrically opposed to that of the thoughtless prodigal, or the avaricious gamester, that I knew not what to think: impatient to convince myself the whole charge was false, I said—'Frederic, have you sold out of the funds lately?'"

"I have, sir," said he, his face glowing like fire.

"And you did it to pay a gaming debt?"

"I did, sir."

"You *did*, you wicked dog! then, sir, I would have you to know that Thornborough Park shall never be thrown away by a dice-box, that's all."

"God forbid that it ever should! you could not feel a greater horror at seeing the abode of your ancestors so disposed of than I do."

"Oh, then you repent, sirrah! how well a man can speak when the mischief is done!—but come, Frederic, tell me how this affair was; I cannot believe you are a gambler—tell me how it was."

"Pardon me, sir, I cannot tell you."

"Then I will ask your mother; I fear some of her dashing connexions led you to this."

"Do not ask *her*, sir, I entreat you."

"I am *determined* to know."

"The look of extreme anguish visible in Frederic's face at this moment at once opened my eyes; and by dint of scolding, and I believe crying, or something very like it, I at length got him to confess, that he had paid above two thousand pounds for his mother's gaming debts, which he had tacitly permitted to be laid to his account."

"'Surely,' cried he, 'it was better that the world should believe me thoughtless and prodigal, than that a woman at my mother's age—the mother of children—the widow of so worthy a man—should fall into such a temptation.'"

Mrs. Daventree wept in silent sympathy and admiration; and the old gentleman wept, or, as he said, *very nearly* wept with her.

"Ay, madam, I see you love my boy, and Louisa must love him too—how can she help it? but that's nothing to the purpose: I said to him then, says I, 'Frederic, what's done cannot be undone; I shall not suffer you to be a loser, but what I give you now shall be in the way of income; you are a good fellow—will do well in time, I doubt not; and all you have to mind is to keep off all thoughts of matrimony till you are turned thirty; this is my advice, and I expect you'll take it;' so he promised he would, for he saw clearly enough that I meant, in the first place—you can't afford to keep a wife till then; and in the second—don't stumble on such a one as your father did before you."

"The advice was certainly very good, sir."

"To be sure it was, ma'am; young men in professions can't afford to marry: now there's your son, the doctor, as fine a young fellow as the sun shines on, why, he mustn't marry these twenty years. I knew you would see the case to be exactly similar."

"Not exactly, Mr. Barnet, for my poor boy has no longer any rich uncles: but this is nothing to the purpose; I can readily see the inequality of the connexion you fear, and am perfectly willing to acquiesce in your wishes, by refusing Mr. Frederic Barnet any opportunity of seeing Louisa. I am sorry my poor girl has been the means of creating you any uneasiness, but can answer for her determination of never intruding into any situation where she is not wished for."

"Nay, now, madam, do not mistake me; I only say Frederic must not marry *soon*; and I expect of him that he shall prove at least an *intention* of fulfilling the promise he made to me: nor do I allege your daughter's want of fortune as an obstacle; for where two people pull one way, a small income may be sufficient for happiness, and my brother's twenty thousand pounder has proved too bad a bargain to make me wish for the same in his son's case; but I say this, some years must pass over their heads first; Louisa is young and lively; but excellent as her education has been, when she gets into the gay world, and has a mother-in-law who is willing to lead her astray, who can tell what may happen?"

"Very true, sir; she is much too young for any such trial; happily our fears on that head are exactly similar, and you could not fear such a circumstance more than I do; but I believe we may both be easy, for I find your nephew has not made any offer to Louisa."

"Offer! no, madam, I know he hasn't, for he told me so himself, and he always speaks truth; but that is nothing to the purpose; he keeps looking at her, and hankering after her—never looks happy out of her presence, and is studying all day long how to go into it; this is what I call making love the most effectual way, and I should despise the man who, after such a course of conduct, should dare to fly from the promise of his actions, for surely they are more to be relied on than words; and this, from all I can learn, was Frederic's conduct all the while I was at Bath; he did not *mean* to do wrong, but he certainly did do it, and so I told him."

"I am sorry the young gentleman awoke your anger for an unintentional offence."

"So am I; and to tell you the truth, madam, I have not been happy since I parted with him, especially as I know he will find his mother very ill, and that will grieve him; for though she is little worth, yet she is his *mother*."

"What is the matter with her?"

"A kind of decline, brought on by racketting, to which may be added my conduct towards her."

"Your conduct, sir!"

"Yes, madam; when I found how she had imposed on Frederic's generosity, I made her so ashamed of her folly, that she entered into an agreement never to hazard her money beyond a certain sum; and most probably this has preyed on her spirits, though it has certainly been the means of preserving her from total ruin."

After taking a sandwich, Mr. Barnet now rose to depart; but he appeared very loth to go; and on Louisa entering to pay her respects to him, the faded rose on her cheek (for faded it was, when her first blush had subsided) seemed to affect him.—"I think," said he, tenderly, "this good girl of ours looks better at Thornborough Park than at Conisbro'."

"Louisa has a headache to-day; she is otherwise perfectly well, sir."

"Mrs. Barnet and me are very lonely, now the young ones are gone; I wish you would allow her to return with me; there can be no danger of any evil arising from it *now*, you know."

"I cannot think so, sir: Thornborough is a very improper residence, on various accounts; it is necessary for my children to strengthen their minds, not enervate them."

"I doubt, with all your humility, Mrs. Daventree, you are too proud for us."

"Not proud, but prudent, Mr. Barnet, and anxious to preserve the peace of my children."

"Well, well, I will say no more at present, except that, whenever you, or any of yours, want a friend, Benjamin Barnet is ready and willing to be that friend; and that if my nephew had been situated as young Darlington is, I would have talked to you in a different manner; you would have seen then that it was the propriety of the thing, and not the paltry consideration of fortune that biassed me. Darlington is as rich again as I am, young as he is; I am not covetous, think as you please; what I say is the *truth*."

Mr. Barnet was walking down the garden as he spoke, and his latter sentences seemed rather spoken to himself than any one else; yet as he looked towards Mrs. Daventree, as if he expected some notice to be taken of them, not knowing what else to say, she merely answered—"I do not know Mr. Darlington, except by name, as the partner of Mr. W——."

"Perhaps *not*," said Mr. Barnet, with a knowing look, "but your daughter Sophia *does*."

Mrs. Daventree started. "Sophia!" exclaimed she.

"Ay, Sophia; he half lives at the Hall; you might have seen him a hundred times, if you did not shut yourself up so—he is worth any body's seeing, that's for certain, and any body's knowing too; but I don't quite like his way of treating your daughter; I go often, and, though I say it, I don't want penetration—I see he loves, and yet does not speak; now why doesn't he? fortune is nothing to him, and as to family, why hers is the best; so, as I say, why doesn't he speak? she, poor innocent, cannot, you know."

Mr. Barnet got into his carriage as he spoke, and drove off, leaving Mrs. Daventree standing precisely where he left her, transfixed with astonishment and a multitude of new and overwhelming anxieties; she would have given the world, at this moment, that she had never suffered either of her children to quit the maternal roof, for she foresaw no other fate opened to them, from their change of scene, but the mortifications of poverty, and the repinings of hopeless attachment. She reviewed many little circumstances in the conduct of Sophia, which bespoke a heart ill at ease; and in her eagerness to exchange situations with Louisa, perceived an aversion to leave the country where one resided whose insidious attentions had probably made the "little spot of earth he stood upon" more dear to her than all the fascinations of the metropolis.

While she was thus revolving the fate of her daughters, poor Louisa, who wished, yet dreaded to know the purport of Mr. Barnet's late visit, had drawn close up to her, and was looking earnestly in her face, but remained, like her mother, silent.

They were roused from their reverie by the trampling of horses' feet, which they considered to be Mr. Barnet's return; but on looking up, beheld a carriage of a very different description from the old family coach of their late visitant; it was a splendid curriole, of the newest fashion, drawn by four beautiful grey horses, whose high spirit was gracefully curbed by a handsome man of six-and-twenty, who, immediately alighting, approached the ladies.

"Mr. Darlington, mamma," said Louisa; and she said it with that unconstrained ease and politeness, which in one instant

proved to the mother how differently she was affected when the sportsman, unattended, had entered her little garden.

Mr. Darlington, accosting Mrs. Daventree with great respect, said, "he had received a letter from his friend, Mr. W——, enclosing one for her, written, he believed, by Miss Daventree; and as he understood the delivery of it immediately was of importance, he lost no time in conveying it to her himself."

The arrival of this gentleman, at the very moment when he was occupying her thoughts, the splendour of his equipage, the circumstance of his mentioning her daughter's name with an accent that marked peculiarity of sentiment concerning her, altogether surprised and overwhelmed Mrs. Daventree so much, that she was scarcely able to make her acknowledgments for his civility articulate: with the most delicate attention to her present embarrassment, he withdrew, but not till he had assured Louisa of his desire to be serviceable to her mother, should the letter, as he apprehended, be found to contain business of importance.

CHAPTER IX.

Mrs. Daventree returned into her parlour, and sitting down with the letter still unopened in her hand, endeavoured to arrange her thoughts, or rather to compose them, by devoting herself and all her concerns to their Almighty disposer. She had no doubt but the business alluded to in Sophia's dispatch was the receipt of those remittances which would nearly, perhaps wholly, restore her income; and she thanked her heavenly Father for having so long sustained her without it. Louisa, hurt at witnessing the absence of her mother's mind, recalled her attention to the letter, in which, with new emotions of interest and astonishment, she read as follows:—

"MY DEAR MOTHER,

"Our excellent friend, Mr. Soane, has this moment called upon me, with the *Morning Post* in his hand, from which I copy the following advertisement:—

"Edward Gardiner, Esq., late of Friday-street and Red Lion-square, or his nearest male heir, is desired to call at Messrs. Blagrove and Walters, Chancery-lane, where he will hear of something greatly to his advantage."

"Before Mr. Soane brought this for my inspection, he kindly called at the attornies' office here mentioned, and there learnt that by the will of the last surviving son of your uncle, George Gardiner, of Rio Janeiro, a very large property descends to our dear Henry. Whilst *I* write to *you*, my dear Mrs. W — is writing to my brother, desiring him to lose no time in making his claims.

"Mr. Soane requests that you will give him the meeting with all your family; so dear Edward will find himself in the Museum again, before he expected.

"This delightful news does not come single, for Mr. Sadler informs me, that in consequence of our dear uncle's directions, sufficient produce has been obtained from various debtors, not only to defray the remaining claims, but leave a considerable surplus. I intended to have kept this a secret, until the money was actually in your power; but I mention it now, in order that you may have no doubts as to the propriety of bringing all your family to London. In the joyful expectation of seeing you, and with best love to all the circle,

"I remain,

"Your truly affectionate

"SOPHIA."

This letter was enclosed in another sheet, and in the envelope was written with a pencil, in a hurried hand—

"Pray come, dear mother; since I wrote the enclosed, a letter has been given me, of the last importance to your poor Sophy; never was there a period of her life in which your presence was of so much moment, or so very precious to her heart."

"God of Mercy, I thank thee!" cried the widow, as with streaming eyes she looked to heaven; and, unable to speak, held out the letter to Louisa, who kissed it a thousand times.

Such was the perfect love and good-will every branch of this united family felt towards each other, that Henry's welfare was as sincerely welcomed and as much appreciated by each, as it could be by the individual possessor; mutual congratulations passed from eye to eye and lip to lip, in all the wild confusion of unexpected joy, chastened by devout gratitude.

At this time the activity of Louisa was of singular benefit to her mother; she sent a messenger for the carriages, packed the clothes, procured the cash, and sought to spare her mother every exertion, being fearful that the circumstances and the journey might be too much for her: at length every person appeared ready, every thing in order but herself.

"My good girl," said the mother, "you cannot go in that slight gown."

"*I*, mother—I will stay and take care of the house; you know I can do no good in London—indeed, I believe I am better in the country," added she, blushing, whilst her eyes filled with tears.

"No, my Louisa," said the approving parent, who comprehended at once the strength of her mind, and the delicacy of her feelings, "you are not better in the country, for the resolution you evince proves you equal to go anywhere, and sustain any trial you may be liable to meet with; go with your family, my dear girl, and in the happiness of those you love, receive your own."

Thus encouraged and praised by her mother, Louisa was quickly equipped, and the whole family left their rural abode with a celerity that astonished their neighbours, almost as much as its cause had surprised and delighted themselves.

Late on the evening of the following day, Mrs. Daventree entered the house of her estimable friend, and was received by him and his lady with every mark of sincere regard and lively sympathy; but many remembrances pressed on her heart and flowed from her eyes, and she was obliged early to retire.

On opening her eyes in the morning, Mrs. Daventree perceived her sweet Sophia sitting by the side of her bed, watching her slumbers; the moment she saw her mother awake, she threw her arms around her, and in broken accents congratulated herself on her arrival.

"But why, Sophia, do you want me so very, *very* much, at this particular time?"

"I have a letter to shew you, mother."

"From Mr. Darlington, hey, Sophy?"

"Yes, mother, it is; but how could you know?"

"Oh, I have secret intelligence; therefore, to spare your confusion, I shall inform you that, in his letter, he makes my poor girl an offer of his hand and fortune."

"Yes, indeed he does, mother," cried the blushing girl, hiding her face in her mother's bosom.

"And this offer is very offensive to Sophy, for she has seen a great deal of him, and thinks him a very disagreeable, officious, impertinent, obtrusive man."

"My de—ear mother!" cried Sophia, drawing up her head slowly from her mother's shoulder, and gazing with astonishment in her face.

"My de—ear daughter, I perceive you have a decided predilection in favour of this generous man, who, I find, has tried you so long, and knows you so well, that I trust he will watch with tenderness over the jewel he has thus distinguished; I therefore trust you will be happy with him, and the high character I have long heard of him leaves me no room to doubt it: write to him, my child, with that simplicity and openness which becomes your character, not forgetful of that modest dignity which is the property of every virtuous woman: leave me now, my child, that I may, unrestrained, thank God for the multiplied mercies he is showering around me."

The greater part of this day the sisters were closeted together; whilst the mother received the kind condolences of some friends, and the congratulations of others: in the course of the evening, some who were strangers to her looked in, and as she had by no means recovered the fatigue of her journey, she was preparing to depart, when her attention was arrested by a lady saying to Mrs. Soane, in a kind of half-whisper—"So poor Mrs. Barnet is dead: she went very suddenly at last."

"So she must indeed, for it is only three days since I saw her fitting on caps at Mrs. Green's, the milliner; to be sure she looked very ill, and had scarcely any breath left."

"Well, well," returned the first speaker, "'tis quite a release for her children, at least, for she had scarcely suffered her daughter to lie down an hour since she came out of the country, nor Frederic neither: by the way, do you know that young man? he is the most handsome, elegant creature—quite a jewel of a man! I shouldn't wonder if he was to marry a woman of the first rank."

"Nor I, for his family is very ancient; he is heir to a fine estate, and his mother's jointure will remove the depression under which he has hitherto laboured."

Mrs. Daventree perceived, from the various changes in poor Louisa's countenance, that it was high time for them to retire; therefore, pleading the fatigues of the preceding night, they withdrew together.

CHAPTER X.

The following morning brought Henry to his mother, and as soon as the first salutations of welcome were over, and the happy party had breakfasted, their hospitable entertainer, with all the impatience of warm and benevolent friendship, ushered into their presence the professional gentleman, whose information was of so much importance to them all.

This gentleman briefly recapitulated the contents of the will in question; it was short, and clearly pointed out Henry as the sole possessor of the property, "which," Mr. Blagrove added, "as far as it had been brought forward, appeared to consist of seventy thousand pounds in the English funds, forty thousand in dollars, ingots, and other produce, now landed from Rio Janeiro, besides some debts due in both countries, whose value was not ascertained."

A silence of some minutes followed this declaration, and Henry, covering his face with his hands, was perfectly absorbed in the great change, and the extensive duties thus suddenly imposed upon him. This silence was first broken by Edward, who, creeping up to his brother, gently withdrew his hand from his face, in which, gazing with an affectionate smile, he said—"Dear Henry, I am exceedingly glad you are so rich—so glad, that I don't know how to speak; but I hope you will let me build *you* a beautiful Etruscan villa, and my mother an Italian cottage."

"Bravo, my little fellow!" exclaimed Mr. Soane; "this is better than even 'feeling the ruling passion strong in death,' for it sheds the lustre of its enthusiasm over the sweetest moments of existence."

"I cannot tell you, my dear boy, what sort of a villa you shall build for *me*," said Henry, after a pause, "but I *can* tell you your means of building for yourself. Edward, to you and to each of my brothers and sisters, I give ten thousand pounds, to be, from this day, appropriated to their use, from the money already funded; and I entreat you, Mr. Blagrove, to take professionally the charge of this affair; but you, my mother—what have I that I can offer you?"

"Nothing!" exclaimed their mutual friend, jestingly, though a tear trembled in his eye; "nothing, I'll answer for it; for the possession of both Indies could neither purchase her treasures, nor increase them."

This "feast of feeling," this rich reward of all her anxieties and all her sacrifices, was almost too much for Mrs. Daventree to support; taking the ready arm of Sophia, she left the room, while the delighted family, crowding round Henry, expressed less their thanks than their congratulations, which their worthy and elegant friends partook with equal zest, and almost similar emotion.

Something more than a week had passed, when Mrs. Daventree was called from her joyful contemplations, by the receipt of a letter with a black seal; as, however, it was from Yorkshire, she felt less alarmed, conscious that if Charles was safe, her whole world was around her; on opening it, she read as follows:—

"MADAM,

"I have just been to your house, and, to my great surprise, found you were gone to London—a circumstance for which I am by no means sorry, though I was disappointed at first, and a little vexed.

"My sister-in-law is dead, much sooner than I foresaw; of course my nephew is in a very different situation, and has my leave for paying his addresses to your daughter Louisa, and marrying at a proper time. I write to him by this day's post, telling him where you are to be found; and I hope you will not look shy at the boy, or any thing of that kind; for, to tell you the truth, I feel rather impatient about this affair, being afraid such a fine girl should slip our fingers in London.

"I am, madam,

"Your sincere friend,

"And faithful servant,

"BENJAMIN BARNET."

On receiving this letter, Mrs. Daventree placed it in the hands of her eldest son, and explained, at the same time, the situation of both his sisters.

Henry could not fail to feel proud of the virtues and attractions of two so very dear to him, and observed, with delight, that their superior merit had surmounted those obstacles usually ascribed to poverty; but the consciousness of having

removed this evil also was dear to his generous heart—he retraced, with equal pride and gratitude, every proof of attachment he had received from them, from his very childhood, and insisted upon it, that the sacrifices they had so frequently made of their comforts were much more valuable than the share they had received from him of that abundance with which Providence had now blessed him.

Mrs. Daventree was not inclined to controvert a fact which proved the goodness of all their dispositions, but she turned the conversation to the future prospects of her daughters in marriage: with the expected union of her eldest daughter, she felt unmixed satisfaction; for although her acquaintance with Mr. Darlington was very slight, yet his general character was well known to her, as a man of probity, strict morality, and attention to religious duties—as the son of pious parents, whom he had not long before mourned over with the truest affection. To these general points of character she knew that Sophia had been enabled to add a thorough knowledge of his temper, taste, and opinions, which, although points of less importance, became essential in all her near connexions; and she was well aware that her daughter Sophia possessed that penetration and discrimination necessary for an investigation of so much consequence to her own happiness, and the fulfilment of her duties.

But there was something in Mr. Barnet's letter, however well meant, which again jarred on her feelings; to render the death of a widowed parent the medium of a son's happiness, had something shocking in it to a mind like hers, especially in the precipitation evinced by Mr. Barnet: this she expressed to Henry.

"My dear mother," replied the son, "I trust you will not think me deficient in a proper sense of duty, when I say, that although I think with you, that Mr. Barnet's blunt letter is certainly rather honest than delicate, yet I cannot help feeling that the late Mrs. Barnet has just as much respect paid to her in this affair as she had a right to expect; that 'which she has sown she may expect to reap;' a great poet has said—

*'Mark, how the world its votaries rewards;
A youth of folly, an old age of cards:'—*

and although the maternal tie is in its own nature the most strong and tender the human heart knows, yet it requires mutual duties and virtues to increase and support it; and as a profligate, undutiful child throws himself out of the pale of parental tenderness, so a dissipated, selfish, unfeeling mother absolves her child from affection in life and regret in death: to a certain degree we *must* love our parents, but where love exists without esteem, it never greatly influences our conduct, when the object so loved no longer acts upon our senses."

"You may be right, Henry, in your opinions, but you are rather too severe in your judgment."

"If I am severe in judging of others, my dear mother, it arises from the high sense I entertain of my own peculiar happiness: had my model of a *good* mother been less perfect, I should have expected less from mothers in general: and notwithstanding what I have said, I assure you I feel a very particular desire to become acquainted with young Barnet, on account of his affectionate attention to that very mother whose conduct I so truly condemn; for although I have said that the faults of a parent, in my opinion, absolve a child from *affection* to a considerable degree, yet I did not say they absolved him from *duty*; and if to duteous attentions he adds tenderness, notwithstanding such faults, his character rises above the common standard of humanity; if Frederic, pursuant to his uncle's advice, and his own desires, should visit us *soon*, in order to push his success with Louisa, I shall not blame him, because I feel that I might do it in his case; but if his delicacy for his mother's memory prevents him, I shall certainly honour him more and love him better."

This was precisely Mrs. Daventree's own sense of the subject; and their mutual wishes were fulfilled, as Frederic did not appear to profit by the consent of his uncle, who finding that to be the case, became as impatient for the fulfilment of his wishes, in the second point of view, as he had been on the first; and as he was likewise very desirous of bringing down his niece, for whom he had a truly parental regard, he set out hastily for London, under an impression that his presence would remove all difficulties. On arriving in town, he was astonished to hear the great change which had taken place in the affairs of Mrs. Daventree and her family; and although, as he observed, "a good fortune mended a good wife, and a pretty girl with ten thousand pounds was better worth having than beauty and beggary," yet still he was very anxious to impress upon Mrs. Daventree's mind that self-evident fact, that he was an entire stranger to the change in Louisa's circumstances when he wrote the letter which contained his consent, and for this purpose he paid her a very early visit.

Mrs. Daventree received him with great pleasure, for she had reasoned herself out of those sensations which shrunk from

the plainness of his manners; and when he assured her, again and again, that "he loved Louisa for her *own* sake," she assured him, with so much frankness, of her entire belief in his assertion, that the old gentleman was quite delighted, and declared, that whenever the wedding took place, he would double Louisa's fortune in her settlement.

At this time the widow was concluding a purchase she had made of a beautiful house and garden at Hampstead, where she intended to settle with her younger children; she mentioned it to the good 'squire, who instantly recommended her to do nothing without the advice of his nephew, whom he recommended to her professionally, adding—"I will send him to you, madam, immediately."

Mrs. Daventree could not forbear smiling as she assented, and soon after Frederic appeared: the strict propriety of his manners was an echo to the modest forbearance of his preceding conduct; and, young as he was, she saw that he would be a husband well calculated for her Louisa, whose innocence and modesty were yet accompanied by a liveliness and occasional volatility, which called for the hand of affectionate restraint, but were ever under its most easy guidance; and though she might need a rein, a silken thread, in a wise hand, would be found a sufficient curb.

In contemplating the character of this young man, as well as those of her own children, Mrs. Daventree became more and more convinced, that affliction is a medicine to the mind of sovereign efficacy; and that the lessons of wisdom, in early life, are best inculcated by some degree of privation and restraint, which it is difficult to inflict in the hour of abundance and prosperity, however necessary; and which, therefore, when given by our heavenly Father, in the infliction of poverty or sickness, may be considered as among the greatest mercies he bestows; for "misfortunes thus given are blessings in disguise."

The rides and walks to and from Hampstead could not fail of producing interviews of the most interesting nature to the young people, who were generally accompanied by Emily Barnet, who having ever been fondly attached to Louisa, saw with delight the progress of her brother's love affair, and was not a little mortified when her uncle likewise expressed his full satisfaction that he had set every thing on a proper footing, and should therefore return into the country immediately. She was, however, somewhat consoled on learning that Mrs. Daventree had accepted the offer he made her, of a seat in the coach, in order that she might go down and make a final settlement of her affairs in Yorkshire, as she had imbibed for that lady the sincerest affection, which was warmly returned; for although Mrs. Daventree loved her family with a most unexampled tenderness, she was not one of those kind of mothers who never see merit in any besides their own offspring; her kind and benevolent spirit, her gentle sympathizing heart, and discriminating mind, ever loved and appreciated virtue and excellence, wherever they were presented to her eye, and in this amiable orphan she felt no common interest.

Though ever gratified by the attentions of her children, yet when, upon her preparations for departure, Henry declared his intention of attending her into Yorkshire, she opposed his design, as being useless to her, and troublesome to himself.

Mr. Barnet, however, agreed with him that it was his duty to do so, and added, "that the fourth seat in his carriage was vacant, and could not be better filled than by the doctor, who would take care of them all;" and added, "if the parson can't find him a bed at Conisbro', he can go home with us, you know; 'tis but seven miles, you know."

Mrs. Daventree knew also, that if he were seven miles distant, he would be of little use to her; but as she knew there was but small occasion for his services, and valued the kindness of his company far above its utility, she assented to this arrangement; and accordingly they parted at Conisbro'.

Martha, who had been left in charge of the house, was overpowered with joy at the sight of her mistress; but when she perceived the coach drive forward without leaving any of the young family, she felt very much surprised, and almost shocked—"Ah, madam," said she, "I see you may say with poor Naomi, 'I went out full, but I return empty,' for none of your children are with you—more's the pity!"

"True, Martha; and if I had indeed lost any of my darlings, the words would have been most painfully applicable; but I thank God I have left them all well, and my present situation enables me to say, in other respects, 'I went out empty, but I return full.'"

"May God be thanked for it!" cried the poor woman, melting into tears of joy; "many a heart in this parish will rejoice at your luck, madam."

"My first care," returned her mistress, "is to make you easy, Martha; you have lived with me now more than seven years,

have always been my faithful servant, and many times exerted yourself far beyond my desires, and your own strength; I now offer you either an easy service in my family, or an annuity of thirty pounds a-year in your own country—which do you prefer?"

"Why, madam, 'tis a long way to be sure; but if it were twice as far, I should say, if it were proper, out of the same book, 'whither thou goest, thither will I go also,' for you have not only been a good mistress to me, in all worldly things, but you have so instructed me, and comforted me in heavenly things, that as I have lived with you, so I desire to die with you."

The good clergyman, his wife, and daughter, broke in upon their invaluable neighbour, with congratulations on her return, which were extended when they learnt the accession of fortune enjoyed by her family. When they had listened to her recital of such facts as she thought proper to communicate, the good man, in his turn, began to speak of *his* family; but by the blushes which arose to his daughter's cheek, the tale was already told, for Mrs. Daventree had long known that a tender connexion subsisted between her and a very worthy man, whose circumstances alone had prevented him from marrying her. The good man now informed his happy auditor, that the impediment was in a great measure removed, as the suitor had been put in possession of a neighbouring curacy, which, together with a little which he would spare from his own income, would enable people so bounded in their wishes to live contentedly, till something better should occur; so that, in the course of a year, when he had looked out for a house, and put them a few necessaries into it, they should be married.

"I always thought Mr. Allenson not only a very worthy, but a very clever man," returned Mrs. Daventree; "and as your daughter is a very active young woman, and of a most excellent temper, I think them particularly calculated for the education and care of young people—has this scheme never struck you, my friends? It could not fail to answer in a place so eminently beautiful and healthy as this; I think I could insure the young couple six pupils from my own acquaintance."

"Ay, my good friend, we have all thought of that many a time; but that must be the work of *time*; a house must be got, with a garden and paddock; furniture be bought: the scheme is good, but the means—the *means* is the thing."

"Behold them here, my dear friends: this house has accommodated seven children; their little beds are all neat and in order, the garden and the paddock are precisely to your wishes, and the rent is too easy to be objectionable; the drawings are my children's, and I shall remove *them*; the wine I must transfer to the parsonage, in lieu of the good elderberry I have so often drank there; but allow every thing else as it stands to be my wedding present to your daughter, a small proof of my love and gratitude to those who have so often soothed my sorrows, and administered to my comforts, both in the way of friendship and duty."

Astonishment and delight for some minutes sealed the lips of her auditors, but a burst of grateful tears at once affected the mother and daughter, who involuntarily rushed into each other's arms; while the good man, recovering his speech, accepted the offer with that frank and generous thankfulness which bespoke him equally willing to accept or confer obligation. Whilst he was yet speaking, Mr. Allenson, the lover, having heard at the parsonage of Mrs. Daventree's arrival, stepped down to her house, to welcome her return, and became, in his turn, a surprised and delighted guest; and the happy party remained with their benefactress till midnight, an hour that had rarely beheld them awake since the christening of this darling daughter.

As Mrs. Daventree had little farther to do at Conisbro', save to distribute proofs of her bounty amongst those who had hitherto participated her care and (as far as she had been able) her benevolence, and found herself extremely lonely in the house where she was wont to be surrounded by her children, she soon informed her son that she was ready to return to town, where her daughters were still under the care of Mrs. Soane; to her surprise, instead of Henry in person, she was answered by the arrival of Mr. Barnet's carriage, and a pressing invitation to spend a few days with the family at the Park, and set out from thence to London.

Though Mrs. Daventree would certainly have preferred going direct to her daughters, who were impatient for her return, yet when she considered the near affinity likely to subsist between herself and this worthy family, she did not feel at liberty to decline this invitation, and therefore bade a hasty adieu to her friends at Conisbro', a place she could not quit without some regret, as it was endeared to her as the scene where the affections of her dear family had been proved, and their virtues had unfolded—where those blossoms had been cherished, whose fruit was now ripening in a warmer but not more genial climate.

When Mrs. Daventree arrived at the Park, she was greeted by Mrs. Barnet with all the affection of a sister, for this good lady was very partial to Louisa, and had long wished to see her the wife of Frederic; and she expatiated with so much pleasure on the virtuous dispositions of this couple, and the promise of happiness they enjoyed, that Mrs. Daventree found the time pass away too delightfully to wish its abridgment, notwithstanding her desire of being in London, and her sense of her children's wishes.

One day, as the two ladies were discoursing as usual on these beloved objects of their cares, the 'squire broke in upon them, and with his usual abruptness said—"What, here you are! both sitting preach, preach, about those who want none of your care, because they're already provided for, and taking no notice at all what becomes of those who do want it—where's Emily and the doctor, hey?"

"I don't know," was the answer of one lady.

"I *rather* think they are walking in the shrubbery," said the other.

"*Rather think!—don't know!* pretty guardians, truly, to a girl of eighteen, rambling about with a handsome young fellow, not two-and-twenty! very pretty work you make of it, upon my word!—if this isn't ruination, I don't know what is: 'tis just Frederic's affair over again—walking in the shrubbery to-day, riding in the park yesterday, reading in the morning, sketching at noon, and singing at night.—Pray what do all these things lead to, hey? answer me that, ladies, answer me that?"

"Sir," said Mrs. Daventree, rising in confusion, "I trust the propriety of my son's conduct, and the purity of his principles, will——"

"Principles—propriety—purity! stuff and nonsense! will they keep my girl from falling in love with him, hey? will they make him look any worse in her eyes; answer me *that*, Mrs. Daventree?"

"I should hope not, sir; but really, sir, you seem to me to have formed very unnecessary apprehensions in this case."

"I ask pardon, madam; I'm a plain man, but it appears to me that I can see full as far into a millstone as those who have more knowledge and refinement. I wasn't mistaken in Frederic's case, was I? there's no answering that; and take my word for it, I'm not wrong now: I said then Frederic made love to the girl, and if he *could* not have her he was a rogue—I said that of my *own* boy, ma'am; and now I say, the doctor is making love to Emily, and if he *wont* have her, I say he's a rogue—that's *your* boy, ma'am; justice is justice, everywhere, to my way of thinking."

"But I am certain, sir, that if my son has indeed formed any decided predilection for Miss Emily, he will act worthy of himself and her."

"But, ma'am, Emily hasn't a shilling, not a shilling till I die—how should she?"

"Her brother must give her a fortune; I hear he is going to marry a girl on whom he means to settle twenty thousand pounds; in my opinion, he had much better give his sister one-half of it—not that my son would wish for a shilling, I am certain."

"You are a very odd woman, a very odd woman indeed; but I shall be even with you some day, Mrs. Daventree, depend upon it; however, if you think the doctor means honourable, and wont leave the girl to *pine* after him, that's enough for me—I neither want to hurry him into a wedding, nor to drive him out of my house, but I *do* want to see my child heart-whole, one way or other; for I hate the sight of a sorrowful face worse than November, and I never like to breathe the same air with your sorrowful folks—'tis as infectious as the plague, and in love-cases you have as little chance of curing it."

Mr. Barnet was interrupted by the entrance of the young people, whose confusion, under the glance of his eye, and the inquiring looks of the ladies, was certainly indicative of the disorder he dreaded.

Mrs. Daventree waited with anxiety for a moment in which she could make those inquiries on this momentous subject necessary for her own satisfaction. She found that their kind host had indeed seen "far into a millstone," to use his own expression, for Henry appeared to her to be by no means aware that his attentions to Miss Barnet involved any responsibility; but he was by no means inclined to shrink from it: he had been so closely bound down to study, during his whole life, that he had scarcely ever entered into any female society, except the little intercourse he had enjoyed, from

time to time, with his own sisters, who were ever the confidants of his every wish and care. When he arrived in London, for the purpose of claiming his fortune, though he was received by them with every mark of affection and pleasure he could desire, yet he was no longer the *first* person in their consideration, as he used to be; and in the various little parties that were formed, he was necessarily led to sit by, or in some way take charge of Emily Barnet: her ingenuousness, sweetness of temper, and cheerfulness of disposition, supplied to him the society he had lost; and he imperceptibly became attached to her, far beyond his own ideas of the case, as he had not, by any means, thought of forming a matrimonial connexion; for being devoted to study, he had concluded, prematurely, that he should remain a bachelor. The conversation with his mother gave him a new view of things; he was led by it to consider on the propriety of leaving the Park immediately, and in leaving it, he learnt how much he must suffer from parting with its fair inhabitant.

During the whole of their journey to London Henry's symptoms increased; but he laboured to acquit himself with resolution, and his mother assisted him, by affecting not to perceive the change; and he was rewarded for his exertion by finding Charles sitting with his sisters. It was now six years since these affectionate brothers had beheld each other: and as they were precisely those years in which the form is most altered and increased, most probably they would not have known each other, had they met in any other place; but the affections of their boyish years had been increased during their absence, for esteem was now added to love, and friendship was engrafted on the ties of nature, so that it is scarcely possible to conceive two young, warm hearts more united in affection than theirs, or two people rendered more happy in meeting, after a long and affecting separation.

Charles's business in London was of a nature to awaken the felicity and congratulations of his friends; he was now, notwithstanding his youth, called to the command of a ship, as a reward for his distinguished courage and uniform good conduct; and as the time of his stay could not be long, and the two gentlemen who were about to become his brothers-in-law were impatient to claim their relationship, it was resolved that the marriages of Sophia and Louisa should take place before he returned to his professional engagements.

Amongst other property which had been transmitted to Henry from Rio Janeiro, were many valuable pearls, which he now busied himself in having formed into three beautiful sets of ornaments, intended as bridal presents; when they were ready for their intended wearers, he first submitted them to the inspection of his mother, who having examined those designed for Louisa, took up the case which contained Sophia's, observing it was much larger.

"It contains, besides such a set as you have seen, a bandeau of the very choicest pearls, intended not so much as a substitute for the hair her love for me once induced her to part with, for time has restored the theft of affection, I perceive, but I give it her as a memorial of a circumstance that must ever rest upon my heart; and as Sophia's lot in life is become a very splendid one, it may not be amiss to remind her, even in an article of luxury, of that time when her necessities induced such a sacrifice."

"Your observation is very just, my dear Henry; for although Sophia is singularly gifted with moderation by nature, and is pious and humble by principle, yet she is but a woman, and a *young* woman too; of course she ought to be guarded in every possible way; the wisest and the best have need of 'line upon line, and precept upon precept;' but surely, Henry, you have not been so foolish as to provide this third case of jewellery for me?"

"Indeed, mother, I have *not*—I knew that you would not—that is, I thought you——"

"Then who are they for?"

"I thought Emily Barnet would most probably be with Louisa on this occasion, and—and——"

"And being a bridemaids, ought to wear the same as the rest."

"Exactly, mother; that is just what I thought—that was *all*, I assure you."

"But then, Henry, I can assure *you*, that neither Emily nor Emily's uncle will accept a present of so much value, until you are inclined to tender the *full* possession of a property far *more* valuable; so pray hide them till you have fully made up your mind; and in order that you may be blessed with the more perfect possession of your reason, in deciding on a matter of so much importance, I promise you that, as far as I can prevent it, without giving pain or offence, Emily Barnet shall not make one of our nuptial party; the longer time you take for consideration, the better."

"I have already thought a great deal on the subject, mother."

"The more the better, Henry."

Henry assented to this, but the assent was followed by a sigh.

CHAPTER XI.

Agreeable to the arrangements now made by Mrs. Daventree, Sophia, on her marriage, set out with Mr. Darlington for his mansion in Yorkshire; and Louisa with Frederic Barnet, for his uncle's seat, in the same neighbourhood; and Charles and Henry went with her to her new abode at Hampstead.

In the course of a fortnight, Charles was obliged to part once more from his dear mother and his new-found friend and brother; and after that time, Henry appeared so low and dispirited, that Mrs. Daventree almost repented the arrangement she had made. It appeared that Emily was engaged in a similar struggle; since on the return of Mr. and Mrs. Frederic Barnet to London, Emily did not accompany them, though pressed to it by her uncle and aunt, who observed "that her spirits were by no means so good as they used to be, and they thought that change of scene might be useful to her." In relating this, Louisa, observed, "that Mr. Barnet shook his head, and looked very sagacious and sorrowful; but, much as she had seen of his manners, and much as she was in his confidence, she knew not to what he alluded, unless he apprehended that Emily had some inherent complaint, to which she was a stranger."

But the mother and son, to whom this was addressed, had at least an idea of the old gentleman's meaning; and the doctor, as he always called Henry, felt as if, in deliberating on his own case, he had been playing with the feelings of another. He made this the subject of an appeal to his mother, who saw, in the animation and anxiety of his manners, how very near the subject now was to his heart.

"I told you," said she, "Henry, that a man of your studious habits could not *think* too much; I now, however, perceive that you have thought *enough*, for your heart has decided, and as you have hesitated from the best of motives, I hope you will be forgiven—so pray set out to the Park, as soon as you please; take your pearls with you, and if it is in your power, bring me a diamond on your return, in another daughter."

The journey of Henry was as successful as any young lover has a right to expect, though he did not bring Emily back with him, as their marriage did not take place till last month, when Mrs. Daventree was on a visit to Sophia, who was then entering on the important duties of a mother to a lovely boy. The squire had the pleasure of arranging this wedding entirely in his own way, and making all his tenantry as joyful as himself: he gave the bride away in his own parish church, and invited all his neighbours to a splendid dinner. These entertainments were by no means in unison with the taste or wishes of the young people; but in their amiable compliance with the wishes of one who had ever been a father to Emily, they found a satisfaction superior to following their own. An obliging disposition, a conciliating temper, conduces no less to the actual happiness of our fellow-creatures, than the nobler gifts of benevolence and charity; and let it be ever remembered, that the same divine lips which taught us to compassionate the distresses and relieve the wants of our afflicted brethren, to the utmost of our power, bade us also "be affable, be courteous," and in all things "do unto others as we would they should do unto us."

This young couple returned to London with Mrs. Daventree, and are at present visitants with Mr. and Mrs. Barnet, who are assisting them in looking for a house, as Henry was desirous of consulting the choice of his bride in this respect, and she is equally anxious to reside near a brother to whom she is tenderly attached, and a mother-in-law for whom she justly entertains sentiments of the profoundest respect, and most lively affection.

Young women, educated as the daughters of Mrs. Daventree have been, could hardly fail to make excellent wives, mothers, mistresses, and friends, and, so far as they have been tried, the promise of their youth is fulfilled. Sophia, as the mistress of a splendid mansion, surrounded by extensive, though pleasing duties, and equally occupied by the management of her own household, and the claims of the poor throughout a considerable district, who look up to her power for protection, and her charity for relief, gives ample proof that a woman of the meekest manners, and most retired habits, whose mind is naturally strong, and has been properly cultivated, and whose heart is informed by a religious sense of duty, can easily rise, and extend her powers and occupations to all that is required in such a situation—humble, yet dignified, modest, but cheerful, blending every elegant accomplishment and useful pursuit, Sophia is the pride and comfort of her husband, the delight of his friends, the guide of his servants, and the consoler of all who need assistance or crave compassion within her circle; and in the late visit of Mrs. Daventree to this beloved daughter, she had the satisfaction of perceiving that the conduct of Sophia went beyond even her most sanguine expectations, and she naturally imputed much of her domestic propriety to the excellent example she had witnessed in the conduct of her patroness, since she had not been enabled to present her one, in person, beyond the period of childhood.

Surrounded by the gaieties of the metropolis, and the acquaintances of the late Mrs. Barnet, and much more likely to be seduced by the volatility of her own disposition, yet Louisa conducts herself with equal propriety; aware of her weakness, she looks continually to her mother, or husband, for protection for herself, and prudently declares, "she will not venture to walk alone, till time has proved that she can do without leading-strings;" her lively disposition, sweetness of temper, and activity of mind, render her so delightful a companion to her husband, that he continues as much attached to domestic pleasures as even his uncle could desire him, and divides his time between the duties of his profession, which every day increases in its claims, and the society of a wife who is singularly well calculated to relieve a mind oppressed by the intensity of study, or distracted by multiplicity of business.

To Frederic, the simple pleasures of connubial felicity have not only inherent excellence to recommend them, but the charm of novelty, for he never witnessed them before, except at the short intervals passed in his uncle's family: he well remembers that the little leisure which his father snatched from the pressure of business was neither enlivened by the society of his mother, nor were his cares soothed by her tenderness: his earliest recollections present him only with ineffectual remonstrances on the one hand, and petulant incorrigibility on the other; he remembers moments when, as the chariot that bore his mother, decked in all the paraphernalia of expense and fashion, rolled from her own door, his father has caught him passionately in his arms, shed bitter tears upon his face, and ardently prayed that Heaven would avert from his son the sorrows under which *he* suffered.

As Frederic sometimes relates scenes of his early sorrows to his fond and sympathizing wife, her tender tears flow to the memory of this unhappy father; and she inwardly prays that she may be made the medium of happiness to that son for whom he thus petitioned Heaven; whilst the husband wipes his glistening eyes, and as he presses her hand, and reads the soft submission of her countenance, silently thanks his God that the desire of his beloved father is already realized.

Edward, far from relaxing in his elegant and useful pursuit, applies himself with double diligence to study, under the direction of his invaluable friend; and as his judgment matures, and the visions of youthful imagination become enlightened by genius, and consolidated by study, there is every reason to hope that he will become the Soane or Wyatt of a future day; the excellence of his disposition, the simplicity and suavity of his manners, and the rectitude of his principles, bid fair to place the brightest jewel in that crown of fame which his talents are likely to procure him; for genius derives its highest lustre from virtue and piety.

Blest with such a preceptress as their mother, and such examples as their elder sisters, Anne and Elizabeth become daily more worthy and amiable; they are active, intelligent, sensible, humane, affectionate, and dutiful children, and are a source of the most tender interest and affecting pleasure to their mother, who is enabled to procure for them the assistances in their education her elder daughters could not enjoy, and to indulge them in many innocent gratifications unknown to their sisters, for which they are taught to be grateful to an overruling Providence, and to receive thankfully and humbly.

William and Martha reside with Mrs. Daventree, and being in good health, and the middle of life, continue to fulfil the easy task assigned them with their wonted faithfulness and vigilance; and their attachment to the family who protects them increases by time, and from their opportunity of comparing the character of those they serve with that of others who surround them. Where the blessings of education are denied, the mind unfolds but slowly, but affection, in this case, performs the office of reason—thus the attachments of servants greatly resemble those of children; but the time must arrive when our claims on the love and esteem of those with whom we are nearly connected must arise from a higher source, and these claims were fully established by their truly exemplary mistress.

Thus happy in her children, easy in her circumstances, beloved by her friends, and respected by all, Mrs. Daventree is enabled gratefully to adore that Providence whose will she obeyed, and whose mercies have led her, step by step, "through clouds and thick darkness," to a quiet resting-place for the evening of her days, and has enabled her not only to answer every lawful demand of the creditors of her late husband, thereby fully absolving his good name from reproach, and honestly satisfying all who might suffer from his misfortunes, but likewise permitted her to reward the kindness of those who befriended her in the hour of distress, or who now demand her compassion as objects of charity. Among the former, Mr. Sadler was her first care, although his known attachment to his first employers, and the probity of his character, had long ago placed him in easy circumstances.

When Mrs. Daventree entered on her present establishment, although she might be said to resume her own situation in life only, yet she certainly experienced a gratification in the gifts of fortune which she had never known before; and as all riches and poverty are comparative, although her powers of expenditure are considerably less than they were in her

early life, yet they appear to be *more*, and confer, apparently, many more gratifications to herself, and more extensive power of benefiting others; since there are many paths of economy taught only to those who are under the necessity of treading them; and notwithstanding the misfortunes which befel Mrs. Daventree evidently tried one who was already a wise and good woman, it is only right to say that she came out of this ordeal a still *wiser* and *better* woman; for our Heavenly Father doth not afflict his children to no end; and where sorrow is sustained with Christian humility, patience, and hope, it purifies the heart, enlightens the judgment, leads us nearer to God, by faith and prayer, and unites us more closely to our fellow-creatures, by a participation of their sufferings, and a sympathy in their feelings.

So fully is the widow herself convinced of these benign influences, both upon herself and her young family, that in retracing the progress of her past life, notwithstanding its severe sorrows, and its manifold cares, she is ever accustomed to close this affecting but salutary review of occurrences, with pious gratitude to the all-wise Disposer, and to say, in the language of the Psalmist, "it is good for me that I have been afflicted."

THE END.

J. BILLING, PRINTER, WOKING, SURREY.

Transcriber's Notes:

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

Page 42, winds rounds the ==> winds round the

Page 68, then due. and ==> then due, and

Page 69, the street; and and as we ==> the street; and as we

Page 96, more of Willam ==> more of William

Page 108, the other: at ==> the other; at

Page 116, Louiz ==> Louisa

Page 120, perfectly, well ==> perfectly well

Page 129, the first rank ==> the first rank.

Page 140, very much supriised ==> very much surprised

Page 153, was a stranger. ==> was a stranger."

[The end of *The History of A Merchant's Widow and her Young Family* by Mrs. Hofland]