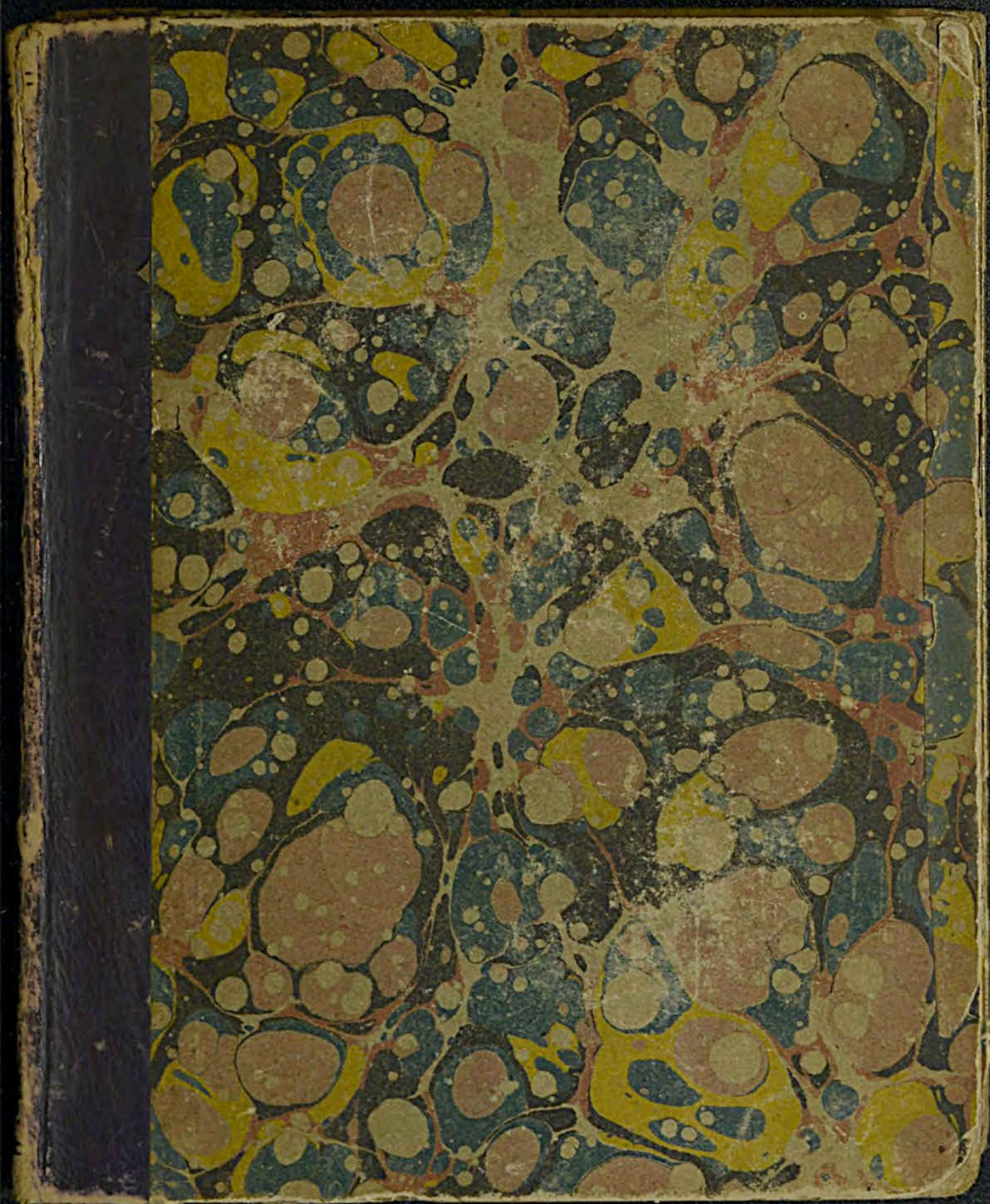
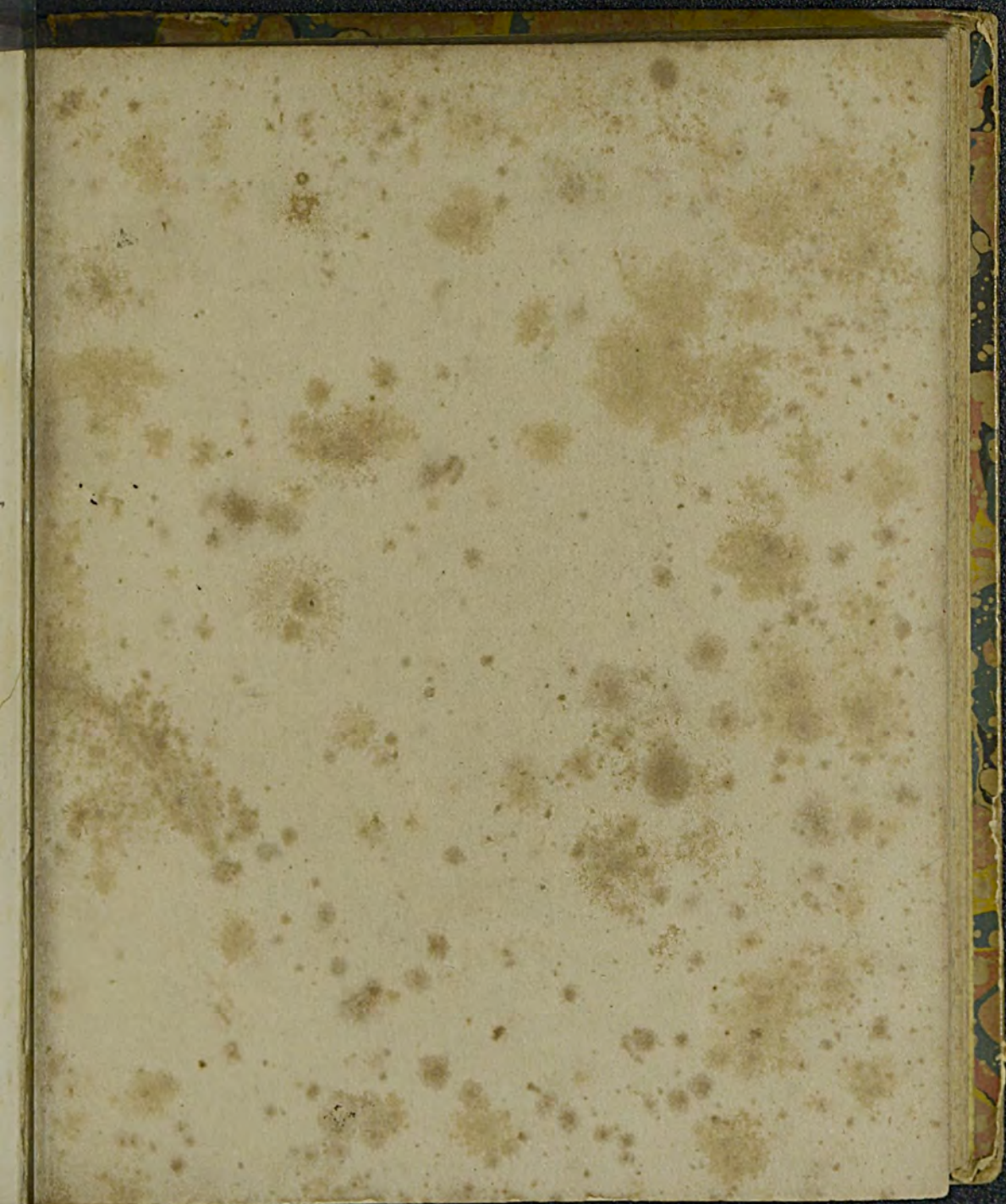




Master O. Jordan
Christmas Present

1850



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Printed by ANDREW SHORTREDE, Thistle Lane.

ADDRESS

TO

MAMMAS AND THEIR CHILDREN.

BY THE EDITOR.

THE following Tales are once more submitted to the Public, the Editor being inclined to believe, from the encouragement they have already received, that parents have found them neither injurious in principle, nor so destitute of merit, as to render them unworthy of their children's perusal.

From the preference often shewn by young people for truth above fiction, my little friends will perhaps read these Stories with additional pleasure when they learn, that the manner in which they originated occurred precisely as related

in the first chapter, and that many of the circumstances, and the greater part of the characters exhibited in each of the Tales, are actually drawn from real life.

With a hearty desire that my dear young readers may derive both amusement and instruction from this book, avoid the errors, and profit by the virtues of the characters described, I subscribe myself their sincerely affectionate friend,

HUMPHREY ARDEN.

THE
TRIAL OF SKILL:

OR,
WHICH IS THE BEST STORY?

INTRODUCTORY.

Here, whilst the needle plies its busy task,
The poet's or historian's page, by one
Made vocal for the amusement of the rest,
Beguiles the night.

“COME, Deborah, now let us make ourselves snug,” said Sir Humphrey Arden, (a testy old bachelor, who had charge of all the spinsters of his family,) addressing a maiden sister, while he seated himself in his large arm chair, one winter's evening :
“Come, Deborah, draw your chair opposite to mine,

at the other side of this fine fire: give one of the girls a book, and let us defy the storm, which rattles against our windows as if it were enraged at not being able to find some chink or crevice through which to pay us a visit."

The maiden sister left the tea-table, and willingly obeyed. In truth, even had she not loved the comforts of a "blazing ingle, and a clean hearth-stane" almost as well as her brother, she would, it is believed, have complied with any request of his in the same manner.

Her three nieces, the orphan children of a deceased sister, aided her, with alacrity equal to her own, in dressing out the fireside according to the old bachelor's conception of what was snug; and whilst the good lady moved a large folding screen into the exact position he liked, and established herself in the great chair opposite his, Kate took her seat on a stool by his side, Emma drew her work-table nearer the fire, and Elizabeth ran to the book-case for a volume of stories, which she knew it was her duty to read aloud to the party this evening.

“ Must I read these stupid tales to-night again ?” said she, in a pleading voice, as she seated herself at the table.

“ Yes, saucy niece, that you must,” said her uncle. “ Finish them to-night, child, and let me see with how good a grace you can do what is disagreeable to you. Your aunt, you know, must hear the book from end to end before she will suffer me to give it to your little sister ; and, for my own part, I should be glad to hear what reason you have for the abuse you have all given it.”

“ I fear you are likely to hear very little of it to-night, my dear uncle,” said Kate, lifting, as she spoke, one corner of a handkerchief which the old gentleman had just thrown over his face, preparatory to an evening’s nap, in which it was his habit to indulge. “ I predict the very first page will put you to sleep, without the aid of this thick curtain, or that blazing fire.”

“ Come, come, my dear girls, let your uncle have his nap in peace,” said the old lady ; “ and if you both dislike the book so much, choose some other for our amusement to-night ; and Emma, who

is not quite so high-flown as either of you, will, I am sure, finish this for me to-morrow."

"No, no, my dearest aunt," cried Elizabeth, hastily opening the book, "no person shall finish it for you except myself;" — and in less than an hour the task was done.

"There now!" she exclaimed, as she pushed the volume away; "there now: my uncle has not heard one word of all the nonsense I have been reading; and when he awakes he will, as usual, call us all fastidious, and hard to please, for not liking it."

"You must not, my dear aunt, let him scold us to-night. I am sure you cannot yourself say any thing in favour of such stupid stories," said Kate.

"Yes, she shall let me scold you," cried out Sir Humphrey, awakening just in time to hear the last sentence, and arranging himself in his chair for a more comfortable nap; "she can, I am sure, say a great deal in favour of these stories, for she is not such a great and mighty critic as all of you young ladies seem to think yourselves."

"I fear I shall come in for share of your scold to-night, brother," said Deborah, "for I cannot

pretend to like these tales better than my nieces do."

"Judging by the progress you have made in my bead purse, dear aunt," said Emma, "I should think you like them less than any of us. You have not dropped one stitch to-night: and when we have a book that pleases you, I am obliged, you know, to lay aside my own work, and sit, ready to take up a bar in your knitting at every second minute."

Mrs Deborah smiled. "In truth, Humphrey," said she, "you would not yourself approve of these tales if you heard them; and I am sorry you happened to buy them for our little girl, since they are not such as we should like to see in her hands."

"Pho! pho! woman!" muttered Sir Humphrey, again turning in his chair, "what harm could they do her?"

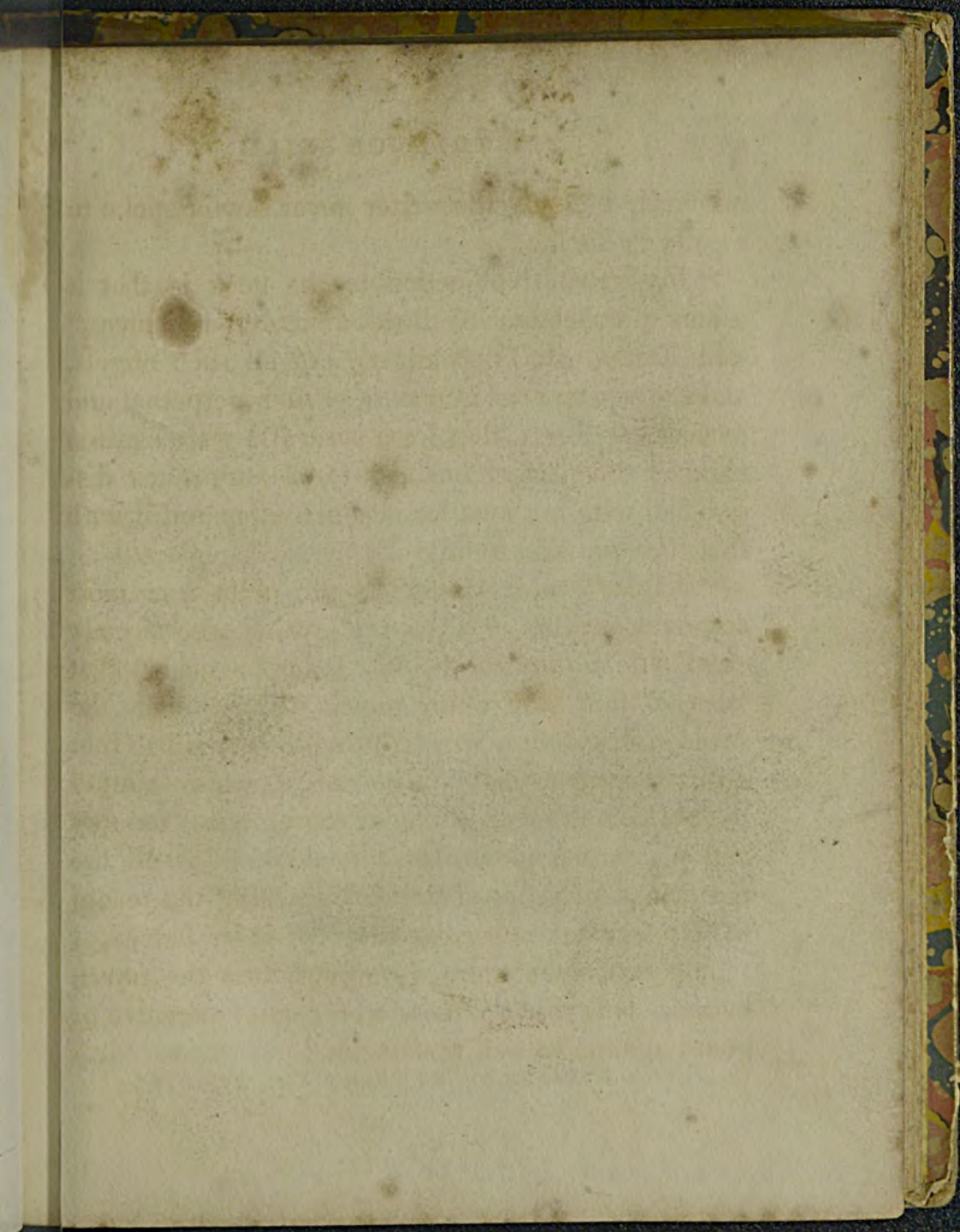
"None in the world, my dearest uncle, I will venture to say," replied Elizabeth. "I am certain my little sister will not read three pages of the book when she finds how dull and prosing it is."

"She would very soon perceive how overstrained and unnatural all the characters are," said Kate.

"I verily believe, the writer never saw or spoke to a child in his life."

"My greatest objection to the book is, that it seems a collection of little unnatural romances," said Emma. "The children are all such angels, and are represented in a state of such perpetual and perfect happiness, that I am sure, if I were again a child, I should feel inclined to be very much dissatisfied with my own lot, when I compared it with that they are said to enjoy."

"Right," said Mrs Deborah, with her most approving smile. "That, my love, is precisely my chief objection to the book. I am persuaded that tales of this kind often sow in young minds the seeds of discontent, which after life may fail to root entirely away. A tale, indeed, however simply told, which abounds in scenes representing too gay and pleasant a picture of human life, has all the pernicious qualities of a novel, teaching the reader to expect what never can arrive. It is, indeed, I should say, even more dangerous than the novel, because it is read by those who cannot perceive or guard against its evil tendencies."





SIR HUMPHREY HEARING THE STORIES.

"What a flourish of fine high sounding sense and sentiment the author makes in his preface," said Kate, "and then runs, all through his book, into the very errors he professes to abhor."

"Yes," said Emma, "that, I confess, provokes me; for, seeing the danger, he should not certainly have placed it in the way of young creatures."

"But he never wrote the preface," cried Elizabeth, "that is easily seen. The whole book, indeed, seems a mere piece of patch-work—a tissue of folly,—false, stupid, and pedantic, from beginning to end."

"Good lack! good lack!" cried Sir Humphrey, in wrath, and pulling down the handkerchief from his face with a sudden jerk. "What, in the name of wonder, will this world come to, when every saucy spinster, from fifteen to fifty, thinks herself at liberty to abuse a poor author in this manner? Why, ladies, you seem to have words at will; but although you fancy yourselves such admirable critics, I should like to see which among you could write half so good a story as the worst in that book."

Mrs Deborah deliberately placed her head in the position which she considered essential for reflection; and taking off her spectacles with one hand, whilst with the other she drew a silver snuff-box from her pocket, — “ Brother,” she said, as she tapped it on the lid, “ I believe I may, without hesitation, assert, that there is not a spinster of any age in the room who could not with ease write a better story than the best in this collection.”

Sir Humphrey rubbed his hands in ecstasy. “ Well, Debby, let the trial be made : here are four of you ; and to her who writes a better story than any in that volume I will give the choice of any book in my library.”

“ Now, would it not be well to punish my uncle for slighting our abilities in this manner ?” whispered Kate. “ How much I should like to see him lose four of his best books ! Do, dear aunt, let us take him at his word, and try to win them.”

“ He deserves to be made repent the challenge, I confess, my dear,” replied Mrs Deborah.

“ Well, try it; I beseech you, try it,” said the testy Baronet, in his own mind fully persuaded

they would not succeed. "I am ready to run the risk of losing my books; for I want to convince you all, it is not so easy a matter as you imagine to take up a pen and write just such a story as you, my good sister, would like to put into a child's hand. Perhaps, too, when you have all felt the difficulty yourselves, you will not think quite so badly of that poor author as you do at present."

"I wish we had courage to try," whispered Elizabeth.

"Take courage, my dear," said her uncle; "you will never succeed in any thing without it. I will give you all a week for the undertaking, though I see Miss Kate, there, thinks she could write a dozen such tales in a day; but I will allow you a week; and, as an additional inducement, I promise the choice of a second book to whichever brings me down the best executed, and best designed story, before the end of that time. Now, what say you all to the proposal?"

"Why, that we ought certainly to make the attempt, since we can lose nothing by it, and may gain so much," answered Kate; "but depend upon

it, my dear uncle, if I have the good fortune to succeed, nothing short of your fine Shakespeare, with all Boydell's plates, will satisfy me."

"I doubt it not, you saucy one," he replied; "but get along, and try to win it if you can. I must only criticise your story with severity equal to your own; and if, after all my endeavours, I cannot find more faults in it than in those you so much condemn, and that you should rob me of one of my best books in that manner, I shall contrive some means to have my revenge, you may be assured."

"Do let us try," said Elizabeth: "a failure can do us no harm; so let us all begin the attempt this night; and you, my dear aunt, will, I hope, set us the example."

Neither Mrs Deborah nor Emma could, however, be persuaded to join in the scheme, although Kate used various entreaties to make them accede to the proposal; but her aunt, unwilling to mar a project upon which her brother's heart seemed fixed, urged her nieces so strongly to make the trial, that, after some time, she obtained from Elizabeth and Kate

a promise that they, at least, would commence the task on the following day.

Taking up her candle, soon after, to retire for the night, "I am cool now, Humphrey," said she, "and I feel conscious that I could not write any tale to equal even the worst of those on the table; but some of your nieces, I think, will make you repent your rashness. Their stories, however, I hope will be of the very simplest kind; and I trust, my dear Elizabeth, that you will let yours be free from all romance or high-coloured scenes. I confess it would gratify me exceedingly should you bring down such a story as your little sister might listen to with benefit."

"And have you no directions to give me, my dear aunt?" said Kate.

"Here are directions for you both, in the words of your favourite Cowper," said Sir Humphrey, lighting his taper, and taking the way to his bed-chamber, —

A tale should be judicious, clear, succinct;
The language plain, the incidents well link'd.
Tell not as new what every body knows;
And, new or old, still hasten to a close.

The two girls declared they would not stay to receive directions which only Cowper himself could follow, and ran off in great glee to discuss the fittest subject for their undertaking. Whether or not their dreams supplied materials for the trial, has never been discovered, but it is possible they may have done so; for at the expiration of the appointed time, Sir Humphrey's fireside, presenting its usual scene of comfort, and the same group being assembled round the work-table, Emma, who could not be induced to join in the attempt, announced that the stories were finished, and brought down for judgment.

Mrs Deborah heard the report with inward satisfaction. Having given the last rub to her spectacles, and pulled from her pocket the various requisites for her complicated knitting, she waited long in anxious expectation, whilst her nieces arranged the pages of their little manuscripts, and debated who should first begin to read.

In such trepidation, however, were they both at thoughts of the exhibition which they fancied themselves about to make, that they delayed

coming to any conclusion, until Sir Humphrey snatched up one of the manuscripts, declaring he would read it himself.

Arrangements having at length been made, that the story of the youngest should be first read, her uncle drew a seat close to his own for Kate, threw himself back in his chair in the attitude of an attentive auditor, laughed heartily at the agitation with which she opened her story, and listened without once closing his eyes whilst she read.

THE
SOLDIER'S RETURN.

PART I.

They were together night and day,
Through all their early years ;
Had the same fancies, feelings, thoughts,
Joys, sorrows, hopes, and fears.

“ COME, Louisa,” said little Emily Menden,
as she alighted with her mother and sister at their
own hall door, after a week’s absence from home ;
“ Come, Louisa, I dare say mamma will have no
objection to our running into the garden for a short
time. I think all our flower seeds must have
sprung up while we have been away : will you
come and see ?”

Louisa was about to comply, but suddenly recollecting herself, she turned back; and promising to join her sister, in case she could persuade her mamma to go with them, she followed Mrs Menden into the house. There, by a thousand artifices, she tried to engage her mother's attention, and finally led her into the garden, where Mrs Menden usually felt as much pleasure as either of her daughters.

Here it will be well to leave them, and account for the degree of melancholy which Louisa had seen steal over her mother's countenance; and which was the more easily perceived, because contented cheerfulness was in general the predominant expression of her features.

Mrs Menden had had the misfortune to lose her parents before that period when young women most require their counsel and support. She might otherwise have been deterred, at the early age of seventeen, and in the midst of a sanguinary war, from becoming the wife of an officer only three years older than herself; and who, even then, had displayed such distinguished courage and talents in his country's service, as left little room to hope

that he would be allowed much leisure to enjoy the comforts of domestic life. She married, unconscious of the fate which awaited her, and in full expectation of as much happiness as can be met with in this world. And so much, assuredly, might have been her lot, could it have been secured by the attachment and amiability of her husband; but she soon found that the life of a soldier is chequered with even more than the common shade of cares and anxieties which belong to this world. During eleven years which had elapsed since her marriage, she had never passed so many months at one time in his society, or scarcely so many days free from alarm for his safety. She had not seen him for the last two years, and the period had been one of peculiar toil and suffering to the troops with whom he was acting. She had devoted the entire of that time to the education of her two little girls, and had never left her own house until the joyful news arrived that his regiment was ordered home, and that he, with his friend, Major Chrestone, might probably arrive in England almost as soon as the letter which carried the intelligence.

Major Chrestone was the only surviving brother of Lady Onslow, Mrs Menden's earliest friend. His health had suffered much from several severe wounds which he had received during the war, in which a younger brother had already fallen. His sister, for many years past alarmed for his safety, and now relieved from all her fears, wrote to her old companion to come and enjoy with her, at Onslow Hall, the delight they must both feel on the return of friends so dear to them. Thither Mrs Menden immediately hastened with her daughters, in the fond hope of meeting her husband a few days sooner than she otherwise could, and of being, at the same time, introduced to her friend's brother, whom she had never yet seen. But they were all doomed to experience another of the trials and vicissitudes occasioned by war.

The transports, bringing Colonel Menden's regiment home, had nearly gained the British coast, and he had already stood on deck, anticipating the happiness of once more embracing his wife and children, when they were met by other ships, carrying troops to the Continent, where a fresh

eruption of the war had taken place. By them he received orders to turn about and fall in with the squadron, and to unite his regiment with those now assembling for the purpose of averting this new and unexpected danger.

Such unlooked for intelligence, when communicated at Onslow Hall, overwhelmed the whole party with sorrow and disappointment.

Mrs Menden had lost, in the commencement of the campaign, and at the same period when Lady Onslow's younger brother had fallen, three near relations, whom she tenderly loved; and these misfortunes had rendered her more sensible of the dangers to which her husband, and many other dear connections, were still exposed.

Her disappointment, on the present occasion, was, therefore, proportioned to the joy she had lately felt, when she believed all danger at an end. Feeling that she could afford no comfort to her friends, she resolved on hurrying back to Menden Park; and, whilst resuming her accustomed pursuits, to try and maintain that cheerfulness which, in every situation of life, she knew it was her duty to cherish.

The children, at the first moment of disappointment, appeared almost as much distressed as herself; but the sight of home, and all the pleasures connected with it, soon enabled them to forget their sorrow, and again to anticipate, with delight, the moment when their father should be restored to them. As they chatted of all the pleasant things which, they said, were sure to happen when that long wished for period arrived, their mother tried to catch the infection of their spirits, and to persuade herself that this new war might not continue long, and that it might terminate without bloodshed.

"Mamma," said Emily, as they returned from the garden, on the evening of their arrival, "when ever the real peace comes, you must write to papa to bring Major Chrestone to Menden Park. Will you not, mamma? oh, I hope you will."

"Willingly, my dear; but tell me why you are so anxious for his coming?"

"I want to know if I should like him as well as Lucy Onslow does. She was just as much disappointed at his not coming home, as we all were because papa did not come. Do you know, mamma,

though he is a grown up man, and has so much to do, he wrote her a nice long letter, and said in it that our papa and he had agreed to roast an ox here whenever they returned, and to set all the tenants dancing on the lawn. Will not that be very nice, mamma?"

"Very nice, indeed. I long almost as much as yourself to witness such a scene, and also to become acquainted with Major Chrestone, who is a favourite with every one who knows him."

"I am sure I do not wonder at his being a favourite with Lucy, he is so good-natured to her. She shewed me a nice set of gardening tools which he made for her entirely himself. He can make things of that kind just as well as any smith or carpenter. Is not that very odd, mamma?"

"It is certainly very uncommon, Emily, if that is what you mean by odd. I dare say he converts his knowledge to many useful purposes; for, from what I have heard your papa say, I think he must be a man of too much refinement to take up such pursuits for mere amusement."

"You are quite right, mamma," said Louisa.

“Lucy told me, that when he first came from the army, he had a person for a long time at Onslow Hall, teaching him to be a carpenter, for he said he had often wished to know something of that trade when he was on service; and he afterwards said he found it so useful to himself and others, that he has since tried to acquire a knowledge of all the mechanic arts.”

“Yes, indeed, mamma,” said Emily, “Lucy says he can do a great many more things even than papa; and there was something else Lady Onslow said he was, besides a smith, or a carpenter, or a turner, or any of those things; something a great deal nicer than any of them, but I forget the name of it.”

“Tell me what it enables him to do, and, perhaps, I may find out the name for you.”

“It enables him to cut and polish pebbles and precious stones, and he has made a great number of beautiful things of them for Lady Onslow.”

“A lapidary is the word you want then, I suppose.”

“Oh! yes, that is the name: and do you know,

it was he who cut the catechism so beautifully on the little marble slab, which hangs up at Lucy's bedside?"

"Then this wonderful man engraves as well as polishes stones: but what catechism do you speak of?"

"A set of questions, mamma, which Lucy is obliged to answer every night before she sleeps."

"And to what do the questions relate?"

"They relate to—to—Louisa will tell you, mamma."

"To her conduct through the day, I believe," said Louisa. "Lady Onslow told me, that every child who wishes to be good, should try to find out, before they sleep, whether they have done any harm during the day or not; and she says, when people grow up, it is very hard to get into the habit of doing this, unless they have been accustomed to it from childhood. So she has always made Lucy ask herself this little catechism when she lies down at night. But Lucy told her mamma she often fell asleep before all the questions were answered: Major Chrestone, therefore, cut

them on the slab, and fastened a pencil to it, and she now writes either yes or no to each question, just before she goes to bed every night."

"Do you understand, mamma?"

"Perfectly. Then Lady Onslow, I suppose, sees the answers, and is able to judge if they are correct. I am quite sorry I did not see this catechism, my dear girls, for I think the plan so excellent, I should like to adopt it with you."

"I knew you would say that, mamma, so I took a copy of it; and here it is," said Louisa, producing a paper from which she said the following questions :

LUCY ONSLOW'S NIGHTLY CATECHISM.

1. Did I this morn devoutly pray
For God's protection through the day?
2. And did I read his sacred word,
To make my life therewith accord?
3. Did I, for any purpose, try
To hide the truth, or tell a lie?
4. Did I, to all who came my way,
Due courtesy and kindness pay?
5. Or if distress my aid implored,
Did I that aid with joy afford?

6. Did I my thoughts with prudence guide,
Checking ill-humour, anger, pride?
7. Did I from every word refrain,
That could give any creature pain?
8. Did I with cheerful patience bear
The little ills we all must share?
9. And did I, when the day was o'er,
God's watchful care again implore?

When Louisa ceased reading, Mrs Menden expressed the highest approbation of the catechism, and said, she no longer wondered at their little friend Lucy's steady and reflecting character, which, she thought, might probably have been produced by this plan of nightly examination.

"Mamma," said Emily, rather mournfully, "do you think it would ever make me steady and reflecting?"

"I think, my dear child, that it might greatly assist your endeavours to become so: the habit of passing judgment on your own actions will in time teach you to consider what that judgment must be, when you are about to commit any fault; and you

know it is only very wicked persons indeed, who can be guilty of an error after they have reflected on its impropriety."

Mrs Menden lost no time in preparing one of these catechisms for each of her daughters. As she had not Major Chrestone to engrave them for her, she printed the questions on two boards, to which she fastened black-lead pencils; and that same night the little girls commenced the plan which had succeeded so well with their young companion.

A short time after their arrival at home, the children, in taking their morning's walk, passed by a cottage where they had a few weeks before often visited a poor old woman, called Alice Dillon, Mrs Menden's nurse, who was then upon her death-bed. The house had, as they thought, remained untenanted since the old woman's death, and they were now surprised, and strongly attracted by the appearance of a little girl who stood at the door, crying in a most piteous manner.

As she seemed to be quite alone, and not more than eight years old, the girls went forward to inquire what was the matter, and to try if they

could comfort her ; but her replies were so broken and incoherent, they could scarcely understand what she said. With great difficulty they discovered that her name was Ally Fisher ; that she had come to that place the day before with her mother, who was gone to the next market town on business ; and that she cried because she was frightened, and unhappy at being left so long alone.

“ It was very cross of your mother to leave you,” said Emily. “ My mother could not help going,” exclaimed the child ; “ she is never cross.”

“ Then why did she not take you with her ? ”

“ Because she knew I could not walk so far.”

“ Well, do not cry, Ally,” said Louisa ; “ we will leave Mrs Saiphly, our maid, with you, until your mother comes home ; and you need not be afraid of any thing, while she is beside you.”

While she spoke, Ally, who kept her eyes constantly fixed on a turn in the road at some distance, ran to the top of the nearest stile, and after a few moment's hesitation, exclaiming, “ I see her, I see her ! ” bounded off without waiting to give them any reply.

The girls ascended the same stile to discover if the person whom they saw approach, were indeed the child's mother; but to their great disappointment they saw poor Ally stop short, and sit down on the side of the road, while the woman walked on without taking any notice of her.

Mrs Saiphly could scarcely prevail on them to return home without going back to comfort her; she, however, promised that she would herself go to the child the moment she had left them at their own door; and aware that they had already outstaid their time, they were at length about to comply, when they perceived another person at the turn of the road. They now saw Ally start up and run to this person with arms stretched out as far as they could reach. The little girls then willingly hurried home, and had no sooner entered the drawing-room, than they began to tell Mrs Menden their adventure. They dwelt particularly on the little stranger's beauty and excessive distress; and were a good deal mortified at perceiving their mamma less inclined to pity, than to blame her for not having borne her mother's absence better. "Indeed,

mamma, if you had seen her," said Emily, "I think you would not blame her; I am quite sure she is not a bold child."

"How can you be quite sure, my love?"

"Because she did not cry as naughty children do; she tried to suppress her sobs, and did not seem cross, but looked so melancholy with her large eyes full of tears, that I think she could not be naughty."

"I have seen large eyes full of tears before now," replied Mrs Menden, archly, "and have been obliged to acknowledge that there was a little naughtiness with them."

Emily blushed, but good-humouredly continued, "Well, mamma, if you will just take a walk with us to Dillon's Hill this evening, you can see yourself whether Ally is a bold child or not."

"Do, dear mamma," said Louisa; "and perhaps you will allow me to take her the last coarse frock you gave me to make; for though she looked so clean and pretty, she had on very bad clothes."

From the child's name, and present residence, Mrs Menden had some idea that she might be the daughter of her foster-sister, Liddy Dillon, who,

she knew, had become the wife of a soldier, called Fisher, about the time of her own marriage. Anxious to know if her conjecture were right, she readily granted the children their request, and promised to go with them to see the little girl after tea.

“Do mamma,” said Emily, “pray do, if you please, allow us to get our lessons after we return, and let us go now. We shall perhaps be in time to see Dillon’s whole herd of cows milked at the foot of the hill, and you know that is so pretty. I can carry your camp chair, and Louisa will bring your work basket, and you may sit and work there the whole evening.”

“I hope you will not insist on my sitting there so long, Emily,” said her mother, smiling; “but I will take you there with pleasure while it is fine. I hope, however, I may rely on your driving the farmer’s whole herd of cows out of your head, when you come back, and applying yourself to your lessons as you ought to do; so get your bonnets, and come along.”

“Oh! thank you, mamma, thank you. Indeed, I will not once think of the cows after we come

home, and I will stay in the house all the rest of the evening, to get my lessons. I assure you, mamma, upon my honour, I will."

"Another promise for the slate, Emily! confirmed by an oath, too," said Mrs Menden.

Her daughter's countenance fell at the mention of this hated slate, which, before we proceed, requires some explanation. There was not in this little girl's character any fault which gave Mrs Menden more uneasiness, than a habit she had contracted of making promises, without considering whether she should ever be able to perform them, — a habit which generally grows into one of premeditated falsehood, if not stopped in time. But to check it in poor Emily (though in other respects a docile and obedient child) had been found a troublesome task. Quick in her imagination, and thoughtless to an extreme, she was no sooner made sensible of what was proper to be done, than she fancied herself certain of being able to perform it; and the moment a fault in her conduct was clearly pointed out, she felt so much distress, that she began to make the most vehement protestations of amendment.

On one occasion, after quietly listening to the end of a long declaration, that she would never do so and so again, but always do such and such things, her mother said to her, — “ I wonder, Emily, if keeping an account of all the good resolutions you make in the course of one short week would help to convince you that the half of them could scarcely be fulfilled in a year.”

“ Indeed, mamma, I do not think I *make* many resolutions now, and I am sure I never *break* one, except when I forget.”

“ But you forget so very often, my love.”

“ Well, mamma, do let us keep an account. Just write down on something every resolution I make, and then put a mark whenever I break one; and I am sure you will find I do not forget so often as you think.”

“ If you wish it, Emily, here is a large slate, which will exactly answer the purpose; but I give you notice, the plan, once begun, shall be continued every week for half a year. The slate shall hang over the mantel-piece, and never be removed during that time, let who may come to the house.”

“ Well, mamma, hang it up,” said Emily, after considering some moments. “ I am determined I will never make another resolution ; and then, you know, there cannot be any written down.”

Mrs Menden smiled, took up the slate, and wrote at the top, in large characters, —

RESOLUTIONS MADE BY EMILY MENDEN.

First—She resolves to make no resolutions.

Then, taking down a picture, and hanging up the slate in its stead, “ Now,” said she, “ I have only to keep the account by writing down each promise as it is made, and putting a mark over it as it is broken.”

Emily was a little disconcerted when she saw the slate fairly in its place ; but still confident of her own powers, and more cautious than usual, lest she should break her first resolution, she chatted with her accustomed gaiety all that evening, without once forgetting herself.

Before the week was ended, however, the slate was full of promises ; and heartily did she repent

her rashness, when, on Saturday morning, some friends having called to visit her mother, one of them asked her to explain the strange ornament which hung over the mantel-piece.

Many entreaties were urged by both the girls that night to make Mrs Menden take down the slate, and give up the plan; but she replied, that she could not require them to keep their resolutions if she broke her own. The slate had, therefore, kept its place for nearly half its appointed time, and was beginning to produce such good effects, that there was now rarely a promise to be seen on it.

But on this unlucky evening of their projected walk to Dillon's Hill, the thoughts of seeing Ally Fisher, and the farmer's herd of cows milked at the foot of the hill, had completely thrown poor Emily off her guard; and her mortification was extreme when she saw her mother write down, first, a promise to pull every weed out of her garden before she slept, and then another, to remain in the house all the evening, for the purpose of getting her lessons.

Her face glowed with vexation as she felt the

impossibility of keeping both these resolutions, without giving up her walk, and to do that required more self-denial than she at that moment possessed.

Fearing to have time for reflection, she caught up her bonnet, and tied it in haste closely round her face; but after moving her chin up and down, and backwards and forwards, for several moments, she exclaimed, "Oh, dear, dear! I have tied the string of this nasty bonnet so tight, it quite chokes me: what shall I do, mamma?"

"I think the best thing you can do, my love, will be to untie it."

"But I have got it into a hard knot, and that is so difficult to untie."

"It requires some patience, I know; but you will make it much worse if you pull in that manner. Had you not better come forward to the glass, and try to find the proper loop to open?"

Emily approached, but her eyes were dimmed with tears, and she sought in vain for the loop, which became closer every moment, until Louisa good-naturedly came to her assistance, and in a short time the ribbon was untied.

Her mortification, however, still remained; and, anxious that it should be attributed to any cause rather than the real one, she said, as she saw her sister fold up the frock she was going to carry with her, "How lucky you are, Louisa, to have that frock to give the poor little girl. I wish I had something to take to her, too."

"You may give her the last petticoat you had to make, if it be finished," said her mother.

"But it is not finished, mamma; and it will be very provoking to go without any thing, when Louisa has that nice frock to take her."

"Then I will not take the frock until your petticoat is ready," said her sister, "and we will take them both together some other time."

Mrs Menden opposed this, saying, "It would be very hard the little girl should be deprived of the frock she so much required, merely because Emily could not have the pleasure of taking her any thing."

"Oh, mamma!" said Emily, earnestly, "if you would only just put off your walk until to-morrow

evening, I should then have the petticoat ready for her, and — and —”

“I cannot, my dear child, consent to gratify a wish so entirely selfish. If you happen to lose a pleasure yourself, Emily, you must try to rejoice that others have not lost it also; but since you think it provoking to see your sister enjoy a satisfaction, only because you cannot partake of it, I advise you to remain at home, which, I confess, I at first supposed you would have done from better motives.”

Emily burst into tears; and Mrs Menden, saying she hoped to find her a more rational girl on her return, took Louisa by the hand, and commenced her walk.

After their departure, Emily sat for some minutes given up to grief; and at last, aloud and angrily, exclaimed, “Oh, that slate! that vile, nasty slate! it is for ever getting me into scrapes and troubles.”

But her reason gradually began to operate, and she soon grew tired of railing at the slate. “I was a fool,” she said within herself, “not to say I would

stay at home, and perform my promises, as I first had thoughts of doing. Then I am sure mamma would have been pleased with me; but now I have made her angry, and lost my walk too. Oh! I was very silly. I wonder what could have made me so silly? And then, why did I say it would be provoking to go to see Ally, without taking her something as well as Louisa? I am sure I have no such feeling now. Well," she continued, carrying on her reflections, "I will make one, just one resolution more: I will try and remember always to put my hands on my mouth the moment I feel myself growing cross, and never take them off, or speak another word, until I am in good humour again."

With this determination she was so well satisfied, that she began to consider what was the next most prudent thing she would do; and at length she decided to try and have her long neglected petticoat finished, and her garden weeded, before her mother's return.

We will now leave her seated at her book in the summer-house, and follow her mother and sister on their walk to the hill. They had pursued their

way almost in silence, except when lamenting the unlucky vow, and the unusual fit of haughtiness, which kept Emily at home. And Louisa seemed but little to enjoy the excursion, until she was roused by her mother's asking, if that lovely child, who stood at the hay stack, near Dillon's gate, were the same she had seen in the morning.

"Yes! that is she, indeed. How much prettier she looks, now that she is not crying! Is it not strange that she can look so clean and neat in all those rags? Oh, mamma! I am quite glad you made me bring her the frock to-night." So saying, Louisa hastened forward to accost the child, and ask if her mother had yet returned.

"Yes, thank you, Miss," said she, dejectedly; "my mother came home soon after you were here this morning, but she is very angry with me for crying so much."

There was, besides her uncommon beauty, an appearance of dejection and timidity about this poor child, which, joined to a look of ill health, interested Mrs Menden greatly, and made her no longer wonder at the compassion which she had excited in

her daughters. The strong resemblance she bore to Liddy Dillon confirmed the supposition of her being the child of that person ; and, taking the little girl by the hand, she desired to be led into the house to her mother.

On entering the cottage, she saw a young woman sitting at work. It was Liddy, but so altered in appearance, that if she had not immediately recognized her mistress, Mrs Menden could scarcely have believed her to be the once blooming and happy girl whom she remembered as the most deserving and most esteemed attendant that had ever been about her person.

They had been nursed on the same milk, had lived together from infancy in the same house, and had never been separated until a few months before they both married. They had never met since that time ; but this attachment, which arose, on one side, from esteem and confidence, and, on the other, from gratitude for uniform kindness, was stronger and more lasting than is often felt by persons of equal rank, who live amidst the dissipations of the world. Mrs Menden, therefore, met her foster sister with

all the affection of an old friend. She condoled with her upon the death of her good old mother, which had taken place shortly before her return; and asked kindly for her husband and brother, who, she had heard, belonged to the same regiment.

They had been killed in battle, on the same day, Liddy said; and, scarcely able to articulate more, she pointed to Ally, declaring she was now the only comfort left to her on earth.

"I hope, for my sake, you will try to forget whatever displeased you in her conduct this morning, and grant her your forgiveness," said Mrs Menden, greatly shocked, and anxious to change the current of Liddy's thoughts.

She promised to comply with this request, and instantly granted the little penitent's pardon. "But, Ally," she said, embracing her, whilst accosting Louisa, to whom she had not before spoken, "this dear young lady must never be so kind to you again, unless you try to bear your troubles, whatever they may be, with more patience than she saw you do this morning."

Louisa vouched for her little favourite's future

good conduct, and soon after drew her away to present her with the offering she had brought.

Mrs Menden congratulated the poor widow on her daughter's prepossessing manner and appearance, and expressed her belief that the little girl would grow up a blessing to her.

"She would be, thank God," replied Liddy, "all that my heart could wish, if it were not that her health is delicate; and that the many frightful scenes it has been her lot to witness, have given a fearfulness and melancholy to her character, quite unnatural at her age, and of which, I fear, she will hardly ever get the better."

Mrs Menden confessed she had perceived this delicacy, and apparent dejection; and acknowledged it might require a mother's utmost skill and attention to overcome both. "But all our trials, dear Liddy, are blessings in disguise; and I cannot help considering it an advantage, that your child should now require such constant care, as must keep you from brooding over your own afflictions, and induce you to suppress every feeling, the sight of which might increase her melancholy.

“It is a proof of the watchful kindness of God, that, along with our heaviest afflictions, he always sends such motives to exertion, as will, if duly attended to, help to support us under their weight.

“Pious resignation, and a grateful sense of the mercy and wisdom of whatever He does, can make us all submit, *without murmuring*, to his will; but it is only by strong active exertion, and constant suitable occupation, that we can support a cheerful appearance under our afflictions.

“You know, Liddy, this was always the opinion of your excellent mother,—an opinion which helped to support her under all her severe trials; and, I am sure, you will not now neglect to follow her example.”

Liddy, with tears, declared, there was nothing she more earnestly wished, than to follow her mother's example in all things; but along with the strength of her body, she had, she said, so completely lost all power over her mind, that she doubted her capability of fulfilling the duties she had still to perform.

Mrs Menden urged every consideration which

religion could suggest to cheer and comfort her, until the hour approached which obliged them to return home.

"You must come to me to-morrow," said she, kindly pressing her hand at parting. "Bring your little girl along with you, and we will consult together on the best plan for the recovery of her health and spirits."

She then called Louisa, and, having desired Ally to bring her mother, without fail, to Menden Park next day, took leave, with a kindness and cordiality which were not the least acceptable part of the consolation she offered.

Arrived at the garden gate, on their return home, they stopped for a moment to observe Emily, who (stretched at full length on a leathern carpet, which was part of her garden apparatus) lay weeding her last flower-bed with more diligence than they had ever seen her exhibit before.

"Shall I help you, Emily?" said Louisa, running close to her side, before she suspected they had returned.

"Oh, Louisa!" cried she, starting, but scarcely

looking up ; " I am sorry you are come home before I have finished my task. How fast you must have walked to be here so soon ! "

" Soon, Emily ? " repeated her sister ; " I assure you we have been three full hours away, by mamma's watch, and I thought we had been much longer, for we walked very slowly ; but may I not help you to get up this vile bishop's weed ? "

" No, no, I thank you Louisa, I must do it all myself," said the little girl, putting her sister gently away. " To be sure, it is a sad troublesome job, and I fear I have pulled up many of my seedlings ; but I have been thinking all the time, that this evening will come into my mind when I am going to make what mamma calls a rash vow ; and then it will certainly prevent me ever taking another, or ever being so cross again, as I was to-night. "

" If it do so, my love, I am sure you will never regret any part of it," said Mrs Menden.

Emily wheeled round at this unexpected remark, " She said *my love*," she whispered to herself, " and I know by her voice she is not angry ; " and then she added aloud, shaking the mould from her hands

as well as she could, "Oh, mamma! I shall not regret any thing,—I shall not regret the vow, or the loss of the walk, or any thing else,—if you are not displeased with me."

"I was displeased with you, very much indeed, Emily; and am still vexed that you possess so little self-command; but since you are anxious to repair your faults, I will endeavour to forget the fretful child I left behind me, and I shall hope never to see so unwelcome a guest at Menden Park again," said Mrs Menden, stooping to embrace her child.

"I will not promise, but I will try, mamma," said Emily, forgetting her dirty hands, and clasping them round her mother's neck; "and I think I never shall be cross again, for indeed it has made me very unhappy."

"I trust you never will, my love; you know not how unhappy it made me too." Her mother then seated herself in the little summer-house, to wait until she had done her task.

Mrs Menden delighted in seeing her children cultivate their garden, and took pains to procure

them flowers, and to afford them as much assistance as she could in that innocent and healthful occupation; she did not profess to be a botanist herself, nor did she desire the title for her girls, but she wished that they should make themselves acquainted with the names and properties of all the plants with which they met. This would, she knew, at once strengthen their memories, and give them a habit of minute investigation, which might be useful to them in after life. She was, therefore, glad to find their taste, in this respect, agree with her wishes, and perceived with pleasure that they had already acquired all the knowledge of the vegetable world which she was able to give.

To stimulate them to a farther pursuit of this study, she had lately made them a present of a book called "Berkenhout's Synopsis," and taught them how to find out there the name of every British plant they met with. She engaged never to refer to this book herself, and promised them a premium for every new flower, of which they could in future teach her the name.

Many premiums had already been won, and

some lost, (for the prize was forfeited whenever the name of the flower was forgotten,) and the girls had now no greater amusement, than in collecting a heap of weeds at every different stage of their growth, and trying to puzzle their mamma with them.

She had not been many minutes seated in the arbour, when Emily finished the task she had imposed on herself; and springing from her knees, something in the attitude of a kangaroo, she shook the clay from about her, and called on her sister to come and admire her garden, declaring there was not a single weed left in it. Louisa laid down a little plant which she had just brought to shew her mother, and ran to seize the wheelbarrow with which the indefatigable Emily was preparing to carry off her weeds; "You have performed your vow completely, Emily," she said, "and you must be very tired, so let me wheel away this rubbish for you; and here," she added, "take a handful of weeds, and try to puzzle mamma, until I have done."

Emily thanked her sister, but looked timidly

towards the arbour for permission, not daring to move until she saw her mother's hand held out in full token of reconciliation. She then sprang to her side, and having collected a large handful of plants, instantly began her efforts to win a premium.

She had, however, little chance of success, for the same plants had come frequently under review before, and she was about to fling them all away in despair, when she perceived on the seat beside her the little flower which Louisa had laid down there. "I shall win a premium now," thought she. "Mamma does not know this weed, I am sure, nor can Louisa either, else she would have shewn it to me." Away she ran into the house for Berkenhout, but she was in too great haste to examine the book with the necessary care and patience, and her mother presently saw her return with the Synopsis in her hand, looking very much disappointed.

"Well, Emily," she said, "I see you have found some plant which is new to you; have you discovered its name?"

"No, mamma, I cannot find it out, though I have looked all over the book for it."

“Looked all over the book, Emily, in scarcely two minutes !”

“I mean that I have looked in every place where I should be likely to find the description of this plant; but it is certainly not in the book, and I am quite sure it is some new flower just sprung up, that nobody ever heard of before.”

“But, Emily, *there is nothing new under the sun!* there is no such thing as a new flower just sprung up, that nobody ever heard of before.”

“Oh, mamma, do you not remember Mr Perkins, the Dutch gardener, last summer bringing you a great number of plants which he said were all quite new?”

“I do remember his bringing me flowers, which he said were new in this country, but they were made along with all other things by God Almighty at the beginning of the world, and there never was any thing formed since that time.”

“Then, mamma, what did Mr Perkins mean by saying he could make *new* flowers himself?”

“He spoke improperly, for he only meant that he could give some flowers a different colour from

that which they originally possessed; a thing which is often done."

"Oh! how, mamma?"

"By putting them into an artificial soil, which will either increase or diminish the proportion of iron natural to the plant: you know, I believe, that iron is the ingredient which gives colour to flowers."

"Yes, mamma, I remember your telling me so once; and when Mr Perkins comes back, I will make him teach me how to prepare the artificial soil, and I will change the colour of all my flowers, and surprise Lucy Onslow, when she comes to see us, with blue pinks, and black snow-drops, and scarlet blue-bells, — oh! how much I wish she was here now. I suppose, too, he could tell me the name of this little plant," she added, again looking over the Synopsis; "but here comes Lousia, she also will wonder what it is."

Louisa did not wonder: she had discovered the plant some days before, when her mother and sister were engaged at lessons, but had quite forgotten it from that time until she came into the garden this

evening. A wish then arising in her mind that she might win something which would be useful to Ally Fisher, brought the flower to her recollection, and she had just gathered a sprig of it to shew to Mrs Menden, as her sister finished her task.

On seeing the flower, and the Synopsis together in Emily's hand, she felt at first a little mortified, but the annoyance passed quickly from her mind. "It is better," thought she, "that Emily has got the premium; it will put her into good spirits again, after her disappointment this evening."

"Well, Emily," she good-humouredly said, "what have you won by that pretty little flower in your hand?"

"I have not won any thing, Louisa, for I cannot find its name any where in the book."

Louisa hesitated, but, after a few seconds, said, "Did you look among the chickweeds, Emily?" "I think it is like some of them;" and as her sister held the book, she turned over the leaves towards the place, where she had before, after a long search, found the description, and then sat down.

Emily drew her finger along the lines as she read, and at last joyfully exclaimed, "Yes, yes, here it is; this must be the very flower I hold in my hand. Here, mamma, take it, and listen if this is not the exact description: just listen, mamma:—Stem and branches small, and spreading on the ground like grass; flowers *very* small, and of a greenish white; corolla of four petals; calyx of four leaves."

"That is certainly the plant in my hand, Emily; now, let me hear its name," said Mrs Menden.

"Pearl-wort chickweed, or moss-like pink," cried Emily, laying the book on her mother's lap, and dancing about the arbour in ecstasy.

"Now, dear mamma, perhaps you will grant me something as a premium, which I have been wishing for all the evening."

Mrs Menden expressed her readiness to give the premium; "but, Emily," she said, "I fear this cannot be the plant Berkenhout means, for he says the moss pink grows on old walls, or dry sandy soil."

"Dear me," interrupted Emily, and this must

have grown in my ranunculus bed, where I pulled up all those weeds. O what a disappointment !”

“ That is the flower Berkenhout means,” said Louisa : “ you will find it is, mamma, and Emily is quite right.”

“ How can that be, Louisa ? you know the flower must answer the description perfectly ; and here is a great difference in one particular.”

“ Yet,” replied Louisa, colouring, “ I know well it is the same flower : I can shew it to you, mamma, growing on the walls of the ivy tower at the foot of the garden.”

“ Oh ! thank you, dear Louisa,” cried Emily, quite satisfied that it had from thence made its way into her garden ; and again thinking herself secure of her premium.

Mrs Menden guessed the truth, and, unwilling to frustrate her eldest daughter’s kind intention, only replied by asking Emily what premium she wished to have.

“ I finished my petticoat,” said she, “ after you went away this evening, mamma, and I wish very much you would make up for this night’s disap-

pointment, by letting me take it to Ally before breakfast to-morrow morning."

"You must choose some other premium, Emily; I cannot grant this; for you know I never allow you to receive a remuneration for any loss which your own misconduct brings upon you."

Emily hung down her head, abashed at having forgotten this wise rule; but she submitted to the decision with good humour.

The party then returned to the house. Louisa recounted all that had passed during the walk, and Emily heard, with pleasure, that Ally Fisher and her mother were to pay them a visit at the Park next day.

In the morning Mrs Menden made a collection of whatever clothes and books she thought would be most useful to Ally, and desired the girls to have them ready to give her.

The moment the little girl arrived, they ran to conduct her into a room where their offering was prepared, and scarcely would allow their mother time to accost her, until they presented their various gifts.

All were thankfully received by their little visiter, but she appeared more delighted with some of the books, than with any other part of the donation.

"The 'Son of a Genius,' by Mrs Hofland," she said aloud, as she read the title of one; "that will do nicely to read to my mother in the evenings. I am sure she never saw it."

"It is a very beautiful story, and would do nicely to read to any one," said Mrs Menden; "but who taught you to read so well, Ally?"

"My mother taught me every thing I know, ma'am; and when we were with the regiment, daddy Fisher, and daddy Dillon, used to teach me, too, every night when they came in from guard."

"Had you two daddies, Ally?" asked Emily, with surprise: "I have but one."

"I had two, Miss," she answered, in a low voice, while tears gushed to her eyes; and stooping forward, as if afraid her mother should hear her, "I had two once; but they are both dead: they were killed together by the French in one day."

Emily, repenting that she had asked the question,

remained silent; and Louisa, wishing to divert Ally's attention, took up another book, and recommended it also for her mother's amusement.

Ally took it from Louisa's hand, and, having read the title page, gazed a few moments at the outside, then cautiously turned over the leaves as if afraid of some disappointment. At length, appearing to have satisfied herself, she cried out in the greatest delight, "It is, it is my own book,— 'Lazy Laurence,' 'The White Pigeon,' 'Simple Susan.'—Oh! I never will lose it again;" and she wrapped it carefully up in her apron.

"Where had you that book before, Ally," asked Emily.

"I had it in France, Miss, but I thought it was lost when my mother grew sick there."

"Dear me," said Emily, "how did you get this little book all the way in France? perhaps it is not the same you mean."

"Indeed, Miss, it is the very same," said the little girl, holding it fast; "the Captain brought it to me himself from London, the last time he came home to the regiment."

“What Captain, Ally?”

“Captain Chrestone, Miss, our own Captain, that was killed,” said the child, her eyes again filling with tears.

The girls, vexed that they had unluckily led to another subject which distressed their little favourite, procured leave to take her into the garden, and spared no pains in trying to amuse her and make her forget her sorrow.

When they were gone, Mrs Menden inquired into the particulars of Captain Chrestone’s death, feeling a deep interest in all which related to that event, from having known him intimately herself, and also from having witnessed the affliction into which Lady Onslow had been thrown by his loss.

Liddy, whose family had lived under his especial care from the time she had first joined the regiment, was well disposed to speak on the subject. She told her mistress how his death had occasioned one of the shocks which had so much affected her poor little girl. “He was,” she said, “the friend and favourite of every creature in the regiment; but his kindness to herself, her husband, brother, and

child, was more than he could ever have been repaid in this world."

"It happened, that the very morning he was killed, when all was bustle and confusion in the camp, from the expectation of a speedy engagement, Ally, who loved him as if he had been her equal, was standing with some other children, looking at a fine ox which the sutler was about to purchase, when the animal, enraged by its confinement, broke loose amongst the crowd, and injured many of the people. Captain Chrestone, who, with some of his friends, had been standing by, tried like every one else, to get out of the way; but hearing the terrified shriek of a child, he stopped, and saw Ally fallen to the ground, and the ox rushing towards her. He never in his life thought of himself, when he knew another to be in danger," said Liddy, "and he immediately turned upon the enraged creature, struck it such a blow across the forehead with his sword, that the animal staggered a few paces back, and then, tearing up the earth in its fury, ran forward, and left my child unhurt,

Her preserver snatched her into his arms, half dead with terror, and carried her home to me, quite happy at having saved her life. He had her still by the hand, standing at the door of our tent, and was trying to make her forget her alarm, when the drum, which we had all been expecting, beat to arms; and, bidding me be of good courage, for that, with the help of God, he would bring my husband and brother safe back to me again that night, he hurried away; and the next minute we heard his voice echoing over the hills while he mustered his men to the line.

“Many a day had I stood watching for the sound of that voice, which I knew among a thousand the moment it reached my ears; for he always used to give three cheers when he approached the camp, if he was bringing all the men of his own company safe home to their wives and children. When the troops marched off, I took my station with Ally on one of the highest hills in view,” continued Liddy, “until evening fell, and the firing ceased, when I gave her in charge to a woman,

whose husband was on duty in the camp, and then I hastened away, as was my usual custom, to meet the men on their return from the field.

“My heart boded no good when I saw them advance, and heard no cheering voice announcing their approach. Already I fancied myself a widow,” said the afflicted creature, bursting into sorrow, “but my husband and brother were both among the few privates of our company who escaped that day unhurt; and of all the officers, our brave Captain alone was missing. The men, who had at first some hopes he might have been carried in wounded to the camp, would not rest till they returned to the field to look for him; and, thinking I might be of use, in case they should be so happy as to find him still alive, I, for the first time in my life, followed them to the scene of slaughter. After many hours of fruitless search, we were preparing to return home, and had passed a spot which we all fancied we had examined before, when sounds of feeble, convulsive sobbing, which seemed to come from some one on the ground, induced us to go back and try if we could afford any assistance.

You may imagine our horror, and astonishment, dear madam, when we discovered my poor child lying beside the lifeless body of her benefactor, with her arms clasped round his neck, as if he had been still alive !”

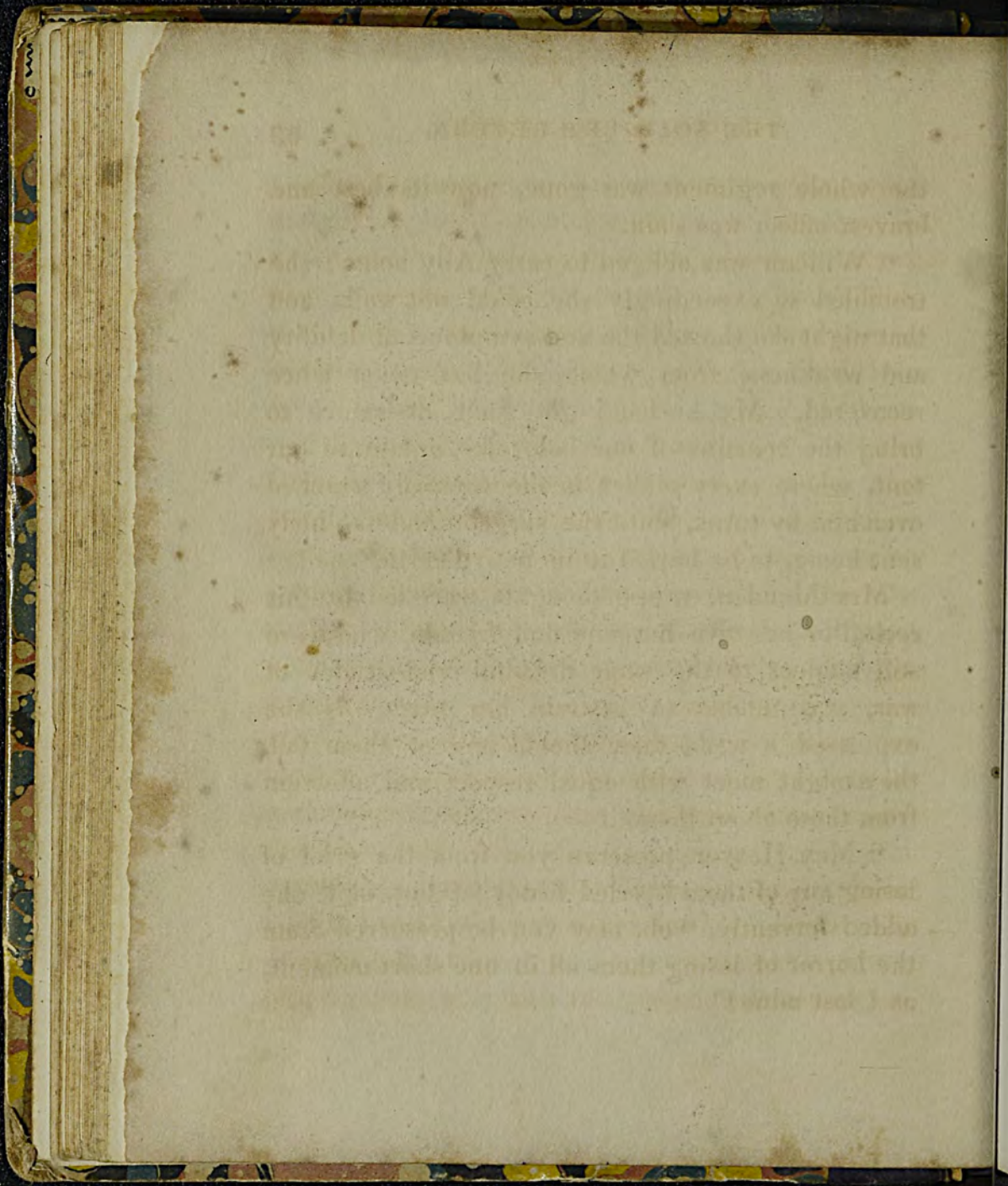
Mrs Menden, shuddering, inquired how such a circumstance could have happened.

“ I little suspected,” replied Liddy, “ that the woman I had left her with, was one of those wretched beings who support themselves by plundering the slain ; and still less did I think that she would bring a child of four years old along with her to such a place : but so it was. Ally had willingly followed her, in the hope of finding me, and chance had directed them to the very spot which we had sought for in vain.”

“ ‘ May be he is only sleeping, father,’ said Ally, when William tried to lift her away from the body : but it was God’s will that he should never awake more in this world. A ball had passed through his heart ; and we had at least the comfort of knowing, that he had not suffered a lingering or painful death. We felt, however, as if the credit and courage of



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the whole regiment was gone, now its best and bravest officer was slain.

“William was obliged to carry Ally home; she trembled so exceedingly she could not walk, and that night she showed the first symptoms of debility and weakness, from which she has never since recovered. My husband got some assistance to bring the remains of our beloved Captain to our tent, where every soldier in the company watched over him by turns, until the surgeon had the body sent home, to be buried in its native earth.”

Mrs Menden, whose thoughts were led by this recital to her own husband and friends, who were still subject to the same dreadful vicissitudes of war, was unable to restrain her tears, as she expressed a wish, that, should any of them fall, they might meet with equal respect and affection from those about them.

“May Heaven preserve you from the grief of losing any of them!” cried Liddy; “but, oh!” she added fervently, “oh, may you be preserved from the horror of losing them all in one short moment, as I lost mine!”

After a pause, she continued, with a little more composure,—"But they were loved and regarded by all who knew them: they were good, and brave, and generous both to friends and foes. They trusted in their Saviour, and they are now reaping the rich reward he has prepared for them in a better world."

"Yes, Liddy," said Mrs Menden, "that they trusted in Him who was able to save, must indeed have been a happy recollection for you; and the certainty of meeting them again, where there are no wars nor sorrows, if you persevere in the same path of religious trust and resignation, will, I hope, enable you to bear up under your severe afflictions."

Liddy tried to check her tears, declaring that she felt relief in talking to one who listened to her with so much compassion; and then continued her narrative.

"There were many sufferers in the camp, as well as myself, the day of the battle of ——. Out of eight hundred men who went from our regiment into the field, only two hundred and seven returned,

and of our own company only three. These poor fellows could hardly speak to me, when I inquired if *all* their companions were slain? At length they confessed that they had seen my brother fall in the beginning of the day; and that scarcely an hour after, my husband had been killed by a grape shot, while fighting like a lion on the same spot.

“I waited for no other word, but ran off to the field of battle, not knowing what I did; and that night,” said the poor widow, sobbing as if her heart would burst, “I walked through the field with as little compassion for the slain that were lying there, as if I had no feeling left. My whole soul was fixed on one object. I thought only of finding the remains of my husband and brother, and the bodies which were not clothed in the uniform of our regiment, excited no sensation in my mind. I went over the ground again and again, still busied in my fruitless search, till morning began to dawn, when I heard the muffled drum beat for the purpose of mustering the men to bury their dead.

“I remember seeing them advance, with the surgeon at their head; but I know nothing of what

happened to me after that for many months, when one day I awoke from sleep, and felt myself so weak and ill, that I had not power even to ask where I was. I only knew my poor little Ally, who leaned over me in the bed with a look of such misery, that I burst into tears at the sight. From that time, my health and reason, which had been quite lost, began to return together. I found I had been placed at a comfortable lodging, by the joint kindness of our surgeon and his brother officers; and that as all my little property had been plundered after the battle, they had raised a subscription for my support during my illness, and made every necessary arrangement with my hostess for the care of myself and my child.

“Whenever my strength was sufficiently restored, this good woman procured me some needle work, by which I was able to support myself, and after a long time, I earned as much money as paid my passage to England, where I landed only last week. I hastened as fast as I could to my mother’s cottage, in the hope of finding her alive. But, alas! she too was gone. God was, however, gracious in

sparing her the sight of my afflictions. His blessed will be done ! I had refrained from writing to her, fearing the news I had to communicate might imbitter her last moments ; and I rejoice that she died in ignorance of my fate."

Mrs Menden again spoke comfort to her foster sister, and relieved her mind from one subject of uneasiness, by describing her mother's death as the happiest and most peaceful she had ever seen.

She then inquired, with friendly interest, into her plans and future prospects of support. She knew Liddy had received an education in every useful part of information, little inferior to her own ; that she was a good English scholar, an excellent accomptant, and a clever workwoman. But she found her now at a loss how to turn these acquirements to account ; and heard with concern, that she had not the means of procuring shelter for herself or her child beyond the present week. Her only surviving relation was farmer Dillon, from whom her mother had rented her little cabin, and who (as the only favour he could afford

to bestow) now allowed Liddy to inhabit it, until he could find a better tenant.

"You need suffer no farther uneasiness on this subject, Liddy," said her kind mistress; "whilst I have power to procure you a home, you shall never want one; and I hope, in a few days, I shall be able to strike out some plan for you, which will meet your approbation."

They then went into the garden in search of the children. The moment Ally saw Liddy approach, she ran to meet her, holding up a long piece of straw plat, which the girls had taught her to make: "See mother," cried she, "what I have learned to do, I shall be very soon able to make a bonnet for you."

"I am glad to find you have been so good, and so well employed in my absence," said her mother; "you see it is possible to be very happy for a little while without me, Ally."

Mrs Menden asked the little girl if she should like to go to school, and learn to do many useful things for herself and her mother.

"Yes, ma'am, very much, if my mother would stay with me."

“But it would not be good for your mother to stay there, though it would be very good for you, Ally, and I think you would find yourself very happy at an excellent school, where I could send you.”

Ally became alarmed: she drew close to her mother's side, and looking anxiously in her face, said, while tears started to her eyes, “Is God going to take you away, mother?”

“No, Ally, do not look so much frightened, I am not going away from you any where.”

“Then, you know you told me, after you were so ill, that you would keep me with you always, until God took you away to himself.”

Liddy promised to be faithful to her engagement; and Mrs Menden, seeing it was no time to urge her proposal farther, after giving them some refreshment, suffered them to depart.

In the course of the day, Louisa and Emily heard the particulars of Liddy's story from their mamma, and dreamed all night of nothing but little Ally, and the thousand schemes they had formed for her advantage. On the moment of

their awaking next morning, they crept to Mrs Menden's bedside, and having satisfied themselves she was not asleep, eagerly ran to the window to count, as was their daily custom, how many new flowers were opened in their gardens below.

Emily no sooner drew up the curtain than she pulled it down again, to shut out the prospect.

"Oh ! how I hate a wet Sunday," she cried ; "It is raining in torrents, and we can neither go to church, nor have a walk to see our poor pensioners, nor get into our gardens this whole day."

"If you cannot have any of those gratifications to-day, Emily, I hope you will be satisfied with others which are within your reach."

"But I was so sure of going to see the poor women to-day, mamma."

"And will it be a great misfortune, either to you or to them, if you should not be able to go until to-morrow, or even till the next day ?"

"Oh ! no, mamma, not just a *misfortune*, but it will certainly be a disappointment."

"That I have no doubt of : but, my dear child, you have not, I hope, quite forgotten your catechism

since last night; you surely recollect that we must have some disappointment, or *little ill*, to bear every day of our lives; and I think you will allow this is a very little one."

Emily, blushing, acknowledged it was; and resolved that she would try to think no more of it. She then drew on her wrapper, and went through the business with which she and her sister had been taught the habit of commencing every new day of their existence. That ended, she set about dressing herself, but could not, or rather did not, avoid frequently stealing to the window, to watch if there were any sign of improvement in the weather. At last, casting her eyes on a timepiece which lay on her mother's toilet, she stood quite still, and exclaimed, "I know, mamma, I shall be set in the stocks to-day at breakfast, for I am not half dressed yet, and more than seven of my twelve minutes are gone."

"Unless you wish to breakfast in them, you had better not waste any more time in watching the weather, or looking at the clock. Do not, dear child, let one subject of vexation lead you into

another. If you exert yourself, you may yet be dressed within your twelve minutes; and may also make the day, wet as it is, turn out pleasantly. Come, Louisa, I see you are already dressed; and as I am not afraid of finding the day too long, I wish to breakfast early."

"Well, what signifies one wet day?" said Emily, as the door closed after her mother and sister. "I will not be cross, and I will exert myself, and try, as mamma says, to make the day turn out a pleasant one."

Emily did exert herself, and we are happy to say, she did not breakfast in the stocks; but how the day turned out, remains to be described.

When the repast was over, as the rain continued to fall, she collected some of their favourite books out of their Sunday library, and sat down to read along with her mamma and sister.

"I wonder if little Ally Fisher would like these Sunday stories as well as we do, mamma; I wish you would allow me to lend her one of the volumes," said she.

"You may take her one this evening, if you please," said Mrs Menden; "and should the weather grow fine, you might stay to make her read you one of the tales, and observe if she likes it."

"Oh, yes! indeed, mamma, I do please it; and if the evening should not be fine, I can do it to-morrow, as you told me in the morning, when I wanted to go and see the old woman."

"No, my love, the books must be locked up to-night: I will not, you know, take them out for you to-morrow; you must wait until next Sunday."

"Until Sunday! dear mamma, why must I wait so very long?"

"Because, Emily, I do not lightly break through any determination which I have once made, and which my reason tells I ought to adhere to; and you know, I did make a strict rule, that this book-case shall never be opened except on Sunday."

"Very true, mamma, but I forget why you made that rule."

"If Louisa had not just gone out of the room, she could tell you, that it was because I like to honour the Sabbath, by setting apart for it every

pleasant and useful occupation which I think suited to the day. I, therefore, keep the most instructive, most valuable, and most beautiful books in my collection, exclusively for your reading on Sunday, and I will never make them common to you, by allowing you to amuse yourselves with them on other days."

Emily seemed to reflect, and then said, "I think, mamma, it could do no great harm to break through the rule this one time, for little Ally's sake."

"But, Emily, my longer experience teaches me that there is harm in breaking through any rule, however trifling, even once, unless it be on some unavoidable occasion. You will never, my child, be a wise or steady character, if you think otherwise. — I would, however, do a great deal for little Ally's sake, and as I have not yet paid the last premium you won from me, I will, if you wish it, get some other equally nice book that you may give to her when you next meet."

"Dear mamma, I am so much obliged to you ! I do, indeed, wish it very much ; and I will tell Ally how I won the premium, and I will teach her to

know the pearlwort chickweed, and will paint a sprig of it in the first leaf of her book, and then, I am sure, neither she nor I will ever forget it."

"And I hope also, Emily, you will never forget that you owe this gratification entirely to the kind forbearance of your sister."

"Do I, mamma?" said Emily, in surprise.

"You do, indeed. She had just pulled up the flower, and brought it into the arbour, when you called her to look at your garden. She laid it down on the seat where you found it, only that she might go and assist you. When she returned and saw you in possession of the plant, I perceived that she did not like to cause you a second disappointment that evening; and you may remember how readily she taught you to find the name of the flower, and permitted you to win the premium, which she might have obtained herself."

Emily's eyes filled. "Oh, mamma! I wish you had given it to Louisa; she deserved it a great deal more than I did."

"Then I should have disappointed her kind intention of gratifying you."

"Well, mamma, I wish you would give it to her now," said Emily.

"No, my love, it is not necessary to offer her any reward: actions of this kind always bring their own recompense. Louisa has been already sufficiently repaid by the satisfaction which disinterested conduct always produces in the person's own mind, and by the increased affection which it procures from all other persons around them. You may, therefore, keep the books for your little friend Ally: I shall be happy to see you give her any thing which may be useful or amusing. I never saw a child whom I thought more deserving of kindness, or more capable of receiving instruction."

"Then, mamma, you like Ally as well as we do; for I suppose it is of her you are speaking," cried Louisa, who at this moment entered the parlour.

"Yes Louisa, it is," said Emily.

"Now, mamma, do you not think she is the prettiest child you ever saw; and do you not agree with us, that she could not be very naughty?"

"Do you mean because she is pretty, Emily?"

"No, not just because she is pretty," said she, gazing at her sister; "yet I think pretty people are always very good."

"Do you think so too, Louisa?"

"I do mamma; at least, all the pretty people whom I know, I like very much."

"I will not ask you to give up this opinion," said Mrs Menden, smiling; "I only request you to observe whether or not you have any foundation for it."

"Mamma," said Louisa, "I think papa is one of the handsomest men I ever saw, and I am sure he is the best."

"It happens, that he is quite as good as he is handsome; but I myself know many persons equally virtuous, who are less well looking: his being good, therefore, cannot be owing to his being handsome."

The girls were silent for some time; at length Emily asked her mother if she recollected what Sir Robert Onslow had said to her the last day they all went to Onslow Hall?

Mrs Menden remembered perfectly many things Sir Robert had said.

"Then, mamma, you know that was the first time we had seen his fine new house; and do you not recollect his lamenting the expense he had been obliged to go to, in buying furniture suitable to it, and his saying that it was necessary always to fit out a place so that the inside and the outside might correspond?"

"I recollect," replied Mrs Menden, "that you then told me, you did not understand what he said, for you thought the word 'correspond' meant writing letters."

"Yes, mamma, but you told me it meant to match, or suit; and that was exactly what made me remember the whole conversation so well. Now, I think that God, who is much wiser than Sir Robert Onslow, or any body else, would never make people with beautiful outsides, and ugly insides, that would not match or suit."

"There is some ingenuity in your argument, Emily," said her mother, smiling, "but no sound reasoning. You are right in saying God would not make people with ugly insides, for that he does not do. Although He forms our bodies, He does

not, to use your phrase, fit up our minds, but having provided us with materials,—that is, given us intellects or implements to work with,—calls on us to furnish them for ourselves. Neither did Sir Robert Onslow, you know, furnish his own house,—he only provided the materials, and gave directions how it was to be done; and you may remember hearing him say, that he at first got a careless upholsterer, who made such awkward furniture, as quite disfigured his handsome rooms. He was, therefore, obliged to take down all this man had done, and hire another, who, from the same materials, fitted the apartments up in the beautiful manner you have seen. Now those persons who take no pains in furnishing their minds, and make no good use of the intellects God has given them, may be compared to the workman who disfigured Onslow Hall. I could point out to you many very handsome people, who turn their talents to such bad account, that their good appearance only makes the ugliness and unsuitableness of their minds more disgusting.”

Emily acknowledged that her argument was turned against herself; but she continued to

converse on the subject until the bell rang for assembling the domestics to join in the service of the day.

It chanced that one of the lessons for the morning was the sixth chapter of Saint Mark, and when Emily found herself again alone with her mother and sister, she recurred to the topic on which they had just before been speaking: "I think," said she, "the daughter of Herodias must have been very beautiful, when she could please Herod and all his court so much, merely by dancing before them."

Mrs Menden replied, that she was indeed famed in history for her beauty. "But what think you of her character, Emily?"

"I do not recollect hearing any thing of her character, mamma."

"But can you not form some opinion of it?" Emily declared she could not. Louisa, however, after a little reflection, said she must have been a very wicked girl, "for you recollect, Emily, she carried the head of John the Baptist herself to her mother, and I am sure she could not have done that if she had not been very cruel."

"Oh!" cried Emily, "I never thought of that; I wonder I did not think of it before; that is quite enough to prove that her beauty did not make her amiable: she must, indeed, have been a very cruel creature. Mamma, what character in the Bible do you like best?"

"I do not think I ever yet decided on that point; but you, I suppose, approve most of Absalom. His beauty was greater than that of any other person mentioned in Scripture."

"Oh, mamma! do you think I could like such a shocking creature, who rebelled against his own father? No; the person I like best is Joseph. I am sure no one could find a fault in his character."

"That is strange, for I do not recollect that his looks are particularly commended."

"I see I must give up that opinion, mamma," said Emily; "and yet I think Joseph must have been at least well-looking, for I heard you once say, mamma, that good temper makes every body handsome; and he was so gentle and forgiving, he must have been good tempered; and then, too, he was so kind and affectionate to his father and his

brothers, that I suppose it made his eyes sparkle, and his mouth smile and look nice, the way papa looks, Louisa, when he is pleased with any thing we say or do."

"You make me believe," said Mrs Menden smiling, "that Joseph must have been handsome; and I fully agree with you in thinking him at least the finest character in the Old Testament. He could not indeed have possessed so many eminent virtues without their giving a sweet and pleasant expression to his features, however rough they might have been; but I now recollect that we are told he was well-favoured."

Emily expressed great delight at hearing her mother approve of her opinion; and their conversation was at that moment joyfully interrupted by the arrival of a large packet from Colonel Menden, which they had been for some time expecting. His letter was written in good spirits, and contained so many pleasant remarks and anecdotes of the country he was in, that dinner was announced before the party were half satisfied with reading it.

Emily wondered very much that her papa did

not say whether or not he would allow them to go to him, since there seemed no chance of his soon returning; but Louisa reminded her, that their mother's letter, making a joint request from them all on that subject, had only been written a few days before, and that their papa could not have received it before he sent away the present packet.

In the evening Mrs Menden told the children she intended to place Liddy Fisher in the new porter's lodge, for which she had been so long looking for a worthy tenant, and that she would consign to their care the task of preparing it for her reception.

This information threw the little girls into a state of perfect delight; for, added to the pleasure of providing a home for Liddy and her daughter, they felt the happiness of knowing that their mother would not have promised them so great an indulgence, unless she had been thoroughly satisfied with their conduct.

When their glee had a little subsided, they inquired in what manner the lodge was to be

prepared; and reminded their mother that there was not any kind of furniture in it at the present moment.

"Very true," she replied, "but it is perfectly dry and comfortable, and I mean that you should fit it up yourselves with some of the discarded furniture which is locked up in one of the offices, and a few other articles which I can spare you out of the house. The little garden is well stocked with vegetables, and only requires to have the walks cleaned; so, if you think you can prepare the place to-morrow morning, I will give you a holyday to work at it, and in the evening you may go and bring home its new mistress."

"Oh, mamma!" cried Emily, leaping about like a little mad creature, "how glad I am that I am nobody's child in the whole world but yours, for I am sure no other little girl is half so happy,—except you, Louisa," she added, "and you, I think, must be a great deal happier even than I am, for you are a great deal better."

"Indeed, Emily, I do not know why you should say so," said Louisa, "for I do not think

I am either happier or better than yourself." And they both ran off to tell Saiphly all that had passed.

When they were gone, Mrs Menden retired to her own apartment to read her husband's letter over again, to return thanks for his present safety, and to pray for its long continuance; for, joyful as the letter had made her, it did not leave her without some anxiety on his account.

On coming down to tea, she found her daughters still busied in forming plans for the next day's employment; and, at their request, she promised to leave the entire management and decoration of the lodge to themselves. They might have old William the butler, and their maid Saiphly, at their command all the morning, she said, to assist in their arrangements; and the only stipulation was, that she should have the power of altering whatever she thought wrong, before Liddy was brought home.

When nine o'clock arrived, Emily, not yet tired of discussing the subject, entreated leave to sit up for half an hour longer.

“What! and prolong this hateful wet Sunday?” said her mother.

“Oh! indeed, mamma, this has been the pleasantest day I ever spent; and I resolved, when you were reading prayers to-night, that I would never be afraid of a wet Sunday again.”

“Then I hope my child will remember in whose presence she made the resolution, and try to keep it,” said Mrs Menden, kissing her little daughter, as she bade her good night.

The girls were soon in bed, and asleep. A bright sun, darting through their window, awoke them at six o'clock the following morning; and great was their delight at the clear blue sky, unspotted by a cloud, which presented itself to their view, and promised them a fine day for their undertaking.

Mrs Menden got up even earlier than usual, to collect as much bedding, house linen, and wearing apparel, as she could spare for their purpose; and the first part of the morning was spent, according to Saiphly's recommendation, in altering some of the things so as to suit Liddy's new establishment.

After breakfast, their mother conducted them to the office where the old furniture was kept, and allowed them to select whatever was necessary.

"William," she observed, "has been to the village already, to purchase all the articles for the kitchen, which I knew would be required; and Saiphly and he will remove and place every thing according to your directions."

She then left them to the care of their two good-natured attendants, who, as well as Ambrose, the gardener, whom they had inlisted in their service, were provided with full occupation for that morning.

The quarter bell rang to summon them to dress for dinner, just as their task was finished; and the repast was no sooner ended, than Mrs Menden was led to the lodge, to give her opinion of what had been done.

She found all arranged to her perfect satisfaction, and was much pleased with the air of cheerfulness and comfort they had contrived to give to every part of the house. In the sleeping room an excellent bed stood, prepared for use. The Sunday evening

stories for Ally, some other books, and a supply of clothes, with a good stock of working materials, lay neatly spread on the shelves of an open closet, in one corner of the room; and in the kitchen, where all had been attended to with equal care, a table was laid out for dinner; and pots, well stored with victuals, for a plentiful repast, stood ready to be hung upon the fire.

The children were then despatched on their joyful embassy, and commissioned to present Liddy with five pounds, which Mrs Menden sent her in advance from the salary belonging to the situation.

The ground was scarcely felt beneath their feet as they flew across the fields to the cottage; and when they reached it, breathless with joy and speed, they stopped not a moment to explain their errand, but merely telling Liddy she was wanted by their mother, and seizing Ally by the hands, they ran with her towards the lodge in silence.

Mrs Menden was still sauntering about the avenue, when she saw them all return; but she did not hear the exclamation of joyful surprise uttered by the little girl, when, stopping to admire

the roses and woodbine which thickly covered its walls, she was informed by her two young friends, that the house, the garden, and all the pretty flowers about it, belonged to herself and her mother.

Liddy looked as much surprised as her daughter ; and when Louisa delivered Mrs Menden's message as they led her through the house, so well prepared for her reception, she could find no words expressive of her feelings. But though silent, even Emily saw that she was grateful ; and if the girls were somewhat disappointed at her not appearing more elated by the gift, they had ample satisfaction from Ally's unconstrained and artless rapture. At one moment she would snatch a cloth and rub the chairs and tables, already shining from the care of abler hands than hers ; then she would run and gather flowers for her mother, flinging her arms around her neck, and scarcely wait to give the intended kiss, until some fresh object of delight caught her eye, and called forth some equally strong expression of her joy.

It was late before Louisa could persuade her sister that it was time to return to their mamma ;

but at last, assuring Liddy that they should often see her, they hastened back to recount all that had passed.

Every look, and word, and action of little Ally was described with delight; but Emily acknowledged, with some chagrin, that Liddy did not seem half so much gratified as she expected; and it required all Mrs Menden's rhetoric to persuade her that the poor woman was probably as much rejoiced and as grateful as her daughter.

When tea was over, their mother left them to get their lessons for the next day, and walked to the lodge, in hopes of being able to cheer the widow's spirits, and turn her mind from the painful reflections to which this change in her circumstances, however desirable, might probably have given rise.

She found her sitting at the door, and evidently in sorrow, whilst her daughter played at some distance in the garden.

The good creature arose hastily, as she saw her mistress approach, and wiping away the tears from her eyes, met her with a smile of gratitude.

"You have done too much for me, ma'am," she

said ; "so much, that I fear you will think me a sad thankless creature, for appearing sorrowful in the midst of your bounty ; but,"——

"I will have no thanks, dear Liddy," replied Mrs Menden, "and deserve none, since I have only performed a duty which I am sure you would have performed for me, had our situations been reversed ; sit down, therefore, and let us be silent on the subject of thanks, and enjoy this sweet evening hour together. All I wish is, to see you become a little more cheerful and happy."

"Indeed, dear madam, I try to become so, because I know it is my duty ; but I cannot," said Liddy, tears flowing afresh as she spoke, "I cannot, especially this evening, get my poor husband out of my thoughts for one moment. He was more worthy than I am of such a situation as this, and he would have been so happy here with me."

"He was, I know, worthy of a far better place, and you have every reason to believe, that where he now is, he is happier than he could be even with you. I must not see you, Liddy, give way to these feelings, which, however natural they may be, are

still, we know, improper; and yet they are so difficult to suppress, that you must ever look for aid to Him who can alone give you strength to conquer them. I trust, through His assistance, I shall soon see you able to draw comfort from the attachment of your child, and the regard of your friends, amongst whom I wish you ever to reckon me."

Liddy, with tears of heartfelt gratitude, expressed her sense of Mrs Menden's kindness, when Ally drew near, and perceived that her mother had been in distress.

She immediately dropped a bunch of flowers which she had been gathering, and ran into the house, but presently returned with a volume of stories in her hand which Emily had obtained and already presented to her.

"You have not seen this pretty book yet, mother," said she. "I should not have left you alone, and I will not do so again, but will sit down and read you one of these new stories, if you will let me, after the lady is gone."

"You shall read it for me to-morrow," said her

mother, smiling affectionately on her; "but you must now pick up all those flowers which you have scattered about the door. I know you will try to keep this place neat and orderly for the lady and her daughters, who have been so kind to us both."

Ally gave the book into her mother's hand, and began to pick up the flowers.

While she was collecting them, Liddy looked into the stories, and, struck with some writing in the first page, could not help pouring forth praises of the two little girls who were so kind to her child. She held out the book to Mrs Menden, who saw written, in Emily's hand, these words,—

'This is Ally Fisher's book. It was procured for her by Louisa Menden.'

"We have both reason to be grateful for many blessings, Liddy; but for none more than the amiable dispositions of our children," said Mrs Menden, who then told her the circumstance by which the stories had been obtained.

While she spoke, Ally brought forward the bunch of flowers which she had collected from the ground, and as she presented them to Mrs Menden, abruptly

asked if it was still her wish that she should go to school?

"I wish you to do every thing which will make you good and happy," said Mrs Menden, taking the flowers, and drawing the little girl to her side.

"Then I will go to school to-morrow, if you please," said Ally, firmly; "but I hope it will not be to any place very far away."

"No, Ally," replied Mrs Menden, kissing her cheek, "it shall not be very far away: you may see the school-house, where I mean you should go, in the opposite field: your mother can take you to it herself, and will be able to superintend your instruction there, if she pleases. Then you will learn how to take care of her, and to support her should it be necessary, when she grows old, and may require your aid."

Ally's reply was interrupted by the appearance of farmer Dillon, who, surprised at his cousin's long absence, had come to conduct her home.

Mrs Menden, happy to see her looking a little more cheerful than when they first met, was glad

to leave her under his care ; and left it to herself to tell him of her present situation.

Ally kept her resolution of attending the school, and in a short time seemed not to mind the daily separation from her mother.

Mrs Menden was astonished at observing the rapid progress she had made in the course of one month, and found she had excited such a spirit of emulation amongst the scholars as was of use to them all.

Louisa and Emily were charmed at her improvement. On the first day of examination, after she had entered, they returned in high spirits from the school ; and, instead of going into the house with their mother, they ran off to their gardens, which they were anxious to shew in perfect order to some ladies who were to dine at Menden Park that day.

Mrs Menden had gone into the drawing-room to rest, and found on the table a packet from her husband, giving such a gratifying answer to the last letter she had written to him, that she

immediately went to seek her children, and communicate its contents to them.

What was her surprise and mortification, on reaching the garden gate, to see Emily run, with every indication of passion, and fling something over the wall, while Louisa, in an agony of grief, stood wringing her hands, as if some sad misfortune had befallen her.

After gazing at them for some time in astonishment, she, in a voice of marked displeasure, demanded an explanation of what she saw.

The culprits started at her voice.

"Oh, mamma!" cried Louisa, struggling to suppress the sobs which she was now unable to conquer, "Emily has pulled up my beautiful almond tree, and thrown it over the wall in a passion."

"But, mamma, she broke mine first," said Emily, in a voice of equal anger.

"I broke yours quite by accident, when I was taking away a weed, which was twisted round it," sobbed Louisa.

“Ambrose would have given you another almond tree, had you asked it, Emily,” said Mrs Menden coldly; “and yours, Louisa, beautiful as it may have been, was scarcely worth such sinful anger or such violent sorrow.”

“No, mamma, I know it was not,” sobbed Louisa; “but I think Emily should not have pulled up my tree, merely because I accidentally broke hers.”

“And I am sure she had no right to come and pull up weeds or any thing else out of my garden,” said Emily.

“The brothers of your favourite Joseph, had no right to sell him to the Egyptians; yet the injury never drove him into the dreadful passion of anger, Louisa—or the still more hateful crime of revenge, Emily.

“I have this moment received a letter from your father, which I had brought out to read to you; but I am sorry to find that neither of you deserve to hear it, nor are you worthy to spend the day with me, or with the friends whom I have invited to dinner: you will therefore remain in your room;

and on your conduct there, throughout the day, and your patient endurance of this punishment, will depend my forgiveness of your misconduct, Louisa, to-night. For you, Emily, I know not when you can expect my pardon."

She then left them, saying she would send their maid to bring them from the garden. At sight of her deep displeasure, their tears flowed from such real sorrow, as quickly touched the heart of their affectionate attendant; but though kind and indulgent to the children, Saiphly was too obedient to her mistress, to attempt mitigating any punishment which she thought proper to inflict. They followed her in silence to the house, and as they passed through the dressing-room, where their mamma was preparing for dinner, found it difficult to retain that composure on which they knew her forgiveness partly depended.

As soon as they were shut up in their own apartment, Louisa's sobs and grief were redoubled. Her spirits were naturally weaker than those of her sister; and in conformity with her mother's advice, to keep herself constantly employed, when she

found it difficult to conquer a fit of crying, she ran to her baby-house, and began to new model and arrange every thing in it, with the hope of regaining her self-command. She did not feel at first any interest in the work, but by degrees perceived the benefit of her exertion ; and by the time her arrangements were finished, she had completely recovered her composure.

Emily, on the contrary, struck by the deep displeasure marked in her mother's manner towards her, sat like a picture of remorse, lost in tears of penitence and sorrow, until her sister, pitying her distress, at length asked her to join in some employment which might amuse them both.

"Suppose," she said, "we try to make the new kind of dressing pincushion mamma has been so long wishing for. Here are our work-boxes, and here are all the things she gave us yesterday for making the attempt."

"I am afraid mamma would not wish me to do any thing for her to-day," said Emily mournfully.

"Indeed, Emily, I am sure she would wish you to do any thing of the kind, that would help to make you happy."

"But I cannot be happy," said Emily, bursting into a fresh flood of tears, "until mamma has forgiven me for being in a passion, and until you, Louisa, have forgiven me for pulling up your almond tree. I think mamma will not kiss me or forgive me to-night; but if you knew how sorry I am for being cross to you, Louisa, I am sure you would forgive me."

Louisa threw her arms round her sister's neck. "I am sure mamma will forgive us both," said she, "whenever she knows we are sorry for having displeased her; and as to me, Emily, I do not care about my almond tree now; I am only sorry that I happened to break yours."

The little girls soon felt happier for having spoken to each other in this manner; and they commenced their new work with such alacrity, that the pincushion was laid upon the toilet, their lessons learned, and all the business of the evening satisfactorily completed, when Saiphly announced to them that it was their time for going to bed.

This was the first night on which they had ever retired to rest, without receiving their mother's blessing; and at that recollection they were obliged

to renew all their struggles to prevent a fresh burst of sorrow.

It was late when Mrs Menden's friends left her ; and, when she withdrew to her room after their departure, her first business was, as usual, to examine her daughters' catechisms, and observe if the answers they had written agreed with her opinion of their conduct.

Opposite the question,—

Did I my heart with patience guide,
Checking ill temper, anger, pride ?

She saw, on both boards, the negatives she expected ; and she was pleased and affected at reading, on each, an humble entreaty from her daughters, that she would grant them her pardon before she slept.

“ I am as anxious to forgive you, my children, as you can be to receive my pardon,” said she, going to their bedside, on finding they were still awake. “ Saiphly tells me you have conducted yourselves in a manner which proves you are sorry for your

faults, and I am therefore well disposed to look on you again with love and favour. But I must not, Emily, indulge myself at the risk of injuring you; and as your behaviour this morning betrayed a disposition, of which I thought you incapable, you deserve a heavier punishment than any I have yet inflicted on you. You must therefore submit either to lose your garden for one month, or not to receive my pardon, until to-morrow morning."

"Oh! mamma," sobbed Emily, stretching out her arms; "Oh! do forgive me; I will give up my garden for as long as you please, only forgive me to-night."

"Reflect before you decide," said her mother. "The spring, with all its sweetest flowers, will be past before the garden can return into your hands; my displeasure, however painful for the time, will be over in one night."

"Oh! do mamma, do, pray, forgive us both," cried Louisa eagerly. "Emily could not be happy until she has received your pardon."

"No, mamma, indeed I could not," sobbed Emily; and still persisting in her wish to resign

the garden, she received that blessing without which, neither she nor Louisa had found it possible to rest; and they both, shortly after, forgot all their cares in sleep.

Here Kate stopped for a few minutes to take breath; and stealing an inquiring glance round the table, she perceived, with pleasure, that her aunt's knitting was cast aside, and that her uncle kept his eye fixed with a pleased expression on her face. He was tapping the lid of a gold snuff-box, which he held ready to take a pinch from, at the first convenient pause; his legs were crossed; the upper foot shook with a quick regular motion, which, she knew well, indicated satisfaction.

"They like the beginning of my story tolerably well," thought she. "There is nothing in it, I see, of which they disapprove; but what will they think of the second part? for oh what a falling off I know to be there!"

Her reflections were interrupted by an entreaty from Elizabeth that she would proceed. Sir

Humphrey snuffed the candles, and placed them nearer to her; and when Mrs Deborah had again taken her seat, after getting up to fix her niece's head and shoulders in a perfectly perpendicular position, Kate resumed her story.

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THE
SOLDIER'S RETURN.

PART II.

Weave the crimson web of war,
Let us go, and let us fly,
Where our friends the conflict share,
Where they conquer, where they die.

GRAY.

No sooner were their eyes opened the next morning, than the two girls came to Mrs Menden's bedside, to inquire what answer their father had given to her request, that they should be allowed to join him abroad.

“He has granted it, my dear girls. He will meet us himself at Ostend, and he proposes that we should remain abroad with him, until the restoration

of peace shall, please God, enable us all to return home together."

"Oh, joy! joy!" cried Emily in ecstasy, "and we shall see papa immediately."

"No, not immediately; we have many preparations to make before we can set out; and afterwards a long voyage to take, which, I fear, you will think neither speedy nor agreeable."

"Oh, no matter, mamma; no matter. I am sure it will be all very pleasant," said both girls, running off, to complete, as fast as possible, the irksome task of dressing.

But though Mrs Menden endeavoured to restrain her own impatience, and to check the unbounded rapture of her daughters, she found it impossible to do either; and the preparations for their departure went on so rapidly, that, on the third day after the receipt of Colonel Menden's letter, they were all ready to commence their journey.

Mrs Menden now pitied her unfortunate foster-sister more deeply than ever, feeling herself secure of recovering that happiness which Liddy could never hope to enjoy again. To keep her from

brooding over her misfortunes, and to occupy her time as much as possible, it was agreed, that she should fill Saiphly's place in the management of the house, while that faithful servant attended her mistress to the Continent.

It was a lovely morning in the month of June, when the party set off, escorted by William, the old butler, who, though he acknowledged himself no very courageous seaman, insisted on seeing his mistress, and his dear young ladies, across the water, and delivering them safely, with his own hands, into his master's care.

The weather was fine; the journey from Menden Park to Harwich, where they were to embark, was delightful; and all things promised fair for a speedy and prosperous voyage.

It proved, indeed, more speedy than any of the passengers wished, for the wind, getting up in the night, blew a gale so strong, as to frighten all on board. Louisa and Emily were not amongst those who suffered least from sickness and terror; but all the miseries of the voyage were forgotten, when the sweet and welcome sound of the bells at Ostend, announced that they were in that harbour.

The party hastened on deck; and whilst the cheerful peal increased on their ear, and the gay and busy scene closed around them, they saw a crowd of persons on shore press forward, each to receive and welcome some expected friend.

Mrs Menden's whole frame trembled with emotion, at the thought of once more seeing her husband in safety; and whilst her eager eye strained through the crowd in search of his well-known form, Louisa, whose looks followed her mother's, cried out, that Russel, her papa's servant, who saved his life so often, was there amongst the throng, just coming up to meet them.

The good soldier hastened forward to assist them on shore, and could scarcely restrain the honest expression of his joy at seeing them again.

"I need not ask you how you do, Russel," said Mrs Menden, holding out her hand to the preserver of her husband's life; "you look just as well, after all your hardships, as you did three years ago, when you promised to bring your master back to me, safe and well, before so many months. But tell me why I do not see him with you? is he still well, and is he here?"

“He is well ; but he is not here,” replied Russel, his face losing a little its expression of gladness. “He has been in many a hard fought battle since you and he parted, my dear mistress, but I never saw him flinch from a soldier’s duty, until he was refused leave to come and meet you at this place. There is not, however, a man in the army at the present moment in better health than himself ; and I am sure there will be none happier, when he gets you and my sweet young ladies by his side again.”

“It seems strange he could not be allowed to come and meet me, if matters remain as quiet as when he last wrote,” said Mrs Menden.

Russel informed her, he had brought a letter from his master, which would explain matters better than he could do ; and when they arrived at the hotel where he had made preparations for their reception, he gave her the packet. From it she learned, that the enemy had mustered a very strong force in the neighbourhood of the British army, and that they must inevitably try their fate in the field before many days were passed. The action, he said,

would be decisive ; and he wished her to remain at Ostend until the conflict was over.

To this she felt the strongest repugnance ; and believing that, in case of his being wounded, her care might be essential to his recovery, or at least to his comfort, she, for once, determined to disobey him, and proposed to leave the children under Saiphly's care, and to proceed herself to Brussels, where she would be within his reach.

She was, however, dissuaded from this plan by Russel, who said he never could answer to his master for letting her go there, as it would be the first place to which the enemy would advance, in case of their being successful : but he thought Odaine, a village some miles to the left of our army, and which was out of the line of march the enemy would take, either in advancing or afterwards retreating, would be a place of perfect security ; and as he told her the families of many British officers had already come there for safety from Brussels, knowing that from thence they could readily cross the country to the sea, if it became necessary to fly, she resolved to follow his

advice, and take her children there along with her.

"How soon could we reach Odaine?" said Mrs Menden, after she had made up her mind to the measure.

"Probably we might be there on Sunday," replied Russel, "if we set out with a detachment of troops, that starts hence this evening."

"Then," said Mrs Menden, "let every thing be prepared for our departure. To commence our journey will only refresh us, after the confinement of the packet, and I shall be ready to set out at any hour you appoint."

Her anxiety to get within reach of her husband at so critical a moment was scarcely greater than that felt by Russel to hasten back to the scene of action. While he sought out the commander of the detachment, and arranged matters with him for their departure, old William busied himself in procuring some refreshment for the travellers, and making preparations for their journey.

A change of clothes, and a few hours' sleep, completely renovated the strength and spirits of the

children. As they got into the carriage with their mother and Saiphly, and drove along, escorted by a strong body of dragoons, and a long train of carts and ammunition wagons, they began to change the opinion which, with much chagrin, they had expressed some time before, that they had seen nothing new or amusing since they left home; and that all the green fields, trees, houses, and people, looked just like those they had left in England.

Unacquainted with the contents of their father's letter, and cheered, after their first disappointment, by the thought, that they were now actually on the road to meet him, they chatted merrily of the strange scene before them. To this they were encouraged by Saiphly, who endeavoured to direct their attention from her agitated mistress, whose distress became, at times, but too apparent, as the danger of her husband rose with fresh horror to her recollection.

The party continued its route night and day, stopping only at intervals, when it was necessary to refresh the horses. At last, on the morning of the second day's journey, worn out by anxiety and

fatigue, Mrs Menden endeavoured to follow the example of her children, who had slept uninterruptedly for the last five hours. She found it, however, impossible to procure a moment's rest; and as the day advanced, her fears were roused almost to agony by the sound of cannon, which she heard rolling like distant thunder through the air.

"The battle is then begun," said she to Russel, who rode close by the carriage window. "How far do you think we are still from Odaine?"

"Not quite a mile," was the reply.

At this moment a troop of Prussian hussars appeared, crossing the country in much disorder, just in front of the detachment.

"What news do they bring?" said Russel, to one of the dragoons, who had galloped forward to interrogate the stragglers.

"Bad enough, by all I could understand from their broken English," replied the soldier. "They say the battle has raged for these two days, and that in an hour or two, at most, our army will be routed."

"But who believes them?" called out the indig-

nant soldier. Then furiously spurring on his horse, he ordered the postilion to keep pace with the cavalry, who, heedless of all fatigue, urged on their wearied horses, and entered the village at a brisk trot.

Here they were met by an officer of the guard, who had charge of the sick and wounded sent into this place of safety the day before.

"What tidings from the camp, Holton?" said the commander of the detachment, without waiting to greet an old acquaintance.

"We were victorious yesterday," returned Holton; but there was more of anxiety than exultation in the voice with which he made the reply. "We fell back last night upon a village near this, and I fear they have some tough work on yonder heights this morning."

"Have we lost many lives, your honour?" asked Russel in a low voice; "Can you tell me if the regiment of light infantry has been much engaged, and if Colonel Menden is safe."

"Your regiment was in the hottest part of the action yesterday," said Holton; "but I left Colonel

Menden in perfect health at six o'clock in the evening, and I trust to find him in the same state half an hour hence ; for, thank God, I am now at liberty to quit this place, and share the danger with my companions." So saying, he resigned his charge, according to orders, into Ripley's hands, and returned to the field. That officer did not receive the trust very graciously, but he was obliged to submit. One of his first cares was, to procure a lodging for Mrs Menden, whose alarm and agitation had been dreadfully increased by all she heard. He soon found her comfortable accommodation, and pitying the distress she appeared to suffer, resolved to pay her every attention in his power.

The children did not awake until the carriage stopped at the door of their lodging, when perceiving the expression of alarm in their mother's look and manner, they caught an apprehension of some impending danger. This was increased on their entrance into the house, by the dreadful cannonading, which they then heard for the first time ; and, deprived of the spirits which had sustained them through the fatigues of their journey, they

seemed no longer able to struggle against their terror and weariness.

Mrs Menden busied herself, with the haste and eagerness of one afraid of having time for reflection, in preparing a place for them to get some repose. She had just assisted them to bed, and was still standing by their side, when the firing increased with such tremendous rapidity, that the house shook to its centre.

She sunk upon the side of their bed. "Sleep, sleep, my children," she cried, in a voice of such misery, that the girls, who had never before seen her lose her self-possession, clung trembling to each other, and closed their eyes, as if anxious to obey her, without daring to speak. In a few minutes the cannonading slackened, and perceiving them steal an inquiring look at her, she assumed sufficient composure to speak to them with cheerfulness, and after a short time had the satisfaction of seeing them sink into a quiet slumber.

When fully assured that they were asleep, she stole to the window, from whence there was a view of the country towards the camp; and seating

herself at the open casement, she watched, with breathless agitation, an immense assemblage of people, who had collected on a hill beyond the village, and seemed to regard the scene of action with anxiety equal to her own.

She had not been long there, when the firing recommenced with double fury; and unable to control her feelings, she summoned Saiphly to her place, and went to join young Ripley and Russel, who paced with hurried steps before her windows.

"Do not feel so much alarmed, dear madam," said the former, advancing to meet her. "The enemy have a bad cause, and cannot much longer maintain it against our gallant commander."

"And my master has been in the hottest of twenty battles before this, and the same Power who preserved his life then, will guard it still," said Russel.

She clasped her hands, but made no reply.

"Why are you not by his side, good Russel?" she at length said. "I should feel happier if you were with him."

Russel looked as if he would feel so too, but he

recollected his master's charge to stay by her in case of danger, and hesitated, being unwilling to leave her.

At this moment a couple of soldiers, and some women from the hill, passed up the street, bearing with them an officer, to all appearance dead, whom they carried into a house close by Mrs Menden's.

She turned away in agony, dreading it might be her husband, or some friend she loved.

"How goes the day?" said Russel, as the men hastened back to the action.

"Hard enough," replied one of them: "the brunt of the battle has fallen on our left wing; but we shall conquer yet, I hope."

"You are well out of the fray to-day," exclaimed the second soldier, who glanced his eye on Russel's uniform; "your regiment was almost surrounded by the enemy's cavalry when we left the field, and I fear will be cut to pieces before we get back."

"I'll stay no longer idling here," cried Russel. "You, lieutenant, cannot quit your post; I leave my mistress to your care; I can do her no good, and may do some elsewhere." So saying he soon

outstripped the fleetest of the men who pursued their way to the field.

Poor Ripley bit his lips, and inveighed bitterly against the unlucky order which chained him to the guard that day. He was, however, a man of true courage, and felt that he might shew as much firmness by submitting to a mortification, as by fighting a battle. Having also a kind and feeling heart, he immediately turned all his attention towards his terrified companion, whom he found it difficult to rouse from the stupefaction, into which the last information had plunged her.

Thinking his best plan would be to give her some employment, and try in any way to engage her attention, he proposed that they should go together and offer assistance to the wounded officer who had just been carried past them; since there was at that time, he knew, no medical aid to be had in the village.

Mrs Menden had thought of this before; but enervated by the excessive fatigue and anxiety she had undergone, the fortitude which, in general, marked her character, had for the moment forsaken

her, and she had been deterred from making the proposal by a vague dread of meeting in the sufferer some person she knew,—an apprehension which, at any other time, would have made her fly to his relief.

Willing, however, to act as her reason told her she ought, she followed Ripley to the house in silence.

On entering the first door they found open, she saw two women very composedly sitting smoking beside the officer, who lay, to all appearance, lifeless on the floor.

“It is not any person I know,” cried she, springing forward with awakened energy; and her companion felt astonished at the judgment and activity which she now exerted to restore life to the stranger.

Having discovered, amongst many dangerous wounds, a severe contusion on his chest, she inquired, from the women, what had been done for his relief? With undisturbed composure they replied that nothing had been done, because the gentleman was dead. They, however, shewed themselves

very ready to be useful in any way that could be pointed out to them, and while one hastened to prepare a warm bath, the other ran to some distance in the village, to try and procure a lancet, with which, when she returned, Ripley took courage to open a vein in the sufferer's arm. With heartfelt satisfaction, they perceived the blood begin to flow; and as hope rose in their minds, all their efforts were redoubled; but there was still little sign of life, and it was many hours before Mrs Menden had any reason to suppose that their exertions would prove finally successful.

In the mean time, Russel pursued his rapid flight to the field of battle, and casting around an eager look for his own regiment, which he considered the pride and glory of the whole army, he soon discovered it maintaining an unequal, but unyielding conflict with two regiments of chasseurs, by which it was attacked on each side, whilst a howitzer from the opposite height poured a destructive fire right upon its centre.

"They are lost!" he exclaimed, on seeing his brave Colonel strain every nerve to extricate the

regiment from so perilous a situation,—“ They will be slaughtered to a man, my brave master and all, and I will never survive their downfall !”

With this determination in his mind, he thought for a moment how he might sell his life to most advantage; and making his way to join the corps, he pushed forward through the centre of the square, resolved, at least, to make one effort for their relief. He watched his opportunity, and rushing on several paces in the enemy's front, threw himself on his face, just as a ball from the howitzer tore up the ground by his side, almost burying him in the devastation it created.

“ Safe for once,” said he, rising on one knee, and shaking off the earth with which he was encumbered; then coolly taking aim at the soldier who stood by the cannon's mouth, preparing for another charge, he fired, and saw the man fall.

Another race, and Russel was again flat on the ground, charging his musket as he lay, when a second ball passed without touching him.

“ Two of our enemies sent where they will never trouble us more,” he exclaimed, having fired his

piece with his former success : " now one more race, and the game is my own."

He ran, escaped, fired again, saw his third adversary fall, and the fourth, panic-struck, desert his post ; then springing forward, he laid his hand upon the cannon, and shouting with the voice of Stentor, " A gun taken !" he waved his cap for his companions to advance.*

Urged on by his unparalleled example, and relieved from the murderous fire of the howitzer, the men were enabled to form, so as to pour one volley close in amongst the enemy, and rushing furiously upon them, at the point of the bayonet, they fought as British soldiers alone can fight, and soon drove them at full flight back upon their lines.

The right wing of the army was, by this time, completely successful, and the commander in chief, aware that a large body of horse was advancing from the left to follow up the victory, formed his

* This gallant exploit was actually performed, in a former action, by Robert Russel, a private in the 85th Light Infantry, well known to all the officers of his corps.

troops into one ponderous line, and rushed like a torrent down the heights, driving the flying enemy before them.

* * * * *

"Where is Russel, our brave preserver?" asked Colonel Menden, when the battle and pursuit had ceased.

"Close by your honour's side," replied the hero, as, intoxicated with delight, he seized his master's hand, and wished him joy of the victory. He, however, soon perceived with horror that Colonel Menden was desperately wounded, and almost covered with blood.

"Gently, good Russel," said the Colonel, shrinking from his grasp; "that arm has had two bullets through it this morning. My horse, too, has no longer strength to carry me, so assist me to dismount; but as you do so, my friend, let me know where you left your mistress, and why you quitted her."

Russel was about to reply, but his master had no sooner left the saddle, than, exhausted by pain, fatigue, and loss of blood, he fell to the earth in a state of insensibility.

The faithful servant, and the men around him, forgot their own fatigue, and all the toils and glories of the day, in anxious zeal to render him assistance. A litter was procured, and he was quickly carried to the village, accompanied by the surgeon of his regiment, and by many sufferers who stood in equal need of assistance.

As the party entered the town, Russel, seeing his master still insensible, ran on before to apprise Mrs Menden of her husband's situation and near approach. He found she had just left her own house, having gone to visit the wounded officer, whose life she still considered in extreme danger.

She was standing by the bedside, examining a slight wound on his head, which had not been observed before, when Russel, unperceived by her, presented himself at the door.

"Is the battle over, and is your Colonel safe?" hastily exclaimed the invalid, with flushed cheek and agitated voice, as he caught the first view of Russel's well known countenance.

Before Mrs Menden turned round to see whom he thus eagerly addressed, she was startled by the voice which replied in ill repressed agitation.

"The day is won, sir; but we have bought it with the loss of many lives."

Seized with sudden tremor, she would have fallen to the ground, had not the good soldier sprang forward to her assistance.

"Your master?—Oh! tell me!" was all she could articulate.

"I will not deceive you, my dear mistress: my master is wounded, but, I trust, not dangerously. He is now at your lodging, and, with your care, in a little time, his wounds may not signify. Let me entreat you, dear lady, to shew as much resolution, now the battle is over, as he did in the midst of it."

"Is it possible that I owe my preservation to the wife of my best friend?" said the invalid, affectionately pressing her hand. "Hasten to him, dear madam—he may require your care,—and tell him you have saved the life of Arthur Chrestone."

Mrs Menden's pale cheek flushed with joyful surprise at this intelligence; but the certainty that her husband was alive, the knowledge that he was wounded, and, above all, the thought that he was so near, filled her with such various emotions, that,

without being able to speak, she merely pressed the hand of her newly discovered friend with affection equal to his own, and hurried away, glad to accept support from the arm of her faithful domestic. A few seconds brought her to her own house, but her fortitude almost forsook her as she reached the door of the apartment, where Colonel Menden lay impatiently waiting for her.

On entering, she saw him stretched on the couch where he had just been laid, wounded, exhausted, and almost covered with blood. The two little girls hung over him weeping by his side, with grief and fear depicted on each expressive countenance.

He struggled to suppress every sign of pain as she approached, and while he leaned forward to meet her, there was only visible in his eye an expression of the joy he felt at beholding her once more. He almost, for the time, forgot the agony of his wounds, but his pale and haggard appearance, and the quantity of blood which flowed from his arm, struck terror to the heart of Mrs Menden.

"You must not speak to me," she said, sinking

on her knees beside his couch, and pressing his outstretched hand against her forehead—"I am sufficiently happy at seeing you alive—you must not speak to me until you are better."

The injunction, however, was unheeded, and he could not be persuaded to let her quit him, until the surgeon, alarmed for the consequences, protested there was an absolute necessity for paying immediate attention to his wounds, which had been already too long neglected.

Mrs Menden sent the girls away, but entreated leave to remain and assist, if possible, in whatever operation might be necessary; nor could she be persuaded to leave the room, until her husband, declaring he would not submit to any while she was present, urged her so anxiously to retire, that, unwilling any longer to resist his wishes, she obeyed.

When Surgeon Trebor examined the broken arm, he found the shoulder bone shattered in two places, and the part so dreadfully inflamed in consequence of many hours' exertion and neglect, that he felt the greatest apprehension for his patient's

life. Amputation, from the state and nature of the wound, was impracticable, and he was under the painful necessity of acquainting Mrs Menden with her husband's situation, as she alone could attend to the precautions requisite for his safety.

The kind-hearted surgeon was moved even to tears on beholding the agony his statement inflicted; and he watched over Mrs Menden with fatherly interest, whilst, day after day, he saw her hover round the sick-bed of her husband, administering with ceaseless anxiety to his wants, and concealing, with heroic firmness, every feeling, the sight of which might agitate his mind, and by consequence augment both his danger and his suffering.

For many days his life was held by an uncertain tenure; but Colonel Menden, happily for himself, possessed such a calm and placid temper, and bore the excruciating agony occasioned by his complicated wounds with such matchless patience and resignation, that his fever, receiving no increase from mental irritation, was able to be kept under, by the skill and care of his attendants, and at length gave way to the remedies applied. He then began

to shew decided symptoms of recovery, and the kind surgeon, who had perceived throughout his illness that he was fully aware of his danger, had the satisfaction of assuring him, that all fears for his life were at length at an end.

"You must give these happy tidings to Mrs Menden yourself, my dear sir," said he, as she, at that moment, stole softly into the room; but Colonel Menden, with a cheerful smile, replied that he believed they would be welcome, come from whom they might.

Surgeon Trebor staid for a short time to witness the renewed happiness of the grateful pair, and felt all his care and anxiety rewarded, by seeing the animated expression of felicity, which gradually spread over Mrs Menden's mild countenance, as her mind opened to the full conviction of her husband's safety.

"How happy our friend Mr Trebor ought to be," she remarked to her husband, in the course of their conversation, "who has been blessed with power to save so many valuable lives in the course of his own, and how trifling are all other worldly

benefits, when compared with those which a physician is often enabled to bestow."

Trebor, though thankful for any good he might have done, disclaimed all praise of this kind, declaring, he did not ascribe to his art the degree of power which it was generally thought to possess. "I have seen," said he, "so many deaths occur from what appear to me inadequate causes, and again, so many recoveries take place after every hope in human remedies seemed vain, that I am persuaded we can do little more than alleviate the sufferings of our fellow-creatures: and in this respect," he added, "I fancy, you ladies have fully as much influence as any of the faculty."

Mrs Menden asked, "In what way?"

"By early inuring your children to hardship, and teaching them to endure suffering without that dread and irritation which, in cases like the present, always increase fever and bring on additional disease. I have," said he, "but this morning lost a patient, whose situation was not half so desperate as that of Colonel Menden, and whose death was certainly produced by the frequent excitement

occasioned by his own impatience and apprehension."

Trebor now rose to depart; and Mrs Menden soon after withdrew, to communicate to her children the happy news, which she could not fully enjoy until it was shared with them. Without knowing the extent of their father's danger, they had been kept close prisoners in a distant part of the house, but had read enough in the anxious faces around them to excite an alarm of which they hardly understood the cause.

"My children," she said, encircling them in her arms as she entered their room, "my beloved children, your father will live to bless and protect you still: he is pronounced out of danger, and we shall all once more be happy."

"O mamma!" said Louisa, returning her embrace, "is he then no longer in pain?"

"And when," said Emily, "when may we see him again? We will sit quietly by his bedside, and only try to be useful, if you will let us go to him."

"You cannot, my dear girls, be more anxious to see him than he is to see you; but he must still be

kept in perfect quiet, and, for his sake, I know you will patiently submit to your confinement a short time longer. We shall all, I trust, very soon be restored to each other; for, since the night of our arrival here, I have not had time to attend even to you, my children, or indeed scarcely to think of you, so much have I been occupied by the sight of your father's suffering, and the dread of what it might produce."

She next informed them of her surprise, at finding in the wounded officer, whom they knew she had been attending, the uncle of their little friend Lucy Onslow, which information filled them with increased delight. This she had carefully concealed from them, whilst his case appeared so very doubtful, being unwilling to heighten the distress which their alarm about their father, their almost constant separation from her, and their confinement in a very comfortless lodging, all conspired to occasion.

Major Chrestone, she confessed, was still in a state of suffering, but she held out to them a hope, that in a few days he might be able to see them; and whenever that was the case, she promised that

they should be permitted to assist in nursing and attending him, as she did herself. She also promised to take them for a few minutes into their father's room whenever he awoke, and after again embracing them, hastened away to his friend, whom she had not seen for some hours.

No hope, no prospect of future pleasure, had, however, power to cheer the girls, as they saw their mother depart again from their prison without them. They now began to demonstrate a truth which is pretty generally acknowledged, that those who can submit to real trials with fortitude and resignation, often suffer themselves to be overcome by trifles, which they ought to blush for thinking about.

Louisa and Emily had borne their long and irksome imprisonment with perfect patience, while their fears for their father's safety were kept alive; but now when their apprehension was removed, and when they were so near emancipation, they began to complain of their lot. All Saiphly's endeavours failed to keep them in good humour. Her prettiest stories, heard over and over again, had now lost their charm; and it was in vain she

tried to remind them, that their father was much better, that their confinement was nearly at an end, and that their dejection and impatience were now unreasonable.

It was very hard, they said, to have left Menden Park, for nothing in the world but to be shut up in a nasty little lodging, without being able to get out of the house, or even to see their father.

"Indeed, Saiphly," said Louisa, in reply to a disapproving shake of her maid's head, and more than half ashamed of the tears which ran down her cheeks; "indeed, Saiphly, it is no wonder I cry, for every thing has turned out unluckily since we left home. It would be quite enough to make any body cry."

"My dear young lady, I am sure you will not repeat that sentence if you consider a little about it: I did not expect to hear you, who have just been told your father was out of danger, say, that every thing has turned out unluckily since you left home."

"Well, Saiphly, I did not mean every thing, but I am sure, most things have."

"No, my dear child, nor yet most things. God, as he always does, has ordered matters providentially and happily for us all, ever since we came here."

"Why, now, Saiphly, was it happy that papa got his arm broken, and was put to such pain and torture for nothing?" said Louisa.

"And was it happy that Major Chrestone, who is loved so much by every body, was nearly killed?" rejoined her sister.

"And what happiness is there in this cold wet weather, which keeps us all shut up in the house in the middle of summer, when we ought to be running about the fields at Menden Park," continued Louisa, "as happy as the bees that are buzzing about in our gardens, and sucking our pretty flowers."

"Softly, softly, dear young ladies," said Saiphly, smiling at their vehemence; "your questions come too quickly, if you mean to have them all answered. Your father, Miss Menden, was not put to pain and torture for nothing; for you know, in trying to save our kingdom from destruction, it could not be avoided that some persons should suffer; and hun-

dreds fell in their country's defence, upon the same field where his life was spared. I, therefore, think it was very providential, that his head did not receive the two bullets which shattered his arm."

"That is happy for us, indeed," said Louisa.

"And then, Miss Emily, I think it was a happy thing that Major Chrestone, instead of being left, like many others, on the field, when all his men supposed him dead, should have been carried to this place, where your mamma, by God's appointment, no doubt, was at hand to use the proper means for his recovery."

"And what can you say for the weather, Saiphly," said Emily, half convinced of her folly.

"I can say, that as the poor wounded soldiers must have had their fevers heightened, and all their sufferings increased, by the heat which is usual at this season of the year, it was kind and merciful of God to send such weather as is most beneficial to their health, and will greatly hasten their recovery."

"Well, Saiphly, if it does that," said Louisa, "I will not call it bad weather any longer."

“Heigh ho!” sighed Emily, “I wish what was good and pleasant for one person, could be good for all. I wonder God does not make that the case. I wonder he did not make papa and Major Chrestone both escape unhurt, and that he did not save all the people who were killed in that vile battle. That is what I would have done. And if I were God, I would let all persons have whatever they wished for; and give them leave to do whatever they pleased; and I would have made them strong like lions, that nothing might hurt them; and I would have given them wings like birds, so that they might fly away wherever they liked; and——and——”

“Oh! stop, stop, dear Emily,” said Louisa, putting her hand on her sister’s mouth. “I am sure mamma would not like to hear you say all this; I fear it is wrong; very, very wrong; but it is I who am in fault, for I began to complain first.”

“It is, indeed, very wrong to use God’s name so foolishly, said Saiphly, and to be dissatisfied with any thing that He has done for us. Your discontent,

Miss Emily, reminds me of a story, which I think I never told you yet. If you wish, I will relate it to you now."

The girls eagerly drew their seats beside her, requesting she might tell it, and she immediately began.

THE THREE SILVER FISHES.

Along the sheltered side of a pleasant hill, upon a time, there ran a very clear river, and in that river lived three silver trouts, the prettiest little fishes that ever swam the water. Now, the Good Spirit who guards and protects all the fishes of the sea, took great care of those little helpless trouts, and let them want for nothing that was good or proper for them. But two of them grew sad and discontented, the one wished for this thing, and the other wished for that, and neither of them could take pleasure in any thing he had, because he was always longing for something he had not. Now this was very naughty in these little trouts ; for the

Good Spirit was kind and gracious, and had never withheld from them any thing which could turn out to their advantage. But instead of thanking him for all his care and kindness, they blamed him in their foolish hearts for refusing any thing that their foolish fancies made them ask. In short, there was no end to their wishing for this thing and longing for the other, and every day they fretted more and more because they did not get whatever they pleased to demand.

At last, the Good Spirit was so provoked, that he resolved to punish their naughtiness by granting all their wishes, and he resolved to make the conduct of these little trouts a warning and example to all the fishes of the flood. So he called them to the margin of the river, and told them he had determined to grant them all their wishes, and bade them now ask for whatever they desired.

Now, the eldest of these silver trouts was a proud conceited little fish, and wanted to be set up above all other creatures of its kind. And he replied boldly, "May it please your greatness, I do not like the life I lead in this poor rocky stream. You

have put me into a little, narrow, troublesome river, where I am straitened on the right side, and straitened on the left side; and I can neither get down into the ground, nor up into the air, nor go where, nor do any thing I have a mind to. I cannot but envy those creatures who do whatever they please, and seem so free and happy. These are your favourites, the little winged birds, who mount this way and that through the air, who fly up into the heavens, and down again to the earth, and appear to have every thing at their command. Now, if you will give me wings like theirs, that I may quit this narrow stream as often as I please, I shall then have something for which I can thank you."

Immediately he felt the wings he wished for, springing from either side of his shoulders; and in a few minutes he spread them forth, and rose proudly out of the water.

At first, he took wonderful delight in finding himself able to fly. He mounted high into the air, above the very clouds, and looked down with scorn on all the fishes, his companions, whom he had left

in the river. He flew over mountains, meadows, and woods, but never thought of marking the way for his return, and sought diversion far and wide, until growing faint with hunger and fatigue, he was at length obliged to descend and look for some refreshment. The little fool forgot that he was now in a strange country, many miles from the sweet stream where he was born and bred, and where he had been taken care of by his kind Creator. So when he came down, he lay amongst dry rocks, and scorching sands, where there was neither fly nor worm for him to eat, nor a drop of water to quench his thirst; and there he remained faint, and weary, and unable to rise, gasping, fluttering, and beating himself against the stones, in pain and misery, until at length he died.

Now, though the second little silver trout was not quite so high minded as the first, yet he did not want for pride, and he was besides a very narrow hearted, selfish little fish, who cared not what became of all the fishes in the tide, provided he was safe and snug himself. He had no desire, to be sure, to ramble into strange places, where he

knew not what might happen to him ; nor did he wish for wings to fly out of the pleasant river, where he had hitherto found all that was necessary for his happiness. So he answered his Creator with great respect, and said, "I lived, may it please you, most good and powerful Spirit, quite safe, happy, and comfortable, until one day, when, as I lay at ease under a cool bank, sheltering myself from the heat of the mid-day sun, I saw a great rope come down along the stream, and it fastened itself, I know not how, to the jaws of a little fish about my size, which was swimming before me in the water, and he was immediately lifted up, struggling, apparently in great pain, and was carried away out of my sight, I know not where. So I trembled in great fear, and grew very sad, for I dreaded that this evil which had befallen my little friend, might sometime happen to myself, and I have been anxious and unhappy, and affrighted ever since. But if you will tell me the cause of this misfortune that befel the trout, and teach me to foresee and understand all the dangers which a little fish can meet with, I shall then be happy and

contented, for I shall always know how to take care of myself?"

The moment he had ceased speaking, his understanding was opened, and he knew the nature of nets and hooks, lines, baits, and all the other perils to which poor fishes are liable. For a little time, he greatly rejoiced in his knowledge, and he said to himself, "Now, I shall certainly be the happiest of all trouts, for as I am forewarned of every danger which can befall me, I shall have nothing to do but to keep myself safe out of their way."

From that time forward, he took care never to venture into any deep holes where he formerly loved to disport himself, lest a pike, or some other ravenous fish, might be there ready to swallow him up. Neither did he rest long in any shallow place, especially in hot weather, lest the sun should dry them up, and leave him on the hard ground. When he saw the shadow of a cloud moving upon the river, "Ah!" said he, "here are the fishermen with their nets;" and he immediately crept close under the nearest bank, where he lay trembling and shaking in terror until the cloud passed away.

Again; when he saw a fly skim along the water, or a worm coming down the stream, he did not dare to bite, however hungry he might be. "No, no," he would say, "I have too much wisdom to be tempted in that manner; let those ignorant fools be caught, who do not know their danger,—but for me, I know this fly may hide some frightful hook, which would drag me from the water to destruction; so I must not touch it, though I sicken for want of food."

Thus did this over-careful trout live in perpetual alarm; he never ate nor drank in comfort, nor could he sleep in peace, nor wake in quiet, lest some evil might befall him. So he daily grew more wretched, and pined and wasted away with care and sadness; until, at last, worn to a shadow with hunger, fear, and melancholy, he died, from dread of dying, the most miserable of all deaths.

Then the Good Spirit came to the young silver fish, and asked him what he desired to have, and bade him freely tell all his wishes, "Ah!" said this darling little trout, "you know, Good Spirit,—for you know, and can do all things,—that I am but

a poor, ignorant, little fish, blind and foolish, that know not what is good, or what is bad for me. I only wonder how you came to think of such a useless, worthless little being as myself; or how I was thought worth the trouble of being brought into this world; still more I wonder why you placed me in this pretty quiet stream, with all these pleasures round me. You have kept me in safety by night and by day, throughout my past life, and I will still depend upon your care; but, if I must ask something, it is, that you would do with me whatever you think best and fittest, and that you would make me content and pleased to live or die, just when and where, and as you would have me."

Now when this precious little trout had made this humble prayer, in his good and trusting heart, the great and Good Spirit felt such love and kindness for him as was never known before. He promised to be his father and his friend for ever; and said he could not choose but take great care of any little fish that trusted so wholly to his love and pleasure.

So his Creator went wherever he went, and was always with him and about him, and was to him as

a father : and he put contentment into his mind, and joy into his heart ; and whether the waters were rough or smooth around him, that little trout always slept in peace, and waked in gladness ; and whether he was full or hungry, or whatever happened, he was still pleased and thankful : and he lived and died the happiest little fish that ever swam in any water.

“ And that is the prettiest little fable I ever listened to,” said Emily, as Saiphly’s story ended.

Louisa also protested it was the prettiest she had ever heard, and immediately proposed making a little book, and writing the story in it for her mamma, if she could only hear it once again.

But her maid assured her, that trouble would be unnecessary, as the fable was a very old one, with which her mamma was, no doubt, well acquainted.*

* Mr Brook, who introduced this beautiful fable in one of his novels, “ The Fool of Quality,” would not, it is presumed, have objected to see it here presented to the young persons for whom he so kindly intended it ; nor, it is believed, would he have disapproved of the alterations in the language, which naturally arise from the manner of its introduction.

"Then you did not make it for me?" said Emily in surprise. "I declare I was quite sure you had made it yourself, and that you meant one of these little trouts that grew sad and discontented, for me."

"Did you think there was any resemblance?" asked Saiphly.

"Yes, indeed, I thought, all the time you were telling the story, that I was very often like the first naughty little fish; but I would much rather be like the youngest little silver trout that was so good, and humble, and contented. That is what I will try to be in future, Saiphly, and I know that is what you wish."

"It is, indeed, just what I wish," replied their excellent attendant; "for if, like it, you trust to the love and good pleasure of your God, he will be a father and a friend to you for ever, as the fable tells; and you, too, will sleep in peace and wake in gladness, and be——"

"And be the happiest little fish that ever swam any water," said Emily, quoting the last words of the fable; "you see how well I remember your story. Papa used to laugh at me very often, and

call me a troublesome little fish sometimes ; but I hope he will now call me a good little one ; and I am sure he may call me a happy one if I ever get back into his room again."

Just as this sentence was finished, Mrs Menden appeared at the door, and to their inexpressible delight, carried them away to visit their father, as she had promised.

In a short time afterwards, Colonel Menden was able to sit up, and soon to have his children almost constantly with him ; and the zeal and tenderness with which they watched his looks, and studied to afford him comfort, could scarcely be exceeded by the more skilful assiduity of their mother.

They had now also permission to assist her in attending Major Chrestone ; and they were not a little astonished on their first visit, to find him a person of more than ordinary plainness ; fancy having taught them to expect the reverse.

The excessive height and lankness of his figure might have produced awkwardness, had not the ease and self-possession of his manner preserved him from that defect ; and the natural coarseness of his features, which was greatly heightened by the

deep scars of a confluent small-pox, would have amounted to positive ugliness, but for the expression of every good and noble disposition which constantly beamed over his countenance.

After their surprise at his plain appearance was over, the girls soon forgot that he was not so handsome as their papa; and in a little time he became one of their greatest favourites, and they his almost constant companions.

Whilst sitting with him, their little friend Lucy was a never failing theme of conversation, and he seemed to take equal pleasure with themselves in talking of her.

Time passed swiftly on; and one morning as the children, somewhat earlier than usual, stole into their father's room, anxious to know how he had spent the night, they were agreeably surprised to find him already up and dressed.

"Well, my girls," said he, as they entered, "I am getting so well, that I think I shall soon be able to try my skill at a butterfly chase with you again; do you remember the last we had at Menden Park, Louisa?"

"Yes, papa, I do quite well; and do you remem-

ber how much frightened mamma was, when you tumbled into the pond, in trying to catch the great tiger moth for me ; and how we all laughed when we saw you come out, quite covered with mud and dirt ?”

“ Oh !” cried Emily, “ I wish I could remember that, it must have been so funny. I hope, papa, we shall have a chase here, whenever you are able ; it would be so droll to see you running in your cocked hat, and this strange dress you wear ; and besides, I want to see a foreign butterfly,—I wonder if they are like our English ones.”

“ But when papa is able to chase butterflies, I hope we shall be at Menden Park,” said Louisa : “ I wish we were all there again, for it is a much pleasanter place than this : I wonder, papa, now you are so well, that you do not take us all home again.”

“ It is exactly what I wish to do,” said Colonel Menden ; “ I have already procured leave to depart ; but you will have no objections, I hope, to wait until your friend, Major Chrestone, is able to accompany us.”

"No," the girls both declared; they would be sorry to go without him; and the whole party soon after adjourned to his lodgings to talk over their proposed journey. It was the first time Colonel Menden had been able to visit his friend, and the meeting between them was indeed a happy one.

From this time Major Chrestone's health began rapidly to amend, and in the course of another fortnight, Surgeon Trebor declared he might begin his journey with safety.

The little girls found it hardly possible to contain their joy, when Mrs Menden at length informed them, they were to set out on their way home the following morning. Their only subject of regret was, that they could not take home with them all the wounded soldiers in the village, and various were the schemes they proposed for the relief of the poor sufferers, whom they had frequently visited along with their mother, in the course of the last few weeks.

Mrs Menden, fearing that those who were disabled would be left destitute of all assistance, when she and their other friends were gone, had set on

foot a subscription for their relief? And Major Chrestone and her husband, the evening before their intended departure, accompanied her on her last visit to the soldiers, for the purpose of inquiring into their circumstances, and trying if they could be of any service to them on their arrival in England.

The subscription money was divided into separate parcels, and committed to the children's care, and the evening being fine, the whole party set out on their charitable excursion.

After visiting several invalids, the gentlemen were happy to find, that they should be able to render essential service to many, and especially to some who belonged to their own regiment.

As they approached the lodging of the last person whom they meant to visit, the two girls began to lament that they had not kept the largest share of money for the poor soldier who lived there, as he was, they said, a much greater object of compassion than any of the others. He was an Irishman, who had been for several weeks at the point of death, having lost a leg in the battle, and received several other severe wounds, from which it was at first

supposed he could not recover. He was, besides, the best tempered and most contented creature in the world, Louisa said, and Mrs Menden corroborated the statement, saying he had by his patience so strongly attached to him an old Dutch woman, the widow of an English settler in the country, with whom he lodged, that she treated him as her own son, and by her care and kindness greatly assisted his restoration.

On entering the house, the party distinctly heard the person spoken of, expostulating in an inner apartment with his hostess, on the hardship of being kept fast tied to a chair, when he was very well able to walk.

“Able to valk ! Phere be t’oder laig ? and how you vill march vidout dat ?” said his companion.

The soldier laughed, and said, if she would take the trouble of looking, she might, perhaps, find it on the field of battle not far off ; “but if you would let me use that wooden one,” added he, pointing to one of rather clumsy form, which lay on the table, “I could get on very well.”

“No, no, you no muss get on dat,” said she,

“dat hurt poor vounded laig von times already ; dat be von vile forme, du tout like *laig de chair*.”*

“Why then, to tell no lie, it is a little like the leg of a chair,” replied he ; “but never mind, it will not hurt me, now that my wound is almost healed ; and as to the form, it is just as shapely as the leg I lost, and might serve me to walk with rather the best of the two, for my own ugly thief was as little good worth at the business, as any limb in Christendom.”

“Comment ! mon ami ?” said the good woman, kindly rubbing the remaining limb from the knee to the ankle. “Pourquoi dit tu que l’autre jambe ne valait rien pour marcher ; voyant que celle-ci va très-bien ?” Perceiving that her companion did not quite understand her, she endeavoured to explain, “L’autre membre tu sais voss laide ! had ver leetle bon ; now diss von, il me semble, is tout beau ; and haf ver much large bon. Dites moi, je tu prie, comment est ça ? say what for, phy is dat ?”

“Too bow,” said the soldier in surprise, and looking, with rather an approving smile, at the limb in question, as he stretched it out before him ;

* A wooden frame for stretching stockings.

“very large bone! and too bow! what can she mean? I never before heard that leg called too bow, or two large either, and to say the truth, I think it a straight, tight, well built little bit of bone as ever was covered with flesh,—very different from the things I see dangling at the hips of the mounseers here, in her country. The other leg, I confess, she might have said was a little bandy, had she seen it.” Getting into good humour as he spoke, he added, “You could scarcely feel a bone in it large or small, Jebide, the day I lost it, for it was shattered and bruised almost to pieces, and nearly carried away from me once before, where there was no kind friend like you to look after either it or me.”

To an inquiry where that had happened, he said it was in a country he did not wish to name, where he had been taken prisoner, and kept in a dungeon for a twelvemonth, with his leg in that shattered state, and nobody to mind or listen to his complaints. “Sure enough,” said he, “I thought it would have dropped off me some day, and that I should have dropped off after it into the grave.

But it pleased God to order things otherwise ; and here I am yet to tell my own story. My leg healed of itself, in spite of the barbarity of my jailor ; and though swelled and little fit for use, I contrived to drag it after me, and limped away one night from the prison with two of my companions, who had found out a way by which they might at any time have escaped before, only they would not consent to leave me behind. We were making our way home to England, when we heard that the war in this country was re-commenced with fresh vigour, and a great army assembling to bring it to an end at once : as fortune would have it, we fell in with some of the transports carrying our troops, and were brought to the army the very evening before the battle ; and what was still better luck, I found my own regiment in the camp."

" Oh ! mans be still still vish for fight !" said the peaceful Jebide. " Phy for you go near l' armée vid sick laig ?"

" I did not wish to fight, or to bid sick leg fight this time ; for, to say the truth, I thought we should neither of us be able for any useful service, and my

Colonel ordered me to stay in the camp, but I could not help hobbling a bit after the men, just to see how they got on; and when I saw the day going so hard with my comrades, I picked up the first musket I met with, forgot my limping gait, and tried to fight as well as the best of them; but I had not been an hour in the field, when a confounded cannon ball carried my leg clean away from me; and now I tell you, as I have often done before, I must try to get home to my wife the best way I can without it."

"Vel, but stay vid me von leetel time more long, and when you be strong man, den take de laig and go."

The impenetrable soldier vowed he would rest no longer without endeavouring to make his way home. "And mind, Jebide," said he, "if it please God that I should find my wife alive, you must promise to cross the water and come to see us both; and if you do, I'll promise for her that she will be as kind a daughter to you, as you have been a mother to her husband."

Colonel Menden, who had been unwilling to interrupt the conversation sooner, now came forward,

and advised the soldier to yield to his good friend's entreaties, and remain at Odaine, until he could be sent home along with the other invalids in the village.

The Irishman was preparing to reply in the same determined strain, when Major Chrestone asked him if he had been in the battle of——in the year 1803, and under what captain he had then served.

The man turned suddenly round at hearing the question, while joy brightened every feature in his honest face: "I served," said he, "in that and four other battles by Captain Chrestone's side; and was, moreover, your worship's own servant for the three first years you were in the army."

"I thought I could not be mistaken," said Major Chrestone, shaking him heartily by the hand. "This is the brave fellow, Menden, who, at the hazard of his own life, rescued me on the field of battle at New Orleans; and whose death, I not many days since mentioned to you with so much regret, as a matter of which I was certain."

The whole party rejoiced at this unexpected meeting, and considered it a most providential circumstance, that the discovery had been made

before the troops left Odaine. The little girls were loud in their exclamations of delight, and the poor man himself seemed so much overjoyed, that he writhed from side to side upon his chair, scarcely knowing what he did.

Major Chrestone proposed, that Colonel and Mrs Menden should set out the next day without him, saying, he could not now think of leaving Odaine, until his faithful servant was able to accompany him; they had been long accustomed to travel together, he said, and should take excellent care of each other by the way.

The good soldier made many grateful acknowledgments, but protested against his master's journey being delayed on his account.

"Please your honour," said he to the Major, after the subject had been debated for some time amongst them, "may I make bold to ask if this gentleman, whom I well remember to have seen when he was an ensign in the 62d regiment, is the person to whom Menden Park belongs, and if this is his lady, who has been so kind to me ever since I was brought here?"

The Colonel, who began to recollect him, answered

in the affirmative; and inquired if he was acquainted with Menden Park, and if any thing could be done for him there.

The man hesitated, and then said he should be able to stay more contentedly at Odaine if he could get any person to inquire after his wife, whose friends all lived in that part of the world, and to let him know how she fared.

Colonel Menden promised to make any inquiry he desired; and took out his pocket book to write down the woman's name, and any other directions he had to give.

"If she be still alive," said he, every expression of joy fading from his face as he uttered the doubt, "all I wish is, to have her told that I am living; and that I will soon, please God, be at home with her. She has thought me dead, no doubt, for a long time, and I fear that might go near to break her heart."

"Then let us hear her name, my good fellow; give us her name; and if she lives in our neighbourhood, we shall be sure to find her out."

"Her name, please your honour, is Liddy Fisher, and she used to live ——"

"Liddy Fisher!" exclaimed the little girls, joyfully interrupting him.

"Say no more, say no more, my good friend," said Mrs Menden, taking the rough soldier's hand; "I am happy to tell you I left Liddy Fisher in my own house in tolerable health not many weeks since."

"Heaven bless you for the news!" exclaimed Fisher, clasping his hands fervently: "was she only tolerably, dear lady? I suppose she grieves for her husband, as for one dead?" said he in great agitation.

"She was well in health, though far from happy, when we parted. Grief for your supposed loss had, indeed, nearly broken her heart; but she will now, I trust, be repaid for all her sufferings."

"And can you tell me if I have still a child?" said Fisher, hardly able to repress his emotion.

"Yes, yes," said Emily, pressing forward, "the prettiest and best little girl in the world; and we shall make her so happy when we tell her you are alive."

Poor Fisher stooped to tie the string of his shoe, which was already tied fast enough.

"Mamma, dear mamma," said Emily, "do let me be the first to tell Liddy the news."

"And, Fisher," said Lousia, "you must give me a letter to take home; Liddy will never believe we have seen you, unless you write to her."

The poor fellow drew the sleeve of his coat hastily across his eyes, as he raised his head, and in the overflowing gratitude of his heart exclaimed, "I wonder why God has always been so good to me, that I never met with a misfortune yet, since I was born: and oh! but it would have been the pity I had been killed in the battle, as sometimes I used to wish I had; but a sore heart I would have had, to have missed this happy day."

The party could not help smiling at his Irish method of expressing his happiness.

"I am sure God will not be less inclined to continue his goodness to you, from seeing you so thankful for it," said Mrs Menden, "I have known many persons pass through life without ever losing a limb, or being imprisoned, who were much less grateful."

"It would be a shame for me if I was not thankful," said Fisher, "for sure, if I did lose a

leg, it was the bad one was taken, and the good one left; and sure, I could be nothing else but thankful for having my master, and the colonel, and you, and these sweet young ladies, all sent here to befriend me as you have done, and to bring me this good news from my poor wife and child."

"Fisher, my good fellow," said Colonel Menden, "I remember once coming into your master's tent, and finding you describing the affliction which the soldiers' wives suffered during an action. I think you ended your account, by protesting you would never marry, so long as you staid in the army."

"I remember it, sir," replied Fisher, smilingly, "and with your honour's leave, I think you were of the same mind."

"And I think I told you both, you would not hold to the determination for six months," said Major Chrestone; "I hope, Fisher, you kept your resolution somewhat longer than the Colonel did his; he, I think, married within the half-year."

Fisher shook his head, "I kept mine pretty well for the space of three months, or so; but about that time I was sent with a recruiting party to a town near Menden Park, where I met poor Liddy,

and, some how or other, I never thought of my resolution again, until his honour brought it to my mind this minute."

"But how came you to leave Major Chrestone's service? I think I also heard you declare, you would never live in any other," said Colonel Menden.

"I must answer that question," said his master, seeing Fisher unwilling to reply. "When I first went abroad with General Bresque, my poor brother Robert stepped into my ensigncy, and as his youth and delicate health made him require a careful attendant more than I did, Fisher, at my request, remained with him; and by his conduct towards him, he has conferred on all our family obligations which we can never sufficiently repay."

Mrs Menden remembered Liddy's account of Captain Chrestone's death, and was not surprised that both the master and servant seemed distressed even by this allusion to it.

"Come," said she, "let us talk no more of the past, but try and think of some plan for getting Fisher back to his wife as soon as possible."

"That is all I want or wish, to make me com-

pletely happy," cried he, gratefully thanking her. He at the same time declared he felt perfectly equal to the journey, and that he had already made his arrangements for beginning it with the first wagon that started from Odaine.

"Well, Fisher," said Major Chrestone, after having consulted some minutes with his friends, "since you are so bent on setting out immediately, you shall go along with me to-morrow. The carriage in which I shall be obliged to travel is constructed for the accommodation of invalids; and as we must proceed slowly, I trust you will not suffer by taking my present servant's place by my side."

It would be vain to attempt a description of Fisher's joy and gratitude at this proposal. The final arrangements were speedily settled; Louisa slipped her last parcel of money into his hand, and the party took leave.

On opening it when they were gone, he rejoiced to see a sum of money, which, he hoped, might be some compensation to his worthy hostess for all the care and tenderness she had bestowed on him during

his illness. Jebide had hitherto refused every proffered remuneration ; and far from seeming to desire his departure, she appeared quite dejected whenever he spoke of its approach.

Whilst he revolved during the evening in his own mind, how he could best contrive to requite this good old woman's kindness, he received a second donation, with a message from his master, desiring that he would draw on him for any sum he might farther require before his journey.

There was nothing now wanting to his perfect happiness, and he retired to rest, thankful for the unexpected blessings of the day ; and resigned himself with confidence to his all gracious Father, who had heaped so many benefits upon him, and who had added to all his other gifts one still more invaluable than the rest,—a grateful and contented spirit.

He was dressed and ready for the road next morning, long before old Jebide could be persuaded it was time for him to depart. She reluctantly assisted him to fasten on the wooden leg ; and when he had returned her the key of a cupboard, in which he had deposited his gift, and at length insisted on

bidding her farewell, she gave him her blessing with the affection of a parent, while tears of sincere regret ran down her cheek; and as she watched him making his way with difficulty from the door, she sobbed out after him, "Faites attention, mon pauvre boiteux, and have care of autre laig; and no more come back for de fight, but come again surement for see de friend."

He waved his hand affectionately in reply, and called aloud his hope to see her again in some part of the world.

The travellers pursued their way by easy stages; and, after a prosperous voyage, landed, in health and safety, once more on British ground.

Louisa, Emily, and Fisher, fancied the journey of the two following days the most tedious they had ever gone; but at length they began to recognize the roads, woods, and gentlemen's seats, in the neighbourhood of Menden Park, and soon found themselves within its beautiful demesne.

Mrs Menden now gave her coachman orders to drive on before the other carriages, that she might have time to prepare Liddy for the surprise which

awaited her ; and whilst, with her husband, she sat silently enjoying the happiness of being restored to their home, under so many fortunate circumstances, the children, unable to sit still, leaned from the carriage window, admiring, as they drove along, every object within their view, all of which seemed to have gained some new charm during their absence.

“ How green and beautiful the lawn looks !” cried one, as they drove through a new plantation which skirted the avenue.

“ And do look, mamma, at the shrubbery,” said the other : “ did you ever see it look so pretty ? And see, Louisa, I declare there is old Ambrose sitting reading in my garden, just as he used to do before we went away.”

“ Yes, Emily ; and now he perceives the carriage, and has thrown away the newspaper : and see,” she added, clapping her hands in ecstasy, “ I declare, mamma, here are all the party from Onslow Hall come to meet us. Oh ! how glad Major Chrestone will be to see them. Look ! look ! Sir Robert, and Lucy, and Lady Onslow, all standing on the steps to receive us.”

The carriage stopped, and the meeting between these affectionate and happy friends was scarcely over, when a group of domestics, with little Ally Fisher in the midst, came forward to welcome their master and mistress.

Mrs Menden, having kindly accosted them all, disengaged herself from the throng, as soon as she possibly could ; and taking Ally by the hand, asked her where her mother was to be found, desiring to be led to her directly.

"I left my mother waiting at the breakfast room door to see you, ma'am : she could not come forward," said Ally, "though I am sure she is just as glad you are come as any body else."

"I have no doubt of that," said Mrs Menden, advancing rapidly to meet Liddy ; but she was shocked, notwithstanding the pleasure which was evident in her countenance at this meeting, to perceive the ravages which affliction, even in the space of a few weeks, seemed to have made in her whole appearance ; and she sincerely lamented that it had not been in her power to save her so much needless sorrow.

The sound of the second carriage rolling to the door threw Mrs Menden into considerable embarrassment, for doubting what effect the tidings she had to communicate might produce on the feeble frame before her, she every moment felt more at a loss how to introduce the subject; and the bustle of the new arrivals, now distinctly heard in the hall, told her it was necessary immediately to make known the truth in some manner.

Her agitation was so apparent, that Liddy, fancying she was over fatigued by her journey, anxiously begged leave to fetch her some refreshment.

"No, no," said her kind mistress, drawing both Ally and her mother into the breakfast room along with her, "you must stay here with me; I am quite well, but to tell you the truth, Liddy, I feel agitated on your account, for I am not sure how you will receive the news I am about to communicate."

"Do not thus discompose yourself on my account, my dear mistress," said Liddy firmly, but pausing for a moment, to conjecture what the news could be. "I am well used to sorrow, and I can bear it,

perhaps, better than you expect; so do not fear to speak, whatever it may be."

"But if I should have only joyful news to tell you, Liddy! Will you promise me to bear that with equal fortitude?"

"Joyful news!" repeated Liddy with astonishment, and perfectly unsuspecting of the truth, "Alas, dear madam, it may look like indifference, which I should be sorry to feel, but I believe you cannot tell me any news of that kind that I shall not be able to bear. The greatest joy I had reason to expect, was seeing you return in health and happiness, and I am sure there is nothing in the world besides to give me greater pleasure."

"Yes, Liddy," said Emily, who at that moment entered the room, leading in her father. "Yes, there is a great deal more pleasure for you yet, and here is papa come to see you; I am sure you are glad of that."

"Yes, my dear young lady, I rejoice to see him with all my heart," said the good creature, hastily wiping a tear from her cheek, "and I trust he will

never be taken away from you and my dear mistress again."

"I trust not," said the Colonel, kindly shaking her hand. "It is probable I shall be allowed to remain with my family in peace for the rest of my life; and I hope I shall be fortunate enough to see every body in my house as happy as I am myself; I think, at least, I have brought home news that will make one individual in it happy for the remainder of her days."

"But Liddy will not hearken to good news," said Mrs Menden. "I cannot get her to believe that we have any for her."

"Then her little daughter must persuade her of the truth," said the Colonel, drawing Ally gently towards her mother. "She must tell Liddy, that many of us soldiers, who have been fighting our country's battles, have escaped, almost by miracle, from the jaws of death."

"Yes, Ally," said Mrs Menden, "tell your mother she may yet be as happy as any woman in the world, — even as happy as I am myself. Tell her that you, dear child, may probably one day

rejoice as much as your young friends have done at the return of their father."

Ally trembled at this appeal; but it was from feelings which she could not thoroughly understand. She saw there was something meant, which painfully disturbed her parent, and gently disengaging herself from Colonel Menden, she turned away, saying, "No, ma'am, I cannot tell my mother that; you know my father can never come back."

She walked towards the door, which was half open, and amongst the crowd who stood around it, instantly descried the well remembered face of her father.

She gazed for some moments in speechless and immoveable amazement; but at length satisfied that her sight did not deceive her, she sprang with one bound into his arms, and clinging round his neck, cried out, but in a voice so feeble as scarcely to be heard, "Oh! daddy! daddy! my own dear daddy Fisher! My mother will never cry again."

Liddy's ears just caught the words. Her sight became dim; she sank unconsciously on her knees, and felt herself the next moment encircled in her

husband's arms. Large tears rolled down the soldier's sunburnt cheeks, as she tried to soothe the speechless agitation of his faithful partner. He pressed her again, and again, to his heart, and promised never more to leave her, if she would only speak to him one word. "Do, dear mother," said Ally, endeavouring to clasp her little arms round them both, and kissing first the cheek of one and then the other. "Do speak to him, mother; it is my own dear daddy, indeed it is: Will you not speak to him?"

A stranger who had entered the breakfast parlour at this moment, and seen the faces of the group assembled there, would have found it difficult to believe that this was a day of rejoicing at Menden Park.

The men, ashamed of their emotion, stole out of the room, to conceal the tears which fell from their eyes; and the females hurried away to get restoratives for Liddy, and, when they saw her a little more composed, left her to enjoy in private, with her husband and child, the restoration of that happiness which she thought had fled for ever.

The voice of conquest now is o'er,
The cry of discord sounds no more ;
Silent, amidst our British hills,
Is war with all her countless ills ;
And they who 've fought with heart and hand,
To guard and save their native land ;
Who 've wrestled long with all her foes,
And toil'd and bled for her repose,
Now home return'd, sit down to rest,
Beloved, and honour'd, and caress'd,
By God and by their country bless'd.

As the last words were finished, Sir Humphrey very deliberately drew out his snuff-box, and, according to his usual custom, when any thing particularly pleased him, took two or three long drawn pinches with peculiar satisfaction.

After replacing the box in his waistcoat pocket, "Truly, Kate," said he, "I did not think you could have written any thing that would please me so much. Now, do not look so modest, child ! There may be a great many faults in the composition of a good story, for aught I know, and your aunt, who is so good a judge, will, I suppose, tell

you it is full of errors ; but it suits my taste, my girl, and that is enough for me. You have exactly hit off the character of my gallant nephew and his two excellent friends, in the description of Colonel Menden, and the two Chreston's ; and have introduced the anecdote of that brave fellow Russel with such good effect, that even these circumstances would, in themselves, make me approve of your tale. So come along, and take your Shakespeare, and the set of prints with it ; and, unless your sister's composition should surpass 'The Soldier's Return,' you shall have the choice of any other book in my collection besides."

Mrs Deborah loudly exclaimed against this unqualified approbation, declaring she had been sadly disappointed by the second part of Kate's story. The first part, she confessed, did merit some commendation ; but the introduction of the battle, the hair-breadth 'scapes, and unexpected discoveries, and, above all, the concluding scene at Menden Park, were so out of character, in a child's story, that she felt some doubts as to her niece's having won the premium.

Kate acknowledged she had not the least title to it, and assured her uncle she was agreeably surprised to find her story deemed worthy of any commendation.

Emma and Elizabeth perfectly coincided in Sir Humphrey's opinion of their sister's work, and Elizabeth declared that her's would not be found to bear the slightest competition with it. But no argument could persuade Mrs Deborah to change her opinion of its merit, and she insisted upon it, that Kate must strike out at least one half of her narrative, before "The Soldier's Return" could be considered deserving of any reward.

"Well, well," said Sir Humphrey, "we will discuss the point some other time; and now, Elizabeth," clapping his second niece rather more roughly upon the shoulder than she liked, "Now, my girl, your trial comes! Do you think you can produce as good a story to-morrow evening, as we have heard to-night?"

"Do not ask the question, dearest uncle," she replied, with disappointment strongly marked in her looks: "I shall not, believe me, give you one

the twentieth part so good ; for I have toiled the whole week without writing any thing either good or useful to please my aunt, or interesting and amusing to please myself. In short, I find I have no talent for composition, — although, to speak the truth, I fancied, before I began, that any person could write a story for children.”

“ Well, you must not be discouraged,” said her uncle kindly. “ You have probably succeeded better than you imagine, and we will all promise not to be too severe upon your story when we have heard it. But get along to bed, now, as fast as you can, and, no doubt, my little romancer will dream of something before morning, with which to embellish her work.”

Elizabeth spent much of the next day at her writing desk, busied in trying to improve her story ; but was still dissatisfied with her work, when, tea being ended, the appointed hour arrived, and she was summoned to the trial.

With a step indicating the failure of all her hopes, she stole to her uncle's side ; and, when she

had crept close under his wing, received his kindest smile, and a few encouraging kisses, having cleared her throat for the hundredth time, she at length began : —

THE
BLACK OAK NECKLACE.

Whene'er this little group their country calls,
From academic shades and learned halls,
To fix her laws, her spirit to sustain,
And light up glory through her wide domain;
Their various tastes in different arts display'd,
Like temper'd harmony of light and shade,
With friendly union in one mass shall blend,
And this adorn the state, and that defend.

MR HAMPTON, a clergyman residing in the north of Ireland, was born to an abundant fortune; but circumstances, which it is needless here to enumerate, left him, at his father's death, possessed only of excellent talents, the kindest heart, an independent spirit, and a curacy.

His loss of fortune he regretted chiefly because it deprived him of all power to continue that assistance to the surrounding poor, which they so much required, and which his family had hitherto liberally bestowed.

But his was not a mind to remain inactive under the loss of one means of usefulness, whilst so many others were still open to him. He resolved, since he was himself prevented the happiness of relieving his fellow-creatures, that he would devote his life to the instruction of youth, and endeavour to give those, who might have more power, the will which he possessed. He was confirmed in this determination by some friends, who, seeing him so well fitted for such a task, wished to place their sons under his care,—a plan which they preferred to sending them to public seminaries, where, from the number of scholars to be taught, it is often impossible that each child should receive the attention which is necessary to form a real Christian, or a perfect gentleman.

In these two characters, no less than in that for classical learning, Mr Hampton was resolved his

pupils should excel, if any pains of his could make them do so : and, that he might have more time to bestow on this laudable endeavour, he determined to take no more than six scholars into his house at once.

He was but twenty-six when he commenced this arduous undertaking, to which, even at that early age, he cheerfully and zealously devoted his whole time and attention ; and from that moment, until the period when the following circumstances occurred, it was never observed that the children committed to his charge looked on him in any other light than that of an indulgent and affectionate father.

The house in which he resided (near to the well known port of Donaghadee) was situated within a pleasant walk of the sea-side, which, during their play hours, was the favourite haunt with the set of young students who inhabited the mansion at the time our history commences.

In passing a cottage which stood near the beach, the little group had frequently observed a poor but decent looking young man, sitting at the door,

engaged with unusual eagerness in carving into a particular shape small pieces of wood, which he cut from a block close by him.

On the same bench generally sat an interesting looking girl of about seventeen, who appeared in extreme ill-health, but who was busily employed in polishing the bits of wood, which her companion from time to time threw into her lap.

For upwards of a month the boys never passed the cottage without seeing this pair occupied in the same manner, save that, when the evenings were cold and damp, the girl sat within doors, while her companion worked without. He seemed anxious also, at these times, to make her lay aside her industry, and often refused to take her in the pieces of wood she asked for, saying they had more work finished than would be called for till Christmas.

The boys felt their curiosity excited, by seeing two grown persons pursuing with such eagerness an employment which appeared to them so childish; but having no excuse for opening a wicket which enclosed a little court before the cottage, or for

going in to observe them more closely, they remained long ignorant of the nature of their employment. At length, however, they all agreed to walk to the cottage in the forenoon of their next holyday, and if the young people still continued their occupation, to make some apology for the intrusion, and not to come away without discovering what their work was.

The morning was fine on which they set out for their rambles, but on reaching the little gate, they found it locked, the cottage door shut, and the bench empty.

“How provoking!” cried Henry Merle, one of the elder boys, to his disappointed but more patient companions. “There can be no harm in vaulting over the hedge,” continued he, “just to see what those pieces of wood are like, which lie scattered about the bench;” and before the words were well uttered, he had some of them in his hand.

They were bits of black oak, evidently meant to represent a shamrock leaf, and though broken and cast away, they seemed carved with the utmost neatness; but Henry was as much at a loss to discover their use as ever.

He was himself very ingenious, and like most other people, felt his interest doubly excited towards a person who seemed to possess a taste in unison with his own.

His dispositions were amiable, and his talents good, but it is here necessary to add, that these qualifications were rendered useless by a habit of haste and thoughtlessness, which was apparent in every thing he did. No boy in school could get his lesson so quickly as Henry Merle; but knowing this, he would lounge over his book, indulging some flight of fancy, until a few minutes before the lesson should be said; then he would fix it on his mind, or rather on his eye, by connecting the leading points with any of the objects in his view: all of which had been, perhaps, used for the same purpose on different subjects the day before. And hence it was, that he could hardly cast a glance around the walls of his school room, without having some ludicrous idea suggested to his mind, by the motley group which each object presented.

Lessons so learned, however fluently said, might engender a taste for the grotesque and ridiculous, but could never teach habits of attention and reflec-

tion, which are amongst the chief advantages derived from study. In these acquirements, Merle was observed to improve less than any of his school-fellows. He had unfortunately heard his father once repeat a remark, which is not more false than it is dangerous, "that men of talent are apt to run in debt to time, trusting to their wits to pay the arrears." Merle therefore imagined, that to adopt this plan would be to prove himself a man of talent. Accordingly, whatever might be the occupation in which he engaged with his companions, he allowed them all to get the start of him at first, trusting to his adroitness for overtaking in the end. And this vain confidence in his abilities, which he took for courage, often tempted him to run into difficulties, from which he seldom escaped without severe mortification.

"These leaves are beautiful," said he to himself, as he examined one of the shamrocks which he held in his hand; "I could help the young man in his work, I am sure, if I but knew how it was finished. I will just put my head through the window, it opens so easily, and look at these others which hang over the fireplace."

The leaves, however, which hung there in little festoons, looked so tempting that Henry was in the room before his friend Edward Hilton could call to him that the poor sick girl was probably in the house, and might be terrified by his sudden entrance.

At the same moment the cottager came to the gate, which he hastily unclosed, set down a small basket he had been carrying, leaped in after Henry, whom he had seen enter, and pushing him aside with indignation, ran forward to a pallet, which Merle had not observed before, saying in a soothing and affectionate voice, "Nancy, achree! it is me that's here: sure, woman, you wouldn't be frightened for one of the schoolboys; he didn't know you were here, I'll warrant, and will not harm you."

The invalid raised herself from her straw pallet, with the intention of assuring them both she was not alarmed; but the trembling frame and inarticulate accents soon brought Merle to a sense of the indiscretion he had committed; shame getting the better of the surprise into which he was at first thrown by

the young man's entrance, he stammered out an assurance, that he only wanted to look at the festoons on the chimney-piece, and leaped out to his friend Hilton, who had come forward to bring him away.

"Had you not better stay and ask," whispered Hilton, "if we could be of any use to these poor people?"

"I should rather you would do it," answered Merle, who felt really shocked at the effect his rashness seemed to have produced on the poor emaciated sufferer; but before either could summon courage to ask the question, the young man shut down the window, and, after speaking again to Nancy, came out to the bench to recommence his work.

Seeing the culprit still stand there, he said, in a steady but respectful tone of voice, "Young gentleman, you look so sorry for frightening my poor sister, that I am bold to hope you will not be angry if I ask you and your companions just to walk softly past the end of our cottage, in the mornings when you go to bathe; it's little sleep she gets, poor

thing! by night or day, and sometimes you rouse her out of the first she has had for many nights together."

"We will keep at a distance on the grass in future; and I wish we knew any thing else we could do, that would be of the least use to your sister," cried Merle.

"Thank you, sir, thank you kindly," replied the cottager; and after pausing a few seconds, his face brightening, as if with the hope that they might be of service to him, he continued, "I am strong and able to work, and I was brought up to a good trade, by which I might easily earn bread enough for both myself and my sister, but I cannot find in my heart to leave her, and go to a distance, in search of employment: so I'll just make free to tell you the only way of living we have at present, and how I think you might be of use to us both, since you are so kind as to wish it.

"One day as I sat beside Nancy, thinking how I would manage to keep her from want, when our last shilling was spent, and idling over this piece of old oak, that I found in the bog hard by, cutting it

into twenty shapes for want of better to do : ‘ Make me some more of them pretty leaves, Harry,’ says she, ‘ and I’ll shew you what we’ll do with them, that will, perhaps, bring us a little money.’”

Here he took from his basket some of the festoons, which had tempted Merle to commit the rudeness for which he was now so sorry, and shewed them to the boys : “ I had cut the bits of stick into that form, at first without any design ; then from single leaves I began to cut them into shamrocks, and as fast as I could make them, she tied them up in this manner, and brought them to this nice polish with a little chalk and turpentine and constant rubbing ; and we both began to think that, with more pains and practice, we could make some that would be pretty enough to offer for sale, as necklaces for the *quality*, that like wearing such things.

“ We worked late and early, until we had finished one to please us ; then I took it down to Mr Bonner, at the Soole, (it’s him that keeps the pleasure boat upon the water, and that’s kind and good to every body,) and I asked *him* to try and get it sold for Nancy, to some of the company he took

out pleasuring with him in his boat. So he was as kind as could be, and praised the necklace out of measure, and desired me to bring him more when we could get them made, and he mostly got one or two sold for us every month this half-year past, which enables me to get her a little nourishment. But poor Mr Bonner has been ill this fortnight, and when I went down to day with the last necklace we made, I found there had been none sold since he grew bad, and that there were many lying on our hands. God bless him ! it was his good word that made our work go off ; and now poor Nancy will have nothing to live on but the dry potatoe and salt until he gets afoot again. Lord be praised for that itself !”

“ That shall not be the case,” cried all the boys at once, for they had all crept forward, on seeing their two companions on such amicable terms with the owner of the cottage. “ I think,” said Hilton eagerly, “ we could each contrive to get one necklace sold for you, and we will, at all events, try to do what we can.”

The honest cottager thanked them all for their

kindness, and declared they could not do him a greater service.

It was immediately agreed amongst them, that at the midsummer holydays, which were to commence in a few days, each boy should take home a necklace, and ask some member of his family to become the purchaser; and it would be hard to say whether the poor young peasant, or his youthful friends, seemed most elated by the proposal. The boys then left him with an assurance of returning the following week, and led him to share in the hope which they entertained, that they would not bring back one of his necklaces unsold.

“Don’t be afraid, Harry, I will take care to make the boys steal past the cottage, so that Nancy shall never be disturbed again,” said Merle, as he followed his companions through the gate, forgetting at the moment a wise injunction of his master’s, that he should not venture to make any promise, until he had subdued that thoughtlessness of character, which made all persons doubtful whether he would fulfil his engagements or not.

“God bless you, sir, for that promise, more than

all the rest," said the cottager; and as the boys departed, he hastened in to communicate to his sister their good fortune. He found her in a quiet sleep, and returned to resume his work, saying to himself, "Now if I could manage to get her a drop of milk every day, till the young gentlemen return."

"Oh! the Lord lighten their hearts in the time of need, and keep that time far off," exclaimed he in ecstasy as he perceived, lying on the bench, six small deposits of money, and saw his generous young friends again hastening past a great thorn-tree, which grew in the corner of the little enclosure before his door.

He quickly collected the treasure, and found it fully sufficient to supply his sister's wants, far more than the time the boys were to be absent; then fastening the wicket after him, with a light and thankful heart he ran to a neighbouring farm to procure her some food by the time she should awaken.

No less joyous were the boys, when, fairly past the cottage, they began to indulge in that feeling

of happiness which is ever produced by a consciousness of being useful. They bounded along the path, forgetful at the moment that there were any other creatures in existence besides the cottager, his sister, and themselves.

“ You never laid your money better down than on that stone bench,” said an old man, who overtook them on their way ; “ there’s not an honest working lad in the parish than Harry Burne, and it’s no wonder for him, for he’s come of honest parents, as may be seen by himself and his sister, poor thing ; it’s her that’s sick in the house, — I warrant ye did not see her ? ”

The last part of this sentence, which was intended for a question, received no other reply than by Merle’s quickly asking, who her parents were.

“ Do you see yon pretty white house, with the two square chimneys, over there at the Braefoot ? Well ! her father and mother lived there in times past ; and well they lived, with their sixteen acres of land, their three cows, and a horse for the plough. An’ it’s them that bred their children in

the fear of God, and gave them the best education to boot, which the parish afforded. But where's the house or home that did'nt grieve after health or wealth last year? And as for them, God's name be blessed! they grieved for both. The father was out night and day, striving to save the crops from the rain; and, when they were all destroyed, to kiln-dry some straw for the poor dumb beasts, that couldn't find a dry rood of ground on the whole farm, to lay their side upon. But what with wet clothes, and want of firing, he took bad with a cold, and went to his bed; and, at last, with fretting for one thing or another, to himself be it told, he turned it to the typhus fever, and the good wife took it off him; and when he came to himself, (for he was like one out of his right mind, and still raved about the crops and the children,) he found the wife clean dead, and Harry, whose last journey had been to the graveyard with his mother, was down in the fever too.

“So Dennis (as there was nobody to cast an eye after any thing) just thought he must run out and take a look about the farm, and the cattle, and all

his other affairs ; but not a praty-rig* had he, that wasn't up to the shoe mouth under water, and not a horn or hoof alive, at all, at all, upon the land : so he gives a groan, (it was myself that met him at the house door, just as he was coming in,) 'and fien be in them cares, now the wife's dead,' says he 'if the poor children had but a mouthful of bread to eat ;' and with that he staggers back to his bed, and some how or another he sickened over again, as bad as ever, and never got up more.

"That very night week, when my wife was helping this poor heart broken Nancy, to lay him out, 'O Molly,' says she, and she was a young thing too to take sorrow so much to heart, 'O Molly, why does not this fever take me that was always frail and useless? but I hope it's me that you will be laying out next, if my sins are forgiven. Harry, thank God, is coming finely through all,' she added, and as if she was sorry that he was coming through, that was the first tear she shed, since her mother died. My wife thinks the poor thing had the fever herself all the time, but because she was doney† by

* Potatoo ridges.

† Weak.

nature, it did not seize on her as it did on the strong ones of the family, and she would never give up tending the father, and mother, and Harry, while she had a foot to stand on. Troth, I'm feared it will take all her brother's care to keep her out of a decay. He, poor fellow, was forced to throw up the farm, and sell all the plenishing, to pay the arrear rent, and that money was due for all the medicine and victuals they had got in their sickness. It was a neighbour and friend of his own that lent him this waste cottage, for the season, to see if Nancy would recover her health in it, before they went to travel."*

"She shall recover her health," cried Merle, switching the grass as he walked along, to drive away the melancholy with which he felt the old man's tale was likely to impress him. "My father is a physician, and he shall tell me what will cure her."

"You're surely not so old as you look, young man, that speak so thoughtless," said the mendicant with a stern air, (for such he really was, notwith-

* A term for going to beg.

standing the freedom of his manner. "If it be not God's will, she'll not recover for your father, nor for all the doctors in Ireland, and there's a many of them."

Merle acknowledged the justice of the reproof, and they all hastened forward to recount to their kind master the adventures of the morning.

As they approached Mr Hampton's enclosure, the whole group were attracted by a beautiful goat, the joint property and equal favourite of them all, which ran forward to meet them, repeating her wonted call, to welcome their return.

The younger boys forgot every thing, to run in search of a car, and harness, in which they were fond of driving her about the avenue. After caressing her for some time, with a countenance on which it is difficult to say whether pain or pleasure was most marked, Edward hinted to his companions, that when one of his sisters was supposed to be in danger of consumption, she had received much benefit from drinking goat's whey.

The idea was no sooner suggested, than they all proposed to resign their right in Nanny to her poor

namesake; not without apprehension, that the two boys, who just then advanced with the car, would hardly listen to their proposal.

The moment it was made, however, one of them said, he had heard Mr Hampton complain that she destroyed all his trees. The other, flinging away the reins which were already in the animal's mouth, and drawing himself up a little, protested he had long been thinking they were all too large for this sort of play, and that the goat had better be resigned to Nancy. Nanny, however, got many a wistful look and kind word from each of her old friends, ere they proceeded to announce to Mr Hampton her destination.

They found him at the gate, talking to their friend Canty Maguire, the beggarman, who had been a parishioner of his own, and was amongst the many sufferers who had been driven from a comfortable home by the late calamitous season. From him he had already learned the circumstances of their visit to the cottage; where, unseen or unheeded by the boys, he occupied a seat, which he had appropriated to himself under the thorn tree, in

Harry's court-yard, and where he had been a quiet observer of all that passed.

"Troth," added he, when his story was finished, "Harry would fain keep me sitting with him the whole day long under the thorn tree, while he is at work, to chat about his father and mother, and times long syne, which the poor lad says makes him work the harder for Nancy."

Mr Hampton, who wished to teach his pupils both to think and act for themselves on every occasion, resolved to leave the care of this family in their own hands, so long as he saw them proceed judiciously in the management of it. He, therefore, made no other comment on the story, but to commend Harry Burne's good temper, in not driving them from his house, on seeing it so unjustifiably entered, and to express his approbation of their plan for disposing of Nanny and the necklaces. He also offered them to assist, if they wished, in trying to get the latter sold, or in any other way in which they chose to make him useful to them.

The boys eagerly caught at his offer, and begged leave to return that evening to take Nanny to her

mistress, and to get some more necklaces to dispose of.

“What!” said Mr Hampton, “before you have parted with those you have already in your possession? I advise you to think twice, before you do either of these things; and recollect, it is not how you can most speedily serve these young people, that you are to consider, but how you can most lastingly and effectually be of use to them. However, you have my ready consent to the walk; and I am only sorry I cannot offer to lend you my purse, which is to-day quite empty, as I fear these poor people must suffer want.”

The boys smiled and blushed, but remained silent.

“Hoot, lads!” cried the beggar, “you should not let the gentleman fret for want of money on their account, that never fretted for it on his own. Troth, sir,” said he, turning to Mr Hampton, “I saw enough laid beside Harry’s door this morning to keep want or hunger off these ten days.”

Why,” said Mr Hampton, in an affectionate manner, which was usual with him when he wished

to correct an error, "why are you, my dear boys, unwilling to acknowledge, if any good reason calls for the discovery, that you gave your money to relieve a fellow creature from distress?"

He paused for a reply; and Merle, who in this instance spoke the sentiments of the whole party, said, "that, for his part, he thought it would appear like boasting, to tell he had given Harry money."

"You must then consider it something to boast of," said Mr Hampton: "I saw you, Henry, the other day, observe with surprise Mr G——'s strange gesticulation, when a certain flattering person asked him how much money he had laid out that year on alms. Did you think his manner bespoke much humility?"

"No," said Merle laughingly, "not at all, he winked and nodded, and signed for silence, and tried, for his very life, to look modest and humble; but I thought he would have succeeded much better, if he had answered, as you did, when the same person attempted to flatter you by asking the same question,—that you gave no more than your fortune afforded, or your duty required."

“ I never wish you to remark on the manners of those around you, Henry, except for example and warning, with the design that you should avoid whatever is wrong, and try to imitate what is right. For me, I consider the desire to relieve distress, wherever we meet it, as so common a propensity, I had almost said so selfish a gratification, that I am generally inclined to doubt the humility of those who seem to apprehend that it should call forth any particular commendation.”

Having, shortly after this conversation, reached the house, the boys took some time to consider why Mr Hampton disapproved of their taking Nanny home that night ; and, after a short deliberation, it struck Hilton that she would only be a burden to Harry until her kid was born ; and that, if they should be unable to sell all the necklaces, or get a smaller price for any of them than they expected, she would then be some compensation for the disappointment.

They were all again around Mr Hampton in a few minutes, to say, they had given up thoughts of their walk ; and to beg that he would allow them

to send Alice, the gardener's daughter, with some milk and medicine to their patient. This request was readily granted; after which, they spent the evening, and the next day, in preparations for their several journeys, and in anticipating the pleasures which awaited them amongst their relatives and friends at home.

It was so late in the evening of their arrival, when the boys were all returned to school, after their vacation, that it was six o'clock the following morning before they found themselves on the way to Harry Burne's cottage.

They had not proceeded far, when Merle recollected, that he wished to add something, by way of peace-offering, from his own pocket, to a sum of money which his father had given him for one of the necklaces. He now, however, found that he had left his purse behind at the parsonage, safely packed up at the bottom of his trunk. He paused for a moment, to consider what he should do; then crying out, "Oh, I may trust to my speed for overtaking them all," he ran back for the intended gift.

“ I shall want something for nurse,” he said, as he reckoned the contents of his purse, “ and something for old Tom the gardener, and a new ribbon for his pretty daughter, who made us the nice harness for Nanny :” and, by the time he had settled how much he could spare for Harry Burne, he found it would require all his agility to overtake his friends before their arrival at the cottage. He did not, in fact, reach them, until they had gained the favourite thorn, from whence they saw Harry, already at his work, sitting with a cordial smile, watching them as they crept cautiously over the ground past Nancy’s window.

“ Stop,” shouted Merle, as loudly as the swiftness of his pace, and want of breath would allow ; “ Stop, boys ; wait for me, I say, why do you not wait for me ?” He was brought, however, to his recollection by seeing them all place their fingers on their lips, as, vexed and disappointed, they perceived, by Harry’s turning suddenly into the cottage, that poor Nancy had been disturbed : and he flung himself upon a stone which lay at the foot of a thorn tree outside the hedge, resolving not to appear.

Edward instantly came back, and declared they had never missed him on the way, or that they would certainly have waited for him; but, with something of the irritation which persons who feel themselves in fault are frequently disposed to vent on others, he declared his determination of not going any farther, and throwing down the money to be delivered to Harry Burne, he rudely turned his back upon his friend. Edward, seeing his companions already at the door, took the parcel in some surprise, and followed them.

The anxious cottager rose, with a flush of expectation and pleasure, to receive them all. "Thank you kindly, gentlemen, thank you kindly, for minding* poor Nancy: you will be proud to see her now looking so purely in the mornings, when you pass," said he, with a more respectful bow than the boys had ever received in their lives before.

They expressed their joy at his sister's amendment, and each presented his offering of money, which, when collected together, seemed to the

* Remembering.

overjoyed and speechless Harry, a sum sufficient to supply all his wants.

Large tears rolled down his cheeks before he could exclaim, "Och, father! your children will not want bread now: and, Nancy dear! ye'll get a bedstead to keep you off the cold ground, and warm clothing to cover you, and plenty to eat, and a whole roof over your head. God be good to them that sent it!"

"Did she require so many necessaries?" cried the boys, who knew not why they were half inclined to shed tears too.

"Try if you have money enough to do so much," said Edward Hilton.

"I'll warrant you, sir: there's twenty shillings, will put clothes upon herself; and three half-crowns will buy timber for the bedstead: then the roof, plague on it! it will take two collar-braces, which will be six thirteens;* and a pair of blades will be half-a-guinea, and the ribbery for the weather-side

* A thirteen is an English shilling; that is, thirteen pence Irish.

of the house, that will be five hogs;* and the watling and the thatch, that will be a full pound more: that's three pound eleven and five pence," cried Harry, having calculated as he went along so rapidly, that the boys could scarcely depend upon his accuracy. "Lord save you all! there's nine-and-twenty shillings over, that will keep us, not rich, but well to live, till more comes in."

"Would that be enough to buy yourself a coat, Harry?" asked Edward.

"Thank your honour," replied he, bowing as low as if he had received a present of a new one; and glancing a half ashamed look at the tattered garment on his back, "This coat will do just well enough; and I'll be after going to the fair in the morning, to buy a goat. There was one here yesterday, said her milk would be pure good for Nancy, and he offered me her grazing on the whinny brae below: but I little thought I would so soon come at the price of her."

"You must not mind the goat, Harry," replied

* A hog is likewise an English shilling.

Edward, "we have provided one for you, and our companion, who was so sorry for frightening your sister the other day, means to bring it to you this evening. Here is the money for his necklace, which I forgot to give before."

"God bless him and you both! I hope the young gentleman is well;" said Harry, "myself missed him all along, but was loath to ask, lest you should think I was looking for more, after all you did for me."

Merle, who, during this dialogue, sat with his head bent, so as not to be visible over the little hedge, mortified at his own thoughtlessness, disappointed at not presenting his own offering, and thrown off his guard by his friend Hilton's generosity, could neither restrain his tears nor conceal his vexation.

"Oh!" he cried, "when will Mr Hampton teach me to think twice before I act? I was the first to promise caution in passing Nancy's window, and the only one to forget that promise: I shall never equal Edward, or the youngest boy at school, in reflection or steadiness."

"Troth will you," said a voice from under the tree at the inside of the fence: "I never saw the body yet couldn't mend himself of a fault, when once it vexed him."

Merle started up at the sudden rejoinder, not at first understanding from whence the voice proceeded, and on rising was immediately perceived by Burne.

"You 're surely not thinking of the day I pushed you so rudely by me, master Merle, when you 'll not come inside the gate," said Harry, cordially advancing towards him.

"No, Harry, but I'm thinking how I forgot your sister to-day, when all the other boys remembered her, and that has made me ashamed to go in," returned the self-condemned Henry.

"Never vex your kind heart for that," said the honest cottager: "it would do her more harm to see you fretting about it."

"Don't stop the lad to fret a bit," cried the voice from beneath the tree: "troth, it will just take the spur from his heel the next time he rides on a fool's errand."

“ Oh, whist ! Canty, whist ! ” said Harry, indignantly, “ ye did not hold the reins so tight yourself, when ye kept the school at the Burn Foot, or I would have been a brave scholar now, and a better lad too.”

Poor Merle was the only boy who was not much amused by the old schoolmaster’s bluntness ; and he was by no means sorry when they all took leave, promising to return in the evening with Nanny, whose kid was now a few days old.

“ Arrived at home, he employed the remainder of his play hours in finishing a very curious little edifice, which his father had taught him to construct, in imitation of one he had seen used by a goat-herd on the Pyrenees. It was made of coarse wicker work, formed into five flat leaves, which were interlaced at intervals with strong cords, in such a manner that, by pulling the cords in the proper direction, each leaf moved into its right place, and from lying one on the top of the other in a flat and portable shape, they could be in a moment erected into a comfortable shelter against the inclemency of the weather. Mr Merle had frequently seen the goat-

herd above mentioned raise a shed of this kind over some sick or injured animal that he wished to defend from the cold; and Henry was never satisfied with hearing a description of it, until he became so perfectly master of its mechanism, as to be able to undertake the manufacture of one for his own favourite goat.

The performance had been kept a profound secret from all the boys except Edward Hilton, who assisted him in preparing the edifice; and Mr Hampton had kindly permitted them to carry on the manufacture in his own workshop. It had now been several months in progress, and Henry was that evening not the least happy of the party, whilst balancing the great wicker platform on his head, and maintaining a profound silence, he followed his laughing and inquisitive companions to the cottage. Here they found Harry seated on the bench, with Canty Maguire by his side; and were delighted at the pleasure they saw sparkle in his eye, when they presented him with the animal, which both they and he hoped might restore his sister to her former health.

"I'll just run in for Nancy to thank you herself," said he, as if he thought his own gratitude an inadequate return.

As she came forward to do so, the boys could not help thinking he must be mistaken in supposing her better; for, as they compared her wasted frame and pallid cheeks with the stout and healthy forms of the sisters from whom they had lately parted, they began to fear their present came too late to be of use. The poor girl, however, seemed delighted with the gift; and at their departure sat down on the bench to watch them, as, followed by Harry and the good old beggarman, they led Nanny to her pasture on the whinny brae.

"Long may they enjoy their health!" she cried. "Long, long may it be, before they see their parents laid in the cold ground! Mine would bless them now, could they see what trouble they are taking for their poor Nancy."

The party had by this time gained the hill; and one of the boys, suddenly recollecting himself, declared they had forgotten a tether for Nanny, without which she would certainly follow them

home again ; whilst another, with a sorrowful countenance, begged Harry Burne to build her a little shed, as she had always been accustomed to shelter at night.

“ Never mind,” said Merle, who was now busily engaged fastening to her horn a cord which was attached by a swivel to his platform ; “ never mind, she will not desire to stir from this by and by. Come here, Edward,” added he ; “ knock those iron spikes, which you see at the two far corners of this wicker table of mine, firmly into the ground.” Hilton obeyed. Henry then, having all prepared, pulled the cords, and up rose the fabric like the castles of old in Fairy Land. Two other spikes being then knocked down at the two front corners, to keep the edifice fast, Nanny, who had been frequently introduced to it as an inmate before, marched into the door with stately crest, followed by her little offspring, and stretched herself out to rest. Henry explained the construction of it to all the party, and shewed Harry how it could easily be moved to any fresh or sheltered side of the hill.

The boys were all in astonishment : Harry, who

examined the work minutely, was full of admiration; and the wonder of old Canty Maguire was only equalled by his volubility. "Well, well," cried he, "sure enough, the ingeniousness of man flags* the world for invention!"

"Barring † the bees," he added, after a pause; "but, to be sure, they beat ‡ the universe."

Here all the boys, having already lingered too long, hastened off to give vent to the laughter which their own glee and Canty's Irish phraseology excited.

* Surpasses.

† Excepting.

‡ Surpass.

THE
BLACK OAK NECKLACE.

PART II.

The redbreast oft, at evening hours,
Shall kindly lend his little aid,
With hoary moss, and gather'd flowers,
To deck the ground where she is laid.

COLLINS.

THE boys continued, from time to time, to get some of the necklaces disposed of for Harry, through Mr Hampton's assistance; and the cottage, with its new thatch and better furniture, especially when its youthful owners sat at the door in their new clothes, assumed a look of comfort, which never failed to inspire the young people with fresh spirits, as they passed on their daily visit to Nanny on the hill.

In a little time they became disappointed at perceiving no change in Nancy's health. They observed also that Harry, notwithstanding his improved condition, had lost all heart, as he termed it himself, about his sister. By his own ingenuity, and the profits of his work, he had, however, been able to purchase implements, and make himself a turning lathe, with which he soon became an expert and successful mechanic; and was well pleased to renounce his former occupation, which, from its trifling nature, had been extremely irksome to his active and industrious turn of mind.

His young friends were one evening taking him the product of the last necklace he had made, hoping, at the same time, to get a lesson in turning, with which he often good-naturedly indulged them, when, going as usual softly round the cottage, for fear of disturbing Nancy, they saw her sitting on the bench, resting her head on her hand.

In a voice of more than usual energy, she conversed with her brother, who stood leaning against the cottage, listening to her with an air of such deep attention and distress, that the boys felt unwilling to disturb them by advancing.

Whilst they stood silently gazing on the scene, and watching Nanny, who, dragging her tether along, cropped the young shrubs unheeded by her master, they caught the sound of Nancy's voice, as she thus expostulated:—

“Sure, Harry, it's not now you are to be told, her milk can do me no good; and, dear, it's long I have been wishing to tell you, there is but one thing can do me any good.”

“What's that, Nancy?” asked her brother, in a voice almost stifled with emotion.

“Just to see you blithe and happy as you used to be, and able to part from me without a thought of grieving.”

Harry sat down on the bench beside her, and trying to suppress his sobs, “Oh!” cried he, “my father, on his deathbed, bid me take care of you, Nancy. Is there no way I can do his bidding?”

“What have you been doing ever since he left me to your care, but doing his bidding?” answered she; “and now when you find that all your care will not do, it would vex me, dear, to see you fret against the will of God. Sure, Harry, you should

not grieve to see your sister go where she would rather be herself; for yon kid, that's bleating on the brae, does not long more after its mother than I do after mine; and, dear, I think with more joy this night of going to my grave, than any bride thinks of going to her bridal. You're strong and healthy, and may have many a rough blast to blow over you yet, my brother. But you must rouse up your strength, dear, and ask God to enable you to bear them all,—to bear them," she added, "as a Christian ought; and, I hope, when you are on your deathbed, Harry, you will know the joy that's in my heart to-night, though I cannot tell it to you now."

"Poor Nanny!" she continued, patting the animal's head, which at this moment laid itself down at her feet, "your milk could not cure me, as your young masters intended; but I wish they knew how much pleasure their care and kindness gave me in my sickness. And, Harry, dearest, they will be always kind to you, I'm sure they will; and if it be true, that God lets his pardoned spirits watch over the friends they leave on earth, may be He that has been good to all our sins, will let me watch over



NANCY AND HER PET GOAT.

ow

The first thing I did was to go to the
house and see what was going on.
I found the door open and the
light on. I went in and saw
the man who had been with me
last night. He was sitting at the
table and looking at the papers.
I went to him and said, "What
are you doing?" He said, "I
am looking at the papers."
I said, "What papers?" He said,
"The papers of the man who was
with me last night." I said, "What
papers?" He said, "The papers of
the man who was with me last
night." I said, "What papers?"
He said, "The papers of the man
who was with me last night."

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you, to guard and save you from all hurt or harm, until we meet again.

"But come," she continued, in a still more cheerful tone, as she saw her brother sunk in affliction, "come, Harry, let us go in and have our supper ; you see how well I am to-night, since I am talking so much. It may be, we are farther from the parting than either of us think." Her brother was not deceived ; but he arose and followed her, and the boys, struggling with the tears which trickled down many of their faces, stole from their hiding-place, and returned home.

Mr Hampton, who had learned from old nurse that Nancy could not recover, proposed to accompany his pupils the next morning to pay her an early visit, and to assure her, that her brother should never want a friend whilst he was near. Glad of any thing which might bring comfort to the sufferer, the boys scarcely waited for the dawning of a fine September morning, before they knocked at their master's door, and claimed his promise. He did not blame their impatience, was soon ready to join them, and the party speedily arrived at their desti-

nation. On turning round the cottage, they perceived Harry standing in the door-way, gazing on the sun now rising before him.

"They'll never wake her more!" sighed he, as he observed them stealing past her window with their accustomed caution; but he stood with a look of such serene composure, that the boys flocked around him, supposing his sister must be better. Their friend, however, read in his countenance, not the expression of hope, but of patient and manly resignation to the will of God.

He seemed afraid to trust his voice with speech, but moved respectfully aside to invite their entrance.

Mr Hampton guessed at the scene which awaited them, and thinking it would probably impress the too thoughtless minds of some of his pupils with serious reflection, he pressed the young man's hand in silence, and passed into the chamber, followed by his little flock.

"How beautiful she looks in that quiet sleep," whispered one of the younger boys, who, struck with a mingled sensation of surprise and awe, seized Mr Hampton's hand, and endeavoured to

stop him as he approached the bed : “ shall we not disturb her, sir, by going nearer ? ” he said.

“ No, my dear child, we have not even that to apprehend,” said Mr Hampton ; and then, drawing the boy gently forward, he continued :—

“ Do not fear to approach with me, and observe how calmly *they* repose whom God has taken to himself ! Can any of you, my young friends, fear death, when you see it in this lovely form, and have it in your power to die as happily ? ”

“ Death ! ” cried the boys with one voice, “ can she be really dead ? ” and with all their faculties riveted on one object, they drew eagerly, but gently, round her bed. The curtains, which they had seen with such delight when first put up, were looped back to admit the air. The floor and every article of furniture were strewn with flowers. A fresh morning breeze, entering from an open casement, breathed through the room, and a venerable looking woman, who had attended to all these offices, sat watching by the bedside. A hectic hue, which seemed to them like health, yet glowed upon her cheek ; and the smile, with which they had often

seen her welcome her kind brother home, after some temporary absence, still lingered round her lip.

The shroud which encompassed her, lost its ideal horrors as they gazed, and death no longer seemed to any of them dreadful.

“It is but a calm and happy sleep,” said Hilton, following the train of his thoughts aloud.

“She cannot be dead,” exclaimed Merle impetuously; yet the tears, which chased each other down his face, denied the rash assertion.

“You spake the truth,” said Molly Maguire, the venerable woman who sat by the bedside, “you spake the truth, young gentleman; she never lived till now! That smile upon her lips, if I had not believed before, would tell me so. It’s there, since ten minutes before her death, when she raised herself up a little on her bed, and called in peace and joy upon her Saviour’s name: then, looking with a keen glance, that seemed to pierce the very skies, ‘Harry! Harry!’ said she, in a hurried voice, and pointing with her hand to where she looked, ‘Is it, Harry — is it my father and mother that I see?’ and after a minute’s pause, the smile spread, as you

see it now, over her whole face, and I could just hear her whisper, 'My God and Saviour will be there too!' Sure I am, she's with them now, in bliss," said the good old woman, while tears, but not of sorrow, rolled down her aged face.

"That's my joy and comfort," sobbed Harry, from the doorway, as he stood with eyes fixed on the pale form of his sister; "sorry would I be to fret against the will of God, and vex her in her happy dwelling. He has done better for her than ever I could do."

The boys, one and all, sobbed almost as fast as Harry; and pressing anxiously round him, some seized his hands, whilst others offered such words of consolation as they could command. Mr Hampton, not less affected than themselves, induced the young man to accompany them part of the way home, and all felt happy to see him somewhat revived by the walk. But the warm eulogium bestowed by them all on his departed sister, was what seemed to have most power in attracting his attention. At length, the pious simplicity of all that Mr Hampton uttered led back his mind to

perfect resignation ; and he resumed his wonted confidence in that protecting care, that providential wisdom, which had, as he himself expressed it, removed a shorn lamb from the storm, and left one surviving who was better able to contend against the blast. " She has taught me to stand every storm that may blow," said he calmly ; " it was hard, indeed, very hard, to see her feeble frame suffering, when I had no power to help her ; but her mind was strong ! She trusted in her Saviour, and knew that he would never leave her nor forsake her, and through his heavenly aid, she remained patient and contented to the end. Now she is with Him in peace and glory ; so come what will to me, I'll try to bear it manfully."

Harry then thanked Mr Hampton and his young friends for all their kindness, and returned home ; but before he reached that now melancholy abode, he was joined by the honest and considerate old beggar man, who, in his own blunt way, offered such shrewd and affectionate consolation as was not lost upon the mourner : since his heart was ever as much alive to the comforts as to the sorrows of his situation.

Mr Hampton continued his walk in silence, until observing that Merle seemed oppressed with sadness, he said to him, "My dear Henry, you will endeavour, I hope, to drive from your mind every painful impression you may have received from the scene we have just witnessed: you should not give way to any feeling which could make you desire to forget the sight; but ought rather to cherish the recollection, as a powerful means of exciting the most useful reflections. If properly considered, you will find it well calculated to afford that confidence in the merciful providence of God which we should all make it our chief study to attain, since it is this alone which can support us under the various trials and distresses of life. I look upon Harry Burne," Mr Hampton added, "as a fit example for the imitation of all my pupils. His pious resignation, manly fortitude, and brotherly affection, will, I am certain, procure for him the continuance of your kindness; and I hope you will make me henceforward a sharer in whatever plans you may form for his benefit."

Such was their kind master's manner towards

them on every occasion where he could possibly make them feel their own powers of usefulness; and he never failed to follow in the path they chose to point out, provided he saw it would in any manner lead them to the end in view.

The following day he was pleased to see that Henry, without falling back into thoughtlessness, was able to resume his usual cheerfulness. It seemed, indeed, that the awful scene, of which he had been a spectator, had, for the first time, roused religious reflections in his mind, and made him feel what Mr Hampton had often endeavoured to inculcate, "that no thoughtless character can meet death with fortitude, much less with hope and joy, as poor Nancy Burne had done."

Mr Hampton observed him, all that morning, watching for a moment to speak to him alone, and took care to afford him the opportunity he sought. In the course of their conversation Merle told him, that old Canty Maguire had said, "Any one could conquer his faults, who was really sorry for them." "But I do not find it so," said Henry: "being vexed at them does not tell me how to cure them."

"It is, however, very apt to make us look about for some plan, which may enable us to conquer them. Have you any such plan in your mind, Henry?"

"No, sir, I cannot say I have; I was wishing, indeed, last night, that you would take me out of the class in which I am at present placed, and allow me a seat near yourself, apart from my school-fellows, where the certainty of being under your eye would keep my attention alive, and, perhaps, enable me to get my lessons without resorting to that mechanical system of which you so much disapprove. You have often told me, that a habit of fixing my attention every day, for the time necessary to get through my business in the common way, would help to make me steady; and I am resolved not to ask a seat among my companions again until I am able to get my lessons as they do.

"Do you call this having no plan for conquering your faults?" asked Mr Hampton smiling. "I believe you could not have fallen upon a better. I will, therefore, readily accede to your wish, and I trust you may have full faith in Canty's adage.

You must not, however, my dear Henry, expect to cure yourself of this, or of any other fault, except by a *habit* of *shunning*, when you can, or of successfully resisting when you cannot shun, those temptations which have hitherto seduced you into it."

They were now interrupted by the other boys, who came to propose a scheme for drawing Harry Burne from his lonely habitation.

This was, to engage him by the day, to teach them, during play hours, the use of his turning lathe, for which they would each ask their parents leave to remunerate him. Mr Hampton readily acquiesced in the scheme, and as Harry was now become an excellent house carpenter, he placed under his superintendence an addition he was obliged to make at the parsonage; by which means Harry obtained ample occupation for upwards of twelve months.

By the profits arising from his several employments, he was shortly after enabled to rent the cottage, and a small farm from his landlord. Here Canty Maguire and his venerable partner took up their abode along with him. Nor were they dis-

possessed, even after Thomas, the old gardener, (having declared that he would never let any one but a good son, and a good brother, be the husband of his pretty Alice) bestowed his wealthy daughter on our hero.

Very shortly after this declaration, the youthful and happy pair were united by Mr Hampton. Hilton's birth day was chosen for the wedding, and Harry led home his blooming bride escorted by the boys, who, in great delight, joined in all the rural sports of evening, and danced on the green until the setting sun warned their kind master to lead them home.

"I'm proud to see you, sir," said Harry Burne to Captain Merle, as Henry some years afterwards rode past the cottage on his way to visit Mr Hampton.

"And I am happy to see you, honest Harry, looking so well, and with so many indications of prosperity around you," said Merle, as he glanced his eye over the snug farm-yard and four rosy children at the wicket. "How is my good friend

Alice? and is my worthy old monitor, Canty Maguire, still alive?"

"Thank your honour kindly," replied Harry, "Alice is just purely; and Canty and the old wife's sitting in the chimney corner yet; and there's Nanny browsing on the brae, almost as good as the day your honour brought her to the cottage. One would think poor Nancy keeps her word, and watches over me and mine, to keep us all from harm: There's a wean,* that's called for her, and her very marrow,† and she never had a brash of sickness since she was born yet."

"We sometimes see merit rewarded even in this life, Harry," said Merle, holding out his hand to bid adieu.

But Harry still detained him, to inquire after all his young companions, especially master Edward Hilton.

"They have all been fortunate in life, and all turned out as well as their excellent preceptor's care taught the world to expect," replied Merle;

* Child.

† Counterpart.

“but Hilton,” he added, “is already the pride of his family, an honour to his friends, and likely to become his country’s greatest ornament,—a prudent and accomplished statesman.”

Harry then suffered him to depart, having obtained a promise that he would call again at the cottage, before he left the country. Merle then spurring his horse forward, was soon out of sight, and in a few minutes after was pressed in the arms of his kind and affectionate master.

“Finished! already finished!” cried Sir Humphrey, roused by the cessation of Elizabeth’s voice as she closed her little manuscript. “I hope, child, you have not spoilt your story, by concluding it so abruptly. ‘They danced on the green, till the setting sun warned them to return;’ were not these your last words? But it is an excellent story, child, an excellent story, interesting and well told; I wish, however, you had not cut it so intolerably short at the end.”

“What does my uncle mean?” exclaimed

Elizabeth, addressing herself to Mrs Deborah, and fixing her eyes on the laughable visage of Sir Humphrey; "I fear," she added, with evident mortification, "I have not succeeded in keeping him awake, even so well as I used to do with those stupid tales which I had foolishly hoped to surpass."

"He seems, indeed, a little bewildered," replied Mrs Deborah; "and in spite of all the *pathos* of your story, Lizzy," (this she said with marked emphasis,) "I fear he has stolen a nap unobserved by us."

"No, Deborah, I have not stolen a nap, and I do not object to the pathos of her story in the least; but," he added, "a marriage coming so soon after the description of a death scene, and, above all, the sudden conclusion of the story, have, I confess, disappointed me."

The fact was, the old gentleman had been so much pleased by what Mrs Deborah called the pathos in Elizabeth's story, particularly in the death scene of poor Nancy, that he was not prepared for the sudden transition from it to the joyous festivities

of a wedding ; and he thought the description in the passage he quoted so much out of place, that he was completely absorbed by his intended criticisms, and had not heard one word of the concluding sentences.

After some explanation, Elizabeth again read the sequel of her story, and was pleased to observe that her uncle now appeared satisfied. Emma and Kate were also warm in their praises, but poor Elizabeth had still the mortification to perceive, that her production did not meet with the approbation of her aunt.

She, however, good humouredly said, she thought quite as little of it as any person could do, and besought Mrs Deborah not to feel any unwillingness to express her real opinion, declaring, that even if the story had been better told, she should have deserved no credit for it, since she had only written down the facts, with which they were all so well acquainted, in the life of the poor young Irishman, who lately earned his livelihood by making black oak necklaces at Donaghadee.

Kate protested that the story deserved much more

commendation than hers, and Emma declared it was far superior to any of those with which it was to be compared; but their aunt maintained that Elizabeth had taken so much pains to produce pathetic description, rather than practical instruction, that she could not help considering it below the level of any in Mr ——'s collection, and she, therefore, pronounced it undeserving of the premium. "There are, too," she said, "so many inelegant phrases, and so many sentences in it contrary to the rules of Lindley Murray, by which you have all been so carefully taught, that I ——"

"Confound your grammar rules, and Lindley Murray into the bargain!" said the old Baronet testily, "I will not have any piece of writing measured in this manner, by rule and compass, like a carpenter's square, and then cast aside by a cross critic, for some half hair's-breadth of error; no, I hate all such criticizing," he added, quite forgetting himself, as he sometimes did, to the great distress of his good sister. He did not in reality, however, like Elizabeth's story so well as that of Kate, which better suited his military spirit; but what he most

liked in "The Black Oak Necklace," was the very pathos of which Mrs Deborah complained, and irritated by what he called her too great fastidiousness, he wished to adjudge the premium to Elizabeth. She, however, acknowledged the justice of her aunt's censure, and confessed that she had shewn so little ingenuity or judgment in her story, that she positively would not accept of a reward which she felt she did not merit.

"I do not see the want of ingenuity," said her uncle, "and few people of your years are remarkable for solidity of judgment, my girl; indeed, we are all at any age too apt to have our judgment led astray by prejudice and fancy. One may shew this, perhaps, by too great love of the pathetic, and the other by over great hatred,—both are equally errors in judgment," he added, with a glance at his sister; "but I assert, that the girl who wrote the story you have just read to us, could probably write a much more able work; and since it is decidedly written with more pathos and feeling than the 'Soldier's Return,' I have no hesitation in adjudging it the second premium, let other people think what they may."

Elizabeth protested against this decision, and really felt that her sister's story deserved the premium much better than her own; but Sir Humphrey commanding her not to say another word on the subject, hastily quitted the room, and as hastily returned, bringing in one hand a beautifully bound copy of "Retirement," a work just come out, which all the girls had been most anxious to read, and in the other a "Milton's Paradise Lost," which he had once heard Elizabeth say she should like better than any other book in his library. Her eyes sparkled with delight as she received the first prize; but the second she still persisted in refusing, and Mrs Deborah asserted that she was right, loudly declaring that the second premium could not be justly awarded to either story, since the merits and demerits of both were, in her mind, so equal, that it would be impossible to decide which was to be preferred. "The only method of proving the superiority," she said, "would be to let each author try who should most improve their work, by lopping off the overwrought and redundant parts." At this suggestion, the Baronet

became almost outrageous: he seized the manuscripts in haste, and carefully locked them both up in his desk, vowing he would, on no account, submit to their being altered in the slightest particular.

Vainly did the girls entreat that he would restore them even for a few hours, that they might endeavour to improve them according to their aunt's wish.

"Do, my dear uncle," cried Kate; "do let me at least endeavour to make mine more what my aunt approves. There are, indeed, innumerable faults in it, which were evident to myself on a second reading, and which I should wish to remove before I read it to my little sister."

Elizabeth also made the same entreaty, but their uncle still protested the stories should not be touched, and that Elizabeth should be considered the victor, and receive the prize. This she again positively declined, repeating that she could not accept a reward which she felt she did not merit.

"Very well, ladies," said the old Baronet, somewhat piqued, "I am a silly old fellow I know, and I perceive you all think I cannot discern a good story from a bad one; but since I shall not get leave

to abide by my own judgment, and since the second premium is not to be given on my award, I will e'en submit the question to those on whose opinion you will perhaps have more dependence."

The girls inquired how this was to be done, but could obtain no satisfactory answer.

Mrs Deborah proposed leaving the matter to the decision of the little girl for whom the stories were ultimately intended, and Sir Humphrey, seeming to agree, said he would read them to Mary himself next morning.

For the whole day after, all the little girl's play hours were devoted to hearing the tales, with which she was so much delighted, that her sisters thought their trouble in writing them well repaid. When finished, she petitioned to have them read over again, but fearful of mortifying either of her sisters, she declared she thought both the stories equally pretty, and no persuasion could induce her to tell which she preferred.

"Don't you think they would make a nice little book, Mary, if they were printed?" said Sir Humphrey, archly.

"Oh yes, uncle, very nice. I wish they were made into a little printed book. They would be a great deal nicer than 'Jack the Giant Killer,' or the 'White Cat,' or any of those stories, which my aunt was so angry with you for giving me. Do, pray, dear uncle, get them printed, if you can, and then I may read them for myself as often as I please."

"That, my little girl, I promise you, is exactly what I mean to do," replied her uncle. "They shall stand in your library in the best print, and finest binding I can give them, before a month goes past, and we shall then have abundant opportunities of discovering which story is generally preferred."

The girls, in consternation, made a desperate attempt to seize the key of the desk, and recover their papers; but failing in all their efforts, they offered to submit to any decision he pleased to make, if he would only give up the scheme of publication.

"No, no," said he, laughing heartily, as he placed the key securely in his waistcoat pocket, "with a blessing the decision shall now be made by

the public; you refused my offer once, Elizabeth, and I do not mean to repeat it."

"You shall have no farther trouble," he added, pushing them both away, and hardening himself against their entreaties; "as sure as my name is Humphrey, I will send your stories to the press, and before one month goes over your heads, you shall see them in print, on that bracket. No small entertainment will it be to me," continued this provoking old man, "when I put the book into some visiter's hand, and ask him to decide, which is the best story? I think I see you both writhing under the apprehension of his detecting some of the characters, and discovering the authors."

"There will be no appeal from the judgment we shall thus obtain; and should you meet with some rough treatment from a few clever critics, young ladies, I hope it will teach you not to be so severe on the next poor writer who falls into your hands."

The girls were silent, either from the idea that it was in vain to speak, or from the hope that this whim of their provoking old uncle would die away, if not too warmly opposed.

But the whim has not died away, the threat is put in execution, and Sir Humphrey trusts that the young people, to whom he dedicates this volume, may never disapprove of the trick by which he hopes to have benefited them, and punished his saucy nieces.

THE END.

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