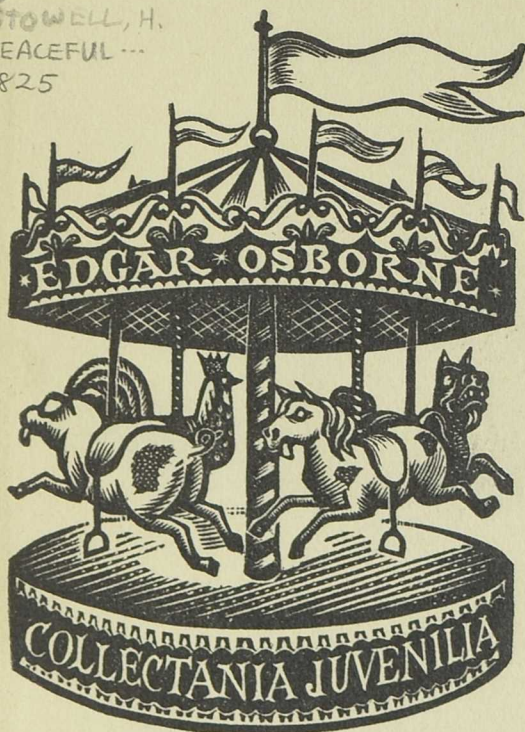


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PEACEFUL VALLEY.

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THE
PEACEFUL VALLEY:

OR,
THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION.

A NARRATIVE OF FACTS.

By a Clergyman of the Church of England.

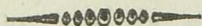
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THE
PEACEFUL VALLEY.



CHAPTER I.

“**A**H, my friend,” observed I to Heward, as we walked arm-in-arm along the brow of a hill commanding a view of the village over which the Lord had placed me as pastor, “doubtless, there is a reality in religion.”

While I spoke, the sun was sinking below the horizon, a deep blush had suffused the western sky, and tinged the clouds which studded the blue expanse, giving to all the landscape around us a softer and a richer aspect.

We paused to contemplate the scene immediately before us: it was one of peculiar interest and beauty.—A valley, embosomed in hills, whose sides were everywhere clothed with beechen groves, and again and again interrupted by little dells, the sweet retreats of solitude and shade. Strewed over the vale were a

number of white-washed cottages, which, rising amid shrubberies and orchards, were partly concealed, and partly discovered. In the centre, but almost shrouded by forest trees, stood the spacious manufactory which employs the greater part of the villagers, and affords them a comfortable subsistence. On the declivity of the hill, directly opposite to where we stood, the neat but modest house of prayer arose. Conspicuous above all the hamlet, it enjoyed that eminence so justly due to it, and seemed a guardian angel overlooking and overshadowing the peaceful scene.

To the right, the valley, after forming a beautiful curve, branched off in different directions, expanding on all sides, and disclosing, in the distance, the outskirts of a neighbouring town, scattered over the brow of a gently-swelling hill, and crowned by a stately spire: while, far beyond, the dark blue hills, now glowing with reflected radiance, seemed to melt into the placid skies. To the left, dilating, and contracting, and meandering, it, at last, eluded the eye by its wild windings, alluring fancy to picture what sight could not trace.

For a while we dwelt in silence on the little paradise. Every sense was regaled by it: our smell by the fragrance which its orchards breathed; our sight by its varied and, as the twilight reigned, still varying charms; our hearing by its mildly mingling, and, to us at least, melodious sounds.

“Lovely spot!” at last exclaimed my enraptured friend.

“Lovely, indeed!” I replied: “in nature lovely, but loveliest in grace. I was on the eve of giving you a sketch of its simple

annals, in proof of my observation that there is a reality in religion, when we paused to survey the 'witching scenery. With your permission I will now proceed.

“ You perceive that neat little chapel just before us, and this snow-white school-house immediately below us. But three or four years ago, and their places knew them not. The village was then a hamlet attached to yonder town which you discern in the distance; and dark and desolate was its moral condition. To a place of worship the cotta-

gers were almost total strangers. Eight unlicensed ale-houses which cursed their borders were usually most crowded on the day of hallowed rest. Dishonesty was so prevailing, that no article, however trivial, could be left unguarded; and the manufactory which you see towering amid those trees was little better than a miniature of hell. The licentious ballad, and the filthy jest, and many an oath profane, were wont to echo within its walls; while discord and drunkenness not unfrequently went so far as even to suspend its operations: for the proprietor has assured me

that he was repeatedly compelled to dismiss all hands, perhaps for the greater part of a day, as the only remedy for the riot and the rage which reigned among them.

“Nor were their temporal circumstances much better than their spiritual. Poverty, the usual progeny of ignorance and sin, was the cheerless inmate of almost every dwelling. Alike regardless of the past, and improvident for the future, the inhabitants were one week indulging in unbefitting luxury, and the next near starving through the vain indulgence.

“ Yet, even twenty years ago, when the gloom which wrapped this place was gloomiest, there was one faint dawning of a better day. Where God designs to introduce the truth, he often sends precursors to prepare its path. It was so in the case before us. The first village Sunday-school in England was established here. A generous, though not at that time religious gentleman, moved with compassion towards the neglected children, devised this expedient for their melioration, as I have been assured, without any knowledge of its pre-existence elsewhere. And though it was

not perhaps conducted on strictly pious principles, and though not much immediate benefit could be perceived to flow from it, beyond a doubt, it proved, at last, a powerful ally to the Gospel.

“Connected with this school, there is an incident, not exactly in the course of my narrative indeed, but so interesting that I cannot forbear mentioning it to you. The gentleman who formed and supported the little institution was, several years afterwards, reduced, by a train of disasters, from affluence to poverty. His afflictions, however, were sancti-

fied to his soul; insomuch that while he lost an earthly heritage, he gained a heavenly crown.

“Subsequently to these events, as he was one day passing through a neighbouring town, he was unexpectedly accosted by a disbanded soldier—‘Do you know me, Sir?’ enquired the man.—‘I can’t say I recollect you,’ replied Mr. W——. ‘Perhaps not, Sir; but I very well recollect you; and I have reason to do so: it was in your Sunday-school I received all the little learning I have, and to it I am indebted for whatever religion, or

prosperity, or comfort, I have hitherto enjoyed.'——'I am glad to hear it, my friend,' answered Mr. W——: 'it cheers me in my trouble. Things have been changed with me since you knew me before: I was then rich, I am now poor; or rather, I was then poor, and I am now rich;—I have lost my fortune, but I have found my Saviour.'——'Do you say so?' rejoined the British soldier: 'well, Sir, I have just received a pension; you are not able to work for a livelihood, I am—the pension is yours.'

“‘I never,’ said Mr. W——,

when afterwards relating the circumstance, 'I never,' and the tears stole down his cheeks as he spoke, 'felt before the full force of that promise—*Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days.*' (Eccl. xi. 1.)

“Thus, the village Sunday-school, even in its infant efforts, was not quite unblest. But the day of the merciful visitation of this unheeded little spot at length drew near. About six years ago a faithful minister commenced his labours in the parish church, and, as is usually the case, much curiosity and much attention were

excited by the simple promulgation of the hallowed oracles. A crowded congregation was the consequence: and among the most punctual and assiduous hearers were the untutored natives of our valley. From them the Gospel met a glad reception. Unprejudiced and undisguised, they felt and owned its influence; while others, their superiors in knowledge, heard unmoved.

“ You well know, my friend, that ignorance is less impervious to the truth than prejudice. God still hides his secret things from the wise and prudent, while he

revealeth them unto babes. In the town itself, the seed was sown with very little visible effect; but in this sequestered, unregarded vale, it met good ground, and brought forth fruit an hundred-fold.

“The villagers could not long pass unnoticed by their pastor. They usually sat in some unoccupied seats immediately beneath his eye: and then their fixed attention, deep solicitude, and strong emotions, told, that they were not forgetful hearers of the word. The consequence was, that, ere long, he used, on enter-

ing the pulpit, to turn with peculiar interest toward the rustic group, and there, when most enkindled, would his eye still rest.

“In this manner his attention, and the attention of his excellent lady, were drawn toward the secluded glen. Their first step in its behalf was, to ascertain whether any traces of the Sunday-school remained. Mrs. M—— undertook the search. On strict investigation, she found the flower, but all its beauty and its fragrance gone. It had pined away, till only some few withered leaves survived, to mark the spot where

once it bloomed. An old man, who had grown grey in the service, still sometimes met a few unruly boys, and strove in vain to teach them. With none to countenance his authority, he had, at last, relinquished the very effort to enforce it; solacing his disappointment with the recollection and recital of brighter and better days. But, however soothing to himself these often-told tales, on the unfeeling urchins they had lost all influence.

“The heart of the benevolent Mrs. *M*—— yearned over the faded flower when she saw it, and

she resolved to take it under her own care and culture. In doing so, however, she had many difficulties to encounter. Winter, in all its inclemency, was at hand. The village was two miles distant from her abode, and the road that led to it a perfect quagmire. Besides, the young rustics were become so rude and untractable, that for a female to attempt moulding them into obedience and order seemed almost absurd. But Christian charity is not easily dismayed. This devoted woman, with a zeal which would not have misbecome an apostle, prosecuted her purpose; and throughout the

stern season which ensued scarcely a single Sabbath afternoon saw her absent from her charge. Neither the driving snow, nor the tempest's fury, could repress her ardour. The task was toilsome, but heavenly love beguiled the toil.

“Such assiduity, united, as it was in her case, with peculiar talents for the undertaking, could not but ensure success. God smiled on her labour of love. The withered flower revived, and bloomed anew. And when I next call your attention to the little Sabbath seminary, it will

present a most gratifying spectacle.

“ But, meantime, Mr. ~~W~~—, ascertaining that many of the inhabitants of this hamlet could not, and more of them would not, attend divine worship, on account of the distance, was induced to open an exposition on Sunday evenings in one of the largest cottages. The measure gave general satisfaction to the cottagers; nor was it long till the lowly temple was crowded with worshippers. Indeed, you might often have seen numbers grouped all around the

door, so eager were they to catch the accents of truth.

“In this simple, and, as some perhaps would deem it, irregular, manner, much good was effected: many of the careless were arrested, and many of the callous aroused. But still various inconveniences attended the plan. Mr. ~~N~~—— found the fatigue more than his constitution could long endure; the cottage was quite inadequate to the population of the village; and there was very little prospect that the scheme which he had adopted would be permanently pursued.

“After revolving these circumstances, while returning from his little flock one tempestuous night, he informed his wife, on his arrival at home, that he had resolved, with the help of the Lord, to attempt the erection of a chapel for his favourite valley. Mrs. **M**—— warmly approved his resolution, and suggested that he should intimate it to the cottagers on the following Sabbath. To this he agreed, not with any view to their forwarding the plan, for he was well aware their poverty would not allow them to do so; but for the purpose of sounding their affections, and, particularly,

of ascertaining their cordiality toward the establishment.

“Accordingly, when he next met them, he signified his intention. A general exclamation of joy burst from the poor peasants when they heard it; and many could scarcely refrain from tears at the prospect of such a blessing.—‘The Lord bless you, Sir:—that we would be glad; that we would!’ rung throughout the little dome.

“The main difficulty however remained. Whence were the funds for the undertaking to be

derived? Mr. ~~M~~— resolved to appeal to the benevolence of the British public, assured that such an appeal, when deserving, is never made in vain. Without delay, therefore, he dispatched letters to the affluent and the humane; declaring at the same time to his lady, that if by return of post he should receive fifty pounds, he would forthwith, in the spirit of faith, embark in the undertaking.

“But, my dear Heward, the night has closed in upon us, and the dews are falling densely: we will, if you please, return at pre-

sent to the house ; and to-morrow evening, if agreeable, resume our walk, and I my narration."

CHAPTER II.

THE following evening proved as lovely as the former; and Heward and myself having regained my favourite eminence, I thus pursued my relation.

“It was singular enough, that the subsequent post brought Mr. **M**—— precisely the sum he had mentioned. Whereupon, hailing this circumstance as a token for good, he straightway addressed

himself to the prosecution of his plan. Nor did He who hath all hearts in his hands look ungraciously on the labour of love. The applications of the worthy minister were crowned with such success, that, ere long, he had to repress, rather than solicit, the streams of munificence which poured in upon him. And it is but justice to tell you, that several of our statesmen and patriots came forward with a liberality which reflects lustre on their characters. No very large sum, however, was required; since the little edifice was, as you perceive, projected and fi-

nished in a style the most simple and uncostly.

“Another propitious event still further encouraged Mr. M——. The ground on which the chapel stands, and which is so admirably suited for the purpose, was, beyond expectation, gratuitously given. It was then, however, as you may yet discern, very nearly a perpendicular steep; insomuch that no inconsiderable expence was apprehended in levelling the situation.

“But how do you think this apprehension was obviated? Why,

the poor villagers, eager in some way to contribute to an undertaking in which they were so intimately interested, reflected, that though they could not give their mite of money, they might give their mite of labour. And, big with delight at the reflection, they spontaneously proposed to prepare the ground for the building.

“ Their benefactor’s heart was rejoiced by the proposal: yet it was not so much on account of the saving which would thus be effected. This was not the principal source of his joy. It was

the feeling betokened in the cottagers' breasts. It was the evidence afforded, that they appreciated the blessings he was labouring to bestow upon them, and the spiritual relish such appreciation implied. Still, how were they to find opportunity for carrying their generous purpose into effect? Dependent as they were upon their daily labour for their daily bread, it would have been scarcely possible for them to have suspended their ordinary occupations. They were not, however, slow in devising an expedient. The spring had for some time been reigning serenely,

the weather was peculiarly mild, and the moon just beginning to fill her pale crescent. So they resolved to avail themselves of the friendly season and the kindly light, and when they should have closed the usual toils of the day, to undertake their pleasing task.

“And there you might have seen the busy group, toiling almost till night’s noon beneath the placid ray. And you might have heard them beguiling their labour the while by pouring some sacred song upon the ear of silence, awaking the low sweet echoes of the dells, or by dis-

coursing, in fond anticipation, of the blissful hours they hoped to spend upon that spot already hallowed to their hearts.

“ ‘We never felt wearied, Sir,’ says one of them: ‘we never felt wearied; we worked with such a hearty good-will!’ O! it was a scene for angels to gaze upon! And the King of angels, who looked complacently upon the widow’s boon, must have beheld it with delight!

“So many favourable circumstances concurring to speed the work, ere long the foundation is

laid; the walls begin to rise; the roof is reared; the simple seats are raised; the little edifice is complete; and the consecration day arrives. That was indeed, to use the expression of the cottagers themselves, 'the *biggest* day' that ever beamed on S——. The much-to-be-venerated Bishop of G——, supported by numbers of his clergy, conducted the solemn ceremony; and beautiful was the devoutness with which he performed it; and vast was the multitude assembled on the occasion; and many were the cheerful faces and the bounding hearts amid that throng.

“Thus the lonely vale was blest, thrice blest indeed. What new sights and what new sounds it enjoyed ! It now ‘smiled when a Sabbath appeared ;’ it now echoed to ‘the sound of the church-going bell ;’ it now witnessed the glad crowd ‘going up to the house of the Lord ;’ it now felt the hallowed influence a place of worship breathes around. And, to perfect the joy of the happy inhabitants, their benefactor, to whom they were so deeply indebted, was induced, from various considerations, to relinquish his former curacy, and, though at a material pecuniary privation,

to come and settle in their bosom, and be unto them a shepherd and a guide. Their joy was perfected,—for “he was a man to all the country dear;” one to whose heart their spiritual interests lay nearest.

‘ And, as a bird each fond endearment tries,
To tempt its new-fledg’d offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reprov’d each dull delay,
Allur’d to brighter worlds, and led the way.’

“Nor did the bountifulness of the Most High towards this now favoured spot end here. He gave them yet another privilege. The Sunday-School, revived by the careful culture of Mrs. M——, had very soon outgrown its for-

mer sphere; and, in consequence, on the completion of the chapel, had been transplanted thither. But as this measure was found pregnant with many inconveniences, Mr. M—— resolved to cast himself once more on a munificent public, in behalf of the lambs of his flock.

“Again his success was abundant; and the result has been, that neat little building, near which yon lane winds its course, and round which so many cottage-gardens are smiling. Even here you can distinguish its tasteful Gothic windows, and the

sweet air of comfort and peace which it wears.

“And now the cup of S—— may be said to have run over with goodness. *The people which sat in darkness saw great light: and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up.* The Lord had done great things for them, whereof they might well be glad.

“Still, however, I would not have introduced these simple animals to your notice, had this been all. Alas! many places are equally privileged, and yet have

but the form of godliness without the power; a name to live, while they are dead. Such privileges, it ought ever to be remembered, are the means, and not the end, the channels to convey the waters of the fountain of life: so that if those heaven-born streams be not drunk by the thirsty soil; if they shed no verdure over the wide waste—what avail they, unless to set forward *their* condemnation to whom they are allotted? But the Lord be magnified! it was not so with this dear village. Truly the *wilderness and the solitary place were*

glad for them, and the desert rejoiced and blossomed as the rose. The Gospel came to them not in word only, but in power and in demonstration of the Spirit.

“It is *therefore*, my dear friend, that I have called your attention to this humble little valley. It is to shew you the genuine influence of divine truth when received in its vitality; to shew you that there is a glorious reality in our religion; that godliness is no less expedient than incumbent; that it is most beneficial to the community, while

most momentous to the individual. In a word, that it is *profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.* (1 Tim. iv. 8.)

“ Nearly five years had now glided away, since truth came in mercy to visit this vale. Let us then, as far as we can gather, trace the effects of her gracious visitation. But look, Heward ! look ! see yon glad group of girls pouring forth from the school-house. How cheerful, and yet how decorous ! It is Thursday evening ; and so inde-

fatigable is Mrs. M——, that, not content with her Sabbath exertions, she always devotes the closing hours of this day to the instruction of her two first classes of females. And, much multiplied as her domestic engagements must be by the absence of her husband, her little flock, for such I still style them, is never forgotten. O! how changed are those children from what they once were! A few years ago, and they were the rudest of the rude. In their minds unenlightened, in their manners unchastised; so untrained, that they could brook no

restrictions, and so uncouth, that a stranger could scarcely pass through the place without insult. Pitiful was their ignorance, and more to be pitied their irreligion. Such were they, when Mrs. M—— gathered them under her maternal care. Such was the marble she had to mould.

“But now, enter that school on the eve of some Sabbath, and I’ll venture to say, you will never have witnessed one more interesting, more orderly, or more intelligent. Often, when the labours of the holy day are closed, do I love to betake myself

to the blithe, busy scene. And, when I open the door, it would delight you to mark the sweet smile of pleasure which flashes round the room, lighting up each little countenance with its artless gleam, while the deep courtesy and the rapid bow bespeak at once affection and respect. They love their minister. They love his visits; and “you are welcome” seems written on every face. Then, I am persuaded, you would be astonished at their answers to the questions proposed; especially at the extensive and experimental acquaintance with Scripture which

they manifest. For this inestimable gift, they are, under God, indebted chiefly to Mrs. M——'s peerless plan. The three fundamental principles of which are,—as far as possible to rivet the interest and the attention of the children upon the hallowed volume; to excite them to the habitual exercise of their own powers of reflection; and, above all, to aim at impressing their hearts more than at enlightening their heads. Three principles, often indeed theoretically adopted by Sunday-Schools, but rarely, I fear, reduced to permanent practice. In pursuance of her first

principle, Mrs. M—— is continually referring her pupils to their Bibles, making Scripture the sole standard of truth, and requiring them, when examined, to confirm every answer by some appropriate quotation. She also endeavours, by an agreeable diversity of mode, to prevent their Biblical studies from becoming, as to children they frequently do become, unattractive and nauseous. For example: she at one time appoints them to trace the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies in the histories of the New; and wonderful are the sagacity and delight which they

evince in this work. At another time, she will direct them to explain or substantiate some important doctrine of our faith by pertinent passages; occasionally, when the subject is intricate, aiding their understandings by reciting from the marginal references several parallel texts, which they mark and commit to memory against the subsequent Sabbath. To accustom them to think for themselves, to understand as well as rehearse, she conveys her instructions for the most part in the catechetical form, shaping her questions so ingeniously, as to constrain the

children to become their own instructors, and advance in knowledge by their own replies. Moreover, if any girl proposes a difficulty ; instead of abridging the trouble, by furnishing an immediate solution, she endeavours to lead the child to solve it for herself. Nor does she ever punish without obliging the little delinquent to prove from Scripture the justice of the punishment ; nor reward, without leading the whole school to acquiesce in the equity of the reward. In this manner she disciplines her young disciples to reflect on their own conduct, to think before they

act, and to be habitually referring to the word and the will of their Father in heaven.

“ It may be said, that such a method must be almost impracticable; or, at all events, intolerably tedious: but while I have never witnessed a better regulated school, neither have I ever witnessed one more simple in its regulation. Diligence, dispatch, and decorum, characterize the whole. Like a well organized piece of machinery, every wheel and all the wheels move in full harmony. And why? because it was formed with perseverance

and care. In truth, a superficial system can never succeed. It is at once the most inefficient and the most arduous. String an instrument well, and it will easily retain its tone;—let it be indifferently strung, and continual discord ensues. By shunning a little labour, we often incur a great deal. The mode of education which, in the outset, seems most easy, will prove, in the issue, most impracticable; and, to be ultimately expeditious, you must be originally slow. *That* system, and *that* alone, will answer which, like Mrs. M——’s, roots itself in the reasons and af-

fections of the children, treating them as rational agents, and not as mere manageable mechanism.

“In accordance with her last principle, of considering the heart more than the head, Mrs. M—— never allows quickness of capacity to atone for impropriety of behaviour. Her favour and her gifts are more regulated by goodness of character than by excellence of intellect; and the homeliest parts, if gilded by piety, ensure a larger share of her regard than the brightest, when unadorned with that heavenly quality.

“ But she goes further. She strives to pierce deeper. She labours to ascertain the spiritual state of each little heart; to be certified who have come to Jesus and who have not; who are the hopeful and who are the hard. For this purpose, she finds it very serviceable to direct them severally to bring her the particular precept, promise, or passage, which most impresses their mind, or seems most suited to their cases. In this way she often gains admission into the recesses of their bosoms, and is enabled to administer the cordial or the caustic, as the case may

require. Nor does she confine herself to general instructions; she loves to take each little one apart, and court its confidence, and search its soul, and with a mother's tenderness to enter into all its puny feelings and perplexities.

CHAPTER III.

“THE practicability, as well as the expediency, of Mrs. M——’s system, is abundantly evinced by its success. For to say no more about the beautiful aspect of the school, its order, and its intelligence, (circumstances which may consist with the total absence of vital godliness,) how many lambs from this fold has the Good Shepherd marked as his own! Five or six of our most

constant and consistent communicants are members of the school. It was there they received their first serious impressions, and thither they still love to resort. In the house of prayer too, the conduct of several, even of the youngest girls, is peculiarly striking. Often have I marvelled to see many a little eye fastened upon me while I preached, with a look of intensest interest: at one time glistening with holy pleasure, at another suffused with emotions of grief.

“Poor Mary W—— was wont to be among the choicest of that

youthful flock. Mention her name to them even now, and you awaken many a tear of fond remembrance. Mary's worth while she lived was not sufficiently known. Though her talents were small, her piety was great; and chiefly was she noted for that ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, so lovely in the sight of our Redeemer.

“It is now about a twelve-month since this young lily of the vale was transplanted to the Eden above. She was then, if I rightly recollect, in her thirteenth year, and the only child

of her parents. Her death was one of agony. As she was passing the fire on her own father's hearth, the flame communicated to her clothes, and her dress being saturated with oil from the nature of her employ at the manufactory, she was straightway wrapped in a blaze. Sweet sufferer! she lingered for some time speechless in her anguish. Not a groan nor a murmur burst from her lips; and while others wept woefully over her blasted form, for where now was the rose of that cheek, and where the bright smile of that eye? she, gentle victim! was sweetly resigned.

“The next Sabbath-Day was a day much to be remembered in S——. It was Mary’s funeral day. A strong sensation of grief had gone abroad over the village; and in every cottage the young cottager’s death had been the subject of conversation, and the subject of sorrow. She was universally known, and as universally lamented; for her meekness and mildness had charmed the most unfeeling. And in the plenitude of their simple sympathy, the poor villagers, to express at once their regard for the dear child, and their condolence with the now childless parents,

whose lot, too, was penury, collected among themselves a sum sufficient to defray the expences of a decent interment.

“It was a sweet Autumnal afternoon, whose serenity well accorded with the day of holy rest, when the last kind office was performed for the mortal remains of Mary. It was a day when all nature breathes a calm, and a freshness, and a joy over the mind, lifting the thoughts to lofty meditation, and winging the affections for heaven;—a day when we rejoice, yet scarcely know wherefore; when we

weep, but it is not for woe. In such peaceful seasons the soul of the holy is sure to be soaring on high, is sure to be reflecting their Father's glory; even as the lovely lake, when most limpid and serene, then most brightly reflects on its beautiful bosom the face of the rich blue sky.

“The village clock was just telling the hour of three, as six of her former schoolfellows, clothed all in white, bore the young cottager's coffin into the school-house she had loved. Silently and sadly they placed it on a table in the centre of the room.

At the foot stood the father, bowed down with the load of his grief—she was his only child. At the head, arrayed in his snowy robe, the minister of God was stationed. The weeping children were grouped all around; and in the back ground, and all about the door, thronged the sympathizing villagers.

“There was a breathless pause, broken only by the deep sigh or by the sudden sob. Then Mr. M——, with all his pathos and solemnity, addressed first the whole multitude of spectators; next, those of the number who

were parents ; afterwards, the crowd of sweet youthful mourners ; and, finally and tenderly, the father himself. This was too much. The poor man could sustain it no longer. He broke forth into heart-rending sobbings, and every fibre of his frame thrilled with emotion. Who could stand it ? No cheek was unwet with a tear. The children were loud in their sorrow. Even the minister's tongue faltered, and his eyes filled.

“ Just then the descending sun gleamed brightly through the Gothic window, shining

full upon the little coffin, and smiling a lustre over its whiteness. The circumstance was simple, but it was not silent. It seemed to chide the excess of sorrow; to tell how blissful was the ransomed spirit; to speak the glory that should yet invest that withered wreath of clay. So it was felt. The man of God took up a loftier theme. He bade them look not at Mary there, but Mary in the skies—Mary the cherub, the associate of God. He pointed her parent to the path she pursued to the Lamb, and encouraged him to follow her thither.

“ A pensive peace then stole over the scene. All were silent, but they were no longer sad. Nay, many of them would gladly have lain down beside the deceased, could her lot have been theirs. But it was time for the little procession to move ; and the young bearers having resumed their dear burden, the whole company proceeded towards the mansions of death. While slowly moving on, the children warbled sweetly that beautiful hymn, beginning—

‘ Happy soul, thy days are ended,
All thy mourning days on earth—’

Nature’s self seemed charmed to

deeper stillness, and the very songsters of the grove to hearken, while this sainted strain poured softly down the vale. What then must have been the sweetness of that anthem in which MARY meantime joined before the throne of GOD!

“It was not long before the pensive procession reached the parish church. The solemn ceremony was discharged, and MARY’s grave but one green mound amid a thousand.

“I said, however, that this Sabbath was a day much to be

remembered in S——; and, I might have said, in heaven; for if there be joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, they surely rejoiced on that day, which three or four of the youthful villagers regard as the birth-day of their souls.

“But you may ask for more positive proofs of the young cottager’s piety. They were not wanting, even when she herself was no more. Her memory has been embalmed by the disclosure of some beautiful facts. It was in this manner they transpired.

“ Mr. M—— took an early opportunity of visiting the bereaved mother, whom sickness had long confined to her cottage, rightly judging that the balm of consolation would be needful for her. He found her in the depths of distress, her soul almost refusing to be comforted. ‘ Oh, Sir ! ’ she exclaimed, when she saw him, ‘ what shall I do for Mary ? What shall I do now Mary is gone ? ’

“ The minister exhorted her to resignation, and told her the Lord would take care of her.

“ ‘ Yes, Sir ; but ’t isn’t her care I shall so much miss ; ’t isn’t that distresses me ; but who will now read to me as she read ? who will teach me what Madam says at the school, as she taught me ? O, Sir ! if I know any thing of Jesus, it is through Mary’s teaching.’ She afterwards presented him with the Bible which her daughter had received at the school, about a twelvemonth back, on account of her excellent behaviour. And sure I am, it would delight you to inspect that little volume. Its hallowed pages clearly tell the wisdom and experience of

the holy child. She has interspersed it with her simple marks almost from the beginning to the end. And there you may see her own black stroke beside each of the choicest promises and most striking incidents or declarations, particularly those best suited to affect a young believer's heart. At the same time, too, it is manifest that all this was done with a practical and personal reference: for if in any of her favourite passages a *my* or a *thy* occurs, beneath it you are sure to find the expressive dash.

“ No wonder that Mr. M——

prizes the little treasure. Who would not value it? He has often produced it, after relating its simple history, at the meetings of that matchless society from whose depository it first issued; and as often has the audience been melted to tears upon its production.

“ Other fruits of the village Sunday-School, scarcely less lovely, might be adduced: but lest the theme should tire you, I shall content myself with mentioning one incident more in this connexion. It is one of very recent occurrence, and I mention

it the rather to *you*, a Sunday-School teacher, because to all such it is peculiarly encouraging as well as instructive.

“About five or six months ago, there was in the school a boy named Joseph R——. The lad by no means wanted for talent, but was so obstinately refractory as to be quite unmanageable. Mrs. M—— bore long with his waywardness, trying every expedient for his improvement, till, finding her efforts altogether in vain, and remembering that ‘one sickly sheep infects the flock,’ she reluctantly

resolved, on a Sabbath afternoon, when his conduct had been perfectly outrageous, to dismiss the young culprit for ever. Before doing so, however, she took him aside, and, her eyes suffused with emotion, she told him her design. ‘It is not in anger, Joseph, that I send you away,’ she added, ‘it is not in anger, but in kindness—in kindness to you and the rest. Nor must we part till we have knelt down together at the footstool of mercy, and prayed to our heavenly Father in your behalf. He can change you though I cannot.’ Then, both kneeling side by side, she

fervently supplicated the God of all grace to touch the little rebel's heart, and turn him from the evil of his ways.

“The boy then departed, and several months passed away, in which his kind teacher heard scarcely any thing about him; even the remembrance of the transaction had almost faded from her memory. But, as she was returning homeward, very lately, in the dusk of the evening, she heard a timid voice whispering behind her, ‘Madam! Madam!’

“‘Who are you?’ she en-

quired, turning round with some terror.

“ ‘ I’m Joe R—, Ma’am, that you turned out of the school, Ma’am.’

“ ‘ Well, Joseph, what do you want?’

“ ‘ O, Ma’am, if you would but take me back again, Ma’am, I’d try so to be a good boy!’

“ ‘ But what has made you take this turn? I thought you hated school, and hated all that is good; and that you loved to

play with wicked boys, and to profane God's holy day.'

“ ‘Yes, Ma'am; but I hav'n't been happy. When I used to see the good children going to school, I was fit to cry. And your praying for me, Ma'am—O, I could never forget your praying for me: it went to my heart.’

“ The boy wept; and Mrs. M——, who, like her Master, ‘despises not the sighing of the contrite heart, nor the desire of such as be sorrowful,’ consoled the returning prodigal, and promised to consider his request.

“On the following Sunday, Joseph was re-admitted to the school. His conduct has since been most exemplary, and often, during sermon-time, have I seen the tears chase each other down his ruddy cheeks. In short, there is every reason to believe, that his reformation is more than a mere outward reform.

“Ye instructors at Sunday-Schools, copy Mrs. M——’s example. Learn hence the keys to the hearts of your pupils, even kindness and prayer. With these you need not despair of unlocking the most adamantine. Re-

member, it was *the praying* so impressed the young delinquent: it was this which, under God, lodged the shaft of conviction in his breast;—which fixed and rankled, till it drove him to the balm that is in Gilead, to the Physician that is there.

“But, my dear friend, you seem somewhat to mistrust my representation of the school and the school’s effects. Do not, however, imagine for a moment that I have over-coloured the picture: I have given you facts, and I could give you more. Yet I would not be understood to in-

sinuate, that there are no cloud-ed characters among so many bright ones; it would be more than human if it were so. All that I am authorized in stating is, that whereas the children of this hamlet were characterized by rudeness, stupidity, and vice, (of course I speak generally,) they are now characterized by civility, intelligence, and virtue: they are obedient at home, diligent in the manufactory, devout at chapel, and consistent every where.

“Such has been the influence of religion on the *youthful* inha-

bitants of S——. You will not, I trust, feel uninterested in tracing its influence on the more mature.

“But yonder is Mrs. M—— taking her evening ramble: I am sure you would like to accompany her. We will therefore pause for the present, and join her in her walk.”

CHAPTER IV.

“IN vouchsafing a revelation to mankind, it was, without doubt, the design of our merciful Creator to communicate happiness to his creatures: a happiness to be originated here, to be consummated hereafter;—to bud below, but to blossom above. We may learn this from the whole tone and tenor of Holy Writ: nor could any other design be so worthy of the divine charac-

ter, so illustrative of the divine goodness, or so suited to human need.

“It is, then, a point of deepest interest to ascertain whether this purpose be answered,—whether, when rightly received, the revelation vouchsafed does beget such a consequence. For if we do not possess incipient felicity in this world, what pledge have we of perfect felicity in the next?—if there be no germ, can we hope for the flower? Now the humble history of this lowly village is, I conceive, of no small value when regarded in this light. It

affords a fresh instance of the genial influence of heavenly truth."

I was making these observations to Heward as we ascended again the hill on which we had sauntered the evening before; and, as soon as we commanded the lovely landscape once more, as if catching inspiration from its loveliness, I resumed my narrative with unwonted delight.

"Yes," I continued, "contrast the present aspect of S—— with its former one; and then tell me, whether there is not a reality in

religion. Of the eight unlicensed ale-houses which blasted its beauty, not one survives; indeed, no ale-house of any kind exists in the valley. Intemperance is almost exiled from the place; and the few individuals who still cleave to their cursed course are regarded by all with commiseration and abhorrence.

“Instead, therefore, of seeing, at eventide, as you would once have seen, the masters of the different cottages hurrying from their labour only to hurry to the pot-house, you may now see them hastening homeward to quaff the

rich cup of domestic enjoyment, and forget all their toils and their troubles in the bosoms of their families. The good man knows he is not returning to a gloomy hearth and gloomier home; but to the blazing log, the smoking supper, and the gladsome group. No more the tyrant of his household, his presence, instead of darkening, as it used, lights up their neat abode. The sound of that step upon the threshold which was wont to send the children sculking into secrecy, now calls them forth in all their joyfulness; while the youngest prattler lisps no words

with greater glee, than, ‘Daddy’s cooming ! daddy’s cooming home !’

“Religion, while it rules, refines the feelings, and quickens, while it rectifies, every affection of the heart. In my twilight rambles, I have often seen, through those humble windows, the sturdy peasant fondling his little ones with all a mother’s tenderness. I have smiled to see one twining round his neck, and kissing his swarthy cheek ; another, big with enterprise and joy, riding astride his foot, while a third, full of innocent wile,

pulls its daddy's locks, and then runs off to hide behind the door. Or else, in soberer mood, I have seen them grouped around his chair, each eager to repeat its little task——some verse from Scripture, or some simple hymn. The father's eyes are glistening, and his heart is full the while; and many a silent aspiration is he darting to the skies, that God, the Parent of them all, would bless his darlings.

“Meantime, the thrifty housewife is spreading the coarse but cleanly cloth, and serving up the hot and wholesome supper; at

which most tempting sight, the youngsters cannot for their lives forbear again, and yet again, to steal a wistful look askance. They are, however, well aware they must not yet begin the feast, nor would they if they might. For first, the good man takes the Book of God from its own sacred shelf, and, having read a portion of its cheering truths, they all fall down before the mercy-seat of prayer: nor needs the cottage priest the help of forms to give his feelings utterance;—he pours spontaneously abroad the fulness of his heart.

“Truly, my friend, it is delightful to reflect from how many of the houses before us, the morning and evening sacrifice ascends as incense to the skies. Still more delightful is it to see, as I have seen, the cottage congregation, or to hear, as I have heard, the melody of praise from one abode, and the deep tones of prayer from another: the latter single and solemn at first, then manifold and mingled, when all the children join in saying, ‘Our Father, which art in heaven.’ But it is most delightful, when you at the same time recollect, that, in these very households,

eventide was wont to see far other sights, and hear far other sounds.

“This village was as notorious for dishonesty as it was for drunkenness. I told you, as perhaps you remember, that the most trivial article was not safe when unsecured. Besides, as a natural consequence, so much mutual mistrust and jealousy prevailed as to paralyze all neighbourly feeling. But now theft is a thing almost unknown in the place. During the last three years, only one open instance has blotted its records. Such also is the increase of social confidence among all,

that I have repeatedly lifted the latch and opened the door of several of the little dwellings, and found not an individual within. Indeed, it is no uncommon thing for their houses to be left thus unguarded; and that too without distrust or danger.

“It is wonderful how piety improves the temporal circumstances of the poor. While it teaches them contentment, it likewise teaches them economy and diligence. The inhabitants of S—— strikingly verify this remark. It is true, they are still strangers to wealth, but they are

no longer, what they once were, the frequent prey of piercing penury. Enter their abodes, and cleanliness and comfort salute you. Look without, and the smiling garden meets your eye; not now, as once, luxuriant in weeds, but clothed with dainties for the cottage board. Nor is the rudely shapen flower-knot wanting: rich in future nosegays for the simple shelf, or for the peasant's breast on Sabbath-Days, it breathes a fragrance all around. And why? Those summer evening hours the ale-house used to squander, the cottager now spends in garnishing his favourite spot.

It is an interesting sight, if, at the close of day, you wander through the winding lanes, to see another and another labourer thus engaged: it almost brings before the mind our great progenitor amid Eden's loveliness. I have often witnessed them with joy. The rather, as it is their custom for each, when he sees me drawing near, to rest a moment from his toils, and, taking off his hat, which nearly hides a countenance lit up with happiness and love, to lean his breast upon his spade, and, bending forward, pant to catch some word of admonition, or of peace, such

as I usually bestow. I love to mark their manly features. On the very countenances of the poor, religion has a sweet effect. It smooths the wrinkles of care, and chases the scowl of discontent: it irradiates the eye with intelligence, and enriches the brow with peace. I will introduce you to some of my dear people, in whose faces you may read their piety. That soul you would declare must be refined, which looks so lovely through its homely vase, which fills the coarse and sun-burnt visage with such grace. In more cases than one I have watched the gradual

transformation of expression in a poor convert's countenance, and I have watched it with wonder. Let frigid formalists smile scornfully at this, and call it mere enthusiasm. But we would ask them if education and breeding can so polish the mind as to exert a perceptible influence on the aspect? Stands it not to reason, that religion, which at once lifts the affections to heaven, tranquillizes the tempestuous passions, pours a flood of purest light upon the clouded intellect—stands it not to reason, that this soul-transforming power should, more or less, affect the mirror of

the soul? It *does* affect it!—it burnishes its once corroded surface, and fills it with beautiful reflections.

“I could dwell on this topic with delight; but the lengthening shadows remind me, that it is high time I should visit some of my spiritual patients, who reckon on a visit this evening. I must not disappoint them. We will therefore relinquish our narrative for the present: to-morrow I hope to furnish you with the sequel.”

CHAPTER V.

WHEN my friend and I began to climb our favourite hill on the ensuing evening, the first glimpse we caught of the valley filled us with chagrin. A dense column of smoke issuing from the manufactory had spread abroad like a cloud, and eclipsed the loveliness of the landscape. Before, however, we had reached the end of our ascent, a gentle gale arising, rolled away the un-

sightly gloom, and left the prospect in its native purity.

“This circumstance,” observed I, resuming my narrative, “is no inapt illustration of the change which religion has effected on the moral aspect of the place. She, like the kindly breeze, has swept away a cloud, a far more dark and deadly cloud of immorality, which, rising chiefly from the same seat, pervaded all the village. She has, too, if I may so express it, dried up the fen from which the noxious vapours rose.

“I love to trace the influence of godliness on all the relationships of social life; not only on the private, and domestic, where, in the case of these holy cottagers, we have in some sort traced it; but, likewise, on the public, and perhaps more trying. *That* piety is little worth, which will not stand an *universal* scrutiny.

“If, however, we examine yonder manufactory, where what may be styled the public relationships of the natives of S—— principally lie, we shall find that their religion is not confined to their cottages. Instead of tu-

mult, discord, and unkindness, lo, order, harmony, and peace! The Bible lies where the ballad lay; and, instead of the songs of Satan, you hear the songs of Zion. Frequently, in passing by, I have heard some solemn hymn pealing from story to story in the lofty building, and, mingled with the clattering din of the machinery, swelling boldly to the skies. Never do the hands of the bustling groups seem to work with such alacrity as when their tongues are thus employed: it soothes their weariness, and animates their souls.

“ ‘Ay, Sir,’ said poor Molly M—— to me, the other day, ‘it does my heart good: and if I was almost fainting, a bit of a hymn would set all to rights.’ ”

“I said, the Bible lies where the ballad lay. Yes; and you may see many of the persons whose work is of such a nature as only to require their attention at transient intervals, snatching up the hallowed volume during their vacant moments, and feasting on its cheering truths. In this way, their minds are enriched with heavenly treasures, while a sweet spiritual savour is main-

tained through all the toils and tumults of the day.

“ But perhaps some ungodly man of business might be disposed to sneer at such proceedings—to pronounce them incompatible with due diligence, and detrimental to the master’s interests. Such malevolent insinuations are often in the mouths of men *who know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm.* For is it possible that serving their Master in heaven will make servants less faithful to their masters on earth? or is it to be supposed that these services are incompatible?

“The proprietor of the concern before us shall decide the question; and surely his decision, backed as it is by the fullest experience, ought to be decisive. What then does he say? He has repeatedly declared,—declared in my hearing,—that he is many thousand pounds the wealthier man from the introduction of real religion into the hamlet. Moreover, the superior quality of his cloth (for it is allowed to surpass that of almost any other manufacturer) he attributes chiefly to the very same cause. —‘For now,’ says he, ‘I can reckon on my work being done;

and, what is more, I can reckon on its being done well: my workmen work from principle. So that, whether I am present or absent, their aim is not merely to finish their task, but to finish it in the manner most conducive to my interests.'

“What a triumphant testimony to the truth! Would to God that every manufacturer in this manufacturing land might feel its force! O that those lords of so large a proportion of our population would awake, if not to a sense of what duty dictates, at least to a sense of what interest

recommends! O that they would labour to promote religion in their establishments, as the most effectual way of securing their own prosperity, while they secure their people's peace!

“Sunday is the day of days in S——. Its approach is fondly anticipated; its dawn is hailed with delight. Saturday evening closes the work of the week; and the houses are swept, and the pewter is scoured, and all in tidiness and neatness await the day of rest. Hence its consecrated hours are not profaned by unbecoming drudgery; but when

the little tinkling bell, which, rude in sound, yet seems to those who love it more harmonious than the warbling lute, invites the rustic worshippers up to their simple temple, soon you see the lanes and fields alive, and scarlet cloaks and spruce blue jerkins all flocking from every quarter to one common centre. Serenity is on every brow, and joyfulness in every eye. The closely constructed seats are forthwith filled, and, often, the very aisles and even the porch before the door are thronged.

“To minister amid such an

audience is a luxury. In singing, they sing lustily; in responding, they respond fervently; when praying, they pray with silent reverence; when hearing, they hear with animated earnestness. How kindling to the preacher, to behold, when he proclaims his text, all eyes upon him, glistening, too, with interest! and then, as he unfolds the messages of Heaven, to catch, one while, the smile of holy extacy, another, the tear of lowly contriteness, again, the look of pious awe, that trembles while it trusts.

“Nor are these mere gleams

of transient feeling. Throughout the week, they cherish and digest the Sunday's feast. Repeatedly, in conversation with them, they have surprised me with apt quotations from my last discourse; and, almost always, I have found the more devout pursuing the train of thought I had therein led them to pursue.

“I said, that throughout the week they feast on Sunday's banquet; but I should rather have said, throughout the former part: for on Wednesday evening we have a lecture, which is accounted a peculiar privilege. ‘We just

begin to be hungry then, Sir,' said one of the poor women to me lately; 'and it comes so nicely: we should be almost fainting, if we didn't get a bit of bread before the blessed Sunday.'

"The attendance on these occasions is seldom less than a hundred persons. Even in the dark and stormy nights of winter, the number scarcely suffers diminution; and, at that season, it is most interesting, when the service is concluded, to stand upon the hill, and watch the little lanterns twinkling all around,

then slowly scattering on every side, and vanishing away.

“Religion ever begets a broad benevolence. The Christian, therefore, who feels no solicitude and makes no effort that his fellow-creatures may *taste and see that the Lord is gracious*, fairly incurs the suspicion of insincerity. No marvel then that these poor villagers, prizing as they prize their precious privileges, should be anxious to impart some portion to the destitute. Accordingly, no sooner was the Church Missionary Society introduced among them, than al-

most every breast was open to receive it.

“It is now nearly three years since its introduction; and, if I rightly recollect, the annual amount of the poor people’s pence has been little less than forty pounds!—a sum which, measured with the population of the place, not exceeding seven hundred at the utmost, is perfectly astonishing. But *the liberal heart deviseth liberal things*; and the contributions of some of these humble cottagers might well put many of their more affluent countrymen to shame.

“One man, who, before grace took possession of his heart, was noted for his churlish and unto-ward disposition, was led, by a very simple circumstance, to become the reverse of all he was before. The circumstance was, the singing, during divine service, that encouraging hymn—

“ ‘Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore,’ &c.

This man, glowing with love to his Redeemer, though his wages were not considerable, subscribed immediately sixpence per week. Nor was he satisfied with this: he contrived to collect a few pupils, whom he instructed

in the rudiments of learning when the toils of the day should have closed; and all the proceeds from this little plan he cast into the Missionary coffers. Here was true self-denial in the cause of Christ.

“Another incident in this connexion will give you some insight into the motives by which these contributors are actuated, in bringing their humble offerings to the Saviour’s shrine.—A workman at the manufactory came to Mr. M—— one day, and said, ‘I have had a sad misfortune, Sir.’

“ ‘What has been the matter, W——?’

“ ‘Why, Sir, I cut a very fine piece of cloth, and I thought, sure enough, that I should be turned away; and I didn’t know what would become of myself and my family. But master was so good, that, considering I was new in the work, and couldn’t help it at all, he quite forgave me. You may be sure, Sir, I was right glad. But I thought it is to God I owe most; *He* must have touched master’s heart; I ought to shew my thanks to *Him*. So, Sir, I have brought a trifle for

the Missionaries.' At the same time he put the fruit of his gratitude into Mr. M——'s hand; an oblation, I am sure, well-pleasing to that God who has declared that even a cup of cold water, when given from such motives, *shall in nowise lose its reward.*

"This same individual is one of the collectors; and a remark which he once made, when paying in his subscriptions, has often compelled me to smile.

"On presenting his list of subscribers, one name was erased: whereupon Mr. M—— enquired,

‘What has become of D——? why has he withdrawn his contribution?’

“‘O, Sir,’ replied the collector, ‘he said as how he was fattening a pig, and he wanted the pence he gave to the Missionaries to fat the pig with. But I thought no good would come of it; and, for sure, the pig was as poor the day he killed her, as she was the day he began to fat her.’

“The observation, though ludicrous, is not without its point: for, as we never lose by what

we give to God, so we never gain by what we withhold from Him."

CHAPTER VI.

“IT is not uncommon to hear it remarked of the benevolence of the truly benevolent, that it exhausts itself on foreign fields, while it neglects the wants of home. The fact, however, will be found to disprove this calumny. The deep yet silent stream, which fertilizes distant regions by its widening waters, seldom fails to bless and brighten its own native vale: but, on the

other hand, the babbling brook, short in its career, and rocky in its bed, possesses little more than the ostentation of beneficence.

“From observation, I can testify that the benevolence of S— does not exhaust itself on foreign fields. Though the poor villagers remember the stranger’s woe, they do not forget to bear one another’s burdens. Is any one of the least of Christ’s brethren among them hungry?—they give him meat: is he thirsty?—they give him drink: is he a stranger?—they take him in: naked?—

they clothe him: is he sick?—
they visit him: is he in prison?
—they come unto him, And, if
there be any truth in the quaint
but beautiful Gaelic proverb, that
'when one poor man helps another
poor man, the Almighty
smiles,'—then has He often
smiled upon this vale.

“More than once, as I have
sat beside the bed of penury and
pain, I have seen one half of
some poor neighbour's broth
come in to cheer the invalid.
Nor is this a rare occurrence:
often is the frugal dinner thus
divided.

“To their power, I bear them record, yea, and beyond their power, these Christians of the pristine cast are prompt to succour one another in the hour of need. The parish is scarcely ever called upon to defray the expences of a funeral; nor are there more than two or three individuals in all the place receiving parochial relief. Such are the fair effects of heaven-descended Charity—such her golden fruits, though nourished in the meanest soul.

“Believe me, my friend, we in the higher walks of life too

often underrate the poor man's sensibilities. We are sadly prone to identify the homely guise with the sordid soul, and to imagine that noble feelings cannot be the inmates of unpolished breasts. But I know the pious poor man to be susceptible of the sublimest sentiments of generosity and gratitude. It is true, these sentiments have not much scope for their exhibition in his narrow sphere, yet have they enough to evince that they are of the loftiest kind.

“ In yonder wretched hovel, the most distant and the most

forlorn of all which lie before us, you would perhaps least expect to find a bright example of this home-spun magnanimity. But beneath that roof there dwells a poor unlettered woman, her family numerous and young, her husband indolent and drunken. She has many straits, and she has many sorrows; yet, amid all these chilling circumstances, her bosom glows with feelings that would dignify a queen. This afflicted woman had once experienced, in a day of sorest exigence, peculiar kindness from a poor but charitable couple now some time deceased. This wor-

thy pair left two sons behind them, one of whom was shortly after assaulted by a lingering disease, which quite unfitted him for work, and cast him wholly on his brother for support. In consequence, their condition has been very straitened; insomuch that they have, for the most part, been unable to hire a female to wash their linen or clean their house. These necessary services must often therefore have been either performed by the overburdened brother, or not performed at all, had it not been for the tender gratitude of the poor woman whom I have been

describing. She forgets her own sufferings to sympathize in theirs. I have ascertained that she is in the habit of stealing many and many an hour from her pressing necessities, to help the orphan offspring of her departed benefactors. "Chill Penury" has not frozen "the genial current of her soul." The unkindness of her husband, for she is obliged to perform her generous offices by stealth, as he would not endure them; the oftentimes unpleasant nature of these offices, for she has to wash the linen which the invalid employs to staunch the

noisome ulcers with which he is afflicted; neither of these circumstances damps the ardour of her active gratitude. Years have not allayed its fervency. The removal of its immediate objects has not weakened it. Of earthly recompence she has no prospect; she shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

“It cannot easily be conceived to what an extent the spirit of Christian courtesy and kindness will sweeten the lot of the children of labour. They are more dependent upon one ano-

ther than the affluent are. The social comfort of the poor man is almost entirely at the mercy of his neighbours. A neighbourhood, therefore, where the poor 'bite and devour,' and envy and calumniate one another, presents one of the darkest scenes that blast the earth—a scene to be paralleled only in hell. But, on the other hand, a humble hamlet, such as this before us, knit together by the bands of love, the whole body animated by the constant circulation of sympathy and tender offices—why, Sir, it is 'a little heaven below.' Methinks angels bend from their

celestial seats to gaze on such a sight; and as they gaze, exclaim, *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*

“ The harmony which reigns among us is not a little fostered by our unanimity of sentiment. Dissent has in vain essayed to gain a lodgment in the valley. A meeting which the Methodists conducted dwindled away, till they relinquished it altogether. Thus the little fold appertains entirely to the Establishment; nor in truth is it her fault, but the fault of her pastors, that any

fold has ever withdrawn from her borders.

“ Another fair feature in the religious character of this place, is a captivating simplicity. To the pernicious “isms” which have rent and ravaged the Christian Church, the inhabitants of S—— are strangers. They seem hardly aware that any difference of opinion can obtain among members of the same hallowed household. Their own divinity is seated rather in their hearts than in their heads. Experience teaches them knowledge, rather than knowledge experience. You

can discover little *system*, but you will find much *substance* in their piety.

“To converse with them on spiritual topics is a feast. They so freely uncurtain the recesses of their breasts; so artlessly narrate the dealings of God with their souls; so unreservedly unfold their child-like apprehensions of their Father’s favour and their Father’s face. Unskilled in the current theological phraseology, which too frequently forms the garment of pretending ignorance, their home-spun expression and rough-hewn image-

ry are indescribably interesting. They do indeed sometimes stir a smile on my countenance, but it is always the smile of admiration. Their religion is very much of the contemplative kind. It resembles the streamlet, which glides along through the herbage unheard and unseen, marking its course by no murmur of waters, but by the verdure that fringes its margin. They not only "read, and mark, and learn," but they "*inwardly digest*" the Word of Truth. Their *delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law do they MEDITATE day and night.*

“ One excellent man, a weaver by trade, recently mentioned to me, in the course of conversation, a striking instance of absorption in this most pleasurable as well as profitable exercise.—‘ I was carrying,’ said he, ‘ a heavy web to a considerable distance, on an oppressive summer’s day. For some time I almost groaned beneath my load, and longed sincerely for my journey’s end: but, after a bit, a beautiful piece of Scripture came over my mind, and I fell to thinking on it; and I thought till I forgot every thing beside. In this way I passed by the house where my

web was to be left; nor did I discover my mistake till I had gone nearly a mile beyond it. I wasn't sorry, however; I had had such a nice sweet talk with the Lord.'

"It was a kindred elevation of mind made the Martyrs sing amid their agonies, and account the furious flames as 'beds of roses.' Their bodies, if I may so express it, were forgotten by their souls.

"Another person, a poor widow woman (who, though weighed down with manifold infirmi-

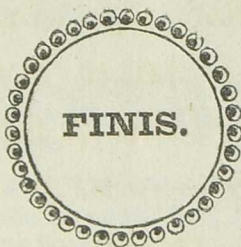
ties, labours hard for a scanty maintenance) so contentedly independent, that she has always gratefully, but firmly, declined receiving any assistance I have offered her;—this cheerful creature observed, the other day, while recounting the mercies of the Lord, ‘It’s wonderful, Sir, how His Word supports us. Sometimes when I get up in the morning I feel so low and weak that I begin to think, “Well, Molly, you can’t work to-day—what must you do?” But, Sir, when I have had a bit of the Bible and a little prayer to Jesus, I have been so light and strong

that I have gone limping to the factory in my poor lame way, as if I could dance for joy. Aye, Sir; and many a time, when I hav'n't been able to allow myself a morsel of meat till the evening, my heart has been so taken up with the Lord, that I never felt hungry or tired. For sure, it makes me think of what our Saviour said—“*Man shall not live by bread alone; but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*” ’

“But, my friend, to enter into the individual instances of Christian character which ornament

this village, would betray me into prolixity. Perhaps, if you visit me again, I shall have an opportunity of singling out some of my favourites, and sketching their simple portraits for you. Meantime, I flatter myself that my object is attained. I flatter myself, that, contrasting the present condition of S—— with its former one, and tracing its rapid advancement in happiness and harmony, civilization and comfort, piety and peace, you cannot but admit, that it exhibits a beautiful illustration of the '*Influence of Religion ;*' and is

justly styled by me, what I usually style it,—‘*The Peaceful Valley.*’ ”



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