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The Mother's Recompense, Volume 2 by Grace Aguilar

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The Mother's Recompense, Volume 2

CHAPTER I.

"Who amongst this merry party will become sufficiently sober to assist me in a work of charity?" was Mrs. Hamilton's address, one afternoon, as she entered her daughter's room, where Emmeline, her young friends Lady Florence and Lady Emily Lyle, and even the usually quiet Ellen, were employing themselves in drawing, embroidery, and such light amusements as diligently as the merry speech, the harmless joke, and the joyous laugh of truly innocent enjoyment would permit.

"A case of extreme distress has come before me," she continued, "for which alms and other relief will not be sufficient; clothing is principally required. Can any of you consent to put aside these pretty things for a few days, merely for the sake of obliging me and doing good? I have set every hand to work, and now for further assistance come to you. To whom shall I appeal?"

"To me---to me---to me!" every voice exclaimed spontaneously, and they eagerly crowded round her to know what she required, what case of distress had occurred, for whom they were to work.

Gratified and pleased at their eagerness, Mrs. Hamilton smilingly imparted all they wished to know. The simple tale drew from the artless group many exclamations of pity, combined with the earnest desire to relieve in whatever way their kind friend would dictate, and their task was received by all with every demonstration of pleasure.

"You, too, Ellen," said Mrs. Hamilton, smiling; "I thought you once said you had no time for work."

"Not for ornamental work, aunt! but I hope you have never asked in vain for my assistance in such a case as this," answered Ellen, blushing as she spoke.

"No, love; my words did you injustice. But you appear to have found time for ornamental work also, if this very pretty wreath be yours," said Mrs. Hamilton, bending over her niece's frame, and praising the delicacy of her flowers.

"Oh, I have time for any and everything now," exclaimed Ellen, in a tone of animation, so very unusual, that not only her aunt but her young companions looked at her with astonishment.

"Ellen, you are becoming more and more incomprehensible," said Emmeline, laughing. "If Edward do not come home soon, as I suspect this extraordinary mood is occasioned by the anticipation of his arrival, I am afraid your spirits will carry you half way over the Channel to meet him. Mamma, take my advice, and keep a strict watch over the person of your niece."

"You know, Ellen, you are as full of fun and mischief as I am, quiet and demure as we once thought you," said Lady Emily.

"Is she? I am glad of it," said Mrs. Hamilton, playfully. "Do not look so very much ashamed of your mirth, my dear Ellen, and bend over your work as if you had been guilty of some extraordinary misdemeanour. You know how pleased I always am to see you happy, Ellen," she added, in a lower voice, as she laid her hand sportively on her niece's head, which was bent down to conceal the confusion Emmeline's words had called forth.

Some little time longer Mrs. Hamilton remained with the young party, entering with her usual kindness into all their pleasures and pursuits, and left them perhaps even happier than she had found them.

Ellen's change of manner had been noticed by the whole party assembled at Oakwood; and by most of them attributed to the anticipation of the long-absent Edward's return. That indefinable manner which had formerly pervaded her whole conduct had disappeared. She no longer seemed to have something weighing on her mind, which Mrs. Hamilton sometimes fancied to have been the case. Cheerful, animated, at times even joyous, she appeared a happier being than she had ever been before; and sincerely her aunt and uncle, who really loved her as their child, rejoiced in the change, though they knew not, guessed not the real cause. Ingratiating herself with all, even the stern Duchess of Rothbury, who, with her now only unmarried daughter, Lady Lucy, had accepted Mrs Hamilton's pressing invitation to Oakwood, relaxed in her manner towards her; and Sir George Wilmot, also a resident guest, declared that if Edward were not proud of his sister on his return, he would do all in his power to hinder his promotion.

Mr. Hamilton and his family had employed the greater part of a very beautiful August in conducting their guests to all the most picturesque and favourite spots in the vicinity of Oakwood. About a week after the circumstance we have narrated, St. Eval and Lady Gertrude joined them in the morning of a proposed excursion, which included the whole party, with the exception of Mrs. Hamilton and Ellen. The Earl and his sister had been instantly enlisted as a most agreeable reinforcement; nor was the young Earl very sorry for an excuse to spend a whole day in enjoying the beauties of Nature *tete-a-tete* with his betrothed, who, since the candid explanation of her agitation on first hearing of Annie's elopement, for which her knowledge of Lord Alphingham's former marriage had well accounted, had become if possible dearer than ever; and this excursion was indeed one of perfect enjoyment to both.

Ellen, for some unaccountable reason, which her young friends could neither penetrate nor conceive, refused to accompany them, declaring that most important business kept her at home.

"Edward will not come to-day, so do not expect him," had been Emmeline's parting words.

The ruralizing party were to dine amid the ruins of Berry Pomeroy, and were not expected home till dusk, to a substantial tea.

It might have been seven in the evening that Ellen quietly entered the library, where her aunt was engaged in writing, and stood by her side in silence, as if fearful of interrupting by addressing her.

"Wait a few minutes, my love, and I shall be ready to attend to you, if you require my assistance in the arrangement of your work," Mrs. Hamilton said, alluding to the parcel of baby-linen she perceived in her niece's hand. Ellen smiled and obeyed. In a few minutes Mrs. Hamilton laid aside her writing, and looked up, as if expecting her niece would speak.

"Well, Ellen, what grand difficulty can you not overcome?"

"None, my dear aunt. My task is done; I only want your approval," replied Ellen.

"Done!" repeated her aunt, in an accent of astonishment. "My dear Ellen, it is impossible; I only gave it you a week ago. You must have worked all night to finish it"

"Indeed I have not," replied Ellen, quickly yet earnestly.

"Then I certainly must examine every little article," said Mrs. Hamilton, laughing, "or I shall decidedly fancy this extreme rapidity cannot have been productive of neatness, which last I rather prefer to the first."

Ellen submitted her work to her scrutiny, without reply, and remained kneeling on a stool at her aunt's feet, without any apprehension as to the sentence that would be pronounced.

"Really, Ellen, I shall incline to Emmeline's opinion, and believe some magic is at work within you," was Mrs. Hamilton's observation, as she folded up the tiny suit with very evident marks of satisfaction. "How you have acquired the power of working thus neatly and rapidly, when I have scarcely ever seen a needle in your hand, I cannot comprehend. I will appoint you my sempstress-general, in addition to bestowing my really sincere thanks for the assistance you have afforded me."

Ellen pressed her aunt's hand to her lips in silence, for an emotion Mrs. Hamilton beheld, but could not understand, choked her voice.

"What is the matter, love? has anything occurred to annoy you to-day? You look paler and more sad than usual; tell me what it is."

"Do you remember what---what chanced---have you forgotten the event that took place this very day, this very hour, in this very room, three years ago?" demanded Ellen, almost inaudibly, and her cheek blanched to the colour of her robe as she spoke.

"Why recall the painful past at such a moment, my sweet girl? has it not been redeemed by three years of undeviating rectitude and virtue? I had hoped the recollection had ere this long ceased to disturb you," replied Mrs. Hamilton, with much feeling, as she pressed her lips to her niece's brow.

"It never can, it never will, unless---unless---" Strong and almost fearful emotion prevented all she had wished to say, and throwing into Mrs. Hamilton's lap a small calf-skin pocket-book, she flung her arms round her neck, and burying her face in her bosom, murmured, in a voice choked with sobs, "The amount of all I took is there---all---all. Oh, take it, and let me thus feel it as a debt which I have paid."

"Ellen, my own Ellen, be composed," entreated Mrs. Hamilton, alarmed by the extreme agitation she beheld. "Tell me, love, what are the contents of this pocket-book? why do you entreat me so earnestly to take it?"

Struggling violently with herself, Ellen tore open the little book, and placed in her aunt's hand bank notes to the amount of those which had once been so fatal a temptation.

"They are mine---all mine. I have gained them honestly; indeed, indeed I have; I have worked for them. It was to gain time for this I refused to go out with you last winter. I had hoped my long, long task would have been done before, but it was not. Oh, I thought I should never, never gain the whole amount, but I have now; and, oh, tell me I have in part redeemed my sin; tell me I am more worthy of your love, your kindness; tell me I am again indeed your own happy Ellen."

She would have said more, but no words came at her command, and Mrs. Hamilton remained silent for a few minutes, in surprise and admiration.

"My Ellen, my own much-loved Ellen!" she exclaimed at length, and tears of unfeigned emotion mingled with the repeated kisses she imprinted on her niece's cheek, "this moment has indeed repaid me for all. Little did I imagine in what manner you were employed, the nature of your tedious task. How could you contrive to keep it thus secret from me? what time could you find to work thus laboriously, when not one study or employment have I seen neglected?"

"I thought at first I never should succeed," replied Ellen, her strong emotion greatly calmed; "for while Miss Harcourt remained with us, I had only two hours before prayers in the morning, and sometimes I have ventured to sit up an hour or two later at night; but not often, for I feared you would discover me, and be displeased, for I could not, dared not tell you in what I was employed. The winter before last I earned so much from embroidery and finer kinds of work, that I thought I should have obtained the whole a year ago; but I was disappointed, for here I could only do plain work, at which I earned but little, for I could not do it so quickly. I had hoped there would have been no occasion to refuse your wish, that I should accompany you and Emmeline, but I found the whole amount was still far from completed, and I was compelled to act as I did."

"And is it possible, my Ellen, you have intrusted your secret to no one; have demanded no sympathy, no encouragement in this long and painful task?"

"I could not have accomplished nor did I commence it, without the kind assistance and advice of Ellis. My dear aunt, I knew, reposed great confidence in her, and I thought if she did not disapprove of my plan, I should not be acting so very independently, and that with her assistance my secret would not be so difficult to keep: she procured me employment. My name nor my reasons for seeking it were never known to those for whom I worked."

"And could she approve of a task such as this, my Ellen? Could she counsel such painful self-denial and tedious labour?"

"She did all she could to dissuade, and at first positively refused to assist me; but at last yielded to my entreaties, for she saw I never should be happy till I could look on the past more as a debt than---than---" She paused, then added---"My own spirit rebelled enough; that was far more difficult to overcome than other dissuasions."

"And what strong impulse could have urged you to this course of self-denial, my sweet girl? I know not yet whether I shall not scold you for this almost needless infliction of pain, and for the deception it involves towards me," said Mrs. Hamilton, with reproachful tenderness.

"Forgive me, oh, forgive me that!" exclaimed Ellen, clasping the hand she held. "I have often and often felt I was deceiving you; failing in that confidence I had promised you should never have again to demand; but I dared not tell you, for I knew you would have prohibited the continuance of my task."

"I should indeed, my Ellen; and tell me why you have done this. Was it indeed because you imagined nothing else could atone for the past?"

"Because I felt---I knew, though I was restored to your favour, your confidence, my conscience was not at peace, because I had read, *'If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that which he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity, he shall surely live, he shall not die;*' and I felt, however I might endeavour to be virtuous and good, till I had given again that which I had robbed, I dared not implore the mercy of my God."

It is impossible to do justice by mere description to the plaintive eloquence, to the mournfully-expressive voice with which these simple words were said, betraying at once those thoughts and feelings which had been so long concealed in Ellen's meek and youthful heart, the hidden spring from which her every action had emanated; Mrs. Hamilton felt its power, the sentiment was too exalted, too holy for human praise. She folded her niece to her bosom.

"May the Almighty searcher of hearts accept this sacrifice and bless you, my dear child. Secretly, unostentatiously, it has been done. Pure must have been the thoughts which were yours when thus employed, when such was their origin, and we may hope, indeed, they have been accepted. Had no self-denial attended the payment of your debt, had you merely entreated your uncle to repay himself from the fortune you possess, I would not have accepted it; such a payment would

neither have been acceptable to me, nor to Him whom, I firmly believe, my Ellen sought more to please. But when every action the last few years has proved to me, the words you repeated have indeed been the foundation of this self-conquest, I cannot but humbly, trustingly, think it will be an accepted offering on high. Nor will I refuse to comply with your request, my dearest Ellen; I will receive that which you have so perseveringly and so painfully earned; it shall be employed in purchasing prayers for us all, from those whom it may relieve. Let not the recollection of the past again disturb you, my sweet child. Solicitude and pain you indeed once caused me, but this moment has redeemed it all. Continue thus undeviatingly to follow the blessed path you have chosen, and our Ellen is and ever will be deserving of all the love which those to whom she is so dear can lavish upon her."

For a few minutes there was silence, for the solemnity with which she spoke had touched a responding chord; but the thoughts of the orphan arose to heaven, silently petitioning for grace to continue in that blessed path of which her aunt had spoken, in thankfulness for having been permitted to conclude her painful task, and thus obtained the approbation of her more than mother, the relative she so revered and loved.

"And this, then, was the long task which your numerous avocations during the day prevented your completing, and you therefore took the time from that allotted to recreation and amusement---this, which so strongly emboldened my little Ellen, that even my coldness had no effect, except to make her miserable. What do you not deserve for thus deceiving me? I do not think I know any punishment sufficiently severe." Mrs. Hamilton had recalled all her playfulness, for she wished to banish every trace of sadness and emotion from the countenance of her niece. Ellen raised her head to answer her in her own playful tone, when they were both startled by the declining light of day being suddenly obscured, as if by the shadow of a figure standing by the open window near them. It was, however, so dark, that the outlines of the intruder were alone visible, and they would have been unrecognised by any, save by the eye of affection.

Ellen sprung suddenly to her feet. "Edward!" burst gladly from her lips, and in another second a fine manly youth had darted through the open casement, and the long parted brother and sister were in each other's arms. For a minute only Ellen was pressed in his embrace, and then releasing her, he turned towards his aunt, and even as a devoted mother, a fond and dutiful son, they met, for such had they been in the long years of separation. Frequently had that high-spirited boy been tempted to error and to sin, but as a talisman had her letters been. He thought on the years that were passed, on their last interview, when every word had graven itself upon his heart, on the devotedness of his orphan sister, the misery he had once occasioned; he thought on these things, and stood firm,---the tempter fled. He stood before them erect in youthful beauty, no inward stain bade him turn from those fond looks or shrink from the entwining arms of his young sister. And, oh, how blessed is it thus to meet! to feel that vanished years have not estranged us, distance has not diminished love, that we are to each other even as we parted; to feel again the fond kiss, to hear once more the accents of a voice which to us has been for years so still,---a voice that brings with it the gush of memory! Past days flit before us; feelings, thoughts, hopes, we deemed were dead, all rise again, summoned by that secret witchery, the well-remembered though long silent voice. Let years, long, lingering, saddening years drag on their chain, let youth have given place to manhood, manhood to age, still will it be the same---the voice we once have loved, and deemed to us for ever still---oh, time, and grief, and blighted hope will be forgotten, and youth, in its undimmed and joyous beauty, its glow of generous feelings, its bright anticipations, all, all again be ours.

"Mother; yes, now indeed may I call you mother!" exclaimed Edward, when the agitation of this sudden meeting had subsided, and he found himself seated on a sofa between his aunt and sister, clasping the hand of the former and twining his arm caressingly round the latter. "Now indeed may I indulge in the joy it is to behold you both again; now may I stand forth unshrinkingly to meet my uncle's glance, no guilt, or shame, or fear has cast its mist upon my heart. This was your gift," he drew a small Bible from his bosom. "I read it, first, because it had been yours, because it was dear to you, and then came other and holier thoughts, and I bowed down before the God you worshipped, and implored His aid to find strength, and He heard me."

Mrs. Hamilton pressed his hand, but spoke not, and after a brief silence, Edward, changing his tone and his subject, launched at once, with all his natural liveliness, into a hurried tale of his voyage to England. An unusually quick passage gave him and all the youngsters the opportunity they desired, of returning to their various homes quite unexpectedly. The vessel had only arrived off Plymouth the previous night, or rather morning, for it was two o'clock; by noon the ship was dismantled, the crew dismissed, leave of absence being granted to all. And for the first time in his life, he laughingly declared he fancied being the captain's favourite very annoying, as his presence and assistance were requested at a time when his heart was at Oakwood; however, he was released at last, procured a horse, and galloped away. His disasters were not, however, over; his horse fell lame, as if, Edward said, he felt a seaman was not a fit master for him. He was necessitated to leave the poor animal to the care of a cottager, and proceed on foot, avoiding the village, for fear of being recognised before he desired; he exercised his memory by going through the lanes, and reached Oakwood by a private entrance. Astonished at seeing the rooms, by the windows of which he passed, deserted, he began to fear the family were all in London; but the well-known sound of his aunt's voice drew him to the library, just as he was seeking the main entrance to have his doubts solved. He stood for a few minutes gazing on the two beings who, more vividly than any others, had haunted his dreams by night and visions by day; he had wished to meet them first, and alone, and his wish was granted.

Wrapped in her happy feelings, it was her brother's arm around her, her brother's voice she heard, Ellen listened to him in trembling eagerness, scarcely venturing to breathe, lest that dear voice should be still, lest the hand she clasped should fade away, and she should wake and find it but a dream of bliss---Edward could not really have returned; and Mrs. Hamilton felt emotion so powerfully swelling within, as she gazed once more on the brave preserver of her husband, the child of her sister, her very image, that it was with difficulty she could ask those many questions which affection and interest prompted.

Edward had scarcely, however, finished his tale, before the sound of many and eager voices, the joyous laugh, and other signs of youthful hilarity, announced the return of the party from their excursion. Nor was it long before Emmeline's voice, as usual, sounded in loud laughing accents for her mother, without whose sympathy no pleasure was complete.

"Do not disturb yourselves yet, my dear children," Mrs. Hamilton said, as she rose, knowing well how many, many things the long-separated orphans must have mutually to tell, and penetrating with that ready sympathy---the offspring of true kindness---their wish for a short time to remain alone together. "You shall not be summoned to join us till tea is quite ready, and if you wish it, Edward," she added, with a smile, "you shall have the pleasure of startling your uncle and cousins as agreeably as you did us. I will control my desire to proclaim the happy tidings of your safe return."

She left the brother and sister together, sending Robert with, a lamp, that they might have the gratification of seeing each other, which the increasing darkness had as yet entirely prevented; and a gratification to both it was indeed. Edward had left his sister comparatively well, but with the traces of her severe illness still remaining vividly impressed upon her features; but now he saw her radiant in health, in happiness, and beauty so brilliant, he could hardly recognise that fair and graceful girl for the ailing, drooping child she had once been. Nor or was the contrast less striking between the Ellen of the present meeting and the Ellen of the last; then wretchedness, misery, inward fever, consumed her outward frame, and left its scorching brand upon her brow. Remorseful anguish had bowed her down; and now he had returned when her heart was free and light as the mountain breeze, her self-inspired penance was completed; and nothing now existed to make her shrink from the delight of devoting hours to her brother.

"Tell James to go over to the Rectory, with my compliments to Mr. Howard, and if he be not particularly engaged, I beg he will join us this evening," said Mrs. Hamilton, a short time after she had left the library, addressing Martyn, then crossing the hall.

"Have you any particular wish for our worthy rector this evening, Emmeline?" demanded Mr. Hamilton, gazing, as he spoke, with admiration and surprise on the countenance of his wife, whose expressive features vainly strove to conceal internal happiness.

"A most earnest desire," she replied, smiling somewhat archly.

"Indeed, I am curious"---

"I am sorry, dear Arthur, for I am no advocate for curiosity, and cannot indulge it."

"Ah, papa, there is a gentle hint for you, and a broader one for me," exclaimed Emmeline, laughing; while conjectures as to what Mrs. Hamilton's business with the rector could possibly be, employed the time merrily till the whole party were assembled.

"You may depend, Emmeline, it is to arrange all the necessary minutiae for your marriage," said Lord St. Eval, who had been persuaded to remain at Oakwood that night. "Your mother has selected a husband for you; and, fearing your opposition, has sent for Mr. Howard that all may be said and done at once."

"I hope, then, that I am the man," exclaimed Lord Louis, laughing; "there is no one else whom she can very well have at heart, not that I see," he added, looking mischievously round him, while some strange and painful emotions suddenly checked Emmeline's flow of spirits, and utterly prevented her replying.

A flush of crimson dyed her cheek and brow; nay, her fair neck partook its hue, and she suddenly turned towards her mother, with a glance that seemed of entreaty.

"Why, Emmeline, my dear child, you surely cannot believe there is the least particle of truth in my mischievous son's assertion?" said the Marchioness of Malvern, pitying, though she wondered at her very evident distress.

"And is marriage so very disagreeable to you even in thought?" demanded Lord St. Eval, still provokingly.

"The very idea is dreadful; I love my liberty too well," answered Emmeline, hastily rallying her energies with an effort, and she ran on in her usual careless style; but her eye glanced on the tall figure of young Myrvin, as he stood with Herbert at a distant window, and words and liveliness again for a moment failed. His arms were folded on his bosom, and his grey eye rested on her with an expression almost of despair, for the careless words of Lord Louis had reached his heart---"No one else she can have."

Lord Louis had forgotten him, or intentionally reminded him that he was indeed as a cypher in that noble circle; that he might not, dared not aspire to that fair hand. He gazed on her, and she met his look; and if that earnest, almost agonized glance betrayed to her young and guileless bosom that she was beloved, it was not the only secret she that night discovered.

Mr. Hamilton was too earnestly engaged in conversation with Sir George Wilmot to notice the painful confusion of his child; and Mrs. Hamilton was thinking too deeply and happily on Ellen's conduct and Edward's return, to bestow the attention that it merited, and consequently it passed without remark.

"Mother, I am sorry to be the first to inform you of such a domestic misfortune," said Percy, soon after entering the room, apparently much amused, "but Robert has suddenly lost his wits; either something extraordinary has happened or is about to happen, or the poor fellow has become bewitched. You smile, mother; on my honour, I think it no smiling matter."

"Never mind, Percy; your favourite attendant will, I have no doubt, recover his senses before the night is over. I am not in the least anxious," replied his mother, smiling.

"Percy, your mother has clothed herself to-night in impenetrable mystery, so do not hope to discover anything through her," said Lord St. Eval, laughing, and the young men continued gaily conversing with Lady Gertrude and Caroline, till the entrance of Mr. Howard and the announcement of tea or supper; of both of which, after a day spent in the country as this had been, the evening meal partook.

"Ellen---where is Ellen?" said several voices, as they seated themselves round the hospitable board, and observed her place was vacant; and Sir George Wilmot eagerly joined the inquiry.

"She will join us shortly, Sir George," replied Mrs. Hamilton, and turning to a servant near her, desired him to let Miss Fortescue know tea was ready.

"I will go, madam. Stand back, James, let me pass," exclaimed Robert, hastily, and he bounded out of the apartment with a most extraordinary failing of his wonted respect.

"There, proof positive; did I not tell you the lad was mad," said Percy, and, as if in confirmation of his words, almost directly after a loud and joyful shout sounded from the servants' hall.

Mr. Hamilton looked up inquiringly, and in doing so his eye caught an object that caused him to start from his seat with an exclamation of surprise and pleasure; while Percy, leaping over chairs and tables that stood in his way, unheeding Lord Louis's inquiry, whether Robert had infected him, shook and shook again the hand of the long-absent relative, in whom both he and Herbert could only recognise the preserver of their father. Herbert and his sisters simultaneously left their seats, and crowded round him. Warmly, affectionately, Edward greeted them one and all, and rapidly answered the innumerable questions of Percy; defended his sister from all share in his concealment, of which Herbert and Emmeline laughingly accused her. The flush of almost painful bashfulness still lingered on his cheek, as he marked the eyes of all fixed upon him, strangers as well as friends; but as he turned in the direction of his aunt, and his eye fell on the venerable figure of his revered preceptor, who stood aside, enjoying the little scene he beheld, as the remembrance of the blessed words, the soothing comfort that impressive voice had spoken in his hour of greatest need, the lessons of his childhood, his dawning youth, rushed on his mind, control, hesitation, reserve were all at an end; he broke from the surrounding and eager group, even from the detaining arm of his sister, sprang towards him, and clasping both Mr. Howard's hands, his eyes glistened and his voice quivered, as he exclaimed---

"Mr. Howard, too! one of my first, my best, and kindest friends. Ellen told me not of this unexpected pleasure; this is joy, indeed."

"A joy to me, too, my dear boy, equally unexpected; we must thank Mrs. Hamilton for this early meeting. I knew not the pleasure she had prepared for me," replied Mr. Howard, returning the pressure of Edward's hand with equal warmth.

"Nor did any one, my good sir. Never will I say again a lady cannot keep a secret," said the Marquis of Malvern, jestingly. "Mr. Hamilton, as you do not seem inclined to honour me, without asking, I must entreat a formal introduction to that gallant nephew of yours, whose name is not unknown to naval fame, though as yet but one of her junior officers."

"I really beg your pardon, my dear Lord; Edward's sudden appearance has startled me out of all etiquette. To one and all, then, of my good friends here, allow me to introduce to their indulgent notice this said Edward Fortescue, midshipman and gallant officer on board His Majesty's good ship Prince William; and, in order that all reserve may be at an end between us, I propose a bumper to the health and prosperity of the wanderer returned."

"Most excellent, my dear father; one that I will second with all my heart," exclaimed Percy, eagerly. "For that amphibious animal looks marvellously like a fish out of water amongst us all: and here we admit no strangers. Edward, there is a vacant seat reserved for you by my mother's side, who looks much as if she would choose you for her knight this evening; and, therefore, though your place in future is amongst the young ladies, to whom by-and-bye I mean to introduce you by name and character, we will permit you to sit there to-night. Ellen, my little coz, where are you? You must be content with looking at your brother, not sitting by him. I cannot allow such breaches of etiquette; that is quite impossible."

"I am perfectly satisfied where I am, Percy," replied his cousin, laughing, as she obeyed the Marchioness of Malvern's request and seated herself beside her. Every eye was turned on Ellen with an admiration, which, had not her thoughts been engrossed with her brother, would have been actually painful to one of her quick feelings. Lady Malvern longed to hear from her young favourite, in words, the internal delight which was so evident in every feature, and by her kindly sympathy succeeded in her wishes. The young sailor's health was celebrated with enthusiasm; and Edward gracefully, though briefly, returned his thanks, while the kindness of all around him, the easy friendliness of those who were strangers, and the joy of feeling himself once more in the midst of those he loved, soon placed him perfectly at ease.

Ellen looked eagerly round her circle of friends, to mark the impression made by Edward, and even her fond affection was fully satisfied. Sir George Wilmot had not spoken, but his eye kindled with animation as in the gallant young sailor he recalled his own youthful days, while some other sad remembrances kept him silent, and checked his usual hilarity. Lord Malvern appeared almost as interested as Mr. Hamilton. Lady Gertrude's kind glance met hers, and told, by its silent eloquence, how well she sympathised in Ellen's feelings; and Lord St. Eval too, his smile spoke volumes, though his natural reserve prevented his addressing Edward, while the young and lively members of the party seemed to find abundant amusement in the anecdotes and adventures he narrated. Arthur Myrvin gazed earnestly at him, and for a time banished his own distressing thoughts in the endeavour to trace in the fine manly youth before him some likeness to the handsome, yet violent and mischievous boy he had first and last seen in the village of Llangwillan.

"I have heard so much of Edward, from my friend Ellen here, that I am most anxious to cultivate his acquaintance, and trust Castle Malvern will often be graced by the presence of such a gallant young sailor," was the Marchioness of Malvern's kind address, after they had adjourned to the drawing room, as, leaning on the arm of Ellen, she advanced to the young man, who, from Percy's lively introduction, was playing the agreeable to Lady Florence and Lady Emily Lyle, while Lord Louis, who found something in Edward's countenance that promised a kindred feeling for fun and frolic, was demanding question after question, which Edward was answering in a manner calculated to excite the continued merriment of his companions, till a sign from his aunt called him to her side.

"So I must entreat Admiral Sir George Wilmot to deign to notice my nephew, it will not be given unasked," she said, approaching the aged officer, who was sitting a little apart, shading his eyes with his hand, as if in deep thought. "Sir George, I shall impeach you of high treason against me, the liege lady of this fortress, that on a night when all is joy, you, who are generally the gayest, should be sad. What excuse can you urge in your defence?"

"Is Edward unworthy of the high privilege of being a sailor, Sir George?" whispered Ellen, archly, "or is your wrath against me, for not joining your expedition this morning, to be extended to him? will you not look on him as a brother seaman?"

"Nay, Ellen, I must toil through long years of servitude, I must reap very many laurels, ere I can deserve that title," said Edward. "The name of Sir George Wilmot is too well known on the broad seas for me to hope for more than a word of encouragement from him, or to enable me to look on him with any other feelings than those of the deepest reverence and respect."

"Ay, ay, young man, you wish to surprise the old hulk to surrender; gaily rigged and manned as you are, you think, by a show of homage to me, to surprise me into paying it to you," said the old man, rousing himself from his abstraction, and laughing as he spoke. "Do not deny it, youngster, but I forgive you; for I have been an old fool, Mrs. Hamilton. I plead guilty, and throw myself on your mercy. You, Mistress Ellen, you deserve nothing from me, after rejecting every courtly speech I could think of this morning, to persuade you to crowd sail and steer out under my guidance instead of remaining safe in harbour. Jokes apart, if you, young sir, will feel pleasure in the friendship of an old time-worn servant of his Majesty as I am, I offer you my hand, with all the warmth and sincerity of our noble profession. For your uncle's sake as well as your own, my best wishes and my best offices shall be exercised in tacking on lieutenant to your name."

"And you will do nothing, then, for *my sake*, Sir George, nor for my aunt's, whose dignity your sadness has offended?" said Ellen, smiling, as did Mrs. Hamilton.

"Your aunt would forgive my sadness, my dear child, did she know its cause. I was wrong to encourage it, but I could not look on these bright features," he laid his hand, which trembled, on Edward's arm, "without seeing again past times peopled with those who have passed away. Mrs. Hamilton, I thought again the merry favourite of my old friend, your father, stood before me, the gay, the thoughtless, lovely Eleanor; she was like him, in the bloom of youth and freshness, when I last beheld her; and I thought, as mine eye glanced on this well known uniform, there was another still of whom he reminded me,---the adopted son of my affections, the darling of my childless years, Charles, my gallant warm-hearted Charles! Nearly six years was he with me, when his courage earned him a lieutenant's berth; he changed his quarters and his commander, and I saw him no more. Such was he; such---oh, I thought Eleanor and Charles again were before me, and I longed for the friend of my early years, to recognise in his grandson the features of his Eleanor, the voice, the laugh, and figure of his Charles. Forgive me, my dear children, I have frightened away your mirth, and made myself gloomy."

There was silence as he ceased, and Sir George was the first to break it, by addressing Edward with animation, questioning him as to all his hopes and anticipations with regard to his promotion, which, as his six years of service were now passed, he allowed to occupy his mind, and in such conversation all traces of gloom quickly vanished; and Ellen, interested in their conference, lingered near them in recovered spirits, till the bell summoned all those who chose to join in the evening prayer. All attended, except young Myrvin, who had departed. Herbert felt anxious on his friend's account, for many reasons, which we must postpone explaining till a future page; suffice it now to say that the young man's conduct not seeming to be such as his profession demanded, a degree of scarcely-perceptible, but keenly-felt coldness was displayed towards him, both by Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Howard. Herbert had this night remarked that his cheek was pale, his eye almost haggard, and his words and manner often confused, and he had endeavoured to elicit the cause of his inward disturbance, but unsuccessfully; the young man, although very evidently unhappy, appeared to shrink from his confidence, and Herbert, though grieved, desisted from his friendly office. That night Mr. Hamilton resigned his place at the reading-desk to the worthy minister, who, both in public and private worship, knew so well the duties of his sacred office. He read the chapters of the evening, with a brief but explanatory commentary on each, and after the usual prayers, broke forth into a strain of earnest thanksgiving for the safe return of him who, since he had last addressed his God, surrounded by his family, had been exposed to the temptations and dangers of the sea, and mercifully preserved through them all, and permitted to return in joy and peace. To all, save to the orphans and Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, his words applied but to the terrors of the deep, but they well knew where the thoughts of their minister had wandered; they knew that fervent thanksgiving was offered up for his preservation from those sins which had been his on his last return; they knew he blessed his Maker for the promise of virtue he beheld; His grace had enabled him to overcome temptation, and return to the home of his boyhood comparatively unstained.

Edward contrasted his present feelings with those which he had experienced the first night of his last return, and Ellen thought on that bitter anguish, the public shame which had been hers in that very hall, that very night three years before, and the young hearts of both the orphans were filled with warm and deep thanksgiving. The thoughts of all were

composed and tranquillized when Mr. Howard ceased, and in the little time that intervened between the conclusion of the service and the family separating to their rooms, no light and frivolous converse disturbed the solemn but sad impression on the minds of each.

"I cannot part from you for the night, my dear cousin," said Edward, somewhat archly, though in a low voice, as he approached the spot where Caroline and St. Eval stood, "without offering you my warmest congratulations on your future prospects, and without requesting an introduction from *you* to him, in whom I am to welcome a new relative. I have been wishing to do so all the evening, but when I was at liberty I missed you."

Evidently pleased, Caroline looked up into St. Eval's face, but before she could speak, the young earl had warmly pressed Edward's hand, and answered with sincerity and kindness equal to his own. The whole party very soon afterwards dispersed.

Were it ours to follow our young and still, in appearance, childlike friend Emmeline Hamilton to her room that night, we should see that the smiles which had beamed around her lip had passed away, the flush on her cheek was no longer there, and one or two bright drops might have been observed slowly falling on her pale cheek, as she sat in deep musing, ere she retired to her couch. She had dismissed Fanny, alleging that she did not require her aid, and her long silky hair loosened from its confinement, hung carelessly in golden waves around her. Tears fell on her hand; she started, and flung back her tresses, looked fearfully around her, and passed her hand across her eyes, as if to check them---but ineffectually; another, and another fell; she leaned her crossed arms upon the pillow, and her head drooped on them, and she wept, wept as she had never wept before, and yet she knew not wherefore; she was sad, how deeply sad, but that young and guileless spirit knew not why. Child she was still in looks, in playfulness, in glee; a child she still believed herself, but she was no child---that age of buoyancy had fled, and Emmeline was, indeed, a woman, a thinking, feeling, ay, and loving woman.

It might have been nearly a week after Edward's return, when, on entering the library one morning, Mrs. Hamilton observed her husband, Mr. Howard, and Edward in earnest conference, the latter appearing somewhat agitated. She would have retreated, imagining her presence mistimed, but Edward, the instant he perceived her, sprung forward, and seizing both her hands, exclaimed, in a voice of entreaty---

"Dearest aunt, will not you use your influence with my uncle, and prevail on him to take the sum I have saved at different times, from my prize-money and other things, to replace that which---which was lost three years ago. To obtain sufficient, I have denied myself all unnecessary indulgence; it has checked my natural extravagance; prevented me, when sometimes I have been strongly tempted to play, or join my messmates in questionable amusements. In saving that, I have cured myself of many faults; it has taught me economy and control, for by the time the whole amount was saved, my wishes and evil inclinations were conquered. I look on it as a debt which I had bound myself to pay. I anticipated the pleasure of telling my dear sister, she might banish the past entirely from her mind, for I would not write a word of my intentions, lest I should fail in them ere I returned. And now my uncle refuses to grant my request; Mr. Howard will not second me; and---and I see how it is," he continued, with a return of former violence in his manner, as he paced the room, and a flush burned on his cheek, "my uncle will not consent to look on it as a debt; he will not permit me, even as far as this will do it, to redeem my sister."

"You are quite mistaken, my dear boy," replied Mr. Hamilton, mildly. "Your sister's own conduct has sufficiently proved to me her repentance and amendment; her gentle virtues and faultless conduct have quite redeemed the past, and so has yours. I refuse to take your well-earned savings, merely because they really are not necessary."

"But if it will give me pleasure, if it will satisfy me. Dearest aunt, plead for me; you know not the relief it will be," again entreated Edward, as he paused in his hasty walk, and looked beseechingly in his aunt's face.

"Nay, dear Edward, do not demand impossibilities," she replied, smiling, "I cannot plead for you. That money with which you appear so very eager to part must return to your own purse; your sister's debt is already paid."

"Paid!" repeated Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Howard, in astonishment, while Edward stood, as if bewildered. "How, and by whom?"

"By Ellen herself," replied Mrs. Hamilton; and, addressing her husband, she added, "I should have told you before, but we have been both too much engaged the last two days to allow any time for private conversation; and my Ellen had entreated that only you should know her secret; but she would, I know, have made an exception in Mr. Howard's favour had I demanded it, for his excellent lessons have in all probability assisted in making her the character she is; and as for her brother---why, in charity, he shall know this strange tale," she added, smiling; and briefly, but with affecting accuracy, she related all that had passed between her and Ellen on the evening of Edward's return. Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Howard listened in astonishment, for they knew not the quiet steadiness, the unwavering firmness of Ellen's private character; they guessed not the deep remorse which had been her own, nor for how long it had guided and purified her actions. Edward had concealed his face in his hands, his arms resting upon the table, for he felt in this tale of persevering effort and self-denial, in comparison with Ellen's, as if his had sunk to nothing; the bright lustre of his sister's character dimmed even to obscurity his own.

"And have you questioned Ellis? do you know in what manner she contrived so secretly to render her assistance?" demanded Mr. Hamilton, with much interest.

"I have," replied his wife, "I did so that same night; for even Edward's unexpected return could not banish his sister from my mind. She told me, that at first she did all she could to turn Ellen from her purpose; but when she found her resolution was unalterably fixed by some means to earn sufficient to repay the cause of so much distress, she entered warmly into her plan; and, with the active assistance of Robert, procured her work from the baby-linen warehouses at Plymouth. She first began with the plainest work, but that succeeded so well, finer was given to her. In London she worked embroidery, purchasing the materials from her own pocket-money, and consequently largely increasing her hoard. Spite of her ill-health, the first winter we spent in London, she perseveringly continued her irksome task, rising even in the coldest weather at six, the provident care of Ellis causing her fire to be lighted almost the earliest in the house. Robert was the messenger employed to and fro, but no one knew her name or rank; for, devoted as we well know he is to Ellen, he took the trouble of changing his livery for plain clothes, whenever Ellis sent him on his mission. Her secret has, indeed, been well preserved both from us and those who employed her. Many, very many silent tears Ellis believes have fallen over my poor Ellen's tedious task; many a struggle to adhere to her resolution, and not throw it aside in despair; and frequently, she told me, after a long, solitary evening, she has thrown her arms round Ellis's neck, and wept from exhaustion, and the misery of hope deferred, for at first it did appear an endless labour; but she persevered unshrinkingly, combating her wishes to accompany me wherever Emmeline visited."

"And it was this, then, that caused her determination to remain at home till next year," observed Mr. Hamilton; "poor child, our harshness was no sweetener of her task."

"It was not, indeed; the night of Emmeline's introduction, Ellis says, she wept as if her heart would break, as if she could not keep her secret any longer; but she struggled with herself, and conquered; although many times, during my estrangement, she has longed to confess all, but the fear that I should forbid her continuing her task restrained her."

"I am very glad she persevered in her secret," said Mr. Howard, warmly; "it is this quiet steady perseverance in a painful duty that has pleased me far more than even the action itself, guided as that was by proper feeling. Extraordinary sacrifices of our own formation are not, in general, as acceptable to Him for whose sake they are ostentatiously made, as the quiet steady discharge of our destined duties---the one is apt to beget pride, the other true humility, but this unshaken

resolution in one so young, had its origin from true repentance, and aided as it has been by the active fulfilment of every duty, strengthened as it has, no doubt, been by prayer, I cannot but trust her heavenly Master will look down with an eye of mercy on His young servant. Look up, Edward; you, too, have done your duty. Why should your sister's conduct cause this sudden depression, my young friend?"

"Because," exclaimed he, with an earnestness almost startling, and as he looked up his eyes glistened with tears, "because all my efforts sink to nothing beside hers. I deemed myself becoming worthy; that the conquests over inclination I made would obliterate the past; but what are my sacrifices compared to hers? Weak, frail, sensitive creature as she is, thus secretly, laboriously to earn that sum which, because it required one or two petty sacrifices of inclination, I deemed that I had so nobly gained. What have been my efforts compared to hers?"

"Almost as great to you, my dear boy, as hers were to her," said Mr. Hamilton, kindly; "you, too, have done well. Your past errors have already, in my mind and in that of Mr. Howard and your aunt's, been obliterated by the pleasure your late conduct has bestowed. She has not had the temptations to extravagant pleasure which have been yours; to save this sum you must have resigned much gratification. You have acted thus excellently, in part, to regain the good opinion of your friends, and the kind wish of restoring perfect peace to your sister: in the first, you have fully succeeded; in the second, when your sister knows what has been the secret purpose of your life for three long years, her affections will amply repay you. You are deserving of each other, my dear Edward; and this moment I do not scruple to say, I am proud to feel myself so nearly related to those who, young as they both are, have so nobly and perseveringly performed their duty both to God and man."

Young Fortescue raised his uncle's hand, wrung it between both his own, and impetuously darted from the room.

"That boy would teach me never to despair again, my good friend," said Mr. Hamilton, addressing the worthy clergyman. "When last he left me I had learned to hope and yet to fear, for I dreaded his exposure to his former temptations; and now---glad, indeed, am I to acknowledge myself vanquished, and to own you were ever in the right."

Mr. Howard smiled.

"And now does my husband regret his having adopted my sister's orphans as his own?" demanded Mrs. Hamilton, entwining her arm in her husband's, and looking caressingly in his face.

"No, my dearest wife; once, indeed, when I beheld you in fancy about to sink beneath the accumulation of misery and anxiety both Edward and Ellen's conduct occasioned, I did in secret murmur that the will of my heavenly Father had consigned to us the care of such misguided ones; I fear I looked on them as the disturbers of family peace and harmony, when it was the will of my God. I felt indignant and provoked with them, when I should have bowed submissively to Him. I have been blessed in them when I deserved it not. You ever trusted, my Emmeline, though far greater distress was your lot than mine. You never repented of that kindness which bade your heart bleed for their orphan state, and urged you to take them to your gentle bosom, and soothe them as your own. I know that at this moment you have your reward."

Mrs. Hamilton was prevented from replying by the entrance of Edward, who eagerly inquired for his sister, alleging he had searched every room in the house and could not find her.

"She has gone with Herbert to the village to take the fruits of her own work, some baby linen, to the poor woman in whose fate I am so interested," replied Mrs. Hamilton, and turning to her husband, added---"Now we really are alone, my dear Arthur, will you give a little of your time to inform me in what manner I can best lay out, for this unfortunate being's advantage, the sum my Ellen has placed in my hands? Do not look at me, Edward, as if to implore me to take

yours also, for I mean to be very positive, and say at once I will not."

"Come with me, my young friend, and we will go and meet Herbert and Ellen," Mr. Howard said, smiling; "a walk is the best remedy for nerves fevered as yours are at present, and I should be glad of your company." And Edward, with eager pleasure, banishing all traces of former agitation, departed arm in arm with a companion whom he still so revered and loved, recalling with him reminiscences of his boyhood, and detailing with animation many incidents of his late trip. This walk, quiet as it was, was productive, both to Mr. Howard and his pupil, of extreme pleasure; the former, while he retained all the gravity and dignity of his holy profession, knew well how to sympathise with youth. Increased duties in the ministry had caused him to resign the school which he had kept when we first knew him, to the extreme regret of both master and pupils. Mr. Howard regarded young people as the tender lambs of his fold, whom it was his especial charge to train up in the paths of grace, and guard from all the dangerous and hidden pitfalls of sin; their parents might neglect, or, ignorant themselves, pursue a mistaken method, but he was the shepherd placed over the flock, and while untiringly, zealously, he endeavoured to lead the older members of his congregation to the only rock of salvation, the younger were the objects of his especial care. To them all was bright, the world in all its dangerous, because more pleasurable, labyrinths was before them. He saw, he knew their perfect ignorance, and he trembled, while he prayed so to lead them, that the lessons of their minister might check them in the career of imprudence or of sin.

"Were I one of the fathers of Rome I should say, *benedicite*, my children," he said, playfully, as Herbert and Ellen, apparently in serious yet happy conversation approached and joined them, "but as I am merely a simple minister of a simple faith, I greet you with the assurance you are blessed in your charitable office."

"And how, my kind friend, could you contrive to discover such was our employment?" replied Herbert, smiling. "Can my mother have been betraying us?"

"Oh, she has been a sad traitress this morning, betraying all kinds of secrets and misdemeanours," said Mr. Howard, laughing, and casting on Ellen a glance of arch meaning, while Edward could scarcely contain his impatience to seize his sister's arm and bear her off with him.

"And we, too, have been hearing many tales of you, Mr. Howard," she said. "We have heard very many blessings on your name in the cottage we have left, although, alas! events have occurred there of a very painful nature."

"And why, alas, my dear child?" said Mr. Howard, affectionately. "Do you deem it so sad a thing to die?"

"It is wrong, I know, to regard it thus, Mr. Howard," replied Ellen; "but yet, to leave all those we love on earth, to sever the tender cords of affection binding us unto this world, must be, even to the strongest and most pious minds, a draught of bitterness."

"Do not, my dear children," said Mr. Howard, "imagine I deem it wrong to indulge in earthly affections. Far from it; they are given us to sweeten life, to draw our hearts in thanksgiving to him who gave them, and thus indulged are pleasing unto Him. And how did you find poor Nanny to-day?" he added, after a brief pause.

"Suffering very much in body, but in a blessed state of mind," replied Ellen, "which she greatly attributed to you; for she told me, before my aunt discovered them and placed them where they now are, before she saw you, death was a trouble awful in anticipation. She had ever tried to do her duty in life, to remember her Maker in her youth, and believed that she had succeeded; but when she knew that she must die, all appeared changed; the aspect of death was different, when seemingly at a distance to that which it presented when near at hand. She longed for some minister of the Lord to pray for her, to comfort her in those moments when suffering prevented serious thoughts, and it was affecting to hear her bless that charity which had not only placed her soul under your guidance, but provided also so many bodily comforts."

"And you have been exercising the duties of the ministry before you have donned your gown, my dear Herbert," said Mr. Howard, glancing approvingly on his young friend. "Glad indeed shall I be to hail you as a young brother in my sacred office; for with you it will be indeed the service of the heart, and not of interest or compulsion. Would that your friend Arthur possessed one-half of your earnest zeal, or that you could inspire him with the same love for his sacred calling which animates you."

"I know not what to make of Arthur," said Herbert, somewhat sadly, "he is strangely, unaccountably changed the last few months. When he was first settled in his curacy, his conduct was such as to excite the approbation of both my father and yourself; and now, I greatly fear, that he is alienating both."

"Do not condemn him harshly, without good proof, dear Mr. Howard," said Ellen, earnestly. "I, too, have noticed that he is changed, though I scarcely know in what manner; but for his father's sake and for mine, do not treat him coldly before my uncle at least. He has many faults, but surely some good qualities."

"I trust he has; but I wish he would not so carefully conceal them, and suffer his parishioners to have cause to relate so many tales of neglect and levity in their curate," replied Mr. Howard; "but we will not bring forward accusations when the accused is not present to defend himself: and here we are at the Rectory before I had thought we were half way. Will you come in, my young friends, and share an old man's homely luncheon?"

Gladly would they have done so, but Ellen had promised to return to Oakwood in time for that meal, and was compelled to refuse; adding, that both her brother and cousin might, for the Rectory was so near one of the entrances to the park, she could easily return alone; but such was not Mr. Howard's intention. He knew how Edward longed for a few minutes' private conversation with his sister, and playfully detaining Herbert, declaring he could not do without one at least, dismissed the orphans on their walk, bestowing his parting blessing on Ellen with a warmth that surprised her at the time, but the meaning of which was fully explained in the interesting conversation that passed between her and her brother ere they reached the house, and as the expression of approbation in the minister she loved, filled her young mind with joy, while the mutual confidence bestowed in that walk added another bright link to the chain of affection which bound the souls of that brother and sister so fondly together.

CHAPTER II.

It was the hour when all in general retired to rest, and the inmates of Oakwood had dispersed for the purpose; but this night thoughts of a mingled and contending nature occupied Mrs. Hamilton's mind, and prevented all wish for sleep. Her guests had the last week increased, and the part of hostess had been kindly and pleasingly performed; but the whole of that day she had longed to be alone, and gladly, gratefully she hailed that hour which enabled her to be so. Shading her eyes with her hand, she gave to her thoughts the dominion they demanded. Maternal ambition, maternal pride, in that silent hour fell before the stronger, more absorbing power of maternal love. But a few brief hours, and the child of her anxious cares, of fervent petitions at the throne of grace, would be no longer an inmate of her father's house, her place in that happy home would be a void. On the morrow, ay, the morrow, for the intervening weeks had fled, her child would be another's. True, but few miles would separate their homes; true, that he on whom that precious gift would be bestowed, was in all respects the husband she would have selected for her Caroline, the husband for whom the involuntary prayer had arisen; virtue and piety, manliness and sincerity were his, besides these attributes, which to some mothers would have been far more brilliant, he was noble, even of exalted rank; but all, all these things were forgotten in the recollection, that on the morrow she must bid farewell to her cherished treasure, the link, the precious link of protection would be severed, and for ever. Thoughts of the past mingled with the present, and softened yet more that fond mother's feelings. Pain, bitter pain, Caroline had sometimes cost her, but pleasure, exquisite in its kind, had mingled with it. No longer would it be hers to watch with trembling joy the dawning virtues which had flourished beneath her eye; a link would be broken between them, a slender one indeed, but still broken,---though Mrs. Hamilton

reproached herself for indulging in such feelings of sadness, when so many blessings promised to gild the lot of her child. And yet, alas! what mother devoted to her children as she had been, and still was this noble and gentle woman, could part from a beloved one even for a brief space, even for happiness, without one pang, selfish as it might be, selfish as perhaps it was? for anxiety for the future darkened not the prospects of earthly bliss, her trust in the character of St. Eval was too confiding; it was only her fond heart which for a time would be so desolate. Her ear would linger in vain for the voice it loved; her eye seek in sorrow for the graceful form, the beauteous features on which it had so loved to gaze. New ties would supply to Caroline the place of all that she had left; deep springs of fond emotions, such as she had never felt before, would open in her heart, and then would she still love, would she still look to that mother, as in childhood and in youth she had done? Vainly she struggled to subdue these thoughts, and bring forward in their stead the visions of happiness, which alone had visited her before. Thronging and tumultuously they came, and tears stole slowly from those mild eyes, which for herself so seldom wept; while engrossed in her own reflections, she heard not the soft and careful opening of her door, she knew not that the beloved object of those tears had entered her room, and was kneeling beside her.

"Mother!" murmured Caroline, in a voice tremulous and weak with emotion equal to her own. Mrs. Hamilton started, and her lip quivered with the effort she made to smile her greeting. "Mother, my own mother, forgive my intrusion; I thought not to have found you thus. Oh, deem me not failing in that deep reverence your goodness, your devotedness, have taught me to feel for you; if my love would bid me ask you why you weep, may I not share your sorrow, mother?"

"These are but selfish tears, my own; selfish, for they fall only when I think that to-morrow bears my Caroline away, and leaves her mother's heart for a time so lone and sad, that it will not even think of the happiness I so fondly trust will be hers, in becoming the bride of him she loves. Forgive me, my own Caroline; I had no right to weep and call for these dear signs of sympathy at such a time."

Silently and tearfully Caroline clung to her mother, and repeatedly pressed her hand to her lips.

"And why are you not at rest, my child? you will have but few brief hours for sleep, scarcely sufficient to recall the truant rose to these pale cheeks, and the lustre to this suddenly dimmed eye, my Caroline;" and the mother passed her hand caressingly over her brow, and parted the luxuriant hair that, loosened from the confining wreath of wild flowers which had so lately adorned it, hung carelessly around her. She looked long and wistfully on that young bright face.

"You ask me why I am not at rest; oh, I could not, I felt I could not part from you, without imploring your forgiveness for all the past; without feeling that it was indeed pardoned. Never, never before has my conduct appeared in such true colours: dark, even to blackness, when contrasted with yours. Your blessing is my own, it will be mine to-morrow; but, oh, it will not be hallowed to my heart, did I not confess that I was---that I am unworthy of all your fondness, mother, and implore you to forgive the pain I have so often and so wantonly inflicted upon you. Oh, you know not how bitterly, how reproachfully, my faults and errors rushed back to my mind, as I sat and thought this was the last night that Caroline Hamilton would sleep beneath this roof; that to-morrow we parted, and I left you without once acknowledging I deserved not half your goodness; without one effort to express the devoted gratitude, the deep, the reverential love, with which my heart is filled. Mother, dearest, dearest mother! oh, call me but your blessing, your comfort,---I never have been thus; wilful and disobedient, I have poisoned many hours which would otherwise have been sweet. Mother, my own mother, say only you forgive me---say that no lingering pang I on my account remains."

"Forgive you, my beloved! oh, long, long since have every childish fault and youthful error been forgiven. Could resentment harbour in my heart so long? could memory linger on moments of pain, when this last year not one fault, not one failing of duty or of love has stained your conduct? Even as my other children have you been my blessing, my comfort; the dearer, when I thought on the doubts and fears of the past. Pain you may have once caused me; but, oh, you know not how blessedly one proof of affection, one hour of devotion in a child can obliterate from a mother's heart the

remembrance of months of pain. Think no more of what is past, my own; remember only that your mother's blessing, her fervent prayers will hover round you wherever you may be; that, should sickness and sorrow at any time be your portion, however distant we may be, your mother will come to soothe and cheer, your mother's bosom will still be open to receive you."

Caroline answered not, for her tears fell fast upon the hand she held; tears not of sorrow but of emotion, blessed in their sadness. She bowed her head before Mrs. Hamilton, and murmured---

"Bless me, my mother!"

"May the God of infinite love, the Father of unclouded mercies, who hath been so unchangeably merciful to his servants, look down from His resplendent throne and bless you, my beloved! May he sanctify and bless that event, which promises to our darkened eyes so much felicity! May He guide my child in His own paths, and hearken to her mother's prayer!"

"We will not separate this night to pray each in solitude, my child; let us read, and address our heavenly Father together, as we were wont to do, when it was my task to raise your infant thoughts and simple prayers to Him who heard and answered. I cannot part from you till these agitated feelings are more composed, and prayer will best enable them to be so."

Willingly, gladly Caroline lingered, and their private devotions, which ever attended their retiring to rest, were performed together. Their blessed influence was mutually felt. He whom they so fervently addressed looked down upon His good and faithful servants, and poured upon the mother's soul and on that of her child the calm and tranquillizing dew of His blessing.

The morning dawned, and common-place as is the expression, yet we must confess the day was lovely; one of those soft, delicious September days so well known to all who are acquainted with the climate of Devonshire. Gaily the sun looked down from his field of stainless azure, and peeped through the windows of the elegant little room which the taste of her young bridesmaids had decorated as Caroline's tiring-room for the day, and his bright rays played on the rich jewels scattered on the toilette, and decked them with renewed brilliance; and at times his light would fall full upon the countenance of the young bride, sometimes pensive, at others, radiant in beaming smiles, as she replied to the kind words of Lady Gertrude, or in answer to the playful conversation of her younger bridesmaids, who, full of life, and hope, and innocence, hovered like fairy spirits round their queen. The tears which had fallen from the eyes of Emmeline on her sister's neck that morning were dried, yet still there were some lingering traces of sadness on her fair sweet face, which she struggled vainly to conceal, but which were regarded as the sorrow of an affectionate heart thus parting from the sister of its love.

And Lilla Grahame, too, was there, smiling with, real and heartfelt pleasure. She had observed the slight cloud on Emmeline's brow, and with every affectionate art endeavoured to remove it.

The toilette of the bride was completed, save her jewels, which Ellen had entreated might be her office to arrange, and, smilingly, Lady Florence resigned her place by Caroline's side.

"For Edward's sake and for mine, dearest Caroline, will you, decked as you are with jewels so far more precious, yet will you wear this, and regard it indeed as the offering of the sincerest affection for yourself, the warmest prayers for your welfare, from those who for so many years have felt for you as if you were indeed their sister? poor as is the gift, will you let Edward see it is not rejected?" and Ellen, as with a flushed cheek and quivering lip she spoke, placed on the arm of her cousin a bracelet, composed of her own and her brother's hair, and clasped with chaste yet massive gold. The

braid was fine and delicate, while the striking contrast of the jet black and rich golden hair of which it was composed, combined with its valuable clasp, rendered it not an unfit offering on such a day.

"Is it to remind me of all my unkindness towards you, Ellen, in days past, of my hour of pride?" replied Caroline, in a low voice, as she threw her arm caressingly round her cousin, and fondly kissed her. "I will accept your gift, my dear Ellen, and sometimes look upon it thus."

"Nay, do not say so, dearest Caroline, or I shall feel inclined to take it even now from your arm, and never let you see it more; no, rather let it be a remembrance of those poor orphans, whose lives *you* have not done the least to render happy. Gratefully, affectionately, shall we ever think of you, dear Caroline, and, oh, may this little offering bid you sometimes think thus, and thus only of us."

The carriages were rather later than expected, and Lady Gertrude observing Caroline somewhat pale, though no other sign denoted agitation, endeavoured, by talking more sportively than usually was her wont, to while away the time till the important moment arrived.

It came at length, and Caroline, with a faltering step, entered the carriage, which conveyed her to the old and venerable church, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton and Lady Gertrude, who had promised to remain near her. The fair girls that held the rank of bridesmaids followed, and three other carriages contained the invited guests to the wedding. Not a creature was visible to disturb by acclamations the bridal party on their route, and take from the calm and holy beauty of the early morning; but that the day was remembered was clearly visible, for there were garlands of the brightest, fairest flowers, which must, by their number and variety, have been culled from many gardens of many villages, festooning the hedges of the green lanes through which they passed, and many a gay pennon pendant from oak or stately elm fluttered in the breeze. All was so still and calm, that ere the carriage stopped at the church porch Caroline had conquered the inward trembling of her frame, and her heart thrilled not perhaps so anxiously as did both her parents', when, leaning on the arm of her proud and happy father, she walked steadily, even with dignity, up the church, where Mr. Howard, young Myrvin, Lord St. Eval, his parents, Lord Louis, Percy, Herbert, and Edward there stood, and a faint but expressive smile played round her lips, in answer to St. Eval's eager yet silent greeting. He could not speak, his feelings of happiness were too deep, too ecstatic for words, but she had but to look on his expressive face, and all, all was said.

There was a moment's solemn pause as they knelt beside the altar, and then the voice of Mr. Howard sounded, and its ever emphatic tones rung with even more than its usual solemnity on the ears of all the assembled relatives and friends, with thrilling power on the bride and bridegroom. Calmly and clearly Caroline responded; her cheek was pale, but her lip quivered not, and perhaps, in that impressive service, the agitation of her mother was deeper than her own. She struggled to retain her composure, she lifted up her soul in earnest prayer, that the blessing of her God might indeed hallow the ceremony on which she gazed, and ere her child arose, and led forward by her young enraptured husband, approached for her parent's blessing and embrace, she was enabled to give both without any visible emotion, save that her daughter might have felt the quick pulsations of her fond heart, as she pressed her in her arms.

We will not linger on the joyous festivity which pervaded the lordly halls of Oakwood on this eventful day.

The hour had come when Caroline, the young Countess of St. Eval, bade farewell to her paternal home. The nearest relatives of the bride and bridegroom had assembled with them in a small apartment, at Caroline's request, for a few minutes, till the carriage was announced, for though resolved not to betray her feelings, she could not bear to part from those she loved in public. She had changed her dress for a simple yet elegant travelling costume, and was now listening with respectful deference but glistening eyes to the fond words of her mother, who, twining her arm around her, had drawn her a little apart from the others, as if her farewell could not be spoken aloud; their attention was so arrested by a remark of Lord Malvern, and his son's reply, that they turned towards them.

"Do not again let me hear you say our Gertrude never looks animated or interested," the former said, addressing the Marchioness, somewhat triumphantly. "She is as happy, perhaps, if possible, even happier than any of us to-day, and, like a good girl, she shows it. Gertrude, love, is it your brother's happiness reflected upon you?"

"Let me answer for her, sir," replied St. Eval, eagerly. "You know not why she has so much reason to look and, I trust, to feel happy. She sees her own good work, and, noble, virtuous as she is, rejoices in it; without her, this day would never have dawned for me, Caroline would never have been mine, and both would have lived in solitary wretchedness. Yes, dearest Gertrude," he continued, "I feel how much I owe you, though I say but little. Happy would it be for every man, could he receive from his sister the comfort, the blessing I have from mine, and for every woman, were her counsels, like yours, guided by truth alone."

"The Earl and Countess of St. Eval left Oakwood about two o'clock, for their estate in Cornwall, Castle Terryn, in an elegant chariot and four superb greys, leaving a large party of fashionable friends and relations to lament their early departure." So spoke the fashionable chronicle in a paragraph on this marriage in high life, which contained items and descriptions longer and more graphic than we have any inclination to transcribe.

A select party of the Marquis of Malvern's and Mr. Hamilton's friends remained to dinner, and, at the request of Percy and Lord Louis, dancing for the younger guests concluded the evening. The day had dawned in joy, and no clouds disturbed its close. Fatigued, and her thoughts still clinging to her child, Mrs. Hamilton was glad to seek the retirement of her own room. Her thoughts turned on her Caroline, and so fondly did they linger there, that Emmeline's strange diversity of wild spirits and sudden but overpowering gloom did not occupy her mind as powerfully as they would otherwise have done; she did not regard them, save as the effects of excitement natural to such an eventful day; she guessed not that of all her household the heart of her Emmeline was the heaviest, her spirits weighed down by a gloom so desponding, so overwhelming, that sleep for many hours fled from her eyes. She had powerfully exerted herself during the day, and now in solitude, darkness, and silence, the reflux of feeling was too violent for that young and, till lately, thoughtlessly joyous heart to bear. Her heavy eyes and pallid cheeks attracted notice indeed the following morning, but they were attributed to fatigue from the gay vigils of the preceding night, and gladly did the poor girl herself encourage the delusion, and obey her mother's playful command to lie down for a few hours, as a punishment for indulging an overplus of excitement.

Herbert's pleasure, too, the preceding day had been alloyed by anxiety; and perhaps his solicitude and his sister's sorrow proceeded from one and the same cause, which our readers will find at length, a few pages hence, when Arthur Myrvin becomes a prominent object in our history.

Pleasure, in a variety of festive shapes, but innocent in all, was for the next month the presiding genius of Oakwood and its vicinity. Lord Malvern's family remained as guests at Oakwood during that time, and some few college friends of Percy and Herbert, but Mr. Hamilton's other friends departed for their respective homes the week following the marriage.

The young Earl and Countess of St. Eval meanwhile resided at their beautiful retreat of Castle Terryn, which the taste of the young Earl had rendered in every respect a residence suited to the rank and feelings of those who claimed it as their own.

Nothing now prevented our young friend Ellen from joining in the amusements that offered themselves, and she enjoyed them even more than she had expected, for she was accompanied by her brother, who had deservedly become an universal favourite, and Mrs. Hamilton had the pleasure, at length, of seeing not only health but happiness beaming apparently unclouded on the countenance of her niece.

Mr. Grahame, for the sake of Lilla, who was becoming dearer each day to both her parents, for her true character for the first time stood clearly forth, struggled with his gloom, and accompanied her where-over her wishes led; and her cheerful spirits, her unpretending manners, and constant and active affection, manifesting itself in a thousand different ways, to amuse the couch of her now really ailing mother, did much to palliate the disappointment and misery the conduct of his elder daughter had occasioned.

Herbert's secret was still inviolably kept; no one suspected that he loved, much less that he was betrothed. Nearly two years had passed of that long period which must elapse ere Herbert could hope to make Mary his wife. They had glided quickly, very quickly by, and so too might the remainder; but there was a dark, foreboding feeling pressing heavily upon Herbert's heart as he looked forward, that robbed anticipation of its charm, and rendered him even more pensive than from his boyhood had been his wont. To strangers, even to his family, he was still the same; to his God alone he laid his spirit bare.

Six weeks after the marriage of Caroline, Oakwood and its neighbourhood was as quiet as it has been when we knew it in former years.

Lord Malvern's family stayed ten days at Castle Terryn, by the pressing invitation of the young couple, and then returned to their estate in Dorsetshire, leaving Lady Gertrude, however, for a few weeks' longer residence with her brother and his wife. The young men returned to college. Lilla Grahame remained at home till after the Christmas vacation, when she was once more to reside with Mrs. Douglas for six months or a year longer, according to the state of her mother's health, who no longer wished to quit Moorlands; and therefore her husband gladly consented to her remain there till Mrs. Hamilton paid her annual visit to London. About this time also, Ellen, accompanied by her brother, fulfilled her promise of visiting her old friend, Mr. Myrvin, and delighted him by making his pretty vicarage her residence till near the middle of November. Edward, with whom the kind old man was as much pleased as he had been with his sister, also remained at Llangwillan during that time, with the exception of three or four flying visits to Oakwood, and latterly to Castle Terryn, where Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, with Emmeline, were staying the few last weeks of his and his sister's visit at the vicarage. Their company was particularly soothing to Mr. Myrvin at this period; for the letters of his son were causing him extreme solicitude, revealing intentions, to understand which we must for a short period retrace our steps, and thus commence another chapter.

CHAPTER III.

Young Myrvin had been, at the period of Caroline's marriage, rather more than a year as Mr. Howard's curate. At first, as we have seen, the example of Herbert had done much towards reconciling him to a profession, which was for many reasons opposed to his feelings. When in the company of his friend, he had imparted to him his struggles with the pride and ambition which still lurked within him, spite of all his endeavours and resolutions to conquer and banish them. While Herbert was near him all was well; his duty was regularly performed, in a manner that satisfied his rector, and sufficiently rewarded Mr. Hamilton for the interest he had taken in his and his father's welfare; but when Herbert left Oakwood, Arthur's distaste for his occupation returned with renewed strength, to which newly-dawning emotions added weight. Most painfully had Arthur, when first intimate with Mr. Hamilton, endeavoured to guard himself from the danger to his peace, which he felt existed in the society of beings so amiable and attractive as were his daughters; but his efforts were vain, as our readers may have already discovered. There was a nameless, an indescribable charm in the appearance and manner of Emmeline which he could not resist. It was some few months ere the whole extent of evil was discovered, not perhaps entirely till Emmeline returned to London, and Oakwood was desolate, painfully desolate to the young man, who, when lingering within its ancient walls, forgot everything around him, save the bright and beautiful being who was to him its charm. When, however, that fair form had departed from his sight, he was awakened to the delusive nature of his hopes, and with the knowledge, exquisite even in its despair, that he loved Emmeline Hamilton, his profession became more and more distasteful. Had he followed the paths of ambition, as his inclination prompted, had

he but had the means of seeking some station whence he might at length have risen to eminence, he cared not what the obstacles, his union with her might not have been so difficult to overcome, or, at least, he might not have met her; and did he wish that such had been the case? no; misery in its most agonizing shape stood before him, and yet the cause of that misery was the one bright star that appeared to gild his lot.

A poor curate of a country parish, with no resources but his salary to increase his scanty means, no power of rendering himself of consequence in the eyes of the world; and, alas! the fruit of many years' hard labour from father to son--one-half of which might have rendered him sufficiently independent to have chosen his own profession--was gone. Poor as he was, could he ever look forward to possess the hand of Emmeline? he felt the utter impossibility, and bitterly he knew he loved but to despair. These contending feelings diverted his thoughts as may well be supposed, and caused him to be careless in the discharge of his clerical duties, abrupt and strange in his manner with Mr. Howard; and unfortunately there was one in the village who was ready to turn the simplest circumstance to the young curate's disadvantage.

It was not likely the sinful and licentious man who, by Mr. Hamilton's active exertions, had not only been dispossessed of the living of Llangwillan, but very nearly of his gown also, would permit these, what he termed injuries, to pass unavenged. Against the elder Myrvin he felt his efforts would be unavailing, nor did he feel inclined to try a second time, when he had once been foiled; but Arthur he believed a surer mark. A farm of some consequence was to be let on Mr. Hamilton's estate; it was very easy to settle in it a man lower in rank, but hard, unrelenting as himself, an unprincipled instrument of his will. The business was done, and the new neighbour, prepossessing in appearance and manners, speedily ingratiated himself with all, and even obtained, by a semblance of hard-working industry, and regular attendance at public worship, seconded by quiet and unobtrusive conduct, the notice and regard of his landlord, Mr. Hamilton.

This man had entered his farm about four or five months after Arthur had been installed as Mr. Howard's curate, and cautiously and yet successfully he executed the wily requirements of his employer. So guardedly did he work, that no one could trace to him, who ever spoke as the friend of their curate, the prejudice which had slowly but surely penetrated the mind of every man against him, and interpreted his simplest action in the worst light. There were some rumours afloat of misdemeanours during his college life; it mattered not whether they were true or false, they were received and encouraged by the credulous. He was a Welshman too, full of evil qualities, and clothed with invulnerable pride, which last idea was unfortunately confirmed by Myrvin's distaste for his profession, which prevented his entering into the joys and sorrows of his parishioners, mingling familiarly and kindly with them as a minister of God should do.

How or when this prejudice began, or what was its origin, not one of the good folks of the village could have told, for they really did not know; but still it existed, and Arthur knew it. He felt himself disliked, and instead of endeavouring to conciliate good-will and remove prejudice, his mind was in such a fevered state of excitement, that he indulged in every bitter feeling toward those with whom he had to deal, and shrunk yet more from the performance of his duty. Instances of careless neglect were often found, and became magnified in the relation. The young curate was not always at hand when his presence was principally required; he never left directions where he might be found. Abuse crept into that parish, which in the time of his predecessor had been one of the most orderly in Mr. Hamilton's domains--abuses in the younger inhabitants, at which old men looked grave, and cited the neglect of their curate as the cause, though to what abuses young Myrvin had given countenance all would have found it difficult to tell. That he did not rebuke them it was true; he did not perhaps observe them, but it was said, and justly, he must have been strangely blind not to do so.

The villagers understood not that preoccupation of mind which does indeed render us blind to all things, save to the one intense subject of thought.

Complaints were made to and heard by the rector, who, faithful to his trust, visited the parish, made inquiries, heard tales concerning his curate that startled his charity, and finally spoke severely to Arthur on his careless and neglectful conduct. It would have been better for Arthur had pride remained banished during that interview; but, unfortunately, fired with indignation at anything resembling censure even from a superior, it returned with full force, and by his haughty silence with regard to some of the charges brought against him, his ill-disguised contempt of others, confirmed every evil report concerning him which Mr. Howard had heard. Mildly he requested that the future might atone for the past, and that Myrvin would remember the sacred post he held. The unhappy young man heard him without reply; but when the rector had departed, he strove to think soberly on the charges brought against him, and look within himself to know if he deserved them. Neglect and carelessness---yes, he had given cause for both. Other accusations of much graver import he dismissed at once, satisfied that the very thought of such vices had never even for one moment stained his mind, and as secure in his own integrity and right feeling, as he was aware of the prejudice against him, he determined---as, alas! how many in such cases do---not to alter his general conduct, lest it should be said he tacitly admitted the truth of every report against him. Had he only been accused of neglect in parochial duties, he might perhaps, if his troubled spirit had permitted him, have endeavoured to attend more closely to them; but his pride prevented him from striving to obtain the good-will of those who seemed only alive to every circumstance tending to his disadvantage. Would he endeavour to conciliate those whom he well knew disliked him? no; the very act of so doing would be brought against him, and sternly he resolved that haughtiness and pride should still characterise his deportment. What mattered it what people thought or said, if it was untrue? he cared not; the world was a wilderness to his excited and irritated fancy, in which there bloomed but one sweet flower, too pure, too beautiful for him to touch. It was his doom he thought to grovel on the earth, hers to shine like a star in the sphere above him.

Not long after Mr. Howard's interview with his curate, Mr. Hamilton's family and his guests arrived at Oakwood, and Herbert eagerly sought his friend. He was shocked at the change he perceived in his appearance, which, though marked, was yet quite indescribable; that Arthur was unhappy, that his profession was more than ever distasteful to him, he soon discovered; but the real cause of these feelings he tried in vain to probe. He saw, with the deepest regret, that all his former exhortations on the subject, his earnest entreaties that Arthur would persevere till he brought a willing heart as an offering to his Maker, all had been without effect; but yet his kind heart could not cast away his friend, opposite as were their feelings on a subject which to Herbert was of vital importance. It was strange that a character such as Herbert Hamilton should have selected Arthur Myrvin for his chosen friend, yet so it was. It might have been pity, sympathy, which had first excited this friendship. The indignation he felt at the unjustifiable treatment Arthur had received while a servitor at college had excited an interest, which had at first completely blinded him to his many faults; and when they were discovered, the ardent desire and hope that he might be of service in removing them from the otherwise noble character of his friend still preserved and, indeed, heightened his regard. Though frequently disappointed during his absence, at the brevity and sometimes even confused style of Arthur's letters, he had buoyed himself up with the hope that his representations had had their effect, and he should find him, on his return, reconciled and happy in the exercise of his duties. Again he urged, with a kindness of manner that caused Arthur to wring his hand, and then pace the room in ill-concealed agony, the necessity, now that he had indeed taken orders, of endeavouring to do his Master's work on earth, of forcing his rebellious spirit to submission. Arthur listened to him attentively, sadly; but vainly Herbert strove to instil in him a portion of that heavenly love which was to him the main-spring of his life. Arthur loved with an intensity, which utterly prevented his looking up to heaven as the goal, to reach which all earthly toil was welcome; and still not even to Herbert did he breathe one syllable of the fire that was inwardly consuming him. Had he been any one but Herbert Hamilton, the unhappy young man would have sought and found relief in his confidence; but not to the brother of the being he loved, oh, not to him---he could not, dared not.

"Herbert," he would say, in a voice hoarse with contending feelings, "did I dare betray the secret of this tortured heart, the true cause of my misery, you would pity, even if you condemned me; but ask it not---ask it not, it shall never pass my lips; one thing only I beseech you, and I do so from the regard you have ever seemed to feel for me. However you may hear my character traduced, my very conduct may confirm every evil report, yet believe them not; I may be

miserable, imprudent, mad, but never, never believe the name of Arthur Myrvin is stained with vice or guilt. Herbert, promise me this, and come what may, one friend, at least, is mine."

Herbert gazed on him with doubt, astonishment, and sorrow, yet an irresistible impulse urged him to promise all he asked, and Myrvin looked relieved; but painfully he felt, though he noticed it not to his friend, that the manner of Mr. Hamilton towards him was changed; cordiality and kindness had given place to coldness and reserve.

The whirl of a gay and happy London season had produced no change in the outward appearance and demeanour of Emmeline Hamilton. It had not been to her the ordeal it had been to her sister. She came forth from the gay world the same pure, innocent being as she had entered it. Admired she was by all with whom she was associated, but her smile was not sought for, her conversation not courted, as had been Caroline's, therefore her temptations had not been so great, but she was universally beloved.

Her mother sometimes wondered that Emmeline, keenly susceptible as she was to every other emotion, should still remain so insensible to anything resembling love. "She is indeed still the same innocent and darling child," she thought, and rested in pleased and satisfied security. She little knew, penetrating even as she was, that those young affections were already unconsciously engaged, that one manly figure, one melancholy yet expressive face utterly prevented the reception of any other. Emmeline knew not herself the extent of influence that secret image had obtained; she guessed not the whole truth until that night when her marriage had been jestingly alluded to, and then it burst upon her, stunning her young mind with a sense of scarcely-defined yet most painful consciousness. Arthur Myrvin had looked to Emmeline's return to Oakwood with many mingled feelings; she might be perhaps, even as her sister, a betrothed bride; he might have to witness, perhaps to officiate at her nuptials; he might see her courted, receiving attentions from and bestowing smiles on others, not casting one look or one thought on him, who for her would have gladly died. The idea was agony, and it was the sufferings occasioned by the anticipation of ideal misery that had produced the change in face and form which Herbert had beheld and regretted.

They met, and as if fortune favoured their secret but mutual affection, alone, the first time since Emmeline had returned from London. Unaccustomed to control, and at that time quite unconscious she had anything to conceal, though wondering why every pulse should throb, and her cheek so flush and pale, her agitation of manner, her expressed and evidently felt sorrow for the traces of suffering she beheld, sunk as balm on the sorrowing heart of the young man, and his first three or four interviews with her were productive of a happiness so exquisite, that it almost succeeded in banishing his gloom; but short indeed was that period of relief. Speedily he saw her, as he had expected, surrounded by gay young men of wealth and station. He felt they looked down on him; they thought not of him, as a rival he was unworthy, as incapable of loving a being so exalted; but in the midst of these wretched thoughts there arose one, that for a brief space was so bright, so glad, so beautiful, that while it lasted every object partook its rays. He marked her, he looked, with eyes rendered clear from jealousy, for some sign, it mattered not how small, to say she preferred the society of others to his own; ready as he was to look on the darkest side of things, he felt the hesitating glance, the timid tone with which she had latterly addressed him, contrary as it was to the mischievous playfulness which had formerly marked her intercourse with him, was dearer, oh, how much dearer than the gaiety in which she had indulged with others. This change in her manner was unremarked by her family.

The eye of love, however, looked on those slight signs in a very different light. Did she, could she love one so unworthy? The very idea seemed to make him feel as a new and better man. He covered his eyes with his hands, lest any outward sign should break that blessed illusion, and then he started, and returning recollection brought with it momentary despair. Did she even love him---were even her parents to consent,---his own,---for his vivid and excited fancy for one minute imagined what in more sober moments he knew was impossible---yet even were such difficulties removed, would he, could he take that fair and fragile creature from a home of luxury and every comfort to poverty? What had he to support a wife? How could they live, and what hope had he of increasing in any way his fortune? Was

he not exciting her affections to reduce them, like his own, to despair? And could she, beautiful and delicate as she was, could she bear the deprivation of his lot? She would never marry without the consent of her parents, and their approval would never be his, and even if it were, he had nothing, not the slightest hope of gaining anything wherewith to support her; and she, if indeed she loved him, he should see her droop and sink before his eyes, and that he could not bear; his own misery might be endured, but not hers. No! He paced the small apartment with reckless and disordered steps. His own doom was fixed, nothing could now prevent it--but hers, it might not be too late. He would withdraw from her sight, he would leave her presence, and for ever; break the spell that bound him near her. Ere that hasty walk in his narrow room was completed, his resolution was fixed; he would resign his curacy, and depart from the dangerous fascinations hovering round him.

Yet still he lingered. If he had been too presumptuous in thinking thus of Emmeline---if he were indeed nothing to her, why should he inflict this anguish on himself? Why need he tear himself from her? The night of Edward's return, while in one sense it caused him misery, by the random remark of Lord Louis, yet, by the agitation of Emmeline, the pang was softened, though he was strengthened in his resolve. Four days afterwards, the very evening of that day when Mr. Howard had alluded to his neglect of duties, before Herbert and his cousins, he tendered his resignation, coldly and proudly refusing any explanation, or assigning any reason for so doing, except that he wished to obtain a situation as tutor in any nobleman or gentleman's family about to travel. So greatly had the mind of Mr. Howard been prejudiced against the unhappy young man, by the false representations of his parishioners, that he rather rejoiced at Myrvin's determination, having more than once feared, if his conduct did not alter, he should be himself compelled to dismiss him from his curacy. But while pleased at being spared a task so adverse to his benevolent nature, he yet could not refrain from regarding this strange and apparently sudden resolution as a tacit avowal of many of those errors with which he was charged.

Feeling thus, it will be no subject of surprise that Mr. Howard accepted his curate's resignation; but while he did so, he could not refrain from giving the young man some kind and good advice as to his future life, which Arthur, aware the rector regarded him through the medium of prejudice, received not in the same kind spirit as it was offered. He listened silently indeed, but with an air of pride which checked all Mr. Howard's really kind intentions in his favour.

The rector, aware that Mr. Hamilton would be annoyed and displeased at this circumstance, did not inform him of Myrvin's intentions till some few weeks after Caroline's marriage, not indeed till he felt compelled by the wish to obtain his approval of a young clergyman who had been his pupil, and was eager to secure any situation near Mr. Howard, and to whom therefore the curacy Arthur had resigned would be indeed a most welcome gift. Mr. Hamilton was even more disturbed, when all was told him, than Mr. Howard had expected. It seemed as if Arthur had forgotten every tie of gratitude which Mr. Hamilton's services to his father, even forgetting those to himself, certainly demanded. His determined resolution to assign no reason for his proceeding but the one above mentioned, told against him, and Mr. Hamilton, aware of the many evil reports flying about concerning the young man, immediately imagined that he resigned the curacy fearing discovery of misdemeanours which might end even more seriously.

Herbert, too, was deeply pained that his friend had left him to learn such important intelligence from the lips of another instead of imparting it himself. It explained all the apparent contradictions of Arthur's conduct the last month, but it surprised and grieved him, yet the mystery caused him both anxiety and sadness, for Myrvin was evidently determined in no way to solve it. That he was unhappy in no ordinary degree, was to the eye of friendship very evident, not only in the frequent wildness of his manner, but in the haggard cheek and bloodshot eye; and sympathy thus ever kept alive in one so keenly susceptible of the woes of others as was Herbert Hamilton, sympathy continually excited, prevented all decrease of interest and regard. Percy was irritated and annoyed; Myrvin had disappointed him. His conduct, in return for Mr. Hamilton's kindness, appeared as ungrateful as unaccountable, and this caused the more fiery temper of the young heir of Oakwood to ignite and burst forth in a flame in the presence of Arthur, whose meek forbearance and, he now began to fancy, silent suffering tamed him after a brief period, and caused him, with his usual frankness and quick

transition of mood, to make him an apology for his violence. He was touched by the young man's manner, but they continued not on the same terms of friendly intimacy as formerly.

Mrs. Hamilton's charitable nature, heightened also by Herbert's unchanging regard, would not permit her to credit the tales that were abroad concerning him. She regretted his determination, for it appeared like wilfully casting away the friendship and interest of those who were likely to do him service. She guessed not the real motive of his resolve, if she had, she would have honoured even as she now regarded him with pity; but almost for the first time the penetration of Mrs. Hamilton was at fault. Emmeline's feelings, even as those of Arthur, were successfully concealed; from her brother Herbert she had first heard of Myrvin's intentions. She listened in silence, but her lip quivered and her cheek grew pale; and when she sought the solitude of her own room, tears relieved her, and enabled her to act up to her determination, cost what it might, to be the same playful, merry girl before her parents as was her wont, not that she meant in any way to deceive them, but she had learned that she loved Arthur Myrvin, and knew also that to become his wife, situated as they were, was a thing impossible.

Had Emmeline really been the romantic girl so generally believed, she would now have done all in her power to overcome every difficulty, by regarding poverty as the only criterion of true love; she would have fed her imagination with visions of herself and Arthur; combating manfully against evil, so they shared it together; she would have robed poverty with an imaginary halo, and welcomed it, rejoicing to become his wife, but such were not her feelings. The careful hand of maternal love had done its work, and though enthusiasm and romance were generally the characteristics most clearly visible, yet there was a fund of good and sober sense within, that few suspected, and of which even her parents knew not the extent, and that plain sense effectually prevented her ever becoming the victim of imagination.

Emmeline loved Arthur Myrvin, loved him with an intensity, a fervour, which only those who possess a similar enthusiastic temperament can understand. She felt convinced she was not indifferent to him; but agony as it was to her young heart to part from him, in all probability for ever, yet she honoured his resolution; she knew, she felt its origin, and she rejoiced that he went of his own accord, ere their secret feelings were discovered.

Notwithstanding all her endeavours, her spirits flagged, and at the conclusion of the Oakwood festivities she appeared so pale and thin, that Mrs. Hamilton consulted Mr. Maitland. Emmeline had resisted, as much as she could without failure of duty, all appeal to medical advice, and it was with trembling she awaited his opinion; when, however, it was given, she rejoiced that he had been consulted, for had her parents entertained any suspicions of the real cause, it would have completely banished them. He said she was merely suffering from the effects of a lengthened period of excitement, that quiet and regularity of pursuits would in all probability restore both health and spirits. A smile, faint and apparently without meaning, played round her lips as her mother repeated what he had said, and playfully declared she should most strictly adhere to his advice.

Arthur had shrunk from the task of acquainting his father with his intentions, for he well knew they would give him pain, and cause him extreme solicitude, and he postponed doing so till his plans for the future were determined. He had even requested Ellen and Edward, who were still his friends, to say but little concerning him during their stay at Llangwillan; but if they revealed his intentions, he implored them to use all their influence with his father to reconcile him to this bitter disappointment of his cherished hopes. He had determined not to return to Llangwillan, he felt he could not bear to see his parent with the consciousness that he had acted contrary to his wishes; he would not therefore do so till he had succeeded in obtaining the situation he so earnestly desired. But as the period when he should resign his curacy now rapidly approached, he no longer refrained from writing to his father, and Ellen proved her regard for both father and son, by affectionately endeavouring to soothe Mr. Myrvin's disappointment and solicitude, which were, as his son expected, extreme. She succeeded, at length, in persuading him, that could he obtain the situation he so much desired, Arthur would be more likely to advance than in retaining his present occupation.

The period of Arthur's departure came a few days before Christmas. He went to bid Mr. Hamilton farewell the very morning on which that gentleman intended riding over to Exeter to meet Ellen and her brother, on their return from Llangwillan. To Arthur this interview was indeed a painful one. From the moment his resolution to depart had been fixed, that moment the blessed truth had strangely and suddenly burst upon him that he was beloved; a new spirit appeared to dawn within, and midst the deep agony it was to feel he was parting for ever from a being he so dearly loved, there was a glow of approving conscience that nerved him to its endurance. It was this which had enabled him to conquer his irritation at Percy's violence, and the grief it was to feel that Herbert too must doubt him. He esteemed, he loved, was deeply grateful to Mr. Hamilton, and his evident displeasure was hard to bear; yet even that he had borne, strengthened by secret yet honourable incentives. But that morning, his heart throbbing with ill-concealed anguish, for the following day he would be miles from Oakwood, never, never to behold Emmeline again, his frame weakened, his blood fevered from the long-continued mental struggle, the stern address of Mr. Hamilton stung him to the quick.

Mr. Hamilton was not one of those who could disguise his sentiments. If interested at all in the fortunes of another, he felt he must speak, however severe in some cases his words might seem. As the chosen friend of his son---the victim for a time of oppression and injury---young Myrvin had excited his interest too powerfully for him entirely to abandon it even now, and therefore he spoke plainly to him even as he thought.

"You are casting from you," he said, "a friend who was both able and willing to assist you, apparently without the slightest regret, even with indifference. As the chosen and dear companion of my valued son, your interests were mine, and gladly would I have done all in my power to forward your views, had your conduct been such as I expected and required, but such it appears has been far from the case. Your unaccountable resignation of a situation, which, though not one of great emolument, was yet of value, unhappily confirms every evil report I have heard. The same unsteady and wavering spirit which urges you to travel, instead of permitting you to remain contented in the quiet discharge of sacred duties, may lead you yet more into error, and I warn you as a friend, govern it in time. You may deem me intrusive in my remarks, I speak but for your own good, young man; and though your forgetfulness of the sacred nature of your profession could not fail to lessen my esteem and regard, yet for your father's sake I would implore you to remember that your calling involves duties of the most solemn nature, and renders you a much more responsible being both in the sight of God and man."

Arthur answered him not. His cheek burned and his heart throbbed, but it was the father of Emmeline, the benefactor of his father, who spoke, and he might have spoken more and more severely, but he would have been unanswered; even to defend his own stainless integrity and innocence he could not have spoken, the power of speech appeared to have entirely deserted him. Never could he have been said to hope, but the words he had heard proved to him that he had lost the esteem and regard of Mr. Hamilton, and darkened his despair. He fixed his large, dark grey eyes earnestly on Mr. Hamilton's face, so earnestly, that for some time afterwards that look was recalled with melancholy feelings; he bent his head silently yet respectfully, and quitted the room without uttering a single word.

Struck by his haggard features, and the deeply mournful tone of his voice, as he bade her farewell and thanked her for all her kindness, Mrs. Hamilton, whose kindly nature had never permitted her to share her husband's prejudice against him, invited him, if his time permitted, to accompany her on her walk to Moorlands, where she had promised Lady Helen and Lilla to spend the day during her husband's absence. There was such extreme kindness in her manner, pervading also her words, that Arthur felt soothed and comforted, though he found it difficult to converse with her on the indifferent subjects she started, nor could he answer her concerning his plans for the future, for with a burning cheek and faltering voice he owned they were not yet determined. He gazed on her expressive features, which responded to the interest she expressed, and he longed to confess the whole truth, and implore her pity, her forgiveness for having dared to love her child; but with a strong effort he restrained himself, and they parted, in kindness, indeed, but nothing more.

"Emmeline is gone down to the school," said Mrs. Hamilton, unasked, and thus betraying how entirely she was free from all suspicions of the truth, "and she goes from thence to see a poor woman in the outskirts of the village. You must not leave us without wishing her farewell, or she will think you have not forgiven all the mischievous jokes she has played off upon you so continually."

Arthur started, as he looked on her face. Again the wish arose to tell her all, but it was instantly checked, and bowing with the deepest reverence, as he pressed in his her offered hand, hastily withdrew.

Should he indeed see Emmeline, and alone? Her mother's voice had bid him seek her, but the same motives that bade him resign his curacy, caused him now to feel the better course would be to fly at once from the fascination of her presence, lest in a moment of excitement he should be tempted to betray the secret of his love; but while passion struggled with duty, the flutter of her dress, as Emmeline suddenly emerged from a green lane, and walked slowly and, he thought, sadly along, caught his eye, and decided the contest.

"I will be guarded; not a word of love shall pass my lips. I will only gaze on her sweet face, and listen to the kind tones of her dear voice again, before we part for ever," he thought, and darting forwards, was speedily walking by her side. He believed himself firm in his purpose, strong, unwavering in his resolution; but his heart had been wrung to its inmost core, his spirit bent beneath its deep, wild agony, and at that moment temptation was too powerful; he could not, oh, he could not part from her, leave her to believe as others did. Could he bear that she, for whose smile he would have toiled day and night, to be regarded with esteem, to obtain but one glance of approbation, could he bear that she should think of him as the unworthy being he was represented? No! he felt he could not, and in one moment of unrestrained and passionate feeling, his love was told, the treasured secret of his breaking heart revealed.

Emmeline heard, and every limb of her slight frame trembled, almost convulsively, with her powerful struggle for composure, with the wish still to conceal from him the truth that he was to her even as she to him, dear even as life itself; but the struggle was vain. The anguish which the sight of his deep wretchedness inflicted on that young and gentle bosom, which from childhood had ever bled for others' woes, was too powerful, and led on by an irresistible impulse, she acknowledged his affections were returned; for she felt did she not speak it, the extreme agitation she could not hide would at once betray the truth, but at the same instant she avowed her unhappy love, she told him they must part and for ever. She conjured him for her sake to adhere to his resolution, and leave the neighbourhood of Oakwood; she thanked him with all the deep enthusiasm of her nature, for that regard for her peace which she felt confident had from the first dictated his resigning his curacy, and braving the cruel prejudices of all around him, even those of her own father, rather than betray his secret and her own; rather than linger near her, to play upon her feelings, and tempt her, in the intensity of her affection for him, to forget the duty, the gratitude, the love, she owed her parents.

"Wherefore should I hide from you that the affection, the esteem you profess and have proved for me are returned with equal force?" continued this noble-minded and right-feeling girl, as they neared Mrs. Langford's cottage, where she felt this interview must cease--she could sustain it no longer. "I would not, I could not thus wound the kind and generous heart of one, to whose care I feel I could intrust my earthly happiness; but as it is, situated as we both are, we must submit to the decrees of Him, who, in infinite wisdom and mercy, would, by this bitter trial, evince our love for Him, and try us in the ordeal of adversity and sorrow. He alone can know the extent of that love we bear each other; and He, if we implore Him, can alone give us sufficient strength to obtain the conquest of ourselves. We part, Arthur--and if not for ever, at least till many years have passed. Forget me, Arthur; you have by the honourable integrity of your conduct wrung from me a secret I had deemed would have died with me; for I knew and felt, and so too must you, its utter, utter hopelessness."

Her voice for the first time, faltered; audibly, but with a strong effort, she rallied, "I do not ask from you an explanation of the rumours to your discredit, which are flying about this neighbourhood, for not one of them do I believe; you have

some secret enemy, whose evil machinations will, I trust, one day be clearly proved; perhaps you have been neglectful, heedless, and I may have been the cause. But let not this be, dear Arthur, let me not have the misery of feeling that an ill-fated love for one thus separated from you has rendered reckless that character which is naturally so good, so bright, and noble. Oh, for my sake, yield not to despair; shake off this lethargy, and prove to the whole world that they have wronged you, that the fame of Arthur Myrvin is as stainless as his name."

Arthur moved not his eyes from her as she thus spoke, every word she uttered increased the strong devotion he felt towards her; but as the purity, the nobleness of her character was displayed even clearer than ever before him, he felt himself unworthy to possess her, and yet that such a being loved him, avowed her love, acknowledged that to him she could intrust her earthly happiness without a single doubt, that knowledge exalted him above himself, soothed that morbid sensitiveness which had oppressed him, and, ere her sweet voice had ceased to urge him on to exertion, to trust in Him who had ordained their mutual trial, he had inwardly resolved to nerve himself to the task, and prove that she was not deceived in him, that he would deserve her favourable opinion. He gazed on her as if that look should imprint those fair and childlike features on the tablet of his memory.

"I will obey you," he said at length, in a voice hoarse with contending emotions. "We part, and when I return years hence, it may be to see you the happy wife of one in all respects more suited to you; but then, even then, although love for me may have passed away, remember it is you, whose gentle voice has saved a fellow-creature from the sinful recklessness of despair; you who have pointed out the path which, I call heaven and earth to witness, I will leave no means untried till it is trodden. Had you refused to hear me, had you scorned my affections, left me in displeasure for my presumption, oh, Emmeline, I might indeed have become that which I am believed; but now you have inspired me with a new spirit. The recollection that you have not deemed me so utterly unworthy, will never, never leave me; it shall cling to me, and if evil assail me, that fond thought shall overcome temptation. The vain longings for a more stirring profession shall no more torment me, it is enough *you* have not despised me; and however irksome may be my future duties, they shall be performed with a steadiness and zeal which shall procure me esteem, if it do no more, and reconcile my conscience to my justly offended Maker. If, in future years, you chance to hear the name of Arthur Myrvin spoken in terms of respect and love, you will trace your own work; and oh, Emmeline, may that thought, that good deed, prove the blessing I would now call down upon your head."

He paused in strong and overpowering emotion, and Emmeline sought in vain for words to reply; they had reached the entrance to Mrs. Langford's little garden, and now the hour had come when they must part. "Farewell, dearest Arthur, may God bless you and give you peace! Leave me now," she added, after a moment's pause. But Arthur could only fix his eyes mournfully on her face, as though her last look should never leave him; then, suddenly, he raised her hand to his quivering lip. One moment, through blinding tears, he gazed on that dear being he loved so well; yet another moment, and he was gone.

Emmeline leaned heavily against the little gate, a sickness as of death for a moment crept over her and paralysed every limb; with a strong effort she roused herself and entered the cottage, feeling greatly relieved to find Mrs. Langford was absent. She sunk on a low seat, and burying her face in her hands, gave way for the first time to a violent burst of tears; yet she had done her duty, she had acted rightly, and that thought enabled her to conquer the natural weakness which, for a short time, completely overpowered her, and when Mrs. Langford returned, no signs of agitation were evident, except a more than ordinary paleness, which in her present delicate state of health, was easily attributable to fatigue.

Now it so happened that Widow Langford possessed a shrewdness and penetration of character, which we sometimes find in persons of her class, but which was in her case so combined, from long residence in Mr. Hamilton's family, with a delicacy and refinement, that she generally kept her remarks very much more secret than persons in her sphere of life usually do. It was fortunate for our poor Emmeline that it was so, for the widow had chanced to be an unseen witness of Arthur's impassioned farewell. She heard the concluding words of both, marked the despairing glance of Arthur, the

deadly paleness of her dear Miss Emmeline, and connecting these facts with previous observations, she immediately imagined the truth; and with that kindness to which we have alluded, she retreated and lingered at a neighbour's till she thought her young lady had had sufficient time to recover her composure, instead of acting as most people would have done, hastened up to her, under the idea she was about to faint, and by intrusive solicitations, and yet more intrusive sympathy in such a matter, betrayed that her secret had been discovered.

Mrs. Langford shrunk from acting thus, although this was not the first time she had suspected the truth. She knew Emmeline's character well, and doted on her with all the affection a very warm heart could bestow. Having been head nurse in Mrs. Hamilton's family from Herbert's birth, she loved them all as her nurslings, but Emmeline's very delicate health when a baby, appeared to have rendered her the good woman's especial favourite.

At the time of Caroline's marriage, Miss Emmeline's future prospects were, of course, the theme of the servants' hall; some of whom thought it not at all improbable, that as Miss Hamilton had become a countess, Miss Emmeline might one day be a marchioness, perhaps even a duchess. Now Widow Langford thought differently, though she kept her own counsel and remained silent. Miss Emmeline, she fancied, would be very much happier in a more humble sphere, and settled down quietly near Oakwood, than were she to marry some great lord, who would compel her to live amidst the wear and tear of a gay and fashionable life. Arthur Myrvin chanced to be a very great favourite of the widow's, and if he could but get a richer living, and become rather more steady in his character, and if Miss Emmeline really loved him, as somehow she fancied she did, why it would not only be a very pretty, but a very happy match, she was quite sure.

The good widow was, however, very careful not in the least to betray to her young lady that she had been a witness of their parting; for, after an expression of pleasure at seeing her there, an exclamation of surprise and regret at her pale cheeks, she at once branched off into a variety of indifferent subjects concerning the village, topics in which she knew Emmeline was interested, and concluded with---

"And so our young curate is, indeed, going to start for Exeter to-night, in the Totness mail. I am so very sorry, though I do not dare say so to any of my uncharitable neighbours. I did not think he would go so soon, poor dear Mr. Myrvin."

"It is not too soon, nurse, when every tongue has learned to speak against him," replied Emmeline, calmly, though a sudden flush rose to her cheek. "He must be glad to feel Mr. Howard no longer requires his services."

"But dear Miss Emmeline, you surely do not believe one word of all the scandalous reports about him?" said the widow, earnestly.

"I do not wish to do so, nor will I, without more convincing proofs," replied Emmeline, steadily. "My father, I fear, is deeply prejudiced, and that, in one of his charitable and kindly feelings, would tell against him."

"My master has been imposed on by false tales, my dear young lady; do not let them do so on you," said the good woman, with an eagerness which almost surprised her young companion. "I am quite convinced he has some secret enemy in the parish, I am pretty certain who it is; and I do not despair one day of exposing all his schemes, and proving Mr. Myrvin is as well disposed and excellent a young man as any in the parish. I know who the villain is in this case, and my master shall know it too, one day." Emmeline struggled to subdue the entreaty that was bursting from her lips, but entirely she could not, and seizing the widow's hand, she exclaimed, in a low agitated voice---

"Do so; oh, proclaim the falsehood, the cruelty of these reports, and I--I mean Arthur--Mr. Myrvin will bless you. It is so cruel, in such early youth, to have one's character defamed, and he has only that on which to rest; tell me, promise me you will not forget this determination."

"To the very best of my ability, Miss Emmeline, I promise you," replied Mrs. Langford, more and more confirmed in her suspicions. "But do not excite yourself so much, dear heart. Mr. Maitland said you were to be kept quite quiet, you know, and you have fatigued yourself so much, you are trembling like an aspen."

"My weakness must plead my excuse for my folly, dear nurse," answered Emmeline, striving by a smile to control two or three tears, which, spite of all resistance, would chase one another down her pale cheek. "Do not mind me, I shall get well very soon. And how long do you think it will be before you succeed in your wish?"

"Not for some time, my dear young lady, at present. I have only my suspicions; I must watch cautiously, ere they can be confirmed. I assure you, I am as anxious that poor young man's character should be cleared as you can be."

A faint smile for a moment played round Emmeline's lips, as she pressed the good woman's hand, and said she was satisfied. A little while longer she lingered, then rousing herself with a strong effort, she visited, as she had intended, two or three poor cottages, and forced herself to listen to and enter with apparent interest on those subjects most interesting to their inmates. In her solitary walk thence to Moorlands she strenuously combated with herself, lest her thoughts should adhere to their loved object, and lifting up her young enthusiastic soul in fervent faith and love to its Creator, she succeeded at length in obtaining the composure she desired, and in meeting her mother, at Moorlands, with a smile and assumed playfulness, which did not fail, even at Mrs. Hamilton's gentle reproof for her lengthened absence and over fatigue, to which she attributed the paleness resting on her cheek, and which even the return of Edward and Ellen to Oakwood, and the many little pleasures incidental to a reunion, could not chase away.

Three weeks passed quietly on; Oakwood was once more the seat of domestic enjoyment. The Earl and Countess St. Eval spent the week of Christmas with them, which greatly heightened every pleasure, and Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, instead of seeking in vain for one dear face in the happy group around them on the eve of Christmas and the New Year, beheld beside their peaceful hearth another son, beneath whose fond and gentle influence the character of Caroline, already chastened, was merging into beautiful maturity, and often as Mrs. Hamilton gazed on that child of care and sorrow, yet of deep unflinching love, she felt, indeed, in her a mother's recompense was already given.

Edward's leave of absence was extended to a longer period than usual. His ship had been dismantled, and now lay untenanted with the other floating castles of the deep. Her officers and men had been dispersed, and other stations had not yet been assigned to them. Nor did young Fortescue intend joining a ship again as midshipman; his buoyant hopes--the expectations of a busy fancy--told him that perhaps the epaulette of a lieutenant would glitter on his shoulder. On his first return home he had talked continually of his examination and his promotion, but as the time neared for him to accompany his uncle to London for the purpose, his volubility was checked.

Caroline and her husband returned to Castle Terryn, and scarcely four weeks after Myrvin's departure, Emmeline received from the hands of Mrs. Langford an unexpected and most agitating letter. It was from Arthur; intense mental suffering, in the eyes of her it addressed, breathed through every line; but that subject, that dear yet forbidden subject, their avowed and mutual love, was painfully avoided; it had evidently been a struggle to write thus calmly, impassionately, and Emmeline blessed him for his care: it merely implored her to use her influence with St. Eval to obtain his interference with his father on his (Arthur's) behalf. Lord Malvern he had heard was seeking for a gentleman to accompany his son Louis as tutor and companion to Germany; there, for the two following years, to improve his education, and enable him to obtain a thorough knowledge of the language and literature of the country. Arthur had applied for the situation, and recognised by the Marquis as the young clergyman he had so often seen at Oakwood, he received him with the utmost cordiality and kindness. On being questioned as to his reasons for resigning his curacy, he frankly owned that so quiet a life was irksome to him, and a desire to travel had occasioned the wish to become tutor to any nobleman or gentleman's son about to do so. He alluded himself to the reports to his prejudice, avowed with sorrow that neglect of parochial duties was indeed a just accusation, but from every other, he solemnly assured the Marquis, his

conscience was free. Not one proof of vice or even irregularity of conduct had been or could be brought against him. He farther informed Emmeline, that not only the Marquis but the Marchioness and the whole family appeared much disposed in his favour, particularly Lord Louis, who declared that if he might not have him for a tutor, he would have no one else, and not go to Germany or to any school at all. The Marquis had promised to give him a decided answer as soon as he had consulted Lord St. Eval on the subject. He knew, Myrvin concluded, that her influence was great with the Earl, and it was for that reason and that alone he had ventured to address her.

Emmeline reflected long and deeply on this letter. Had she listened to the powerful pleadings of her deep affection, she would have shrunk from thus using her influence, however small, to send him from England,---yet could she hesitate? had she indeed forgotten herself to follow that only path of duty she had pointed out to him? Brief indeed were her moments of indecision. She wrote instantly to St. Eval in Arthur's favour, but so guardedly and calmly worded her letter, that no suspicion of any kinder or more interested feeling than that of her peculiarly generous and warm-hearted nature could have been suspected, either by St. Eval or her sister. She excused her boldness in writing thus unadvisedly and secretly, by admitting that she could not bear that an unjust and unfounded prejudice should so cruelly mar the prospects of so young and, she believed, injured a fellow-creature. She was well aware that her father shared this prejudice, and therefore she entreated St. Eval not to mention her share in the transaction.

Lord St. Eval willingly complied with her wishes. She had been, as we know, ever his favourite. He loved her perfect artlessness and playfulness, her very enthusiasm rendered her an object of his regard; besides which, on this point, his opinion coincided with hers. He felt assured young Myrvin was unhappy---on what account he knew not---but he was convinced he did not deserve the aspersions cast upon him; and, directly after the receipt of Emmeline's earnest letter, he came unexpectedly to the parish, made inquiries, with the assistance of Mrs. Langford, and returned to Castle Terryn, perfectly satisfied that it would certainly be no disadvantage to his brother to be placed under the care and companionship of Arthur Myrvin. He lost no time in imparting this opinion to his father; and Emmeline very quickly learned that the whole affair was arranged. Lord Louis was wild with joy that Arthur Myrvin, whom he had liked at Oakwood, was to be his tutor, instead of some prim formidable, dominie, and to this news was superadded the intelligence that, the second week in February, the Rev. Arthur Myrvin and his noble pupil quitted England for Hanover, where they intended to make some stay.

Emmeline heard, and the words "will he not write me one line in farewell ere he leaves England?" were murmured internally, but were instantly suppressed, for she knew the very wish was a departure from that line of stern control she had laid down for herself and him; and that letter, that dear, that precious letter---precious, for it came from him, though not one word of love was breathed,---ought not that to be destroyed? Had she any right now to cherish it, when the aid she sought had been given, its object gained? Did her parents know she possessed that letter, that it was dear to her, what would be their verdict? And was she not deceiving them in thus retaining, thus cherishing a remembrance of him she had resolved to forget? Emmeline drew forth the precious letter; she gazed on it long, wistfully, as if in parting from it the pang of separation with the beloved writer was recalled. She pressed her lips upon it, and then with stern resolution dropped it into the fire that blazed upon the hearth; and, with cheek pallid and breath withheld, she marked the utter annihilation of the first and last memento she possessed of him she loved.

Mrs. Hamilton's anxiety on Emmeline's account did not decrease. She still remained pale and thin, and her spirits more uneven, and that energy which had formerly been such a marked feature in her character appeared at times entirely to desert her; and Mr. Maitland, discovering that the extreme quiet and regularity of life which he had formerly recommended was not quite so beneficial as he had hoped, changed in a degree his plan, and advised diversity of recreation, and amusements of rather more exertion than he had at first permitted. Poor Emmeline struggled to banish thought, that she might repay by cheerfulness the tenderness of her parents and cousins, but she was new to sorrow; her first was indeed a bitter trial, the more so because even from her mother it was as yet concealed. She succeeded for a time in her wishes, so far as to gratify her mother by an appearance of her usual enthusiastic pleasure in the anticipation

of a grand ball, given by Admiral Lord N----, at Plymouth, which it was expected the Duke and Duchess of Clarence would honour with their presence. Ellen anxiously hoped her brother would return to Oakwood in time to accompany them. He had passed his examination with the best success, but on the advice of Sir Edward Manly, they both lingered in town, in the hope that being on the spot the young officer would not be forgotten in the list of promotions. He might, Edward gaily wrote, chance to return to Oakwood a grade higher than he left it.

CHAPTER IV.

"Ellen, I give you joy!" exclaimed Emmeline, entering the room where her mother and cousin were sitting one afternoon, and speaking with some of her former cheerfulness. "There is a carriage coming down the avenue, and though I cannot quite distinguish it, I have second sight sufficient to fancy it is papa's. Edward declared he would not tell us when he was coming home, and therefore there is nothing at all improbable in the idea, that he will fire a broadside on us, as he calls it, unexpectedly."

"I would willingly stand fire, to see him safe anchored off this coast," replied Ellen, smiling. "Lord N----'s ball will lose half its charms if he be not there."

"What! with all your enthusiastic admiration of her Royal Highness, whom you will have the honour of seeing? For shame, Ellen."

"My enthusiastic admiration; rather yours, my dear Emmeline. Mine is so quiet that it does not deserve the name of enthusiasm," replied Ellen, laughing. "Nor could I have imagined you would have honoured me so far as to give me an attribute in your eyes so precious."

"I am getting old and learning wisdom," answered Emmeline, making an effort to continue her playfulness, "and therefore admire quietness more than formerly."

"And therefore you are sometimes so silent and sad, to atone for the past, my Emmeline," remarked her mother, somewhat sorrowfully.

"Sad, nay, dearest mother, do me not injustice; I cannot be sad, when so many, many blessings are around me," replied the affectionate girl. "Silent I may be sometimes, but that is only because I do not feel quite so strong perhaps as I once did, and it appears an exertion to rattle on as I used upon trifling subjects."

"I shall not be contented, then, my own Emmeline, till that strength returns, and I hear you delighted, even as of old, with little things again."

"And yet you have sometimes smiled at my romance, and bade me think of self-control, dearest mother. Must I be saucy enough to call you changeable?" answered Emmeline, smiling, as she looked in her mother's face.

Mrs. Hamilton was prevented replying by Ellen's delighted exclamation that it was her uncle's carriage, and Edward was waving a white handkerchief, as if impatient to reach them, an impatience which was speedily satisfied by his arrival, bounding into the room, but suddenly pausing at the door to permit his uncle and another gentleman's entrance, to which latter he respectfully raised his cap, and then sprung forward to clasp the extended hands of his cousin and sister.

"Allow me to congratulate you, madam," said Sir Edward Manly, after returning with easy politeness the courteous greeting of Mrs. Hamilton, "on the promotion of one of the bravest officers and most noble-minded youths of the British navy, and introduce all here present to Lieutenant Fortescue, of his Majesty's frigate the Royal Neptune, whose

unconquered and acknowledged dominion over the seas I have not the very slightest doubt he will be one of the most eager to preserve."

"Nor can I doubt it, Sir Edward," replied Mrs. Hamilton, smiling, as she glanced on the flushing cheek of her gallant nephew, adding, as she held out her hand to him, "God bless you, my dear boy! I do indeed rejoice in your promotion, for I believe it well deserved."

"You are right, madam, it is well deserved," replied Sir Edward, with an accent so marked on the last sentence that the attention of all was arrested. "Hamilton, I have been silent to you on the subject, for I wished to speak it first before all those who are so deeply interested in this young man's fate. The lad," he added, striking his hand frankly on Edward's shoulder, "the lad whose conscience shrunk from receiving public testimonials of his worth as a sailor, while his private character was stained, while there was that upon it which, if known, he believed would effectually prevent his promotion; who, at the risk of disappointment to his dearest wishes, of disgrace, want of honour, possessed sufficient courage to confess to his captain that his log-book, the first years of his seamanship, told a false tale---the lad, I say, who can so nobly command himself, is well worthy to govern others. He who has known so well the evil of disobedience will be firm in the discipline of his men, while he who is so stern to his own faults will, I doubt not, be charitable to those of others. The sword presented to him for his brave preservation of the crew of the Syren will never be stained by dishonour, while he looks upon it and remembers the past, and even as in those of my own son, shall I henceforward rejoice in using my best endeavours to promote the fortunes of Edward Fortescue."

The return of Edward, the honours he had received, the perfect happiness beaming on his bright face, all caused Ellen to look forward to the ball with greater pleasure than she had ever regarded gaiety of that sort before; and Mrs. Hamilton would sometimes playfully declare that she and Emmeline had for a time exchanged characters, although Edward's never-failing liveliness, his odd tales and joyous laugh, had appeared partly to rouse the latter's usual spirits, and dissipate slightly her mother's anxiety.

The festive night arrived, and anticipation itself was not disappointed in the pleasure it bestowed. All the nobility of the country, for miles round, had assembled in respect to the royal guests who had honoured the distinguished commander with their august presence; and Mrs. Hamilton's natural feelings of pride were indeed gratified that night, as she glanced on her Caroline, who now appeared in public for the first time since her marriage, attired in simple elegance, yet with a richness appropriate to her rank, attracting every eye, even that of their Royal Highnesses themselves, by the graceful dignity of her tall and commanding figure, by the quiet repose and polished ease which characterised her every movement. If Lord St. Eval looked proud of his young wife, there were few there who would have blamed him. The Lady Florence Lyle was with her brother, enjoying with unfeigned pleasure, as did Ellen, and to all appearance Emmeline, the scene before them.

The brilliant uniforms of the army, and the handsome but less striking ones of the navy, imparted additional gaiety and splendour to the rooms, forming picturesque groups, when contrasting with the chaste and elegant costumes of the fairer sex. But on the fascinating scene we may not linger, nor attempt to describe the happiness which the festivities occasioned the entire party, nor on the gratification of Lieutenant Fortescue, when Sir Edward Manly begged the honour of an introduction for his young friend to his Royal Highness the Duke of Clarence, who, with his amiable consort, the Princess Adelaide, had honoured Lord N---- with their august presence. Upon one incident alone we must be permitted to dwell, as affording a great and unexpected pleasure to our friend Ellen.

Edward and Ellen were for some time perfectly unconscious that they were objects of the most earnest, penetrating scrutiny of a lady, leaning on the arm of a young and handsome man in regimentals, near them.

"It must be them; that likeness cannot be that of a stranger," were the words, uttered in an earnest, persuading tone, addressed by the young officer to the lady, who might be his mother, which were the first to attract the attention of the little group, though the speaker appeared quite unconscious he was overheard. "Let me speak to him, and at least ask the question."

"No, no, Walter," the lady replied, in a low tone. "Changed as are our situations now, I could not wish, even if it be them, to intrude upon their remembrance."

An exclamation of suppressed impatience escaped from the lips of the young man, but instantly checking it, he said, respectfully and tenderly---

"Dearest mother, do not say so, if" (the name was lost) "grew up as she was a child, she would be glad to welcome the friend of her father, the companion of her childhood."

"But it cannot be, Walter; that beautiful girl is not like my poor child, though her brother may strangely resemble those we have known."

"Have you not often told me, mother, we never change so much as from childhood into youth? Ellen was always ill, now she may be well, and that makes all the difference in the world. I am much mistaken if those large, mournful eyes can belong to any but"---

He paused abruptly; for convinced that they must be the subject of conversation, and feeling they were listening to language not meant for their ears, Edward and Ellen turned towards the speakers, who to the former appeared perfect strangers, not so to the latter. Feelings, thoughts of her earliest infancy and childhood, came thronging over her as a spell, as she gazed on the lady's countenance, which, by its expression, denoted that sorrow had been her portion; it was changed, much changed from that which it had been; but the rush of memory on Ellen's young soul told her that face had been seen before. A night of horror and subsequent suffering flashed before her eyes, in which that face had beamed in fondness and in soothing kindness over her; that voice had spoken accents of love in times when even a mother's words were harsh and cold.

"Forgive me, sir, but is not your name Fortescue?" inquired the young man, somewhat hesitatingly, yet frankly, as he met Edward's glance.

"You have the advantage of me, sir," he replied, with equal frankness; "such is my name, but yours I cannot guess."

"I beg your pardon, but am I speaking to the son of Colonel Fortescue, who fell in India during a skirmish against the natives, nearly ten years ago?"

"The same, sir."

"Then it is---it is Mrs. Cameron; I am not, I knew I could not be mistaken," exclaimed Ellen, in an accent of delight, and bounding forward, she clasped the lady's eagerly-extended hand in both hers, and gazing in her face with eyes glistening with starting tears. "And would you, could you have passed me, without one word to say my friend, the wife of my father's dearest friend, was so near to me? you who in my childhood so often soothed and tended my sufferings, dearest Mrs. Cameron?" and tears of memory and of feeling fell upon the hand she held, while young Cameron gazed on her with an admiration which utterly prevented his replying coherently to the questions, the reminiscences of former years, when they were playmates together in India, which Edward, discovering by his sister's exclamation who he was, was now pouring in his ear.

"I did not, could not think I should have been thus affectionately, thus faithfully remembered, my dear Ellen, after a lapse of so many years," replied Mrs. Cameron, visibly affected at her young companion's warmth. "I could not imagine the memory of a young child, such as you were when we parted, would have been so acute."

"Then my niece must have been all these years mistaken, and you too did not understand her, though she fancied you did," said Mrs. Hamilton, with a smile, advancing to relieve Ellen's agitation, which the association of her long-lamented father with Mrs. Cameron rendered almost painful. "I could have told you, from the moment she was placed under my care, that she never would forget those who had once been kind to her. I have known you so long, from Ellen's report, that glad am I indeed to make your acquaintance; you to whom my lamented sister was so much indebted."

Gratified and soothed by this address, for the sight of Ellen had awakened many sad associations, she too being now a widow, Mrs. Cameron rallied her energies, and replied to Mrs. Hamilton, in her naturally easy and friendly manner. Ellen looked on the black dress she wore, and turned inquiringly to young Cameron, who answered hurriedly, for he guessed her thoughts.

"Ask not of my father, he is beside Colonel Fortescue; he shared his laurels and his grave."

An expression of deep sympathy passed over Ellen's countenance, rendering her features, to the eager glance of the young man, yet more attractive.

"You have, I see, much to say and inquire, my dear Ellen," said her aunt, kindly, as she marked her flushed cheek and eager eye. "Perhaps Mrs. Cameron will indulge you by retiring with you into one of those quiet, little refreshment-rooms, where you can talk as much as you please without remark."

"Can I ask my dear young friend to resign the pleasures of the dance, and agreeable companionship of the friends I see thronging round her, to listen to an old woman's tale?" said Mrs. Cameron, smiling.

"I think you are answered," replied Mrs. Hamilton, playfully, as Ellen passed her arm through that of Mrs. Cameron and looked caressingly and persuadingly in her face.

Mrs. Cameron's tale was soon told. She had returned to England, for India had become painful to her, from the many bereavements which had there unhappily darkened her lot. Captain Cameron had fallen in an engagement, two or three years after Mrs. Fortescue's departure; and out of seven apparently healthy children, which had been hers when Ellen knew her, only three now remained. It was after the death of her eldest daughter, a promising girl of eighteen, her own health having suffered so exceedingly from the shock, that her son Walter, fearing for her life, effected an exchange, and being ordered to return with his regiment to England---for he now held his father's rank of captain---he succeeded in persuading his mother to accompany him with his sisters. He was quartered at Devonport, where it appeared they had been residing the last eight months, visited, even courted, by most of the military and naval officers who had known and respected his father; amongst whom was Lord N---, who had persuaded Mrs. Cameron to so far honour his ball as there to introduce her daughter Flora, using arguments she could not resist, and consequently delighting her affectionate children, by once more appearing in public.

"And this is Walter, the kind Walter, who used ever to take my part, though he did scold me for always looking so sad," exclaimed Ellen, after hearing her friend's tale, and answering all her questions concerning herself, looking up as she spoke on the young man, who had again joined them, and blushing with timidity at her boldness in thus speaking to one who had grown into a stranger.

The young man's heart throbbed as he heard himself addressed as Walter by the beautiful girl beside him; and he found it difficult to summon sufficient courage to ask her to dance with him; frankly, however, she consented.

Ellen found pleasure, also, in renewing acquaintance with the timid Flora, whom she had left a playful child of seven, and who was now merging into bright and beautiful girlhood; eager to return her kindly warmth in the delight of finding one of her own age among that glittering crowd of strangers.

But few more incidents of note occurred that night; dancing continued with unabated spirit, even after the departure of the royal guests, and pleasure was the prevailing feeling to the last. The notice of the Duke, and the benignant spirit of the Duchess, her gentle and kindly manners, had penetrated many a young and ardent soul, and fixed at once and unwaveringly the stamp of future loyalty within.

Once introduced to Mrs. Cameron, and aware that she resided so near them, Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton cultivated her acquaintance; speedily they became intimate. In Mrs. Fortescue's broken and dying narrative, she had more than once mentioned them as the friends of her husband, and having been most kind to herself. Edward had alluded to Captain Cameron's care of him, and parting advice, when about to embark for England; and Ellen had frequently spoken of Mrs. Cameron's kindness to her when a child. All those who had shown kindness to her sister were objects of attraction to Mrs. Hamilton, and the widow speedily became so attached to her and her amiable family, that, on Walter being suddenly ordered out to Ireland (which commands, by the way, the young man obeyed with very evident reluctance), she gladly consented to rent a small picturesque cottage between Moorlands and Oakwood, an arrangement which added much to the young people's enjoyment; while the quiet repose of her present life, the society of Mrs. Hamilton and her worthy husband, as also that of Mr. Howard, restored the widow to happiness, which had not been her portion since her husband's death; and now, for the first time, Mrs. Hamilton became acquainted with those minute particulars which she had for the last nine years desired to know, concerning the early childhood of those orphans then committed to her care. That her sister had been partial, it was very easy to discover; but the extent of the evil, and the many little trials Ellen's very infancy had to encounter, were only subjects of conjecture, for she could not bear to lead them to speak on any topic that might in the least have reflected on the memory of their mother.

The intelligence therefore which she now obtained explained all that had been a matter of mystery and surprise in Ellen's character, and rendered clearer than ever to Mrs. Hamilton the painful feelings which had in opening youth actuated her niece's conduct; and often, as she listened to Mrs. Cameron's account of her infant sufferings and her mother's harshness and neglect, did Mrs. Hamilton wish such facts had from the first been known to her; much sorrow, she felt assured, might have been spared to all. She would perchance have been enabled to have so trained her and soothed her early-wounded sensibility, that all the wretchedness of her previous years might have been avoided, but she would not long allow her mind to dwell on such things. She looked on her niece as dearer than ever, from the narrative she had heard, and she was thankful to behold her thus in radiant health and beauty, and, she hoped, in happiness, although at times there was still a deeper shade of seriousness than she loved to see imprinted on her brow, and dimming the lustre of her eye, but it caused her no anxiety. Ellen's character had never been one of light-hearted glee; it would have been unnatural to see it now, and she believed that appearance of melancholy to be her natural disposition, and so too, perhaps, the orphan regarded it herself.

A very few weeks after Lord N----'s ball, Edward again departed from Oakwood to join his ship. He parted gaily with his friends, for he knew his voyage was to be but a short one; and that now the first and most toilsome step to promotion had been gained, he should have very many more opportunities of taking a run home and catching a glimpse, he said, joyously, of the whole crew who were so dear to him, on board that tough old ship Oakwood; and Ellen, too, could share his gaiety even the night previous to his departure, for this was not like either their first or second parting. She had all to hope and but little to fear; for her trust was too firmly fixed on Him who had guarded that beloved brother through so many previous dangers and temptations to bid her waver now. Even Mrs. Hamilton's anxious bosom trembled not as she

parted from the son of her affections, the preserver of her husband; and though Oakwood felt dull and gloomy on the first departure of the mischief-loving, mirthful sailor, it was not the gloom of sorrow. February passed, and Mrs. Hamilton's solicitude with regard to Emmeline still continued. There were times when, deceived by her daughter's manner, lively and playful apparently as usual, she permitted herself to feel less anxious; but the pale cheek, the dulled eye, the air of languor, and sometimes, though not often, of depression, which pervaded every movement, very quickly recalled anxiety and apprehension. Mr. Maitland could not understand her. If for a moment he imagined it was mental suffering, her manner was such the next time he saw her as entirely to baffle that fancy, and convince him that the symptoms which caused Mrs. Hamilton's alarm were, in reality, of no consequence. Determined to use every effort to deceive him, lest he should betray to her parents the real cause of her sufferings, Emmeline generally rallied every effort and rattled on with him, as from a child she had been accustomed, therefore it was no wonder the worthy surgeon was deceived; and often, very often, did the poor girl wish she could deceive herself as easily. It was now nearly three months since she and young Myrvin had so painfully parted, and her feelings, instead of diminishing in their intensity, appeared to become more powerful. She had hoped, by studiously employing herself, by never indulging in one idle hour, to partially efface his remembrance, but the effort was fruitless. The letters from Lady Florence and Lady Emily Lyle became subjects of feverish interest, for in them alone she heard unprejudiced accounts of Arthur, of whose praises, they declared, the epistles of their brother Louis were always full; so much so, Lady Emily said, that she certainly should fall in love with him, for the purpose of making a romantic story. Sadly did poor Emmeline feel there was but little romance in her feelings; cold clinging despair had overcome her. She longed for the comfort of her mother's sympathy, but his character was not yet cleared. Mr. Hamilton evidently mistrusted the praises so lavishly bestowed on the young man by Lord Malvern's family; and how could she defend him, if accused of presumption towards herself? Presumption there had not been; indeed, his conduct throughout had done him honour. She fancied her mother would be displeased, might imagine she had encouraged the feeling of romantic admiration till it became an ideal passion, and made herself miserable. Perhaps an unknown yet ever-lingering hope existed within, spite of despair; perhaps aerial visions would mingle in the darkness, and Emmeline shrunk, unconsciously, from their utter annihilation by the stern prohibition of her parents. Such was the constant tenour of her thoughts; but one moment of excited feeling betrayed that which she had deemed would never pass her lips.

But a very few days had elapsed since Edward's departure from Oakwood when, one afternoon, Mr. Hamilton entered the usual sitting-room of the family, apparently much disturbed. Mrs. Hamilton and Ellen were engaged in work, and Emmeline sat at a small table in the embrasure of one of the deep gothic windows, silently yet busily employed it seemed in drawing. She knew her father had gone that morning to the village, and as usual felt uneasy and feverish, fearing, reasonably or unreasonably, that on his return she would hear something unpleasant concerning Arthur; as she this day marked the countenance of her father, her heart throbbed, and her cheek, which had been flushed by the action of stooping, paled even unto death.

"What mishap has chanced in the village, that you look so grave, my dear love?" demanded his wife, playfully.

"I am perplexed in what matter to act, and grieved, deeply grieved, at the intelligence I have learned; not only that my prejudice is confirmed, but that the knowledge I have acquired concerning that unhappy young man places me in a most awkward situation."

"You are not speaking very intelligibly, my dear husband, and therefore I must guess what you mean; I fear it is young Myrvin of whom you speak," said Mrs. Hamilton, her playfulness gone.

"They surely have not been again bringing him forward to his discredit?" observed Ellen, earnestly. "The poor young man is far away; why will they still endeavour to prejudice you and Mr. Howard against him?"

"I admire your charity, my dear girl, but, I am sorry to say, in this case it is unworthily bestowed. There are facts now come to light which, I fear, unpleasant as will be the task, render it my duty to write to Lord Malvern. Arthur Myrvin is no fit companion for his son."

"His poor, poor father!" murmured Ellen, dropping her work, and looking sorrowfully, yet inquiringly, in her uncle's face.

"But are they facts, Arthur---are they proved? for that there is unjust prejudice against him in the village, I am pretty certain."

"They are so far proved, that, by applying them to him, a mystery in the village is cleared up, and also his violent haste to quit our neighbourhood. You remember Mary Brookes?"

"That poor girl who died, it was said, of such a rapid decline? Perfectly well."

"It was not a decline, my dear Emmeline; would that it had been. She was beautiful, innocent, in conversation and manner far above her station. There are many to say she loved, and believed, in the fond trust of devotion, all that the tempter said. She was worthy to be his wife, and she became his victim. His visits to her old grandmother's cottage I myself know were frequent. He deserted her, and that wild agony broke the strings of life which remorse had already loosened; ten days after Myrvin quitted the village she died, giving birth to an unhappy child of sin and sorrow. Her grandmother, ever dull in observation and sense, has been silent, apparently stupefied by the sudden death of her Mary, and cherishes the poor helpless infant left her by her darling. Suddenly she has appeared awakened to indignation, and a desire of vengeance on the destroyer of her child, which I could wish less violent. She implored me, with almost frantic wildness, to obtain justice from the cruel villain---accusing him by name, and bringing forward so many proofs, which the lethargy of grief had before concealed, that I cannot doubt for one moment who is the father of that poor babe---the cruel, the heartless destroyer of innocence and life."

"But is there no evidence but hers? I wish there were, for Dame Williams is so weak and dull, she may easily be imposed upon," observed Mrs. Hamilton, thoughtfully. "It is indeed a tale of sorrow; one that I could wish, if it indeed be true, might not be published, for did it reach his father's ears"---

"It will break his heart, I know it will," interrupted Ellen, with an uncontrolled burst of feeling. "Oh, do not condemn him without further proofs," she added, appealingly.

"Every inquiry I have made confirms the old dame's story," replied Mr. Hamilton, sadly. "We know Myrvin's life in college, before his change of rank, was one of reckless gaiety. All say he was more often at Dame Williams's cottage than at any other. Had he been more attentive to his duties, we might have believed he sought to soothe by religion poor Mary's sufferings, but we know such was not his wont. Jefferies corroborates the old dame's tale, bringing forward circumstances he had witnessed, too forcibly to doubt. And does not his hasty resignation of a comfortable home, a promising living, evince his guilt more strongly than every other proof? Why did he refuse to defend his conduct? Was it not likely such a crime as this upon his conscience would occasion that restlessness we all perceived, that extreme haste to depart? he would not stay to see his victim die, or be charged with a child of sin. There was a mystery in his sudden departure, but there is none now; it is all too clear."

"*It is false!*" burst with startling almost overwhelming power from the lips of Emmeline, as she sprung with the strength of agony from her seat, and stood with the suddenness of a vision, before her parents, a bright hectic spot burning on either cheek, rendering her usually mild eyes painfully brilliant. She had sat as if spell-bound, drinking in every word. She *knew* the tale was false, but yet each word had fallen like brands of heated iron on her already scorching brain; that

they should dare to breathe such a tale against him, whose fair fame she knew was unstained, link his pure name with infamy; and her father, too, believed it. She did not scream, though there was that within which longed for such relief. She did not faint, though every limb had lost its power. A moment's strength and energy alike returned, and she bounded forward. "It is false!" she again exclaimed, and her parents started in alarm at her agonized tone; "false as the false villain that dared stain the fair fame of another with his own base crime. Arthur Myrvin is not the father of that child; Arthur Myrvin was not the destroyer of Mary Brookes. Go and ask Nurse Langford: she who hung over poor Mary's dying bed; who received from her own cold lips the name of the father of her child; she who was alone near her when she died. Ask her, and she will tell you the wretch, who has prejudiced all minds against the good, the pure, the noble; the villain, the cruel despicable villain, who rested not till his base arts had ruined the---the---virtuous; that Jefferies, the canting hypocrite, the wretched miscreant, who has won all hearts because he speaks so fair, he, he alone is guilty. Put the question to him; let Nurse Langford ask him if the dying spoke falsely when she named him, and his guilt will be written on his brow. Arthur Myrvin did visit that cottage; Mary had confessed a crime, she said not what, and implored his prayers; he soothed her bodily and mental sufferings, he robbed death of its terrors, and his only grief at leaving the village was, that she would miss his aid, for that crime could not be confessed to another; and they dare to accuse him of sin, he who is as good, as pure, as---" For one second she paused, choked by inward agony, but ere either her father or mother could address her, she continued, in an even wilder tone,---"Why did Arthur Myrvin leave this neighbourhood? why did he go hence so suddenly---so painfully? because, because he loved me---because he knew that I returned his love, and he saw the utter hopelessness that surrounded us, and he went forth to do his duty; he left me to forget him, to obtain peace in forgetfulness of one I may never see again---forgetfulness! oh, not till my brain ceases to throb will that be mine. He thought to leave me with his love unspoken, but the words came, and that very hour we parted. He loved me, he knew I could not be his, and it was for this his living was resigned, for this he departed; and had he cause to blush for this? pure, honourable, as was his love, too noble, too unselfish to urge aught that could bid Emmeline forget her duty to her parents for love of him; bearing every calumny, even the prejudice, the harshness of my father, rather than confess he loved me. He is innocent of every charge that is brought against him---all, all, save the purest, the most honourable love for me; and, oh, is that indeed, indeed a crime?"

She had struggled to the very last to speak calmly, but now sobs, the more convulsive because the more suppressed, rose choking in her throat, and rendered the last words almost inaudible. She pressed both hands against her heart and then her temples, as if to still their painful throbbings, and speak yet more, but the effort was fruitless, and she darted wildly, and fled as an arrow from the room.

Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton looked on each other in painful and alarmed astonishment, and Ellen, deeply affected, rose hastily, as if with the intention of following her agitated cousin, but her aunt and uncle entreated her not, alleging Emmeline would sooner recover alone, asking her at the same time if she had known anything relative to the confession they had just heard. She answered truly in the negative. Emmeline had scarcely ever spoken of young Myrvin in her hearing; but as the truth was now discovered, many little instances rose to the recollection of both parents to confirm the avowal of their child, and increase their now painfully awakened solicitude. Her agitation the night of Edward's return, when Lord St. Eval laughingly threatened her with marriage, rose to the recollection of both parents; her extreme excitement and subsequent depression; her visibly failing health since Arthur's departure, all, all, too sadly confirmed her words, and bitterly Mrs. Hamilton reproached herself for never having suspected the truth before, for permitting the young man to be thus intimate at her house, heedless of what might ensue, forgetful that Emmeline was indeed no longer a child, that her temperament was one peculiarly liable to be thus strongly excited.

For a few minutes Mr. Hamilton felt pride and anger struggling fiercely in his bosom against Arthur, for having dared to love one so far above him as his child, but very quickly his natural kindness and charity resumed their sway. Could he wonder at that, love for one so fond, so gentle, so clinging, as his Emmeline? Would he not have deemed Arthur cold and strange, had her charms indeed passed him unnoticed and unfelt; he remembered the forbearance, the extreme temper the unhappy young man had ever displayed towards him, and suddenly and unconsciously he felt he must have done him

wrong; he had been prejudiced, misguided. If Nurse Langford's tale was right, and Jefferies had dared to accuse another of the crime he had himself committed, might he not in the like manner have prejudiced the whole neighbourhood against Arthur by false reports? But while from the words of his child every kindly feeling rose up in the young man's favour, Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton did not feel the less painfully that Emmeline had indeed spoken rightly: hopelessness was her lot. It seemed to both impossible that they could ever consent to behold her the wife of Myrvin, even if his character were cleared of the stigmas which had been cast upon it. Could they consent to expose their fragile child, nursed as she had been in the lap of luxury and comfort, to all the evils and annoyances of poverty? They had naturally accustomed themselves to anticipate Emmeline's marrying happily in their own sphere, and they could not thus suddenly consent to the annihilation of hopes, which had been fondly cherished in the mind of each.

Some little time they remained in conversation, and then Mrs. Hamilton rose to seek the chamber of her suffering child, taking with her indeed but little comfort, save her husband's earnest assurance that he would leave no means untried to discover Jefferies' true character, and if indeed Arthur had been accused unjustly.

It was with a trembling hand Mrs. Hamilton softly opened Emmeline's door, and with a heart bleeding at the anguish she beheld, and which she felt too truly she could not mitigate, she entered, and stood for several minutes by her side unnoticed and unseen.

There are some dispositions in which it is acutely painful to witness sorrow. Those whom we have ever seen radiant in health, in liveliness, in joy---so full of buoyancy and hope, they seem as if formed for sunshine alone, as if they could not live in the darkening clouds of woe or care; whose pleasures have been pure and innocent as their own bright beauty; who are as yet unknown to the whispering of inwardly working sin; full of love and gentleness, and sympathy, ever ready to weep for others, though for themselves tears are unknown; creatures, whose warm enthusiastic feelings bind them to every heart capable of generous emotions; those in whom we see life most beautified, most glad. Oh, it is so sad to see them weep; to feel that even on them sorrow hath cast its blight, and paled the cheek, and dimmed the laughing eye, the speaking smile, and the first grief in such as these is agony indeed: it is the breaking asunder of every former joy. They shrink from retrospection, for they cannot bear to feel they are not now as then, and the future shares to them the blackened shadows of the hopeless present. As susceptible as they are to pleasure so are they to pain; and raised far above others in the enjoyment of the one, so is their grief doubled in comparison with those of more happy, because more even temperaments. So it was with Emmeline; and her mother felt all this as she stood beside her, watching with tearful sympathy the first real grief of her darling child. Emmeline had cast herself on her knees beside her couch; she had buried her face in her hands, while the sobs that burst incessantly from her swelling bosom shook her frail figure convulsively; the blue veins in her throat had swelled as if in suffocation, and her fair hair, loosened from its confinement by her agitation, hung wildly around her.

"Emmeline," Mrs. Hamilton said, gently and falteringly, but her child heard her not, and she twined her arm around her, and tried to draw her towards her.

"My own darling Emmeline, speak to me; I cannot bear to see you thus. Look up, love; for my sake calm this excited feeling."

"May I not even weep? Would you deny me that poor comfort?" burst almost passionately from the lips of Emmeline, for every faculty was bewildered in that suddenly-excited woe. She looked up; her eyes were bloodshot and haggard, her cheek flushed, and the veins drawn like cords across her brow.

"Weep: would your mother forbid you that blessed comfort and relief, my Emmeline? Could you indeed accuse me of such cruelty?" replied Mrs. Hamilton, bending over her as she spoke, and removing from those flushed temples the hair which hung heavy with moisture upon them, and as she did so Emmeline felt the tears of her mother fall thick and fast on

her own scorching brow. She started from her knees, gazed wildly and doubtingly upon her, and tottering from exhaustion, would have fallen, had not Mrs. Hamilton, with a sudden movement, received her in her arms. For a moment Emmeline struggled as if to break from her embrace, but then, with a sudden transition of feeling, clasped her arms convulsively about her mother's neck, and burst into a long and violent but relieving flood of tears.

"I meant never, never to have revealed my secret," she exclaimed, in a voice almost inaudible, as her mother, seating her on a couch near them, pressed her to her heart, and permitted some minutes to pass away in that silence of sympathy which to the afflicted is so dear. "And now that it has been wrung from me, I know not what I do or say. Oh, if I have spoken aught disrespectfully to you or papa just now, I meant it not, indeed I did not; but they dared to speak false tales, and I could not sit calmly to hear them," she added, shuddering.

"There was nothing in your words, my own love, to give us pain with regard to ourselves," said Mrs. Hamilton, in her most soothing tone, as again and again she pressed her quivering lips to that flushed cheek, and tried to kiss away the now streaming tears. "Do not let that thought add to your uneasiness, my own darling."

"And can you forgive me, mother?" and Emmeline buried her face yet more closely in her mother's bosom.

"Forgive you, Emmeline! is there indeed aught in your acquaintance with Arthur Myrvin which demands my forgiveness?" replied her mother, in a tone of anxiety and almost alarm.

"Oh, no, no! but you may believe I have encouraged these weak emotions; that I have wilfully thought on them till I have made myself thus miserable; that I have called for his love---given him encouragement: indeed, indeed I have not. I have struggled hard to obtain forgetfulness---to think of him no more, to regain happiness, but it would not come. I feel---I know I can never, never be again the joyous light-hearted girl that I was once; all feels so changed."

"Do not say so, my own love; this is but the language of despondency, now too naturally your own; but permit it not to gain too much ascendancy, dearest. Where is my Emmeline's firm, devoted faith in that merciful Father, who for so many years has gilded her lot with such unchecked happiness. Darker clouds are now indeed for a time around you, but His blessing will remove them, love; trust still in Him."

Emmeline's convulsive sobs were somewhat checked; the fond and gentle tones of sympathy had their effect on one to whom affection never pleaded in vain.

"And why have you so carefully concealed the cause of the sufferings that were so clearly visible, my Emmeline?" continued her mother, tenderly. "Could that fear which you once avowed in a letter to Mary, have mingled in your affection for me? Could fear, indeed, have kept you silent? Can your too vivid fancy have bid you imagine I should reproach you, or refuse my sympathy in this sad trial? Your perseverance in active employments, your strivings for cheerfulness, all must, indeed, confirm your assertion, that you have not encouraged weakening emotions. I believe you, my own, and I believe, too, my Emmeline did not give young Myrvin encouragement. Look up, love, and tell me that you do not fear your mother---that you do not deem her harsh."

"Harsh? oh, no, no!" murmured the poor girl, still clinging to her neck, as if she feared something would part them. "It is I who am capricious, fanciful, miserable: oh, do not heed my incoherent words. Mother, dearest mother, oh, let me but feel that you still love me, and I will teach my heart to be satisfied with that."

"But if indeed I am not harsh, tell me all, my Emmeline---tell me when you were first aware you loved Arthur Myrvin; all that has passed between you. I promise you I will not add to your suffering on his account by reproaches. Confide in the affection of your mother, and this trial will not be so hard to bear."

Struggling to obtain composure and voice, Emmeline obeyed, and faithfully repeated every circumstance connected with her and Arthur, with which our readers are well acquainted; touching lightly, indeed, on their parting interview, which Mrs. Hamilton easily perceived could not be recalled even now, though some months had passed, without a renewal of the distress it had caused. Her recital almost unconsciously exalted the character of Arthur in the mind of Mrs. Hamilton, which was too generous and kind to remain untouched by conduct so honourable, forbearing, and praiseworthy.

"Do not weep any more for the cruel charges against him, my love," she said, with soothing tenderness, as Emmeline's half-checked tears burst forth again as she spoke of the agony she in secret endured, when in her presence his character was traduced. "Your father will now leave no means untried to discover whether indeed they are true or false. Insinuations and reports have prejudiced his judgment more than is his wont. He has gone now to Widow Langford, to hear her tale against Jefferies, and if this last base charge he has brought against Arthur be indeed proved against himself, it will be easy to convict him of other calumnies; for the truth of this once made evident, it is clear that his base machinations have been the secret engines of the prejudice against Myrvin, for which no clear foundation has ever yet been discovered. You will not doubt your father's earnestness in this proceeding, my Emmeline, and you know him too well to believe he would for one moment refrain from acknowledging to Mr. Myrvin the injustice he has done him, if indeed it prove unfounded."

"And if his character be cleared from all stain---if not a whisper taint his name, and his true excellence be known to all---oh, may we not hope? mother, mother, you will not be inexorable; you will not, oh, you will not condemn your child to misery!" exclaimed Emmeline, in a tone of excitement, strongly contrasting with the hopelessness which had breathed in every word before; and, bursting from her mother's detaining hold, she suddenly knelt before her, and clasped her robe in the wildness of her entreaty. "You will not refuse to make us happy; you will not withhold your consent, on which alone depends the future happiness of your Emmeline. You, who have been so good, so kind, so fond,---oh, you will not sentence me to woe. Mother, oh, speak to me. I care not how many years I wait: say, only say that, if his character be cleared of all they have dared to cast upon it, I shall one day be his. Do not turn from me, mother. Oh, bid me not despond; and yet and yet, because he is poor, oh, would you, can you condemn me to despair?"

"Emmeline, Emmeline, do not wring my heart by these cruel words," replied Mrs. Hamilton, in a tone of such deep distress, that Emmeline's imploring glance sunk before it, and feeling there was indeed no hope, her weakened frame shook with the effort to restrain the bursting tears. "Do not ask me to promise this; do not give me the bitter pain of speaking that which you feel at this moment will only add to your unhappiness. You yourself, by the words you have repeated, behold the utter impossibility of such an union. Why, why then will you impose on me the painful task of repeating it? Could I consent to part with you to one who has not even a settled home to give you, whose labours scarcely earn sufficient to maintain himself? You know not all the evils of such an union, my sweet girl. You are not fitted to cope with poverty or care, to bear with that passionate irritability and restlessness which characterise young Myrvin, even when weightier charges are removed. And could we feel ourselves justified in exposing you to privations and sorrows, which our cooler judgment may perceive, though naturally concealed from the eye of affection? Seldom, very seldom, are those marriages happy in which such an extreme disparity exists, more particularly when, as in this case, the superiority is on the side of the wife. I know this sounds like cold and worldly reasoning, my Emmeline; I know that this warm, fond heart revolts in agony from every word, but do not, do not think me cruel, love, and shrink from my embrace. How can I implore you, for my sake, still to struggle with these sad feelings, to put every effort into force to conquer this unhappy love? and yet my duty bids me do so; for, oh, I cannot part with you for certain poverty and endless care. Speak to me, my own; promise me that you will try and be contented with your father's exertions to clear Arthur's character from all aspersions. You will not ask for more?"

There was a moment's pause. Mrs. Hamilton had betrayed in every word the real distress she suffered in thus speaking, when the gentle pleading of her woman's heart would have bade her soothe by any and every means her afflicted child; Emmeline knew this, and even in that moment she could not bear to feel her mother grieved, and she had been the cause.

Filial devotion, filial duty, for a few minutes struggled painfully with the fervid passion which shook her inmost soul; but they conquered, and when she looked up, her tears were checked, and only the deadly paleness of the cheek, the quivering of the lip and eye, betrayed the deep emotion that still prevailed within.

"Be not thus distressed for me, my dear, my too indulgent mother," replied Emmeline, in a voice that struggled to be composed and firm, though bodily weakness defied her efforts. "I meant not to have grieved you, and yet I have done so. Oh, let not my foolish words give you pain, you whose love would, I know, seek to spare me every suffering. My brain feels confused and burning now, and I know not what I say; but it will pass away soon, and then I will try to be all you can wish. You will not, I know you will not be so cruel as to bid me wed another, and that knowledge is enough. Let but his character be cleared, and I promise you I will use every effort to be content. I knew that it was hopeless. Why, oh, why did I bid your lips confirm it!" and again were those aching eyes and brow concealed on Mrs. Hamilton's shoulder, while the despairing calmness of her voice sounded even more acutely painful to her mother than the extreme suffering it had expressed before.

"May God in His mercy bless you for this, my darling girl!" escaped almost involuntarily from Mrs. Hamilton's lips, as the sweet disposition of her child appeared to shine forth brighter than ever in this complete surrender of her dearest hopes to the will of her parents. "And oh, that He may soothe and comfort you will mingle in your mother's prayers. Tell me but one thing more, my own. Have you never heard from this young man since you parted?"

"He wrote to me, imploring me to use my influence with St. Eval, to aid his obtaining the situation of tutor to Lord Louis," answered Emmeline. "He did not allude to what had passed between us; his letter merely contained this entreaty, as if he would thus prove to me that his intention to quit England, and seek for calmness in the steady performance of active duties, was not mere profession."

"Then your representations were the origin of Eugene's interest in Arthur?" said Mrs. Hamilton, inquiringly.

Emmeline answered in the affirmative.

"And did you answer his letter?"

"No, mamma; it was enough for me and for him, too, his wishes were granted. I would not indulge my secret wish to do so. Neither you nor papa, nor indeed any of my family, knew what had passed between us. Determined as I was to struggle for the conquest of myself, I did not imagine in keeping that secret I was acting undutifully; but had I written to him, or cherished, as my weak fondness bade me do, his---his---why should I hide it---his precious letter, my conscience would have added its pangs to the sufferings already mine. While that was free and light, I could still meet your look and smile, and return your kiss, however I might feel my heart was breaking; but if I had so deceived you, so disregarded my duty, as to enter into a correspondence with him, unknown to you, oh, the comfort of your love would have flown from me for ever."

"And had my Emmeline indeed sufficient resolution to destroy that letter?" demanded Mrs. Hamilton, surprise mingling with the admiration and esteem which, though felt by a mother for a child, might well be pardoned.

"It was my duty, mother, and I did it," replied Emmeline, with a simplicity that filled the eyes of her mother with tears. "Could I indeed forget those principles of integrity which, from my earliest infancy, you have so carefully instilled?"

Mrs. Hamilton clasped her to her bosom, and imprinted kisses of the fondest affection on her colourless and burning forehead.

"Well, indeed, are my cares repaid," she exclaimed. "Oh, that my affection could soothe your sorrows as sweetly as your gentle yet unwavering adherence to filial love and duty have comforted me. Will you, for my sake, my own love, continue these painful yet virtuous efforts at self-conquest, which you commenced merely from a sense of duty? Will you not glad your mother's heart and let me have the comfort of beholding you once more my own cheerful, happy Emmeline?"

"I will try," murmured Emmeline, struggling to smile; but oh, it was so unlike herself, so lustreless and faint, that Mrs. Hamilton hastily turned away to hide emotion. The dressing-bell at that instant sounded, and Emmeline looked an entreaty to which her lips appeared unwilling to give words. Her mother understood it.

"I will not ask you to join us at dinner, love. Do not look so beseechingly, you will recover this agitation sooner and better alone; and so much confidence have you compelled me to feel in you," she added, trying to smile and speak playfully, "that I will not ask you to make an exertion to which you do not feel equal, even if you wish to be alone the whole evening. I know my Emmeline's solitary moments will not be spent in vain repinings."

"You taught me whom to seek for comfort and relief in my childish sorrows, and I will not, I do not forget that lesson now, mother," answered Emmeline, faintly yet expressively. "Let me be alone, indeed, a few hours, and if I can but conquer this feeling of exhaustion, I will join you at tea."

Mrs. Hamilton silently embraced and left her, with a heart swelling with fond emotion, as she thought on the gentle yet decided character of her child, who from her infancy had scarcely ever caused her pain, still less anxiety. Now indeed solicitude was hers, for it was evident, alas! too evident, that Emmeline's affections were unalterably engaged; that this was not the mere fervour of the moment, a passion that would pass away with the object, but one that Mrs. Hamilton felt forebodingly would still continue to exist. Emmeline's was not a disposition to throw off feelings such as these lightly and easily. Often had her mother inwardly trembled when she thought of such a sentiment influencing her Emmeline, and now the dreaded moment had come. How was she to act? She could not consent to an union such as this would be. Few mothers possessed less ambition than Mrs. Hamilton, few were so indulgent, so devoted to her children, but to comply with the poor girl's feverish wishes would be indeed but folly. Arthur had engaged himself to remain with Lord Louis Lyle during the period of his residence in Germany, which was at that time arranged to be three years. The future to young Myrvin must, she knew, be a blank; years would in all probability elapse ere he could obtain an advantageous living and means adequate to support a wife and family; and would it not be greater cruelty to bid Emmeline live on in lingering and sickening hope, than at once to appeal to her reason, and entreat her, by the affection she bore her parents, to achieve this painful conquest of herself, as their consent could not be given. They felt sad, indeed, thus to add to the suffering of their afflicted child, yet it was the better way, for had they promised to consent that when he could support her she should be his own, it might indeed bring relief for the moment, but it would be but the commencement of a life of misery; her youth would fade away in that sickening anguish of hope deferred, more bitter because more lingering than the absolute infliction of brief though certain suffering. The hearts of both parents grieved as they thought on all she had endured, and for a brief period must still endure, but their path of duty once made clear, they swerved not from it, however it might pain themselves.

Mrs. Hamilton was right. Emmeline's solitary moments were not spent in vain repinings; she struggled to compose her thoughts, to cast the burden of her sorrows upon Him, who in love and mercy had ordained them; and she did so with that pure, that simple, beautiful faith so peculiarly her own, and a calm at length stole over her wearied spirit and exhausted frame, soothing her, even to sleep, with the words of prayer yet lingering on her lips. She awoke, after above an hour's slumber, composed in mind, but still feverish in body. Prayer had brought its blessed influence, but that calm was more the quiescence proceeding from over-excitement than natural feeling; she felt it so, and dreaded the return of mental agony, as bodily sufferers await the periodical paroxysms of pain. She resolved not to give way to the exhaustion she still felt. She rejoined the family at tea, pale indeed, but perfectly composed, and even faintly smiling on her father, who,

hastily rising as she languidly and unexpectedly entered the room, carried her tenderly in his arms to a couch, compelled her to lie down, and bending over her with that soothing fondness which she so much loved, retained his seat by her side all the evening, though participating and frequently inducing her to join in the conversation on various topics, which Mrs. Hamilton and Ellen seemed determined to maintain. Once during that evening Emmeline had looked up beseechingly in her father's face, and that touching, silent eloquence told all she would have said, far more expressively than words.

"Justice shall be done, my Emmeline," he replied, gently drawing her to him, and speaking in a tone that was heard by her alone. "I have been harsh, prejudiced, as cruelly unjust as blindly imposed on by a comparative stranger; but I promise you, all shall be impartially considered. I have done this unfortunate young man much wrong, for I should have recollected his father has many enemies, and this may be one of them, seeking from revenge to injure him. I am grateful to Arthur Myrvin for his forbearance towards myself, for his truly noble conduct towards you---right principles alone could have dictated both. Mrs. Langford has confirmed all you said, and informed me of many little circumstances which if, on a strict examination, I find are founded on truth, Jefferies' character and base designs will not be difficult to fathom. Myrvin's character shall be cleared from suspicion, if it be in my power, my dear girl; rest as confident on my promise to that effect, as I do on yours, that, this accomplished, *you will ask no more.*"

Emmeline's head rested on his shoulder; he had marked the relief, the gratitude her sweet face expressed during his first words, but as he ceased, her eyes were hid upon his bosom, and he could read no more. It was well for the steadiness of his determination that it was so, for the wretchedness imprinted on every feature, every line of her countenance, at his concluding sentence, would have wrung his soul.

Though persuaded by her parents to retire early, Emmeline did not do so till the usual hour of separation after prayers. To Ellen's silently-observing eye she appeared to shrink from being alone, and this thought haunted her so incessantly, that, instead of composing herself to rest, she softly traversed the short distance which separated their apartments, and entered her cousin's room.

Emmeline was alone, undressed, a large wrapping robe flung carelessly over her night attire, but instead of reading, which at that hour, and in that guise, she generally did, that the word of God might be the last book on which she looked ere she sought her rest, she was leaning abstractedly over the fire, seated on a low stool, her hands pressed on her temples, while the flickering flame cast a red and unnatural glare on those pale cheeks. Ellen advanced, but her cousin moved not at her entrance, nor even when she knelt by her side, and twined her arms around her.

"Will you not go to bed, dearest Emmeline? it is so late, and you have been so fearfully agitated to-day. Look up and speak to me, my own dear cousin, or I shall fancy you are hurt with me for permitting so many hours to pass without coming near you, when I knew you were in suffering. Oh, you know not how I longed to come, but my aunt said you had entreated to be left alone. I stood for some minutes by your door, but all was so still, I thought I should disturb you did I enter. You do not accuse me of unkindness, Emmeline?"

Housed by her cousin's affectionate words and imploring voice, Emmeline resisted not her embrace, but clung to her in silence.

"You are ill, you are very ill, dearest, dearest Emmeline; do not sit up thus; for my sake, for your mother's sake, try if sleep will not ease this aching head," exclaimed Ellen, much alarmed at the burning heat and quick throbbing of Emmeline's forehead, as it rested on her shoulder.

"I cannot sleep, Ellen, it is useless to attempt it; I feel as if my eyes would never close again; as if years had passed over my head since last night. I thought I could not be more miserable than I was when---when we parted, and as I have been since; but that was nothing---nothing to this. I thought I had not indulged in hope, for I knew that it was vain, but now,

now I feel I must have done so, and it is its utter, utter annihilation that bows me to the earth. Oh, why am I so changed, I who was once so glad, so free, so full of hope and happiness, looking forward to days as bright as those that fled; and now what am I, and what is life? a thing from which all happiness has flown, but clothed in darker shadows, from its contrast with the past."

"Oh, do not say so, dearest," replied Ellen, affected almost to tears by the despairing tone in which these words were said. "The blessing, the comfort of your parents, your brothers, of all who know you as you are, do not say your life will be without joy; its most cherished flower, its most precious gem may have passed away, but others will spring up in time, to fill that yearning void. You, whose presence ever brings with it such enjoyment to others, oh, you too will be blessed. You cannot long continue miserable, when you feel the power you have of making so many of your fellow-creatures happy. You are ill, exhausted now, and therefore all around you looks so full of gloom and pain, yet when this shall have passed, you will not reject the comfort that remains. Have you not an approving conscience to support you, the consciousness that you have proved your love and gratitude to the parents you so fondly love? and think you He, who looks with an eye of favour on the faintest effort of His creatures, made for His sake, and in His spirit, will permit this strength to pass unaided? No, dearest, He will assist and strengthen you; He can take even from this bitter trial its sting."

"I know it, I feel it," murmured Emmeline, still clinging to her cousin, as if she found comfort in her presence and her words. "I know well that this trial in itself is as nothing compared with those endured at this very hour by thousands of my fellow-creatures, and knowing this makes me the more wretched, for if I am thus repining and miserable, how dare I hope my prayers will be heard?"

"Yet doubt it not, my own Emmeline; our Father in heaven judgeth not as man judgeth. Man might condemn this appearance of weakness in you now, but God will not, for he knows the individual strength of His creatures, and in love and mercy chasteneth accordingly. He knoweth this is a severe trial for one, young and gentle as you are; and with your heart lifted up to Him, as I know it is, doubt not that your prayers will be heard and this pang softened in His own time. I fear my words sound cold; but oh, would that I could comfort you, dearest," and tears stood trembling in Ellen's eyes.

"And you do comfort me, Ellen; oh, I do not feel so very wretched with you near me as I do alone, though even you cannot guess this extent of suffering; you know not what it is to love, and yet to feel there is no hope; no--none," she repeated, in a low murmuring tone, as if to convince herself that there was indeed none, as she had said; and it was not strange that thus engrossed, she marked not that a slight shudder passed through her cousin's frame at her last words; that Ellen's cheek suddenly vied in its deadly paleness with her own; that the tears dried up, as if frozen in those large, dark eyes, which were fixed upon her with an expression she would, had she seen it, have found difficult to understand; that the pale lip quivered for a few minutes, so as entirely to prevent her speaking as she had intended.

"Go to bed, dearest Emmeline, indeed you must not sit up longer," Ellen said at length, as she folded her arms fondly round her and kissed her cheek. "When I was ill, you ever wished to dictate to me," she continued, playfully, "and I was always good and obedient; will you not act up to your own principle and obey me now? think of your mother, dearest, how anxious she will be if you are ill. I will not leave you till you are asleep."

"No, no, dear Ellen, I will not so abuse your kindness; I will go to bed. I have been wrong to sit up thus, when I promised mamma to do all I could to--but, indeed, you must not stay with me, Ellen. I feel so exhausted, I may perhaps sleep sooner than I expect; but even if I do not, you must not sit up."

"Never mind, my love, let me see you obedient, and I will perhaps learn the same lesson," replied Ellen, playfully, though her cheek retained its suddenly-acquired paleness. Emmeline no longer resisted, and Ellen quickly had the relief of seeing her in bed, and her eyes closed, as if in the hope of obtaining sleep; but after a few minutes they again opened, and seeing Ellen watching her, she said--

"You had better leave me, Ellen, I shall not be able to sleep if I think you are watching me, and losing your own night's rest. I am not ill, my dear cousin, I am only miserable, and that will pass away perhaps for a short time again, as it did this afternoon."

Ellen again kissed her and closed the curtains, obeying her so far as to retire to her room, but not to bed; she was much too uneasy to do so. Emmeline had been in very delicate health for some months, and it appeared to her observant eyes and mind, that now the cause for her exertion was removed, by the discovery of her long-treasured secret, that health had really given way, and she was actually ill in body as well as mind. The burning heat of her forehead and hand, the quick pulsation of her temples, had alarmed her as predicting fever; and Ellen, with that quiet resolution and prompt decision, which now appeared to form such prominent traits in her character, determined on returning to her cousin's room as soon as she thought she had fallen asleep, and remain there during the night; that if she were restless, uneasy, or wakeful, she might, by her presence, be some comfort, and if these feverish symptoms continued, be in readiness to send for Mr. Maitland at the first dawn of morning, without alarming her aunt.

"You are not formed for sorrow, my poor Emmeline," she said internally, as she prepared herself for her night's visit by assuming warmer clothing. "Oh, that your grief may speedily pass away; I cannot bear to see one so formed for joy as you are grieved. My own sorrows I can bear without shrinking, without disclosing by one sign what I am internally suffering. I have been nerved from my earliest years to trial, and it would be strange indeed did I not seem as you believe me. *I know not what it is to love. I know not the pang of that utter hopelessness which bows my poor cousin to the earth. Ah, Emmeline, you know not such hopelessness as mine, gloomy as are your prospects; you can claim the sympathy, the affection, the consolation, of all those who are dear to you; there is no need to hide your love, ill-fated as it is, for it is returned---you are beloved; and I, my heart must bleed in secret, for no such mitigation attends its loss of peace. I dare not seek for sympathy, or say I love; but why---why am I encouraging these thoughts?*" and she started as if some one could have heard her scarcely-audible soliloquy. "It is woman's lot to suffer---man's is to *act*, woman's to *bear*; and such must be mine, and in silence, for even the sympathy of my dearest relative I dare not ask. Oh, wherefore do I feel it shame to love one so good, so superior, so holy? because, because he does not love me, save with a brother's love; and I know he loves another."

The slight frame of the orphan shook beneath that inward struggle; there were times, in her hours of solitude, when such thoughts would come, spite of every effort to expel them, and there was only one way to obtain that self-control she so much needed, so continually exercised, till it became a second nature. She became aware her feelings had obtained undue ascendancy, and, sinking on her knees, remained absorbed in prayer, fervent and heartfelt, truly the outpourings of a contrite and trusting spirit, confident in the power and mercy to which she appealed. That anguish passed ere she arose, and every sign of agitation had left her countenance and voice as she put her resolution into action, and returned to her cousin.

Emmeline had awoke from her brief and troubled slumbers, more restless and feverish than when she had first sought her couch; and, suffering as she was from that nervous and anxious state peculiar to approaching fever, the poor girl no longer resisted Ellen's evident determination, and clasping her hand between her own, now burning with fever, continually thanked her, in broken and feeble accents, for remaining with her, assuring her she did not feel so ill or as unhappy as she should have done had she been alone. Anxious as she was, Ellen would not arouse her aunt, but at the first break of day she softly entered the housekeeper's room, and succeeded in arousing without alarming her, informed her of Emmeline's restless state, and implored her to send at once for Mr. Maitland. Hastily rising, Ellis accompanied Ellen to her cousin's room, and instantly decided on complying with her request. The household were already on the alert, and a servant was speedily despatched; but, relieved as she was on this point, Ellen would not comply with the good housekeeper's request to repose herself for a few hours; she had resolved not to relinquish her post by the bedside of the young sufferer to any save her aunt herself. Ellis desisted, for a word from her favourite, almost her darling, as Ellen from many circumstances had become, was to her always sufficient.

Mrs. Hamilton and Mr. Maitland met at Emmeline's door, to the astonishment and at first alarm of the former---an alarm which subsided into comparative relief, as she listened to Ellen's hurried tale, although anxiety to a very high degree remained, and with some reason, for Ellen's fears were not unfounded. Emmeline's fever rapidly and painfully increased, and for a week her parents hung over her couch almost despairing of her recovery; their fond hearts almost breaking, as they heard her sweet voice, in the wild accent of delirious intervals, calling aloud on Arthur, and beseeching their consent and blessing to restore her to health; and scarcely less painful was it in her lucid hours to see her clasp her mother's hands repeatedly, and murmur, in a voice almost inarticulate from weakness---

"Do not be anxious or grieved for me, my own dear mamma, I shall soon get well, and be your happy Emmeline again. I cannot be miserable, when I have you and papa and Ellen to love me so tenderly," and then, she would cling to her mother's neck, and kiss her till she would sink to sleep upon her bosom, as in infancy and childhood she had so often done; and dearer than ever did that gentle girl become, in these hours of suffering, to all who had loved her so fondly before; they had deemed it almost impossible that affection could in any way be increased, and yet it was so. Strange must be that heart which can behold a being such as Emmeline cling to it, as if its protection and its love were now all that bound her to earth, and still remain unmoved and cold. Affection is ever strengthened by dependence---dependence at least like this; and there was something peculiarly touching in Emmeline's present state of mental weakness. Her parents felt, as they gazed on her, that they had occasioned the anguish which had prostrated her on a bed of sickness; and yet their child clung to them as if, in the intensity of her affection for them, and theirs for her, she would strive to forget her unhappy love, and be once more happy.

Time rolled heavily by, and some few weeks passed, ere Emmeline was sufficiently convalescent to leave her room, and then her pallid features and attenuated form were such constant and evident proofs of that mental as well as bodily fever, that Mrs. Hamilton could not look on her without pain. She was still inwardly restless and uneasy, though evidently struggling for cheerfulness, and Mr. Maitland, to whom some necessary particulars of her tale had been told, gave as his opinion, that some secret anxiety still rested on her mind, which would be much better removed; the real cause of that solicitude her parents very easily penetrated. Mr. Hamilton, fearing the effects of excitement in her still very delicate state, had refrained from telling her all he had accomplished in young Myrvin's favour during her sickness, but on hearing Mr. Maitland's report, her parents both felt assured it was for that information she pined, and therefore determined on instantly giving her relief.

It was with the utmost tenderness and caution Mr. Hamilton alluded to the subject, and seating himself by her couch, playfully asked her if she would promise him to get well the sooner, if he gratified her by the pleasing intelligence that Arthur Myrvin's character was cleared, that his enemy had been discovered, his designs exposed, and himself obliged to leave the village, and the whole population were now as violently prejudiced in Arthur's favour, as they had formerly been against him; provoked also with themselves for their blind folly in receiving and encouraging the idle reports propagated against him, not one of which they now perceived were sufficiently well founded to stand before an impartial statement and accurate examination.

Had her parents doubted what had weighed on Emmeline's mind, the sudden light beaming in those saddened eyes, the flush kindling on those pale cheeks, the rapid movement with which she caught her father's hand, and looked in his face, as if fearful he would deceive her, all these minute but striking circumstances must have betrayed the truth. In a voice almost inarticulate from powerful emotion, she implored him to tell her every particular, and tenderly he complied.

He had followed, he said, her advice, and confronted Nurse Langford with the unprincipled man who had dared accuse a fellow-creature of a crime in reality committed by himself, and reckless as he was, he had shrunk in guilt and shame before her accusation, which was indeed the accusation of the dying, and avowing himself the real perpetrator of the sin, offered her a large bribe for secrecy, which, as might be expected, the widow indignantly refused. It was easy to perceive, his arts had worked on the old woman, Mary's grandmother, to believe him her friend and Arthur her foe; the

poor old creature's failing intellect assisted his plans, while the reports he had insidiously circulated against the unfortunate young man also confirmed his tale. Little aware that the Widow Langford had been almost a mother to the poor girl his villainy had ruined, and that she was likely to have heard the truth, being quite unconscious she had attended her dying moments, he published this falsehood, without any feeling of remorse or shame, hoping by so doing, effectually to serve his employers, effect the disgrace of Myrvin, and completely screen himself. Mrs. Langford now found it was time indeed for her to come forward and perform her promise to Emmeline by proving young Myrvin's innocence, but hesitated how to commence. She was therefore both relieved and pleased at the entrance and inquiries of Mr. Hamilton, and promised to obey his directions faithfully, only imploring him to clear Mr. Myrvin's character, and expel Farmer Jefferies from the village, which, from the time of his settling there, she said, had been one scene of anarchy and confusion; frankly avowing, in answer to a question of Mr. Hamilton, that it was for Miss Emmeline's sake she was so anxious; she was sure she was interested in Mr. Myrvin's fate, and therefore she had mentioned the unhappy fate of poor Mary Brookes, to prove to her the young man had attended to his duty. Many other startling proofs of Jefferies' evil conduct had the good widow, by silent but watchful attention, been enabled to discover, as also convincing evidence that the young curate had not been so neglectful or faulty as he had been reported. All her valuable information she now imparted to her master, to be used by him in any way his discretion might point out, promising to be ever ready at the slightest notice to prove all she had alleged. Mr. Hamilton carefully examined every circumstance, reflected for a brief period on his mode of action, and finally, assembling all the principal inhabitants around him, in the public school-room of the village, laid before them all the important facts he had collected, and besought their impartial judgment. He owned, he said, that he too had been prejudiced against Mr. Myrvin, whose life, while among them, many circumstances had combined to render unhappy, but that now, he heartily repented his injustice, for he felt convinced the greater part of what had been alleged against him was false. Those evil reports he proved had all originated from the machinations of Jefferies, and he implored them to consider whether they could still regard the words of one, against whom so much evil had now been proved, as they had formerly done, or could they really prove that their young curate had in truth been guilty of the misdemeanours with which he had been charged.

Mr. Howard, who was present, seconded his words, acknowledging that he too had been prejudiced, and adding, that he could not feel satisfied till he had avowed this truth, and asked his young friend's pardon for the injury he had done him.

Nothing is more sudden and complete than changes in popular feeling. The shameful act of Jefferies, in casting on the innocent the stigma of shame and crime which was his own, was quite enough for the honest and simple villagers. At once they condemned themselves (which perhaps they might not have been quite so ready to do, had not Mr. Hamilton and their rector shown them the example), and not only defended and completely exculpated Myrvin, but in an incredibly short space of time, so many anecdotes of the young man's performance of his duty were collected, that had not Mr. Hamilton been aware of the violent nature of popular feeling, those defects which still remained, though excused by the recollection of the mental tortures Myrvin had been enduring, would undoubtedly have departed, as entirely as every darker shade on his character had done.

Convinced that Arthur's attention to parochial affairs, as well as his conduct in other matters, had been very opposite to that which had been reported, neither Mr. Howard nor Mr. Hamilton could feel satisfied till they had written to him, frankly avowing their injustice, and asking his pardon and forgetfulness of the past, and assuring him that, if his conduct continued equally worthy of approbation as it was at the present time, he should ever find in them sincere and active friends.

Mr. Hamilton felt he had much, very much to say to the young man; but in what manner to word it he was somewhat perplexed. He could not speak of his daughter, and yet Myrvin's conduct towards her had created a feeling of gratitude and admiration which he could not suppress. Many fathers would have felt indignation only at the young man's presumption, but Mr. Hamilton was neither so unreasonable nor so completely devoid of sympathy. It was he himself, he thought, who had acted imprudently in allowing him to associate so intimately with his daughters, not the fault of the

sufferer. Myrvin had done but his duty indeed, but Mr. Hamilton knew well there were very few young men who would have acted as he had done, when conscious that his affection was returned with all the enthusiasm and devotedness of a disposition such as Emmeline's. How few but would have played with those feelings, tortured her by persuasions to forget duty for the sake of love; but Arthur had not done this, and the father's heart swelled towards him in gratitude and esteem; even while he knew the hopelessness of his love, he felt for the anguish which his sympathy told him Arthur must endure. After more deliberation and thought than he could have believed necessary for such a simple thing as to write a letter, Mr. Hamilton did achieve his object, retaining a copy of his epistle, to prove to his child he had been earnest in his assurances that Arthur's character should be cleared. Painfully agitated by the tale she had heard, and this unexpected confidence of her father, Emmeline glanced her eye over the paper, and read as follows:---

"To the Rev. Arthur Myrvin, Hanover.

"MY DEAR MYRVIN.---You will be no doubt astonished at receiving this letter, brief as I intend it to be, from one with whom you parted in no very friendly terms, and who has, I grieve to own, given you but little reason to believe me your friend. When a man has been unjust and prejudiced, it becomes his peremptory duty, however pride may rebel, to do all in his power to atone for it by an honourable reparation, both in word and deed, towards him he may have injured. Such, my young friend, is at present our relative position, and I am at a loss to know how best to express my sense of your honourable conduct and my own injustice, which occasioned a degree of harshness in my manner towards you when we separated, which, believe me, I now recall both with regret and pain. Circumstances have transpired in the parish once under your care, which have convinced not only me, but all those still more violently prejudiced against you, that your fair fame was tarnished by the secret machinations and insidious representations of an enemy, and not by the faulty nature of your conduct; and knowing this, we most earnestly appeal to the nobleness of your nature for forgetfulness of the past, and beg you will endeavour henceforward to regard those as your sincere friends whom you have unhappily had too much reason to believe otherwise.

"For myself, my dear Myrvin, I do not doubt that you will do this, for candidly I own, that only now I have learned the true nature of your character. When I first knew you, I was interested in your welfare, as the chosen friend of my son, and also for your father's sake, now it is for your own. The different positions we occupy in life, the wide distance which circumstances place between us, will, I feel sure, prevent all misconception on your part as to my meaning, and prevent your drawing from my friendly words conclusions opposite to what I intend, therefore I do not hesitate to avow that I not only esteem, but from my heart I thank you, Myrvin, for your indulgence of those honourable feelings, that perfect integrity which bade you resign your curacy and depart from Oakwood. I did you wrong, great wrong; words can but faintly compensate injury, though words have been the weapon by which that injury has been inflicted, yet I feel confident you will not retain displeasure, natural as it was; you will consent once more to look on and appeal, if you should ever require it, to the father of Herbert as your willing friend. Believe me, that if it be in my power to assist you, you will never appeal in vain. Lord Malvern, I rejoice to find, is your staunch friend, and nothing shall be wanting on my part to render that friendship as permanent as advantageous. Mrs. Hamilton begs me to inform you, that in this communication of my feelings, I have transcribed her own. Injustice indeed she never did you; but admiration, esteem, and gratitude are inmates of her bosom as sincerely as they are of my own. Continue, my young friend, this unwavering regard to the high principles of your nature, this steady adherence to duty, spite of prejudice and wrong, if indeed they should ever again assail you, and the respects of your fellow-creatures will be yours as warmly, as unfeignedly, as is that of

"Your sincere friend,

"ARTHUR HAMILTON."

No word, no sound broke from the parched lips of Emmeline as she ceased to read. She returned the paper to her father in that same silence, and turning from his glance, buried her face in her hands. Mr. Hamilton guessed at once all that was passing in that young and tortured heart; he drew her to him, and whispered fondly---

"Speak to me, my Emmeline. You do not think he can mistake my feelings. He will not doubt all prejudice is removed."

"Oh, no, no," she replied, after a severe struggle for composure; "you have said enough, dear, dear papa. I could not have expected more."

For a moment she clung to his neck, and covered his cheek with kisses, then gently withdrawing herself from his arms, quietly but hastily left the room. For about an hour she might have remained absent, and Mrs. Hamilton would not disturb her; and when she returned there was no trace of agitation, pale she was indeed, and her eye had lost its brightness, but that was too customary now to be deemed the effect of excited emotion, and no further notice was taken, save that perhaps the manner of her parents and Ellen towards her that night was even fonder than usual.

Once again Mr. Hamilton mentioned Arthur Myrvin; to speak of the pleasing and satisfactory letters both he and Mr. Howard had received from him. He addressed himself to Ellen, telling her, Arthur had written in a manner tending to satisfy even her friendly feelings towards him. Emmeline joined not in the conversation. Her father did not offer to show her the letter, and she stilled the yearnings of her young and loving heart. From that hour the name of Arthur Myrvin was never heard in the halls of Oakwood. There was no appearance of effort in the avoidance, but still it was not spoken; not even by Percy and Herbert, nor by Caroline or her husband. Even the letters of Lady Florence and Lady Emily Lyle ceased to make him their principal object. Emmeline knew the volatile nature of the latter, and therefore was not surprised that she had grown tired of the theme; that Lady Florence should so completely cease all mention of the tutor of her favourite brother was rather more strange, but she did so perhaps in her letters to Ellen, and of that Emmeline had not courage to ask. St. Eval would speak of Lord Louis, expressing hopes that he was becoming more steady; but it so chanced that, although at such times Emmeline, spite of herself, ever longed for somewhat more, the magic name that would have bidden every pulse throb never reached her ears, and her excited spirit would sink back in despondency and gloom, increased from the momentary excitement which expectation had vainly called forth.

Astonished indeed had Arthur Myrvin been at the receipt of his letters from Oakwood and the Rectory. Mr. Howard's was productive of gratification alone; that of Mr. Hamilton afforded even greater pleasure, combined with a more than equal measure of pain. He had hoped Emmeline would have answered his letter. She did not, but he knew her influence had been exercised in his favour; and agony as it was, he acknowledged she had acted wisely. There was too much devotedness in Emmeline's character for Myrvin to encourage one lingering doubt that his affections were returned; and as he thought on her steady discharge of filial duty, as he recalled their parting interview, and felt she had not wavered from the path she had pointed out, his own energies, notwithstanding that still lingering, still acute suffering, were roused within him, and he resolved he would obey her. She should see her appeal had not been made in vain; she should never blush for the man she had honoured with her love; he would endeavour to deserve her esteem, though they might never meet again. He felt he had been too much the victim of an ill-fated passion; he had by neglect in trifles encouraged the prejudice against him, lost himself active and willing friends; this should no longer be, and Myrvin devoted himself so perseveringly, so assiduously to his pupil, allowing himself scarcely any time for solitary thought, that not the keenest observer would have suspected there was that upon the young man's heart which was poisoning the buoyancy of youth, robbing life of its joy, and rendering him old before his time.

That Mr. Hamilton, the father of his Emmeline, that his feelings should have thus changed towards him, that he should admire and esteem instead of condemn, was a matter of truly heartfelt pleasure. Hope would have shook aloft her elastic wings, and carried him beyond himself, had not that letter in the same hour dashed to the earth his soaring fancy, and placed the seal upon his doom. He could not be mistaken; Mr. Hamilton knew all that had passed between him and

Emmeline, and while he expressed his gratitude for the integrity and forbearance he (Myrvin) had displayed, he as clearly said their love was hopeless, their union never could take place.

Myrvin had known this before, then why did his heart sink in even deeper, darker despondency as he read? why were his efforts at cheerfulness so painful, so unavailing? He knew not and yet struggled on, but weeks, ay, months rolled by, and yet that pang remained unconquered still.

And did Emmeline become again in looks and glee as we have known her? Was she even to her mother's eye again a child? Strangers, even some of her father's friends, might still have deemed her so; but alas! a mother's love strove vainly thus to be deceived. Health returned, and with it appeared to come her wonted enthusiasm, her animated spirits. Not once did she give way to depression; hers was not that pining submission which is more pain to behold than decided opposition, that resignation which has its foundation in pride, not in humility, as its possessors suppose. Emmeline's submission was none of these. Her duties as daughter and sister and friend, as well as those to the neighbouring poor, were, if possible, more actively and perseveringly performed than they had even been before. Not one of her former favourite employments was thrown aside. The complete unselfishness of her nature was more clearly visible than ever, and was it strange that she became dearer than ever to those with whom she lived? Her parents felt she was twining herself more and more around their hearts, and beheld, with inexpressible anguish, that though her young mind was so strong, her fragile frame was too weak to support the constant struggle. She never complained; there was no outward failing of health, but there was a nameless something hovering round her, which even her doting parents could not define, but which they felt too forcibly to shake off; and notwithstanding every effort to expel the idea, that nameless something brought with it alarm---alarm defined indeed too clearly; but of which even to each other they could not speak.

Time passed, and Herbert Hamilton, as the period of his ordination was rapidly approaching, lost many of those painfully foreboding feelings which for the last three years had so constantly and painfully assailed him. He felt stronger in health than he had ever remembered to have done, and the spirit of cheerfulness, and hope, and joy breathing in the letters of his Mary affected him with the same unalloyed feelings of anticipated happiness; sensations of holiness, of chastened thanksgiving pervaded his every thought, the inward struggle appeared passed. There was a calm upon his young spirit, so soothing and so blessed, that the future rose before him unsullied by a cloud; anticipation was so bright, it seemed a foretaste of that glorious heaven, the goal to which he and his Mary looked---the home they sought together.

Percy had also obtained honourable distinction at Oxford; his active spirit would not have permitted him to remain quiet in college so long, had he not determined to see his brother ordained ere he commenced the grand tour, to which he looked with much zest, as the completion to his education, and render him, if he turned it to advantage, in all respects fitted to serve his country nobly in her senate, the point to which he had looked, from the first hour he was capable of thought, with an ardour which increased as that long-desired time approached.

The disgraceful expulsion of Cecil Grahame from Cambridge opened afresh that wound in his father's heart which Annie had first inflicted, but which the conduct of Lilla had succeeded in soothing sufficiently to bid her hope it would in time be healed. The ill-directed young man had squandered away the whole of his mother's fortune, and behaved in a manner that rendered expulsion inevitable. He chose to join the army, and, with a painfully foreboding heart, his father procured him a commission in a regiment bound for Ireland, hoping he would be exposed to fewer temptations there than did he remain in England.

Lady Helen, as her health continued to decline, felt conscience becoming more and more upbraiding, its voice would not be stilled. She had known her duty as a mother; she had seen it beautifully portrayed before her in Mrs. Hamilton, but she had neglected its performance, and her chastisement she felt had come. Annie's conduct she had borne, she had forgiven her, scarcely appearing conscious of the danger her daughter had escaped; but Cecil was her darling, and his

disgrace came upon her as a thunderbolt, drawing the veil from her eyes, with startling and bewildering light. She had concealed his childish faults, she had petted him in every whim, encouraged him in every folly in his youth; to hide his faults from a severe but not too harsh a judge, she had lowered herself in the eyes of her husband, and achieved no good. Cecil was expelled, disgracefully expelled, and the wretched mother, as she contrasted his college life with that of the young Hamiltons, felt she had been the cause; she had led him on by the flowery paths of indulgence to shame and ruin. He came not near her; he joined his regiment, and left England, without bidding her farewell, and she felt she should never see him more. From that hour she sunk; disease increased, and though she still lingered, and months passed, and there was no change for the worse, yet still both Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton felt that death was written on her brow, that, however he might loiter on his way, his destined victim would never again feel the blessedness of health; and all their efforts were now directed in soothing the affliction of Grahame, and lead him to console by tenderness the remaining period of his unhappy wife's existence. They imparted not to him their fears, but they rested not till their desire was obtained, and Lady Helen could feel she was not only forgiven but still beloved, and would be sincerely mourned, both by her husband and Lilla, in whom she had allowed herself at one time to be so deceived.

Having now brought the affairs of Oakwood, and all intimately connected with it, to a point, from which no subject of interest took place for above a year, at that period we resume our narrative.

CHAPTER V.

It was a fine summer morning. The windows of a pretty little sitting-room were thrown wide open, and the light breeze, loaded with the perfume of a thousand flowers, played refreshingly on the pale cheek of our young friend Emmeline, who, reclining on a sofa, looked forth on beautiful nature with mingled sadness and delight. More than a year had elapsed since we last beheld her, and she was changed, painfully changed. She still retained her childish expression of countenance, which ever made her appear younger than in reality she was, but its ever-varying light, its beautiful glow were gone; yet she complained not. The smile ever rested on her lips in the presence of her parents; her voice was ever joyous, and no sigh, no repining word, betrayed the breaking heart within. She recognised with a full and grateful heart the blessings still surrounding her, and struggled long and painfully to be content; but that fond yearning would not be stilled, that deep love no effort could dispel. Still there were times when those who had never known her in former years would have pronounced her well, quite well in health; and Emmeline would smile when such remarks reached her, and wonder if her parents were so deceived. Sometimes she thought they were, for the name of Arthur Myrvin was no longer suppressed before her. She heard of him, of his devotion to his pupil, of the undeviating integrity and steadiness which characterised him, and promised fair to lead Lord Louis in the same bright paths; she had heard of Arthur's devoted care of his pupil during a long and dangerous illness, that he, under Divine goodness, had been the instrument of saving the youth's life, and restoring him to health; and if she permitted no sign to betray the deep, absorbing interest she felt, if her parents imagined he was forgotten, they knew not the throbbings of her heart.

She was conversing this morning with Mrs. Cameron, who had learned to love Emmeline dearly; from being very often at Oakwood, she and her daughters were looked on by all Mr. Hamilton's children as part of the family.

"Is not Flora delighted at the idea of again seeing her brother?" Emmeline asked, in answer to Mrs. Cameron's information that Walter was returning with his regiment to England, and in a very few weeks would be once more an inmate of her home. She answered cheerfully in the affirmative, and Emmeline again inquired---"Was Captain Cameron at all acquainted with Cecil Grahame? Did he know the cause of his having been so disgracefully cashiered?"

"Their regiments were quartered in such different parts of Ireland," replied Mrs. Cameron, "that I believe they only met on one occasion, and then Walter was glad to withdraw from the society of the dissolute young men by whom Lieutenant Grahame was always surrounded. The cause of his disgrace appears enveloped in mystery. Walter certainly alluded to it, but so vaguely, that I did not like to ask further particulars. I dreaded the effect it would have on Mr. Grahame, but

little imagined poor Lady Helen would have sunk beneath it."

"I believe few know how she doted on that boy. It was misguided, but still it was love that caused her to ruin him as she did in his childhood. From the hour he was expelled from Cambridge, she never held up her head; it was so cruelly ungrateful of him to set off for Ireland without once seeking her; and this last stroke was too much for her to bear. She still hoped, despite her better judgment, that he would in the end distinguish himself, and she could not meet the disappointment."

"Did she long survive the intelligence?"

"Scarcely four-and-twenty hours. Mr. Grahame, feeling unable to command himself, requested mamma and Lilla to impart to her the distressing information, which they did most tenderly; but their caution was entirely fruitless. Her constant inquiry was relative to his present situation, and when she heard that he had not been seen since he was cashiered, she sunk into a state of insensibility from which she never recovered."

"And Mr. Grahame?"

"The shock rendered him almost distracted, for it was so sudden. Lady Helen had become so altered lately, that she was devotedly loved both by her husband and child; she had been so long ailing, that both Lilla and her father fondly hoped and believed she would be spared to them still some years longer, though she might never entirely recover her health. Mr. Grahame's feelings are stronger than most people imagine, but his misfortunes have bowed him down even more than I could have believed possible."

"They appeared so united and happy, that I do not wonder at it," observed Mrs. Cameron. "I have seldom seen such devotedness as Lady Helen received from both her husband and child; she always welcomed their affectionate attentions as if she felt herself undeserving of them. I was interested in her, she bore her sufferings so meekly."

"And poor Lilla, how is she?"

"She suffers much, but behaves admirably. Ellen says her self-control is extraordinary, when we remember she was one of those beings who could never conceal a single feeling. Her poor father seems to look to her now as his sole blessing and support; she soothes his sorrow so quietly, so tenderly, and ever tries to prevent his thoughts dwelling on the stigma which Cecil's disgraceful conduct has cast upon his name. I trust time will restore that calm tranquillity which he has enjoyed the last year, but I must own I fear it. If this moody irritability continue, Lilla will have much to bear, but she will do her duty, and that will bring its own reward."

A faint and scarcely audible sigh escaped from Emmeline as she spoke. Mrs. Cameron, without noticing, asked when she expected her brothers to return home from London.

"Herbert takes orders next week, and they return together very soon afterwards. He is, as you will believe, delighted at the near approach of an event which has been his guiding star since his boyhood. I never saw him looking so well or so happy, and Percy shares his joy, and we shall have him near us, I am happy to say, for he will be the minister of our own dear parish, which, by Mr. Howard's promotion, will be vacant about the time he will require it. Mr. Howard says he thinks he should have turned rebel, and refused the presentation of a valuable living, with the title of archdeacon attached to his name, if any one but Herbert were to succeed him here; but as he leaves his flock under his care, he will not refuse the blessings offered him. He does not go very far from us, if he had I should have been so very sorry, that even my brother's succeeding him would not have satisfied me."

There was a short pause, which was broken by Emmeline saying---

"Speaking about Mr. Howard and Herbert has made me forget Percy, dear fellow. You know how he has raved about the grand tour he is going to make, all the curiosities he is to see and bring home for me, even to the dome of St. Peter's or the crater of Vesuvius, if I wish to see them. He has taken my provoking remarks in good part, and sets off with Caroline and her husband in July. My sister's health has been so delicate the last three months, that she is advised to go to Geneva. Her little boy grows such a darling, I shall miss him almost as much as his mother."

"Do you stay with them at Castle Terryn before they go?"

"I do not think I shall, for at present I seem to dislike the idea of leaving home. They come to us, I believe, a few weeks hence, in order that we may be all together, which we could not very well be at St. Eval's."

"Has Lord St. Eval quite lost all anxiety on his brother's account? The physicians said they could never have brought him through it, had it not been for Mr. Myrvin's prudent and unceasing care."

"Yes; every letter from Castle Malvern confirms the report, all anxiety has been over some weeks now; indeed, before the Marquis reached Hanover, where he received from his son's own lips an affecting and animated account of his own imprudence, and Mr. Myrvin's heroic as well as prudent conduct."

"Was there an accident, then? I thought it was from the fever then raging in the town."

"Lord Louis had determined, against his tutor's consent, to join a party of very gay young men, who wished to leave Hanover for a time and make an excursion to the sea-shore. Mr. Myrvin, who did not quite approve of some of the young gentlemen who were to join the party, remonstrated, but in vain. Lord Louis was obstinate, and Mr. Myrvin, finding all his efforts fruitless, accompanied his pupil, very much to the annoyance of the whole party, who determined to render his sojourn with them so distasteful, that he would quickly withdraw himself. Lord Louis, led on by evil companions, turned against his tutor, who, however, adhered to his duty unshrinkingly. A sailing match was resolved on, and, notwithstanding the predictions of Mr. Myrvin, that a violent storm was coming on and likely to burst over them before half their day's sport was completed, they set off, taunting him with being afraid of the water. They declared there was no room for him in their boats, and pushed off without him. He followed them closely, and fortunate was it that he did so. The storm burst with fury; the little vessels were most of them shattered to pieces, and many of the misguided and unfortunate young men fell victims to their wilful folly. Some, who were good swimmers, escaped, but Lord Louis had struck his head against a projecting rock, and, stunned and senseless, must have sunk, had not Mr. Myrvin been mercifully permitted to bear him to the shore in safety. He was extremely ill, but in a few weeks recovered sufficiently to return to Hanover, unconscious, as was Mr. Myrvin, of the virulent fever then raging there. Already in delicate health, he was almost instantly attacked by the disease, in its most alarming and contagious form; the servants fled in terror from the house, only one, his own valet, an Englishman, remained near him. But Mr. Myrvin never left him; day and night he attended, soothed, and relieved him. His efforts were, happily, rewarded: Lord Louis lived and his preceptor escaped all infection. The Marquis and his son have both written of Mr. Myrvin in the most gratifying terms; and the Marchioness told mamma she could never in any way repay the debt of gratitude she owed him."

Mrs. Cameron was much interested in Emmeline's narrative, and asked if they were not soon to return to England.

"They may have already arrived," replied Emmeline. "Florence wrote me a fortnight ago she was counting the days till their return. I sent a letter, apparently from her, this morning to Moorlands for Ellen, as I am not quite sure whether she will return home this evening or not, and perhaps that contains the intelligence. His mother and sisters will be overjoyed to have him once more with them, after the dangers he has passed."

"Has Mr. Myrvin any family?"

"Only his father, a truly good, kind, old man, the rector of Llangwillan."

"And are you not desirous to see this admirable young man, this devoted preceptor, my dear Emmeline?" said Mrs. Cameron, smiling. "Will he not be an excellent hero of romance?"

Emmeline answered, that as she already knew him, she could not throw around him the halo of imagination; she was content to admire his character as it was, without decking him in other charms. Their further conversation turned upon other and indifferent subjects till Mrs. Cameron departed.

The death of Lady Helen and the misconduct of her son had cast such deep gloom over Moorlands, that not only Emmeline, but both Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton feared Grahame would never arouse himself from the moody apathy into which he had fallen. He felt disgrace had fallen on his name, a stain never to be erased; that all men would shun the father of one so publicly dishonoured. The extent of Cecil's conduct was scarcely known even to his father; but that he had used dishonest measures at the gambling table to discharge enormous debts; that he had behaved insolently to his superior officers; that it required great interest to prevent a much harsher sentence than had been his punishment---these facts were known all over England. The previously unsullied name of Grahame was now synonymous with infamy; and it was even supposed Cecil would never show his face in England again. Mr. Grahame shrunk in misery from encountering the glance even of his friends; he felt as if he too shared the disgrace of his son, he and his young, his beautiful Lilla; she whom he had anticipated, with so much pleasure, introducing among his friends, she was doomed to share with him the solitude, which he declared was the only fit abode of ignominy; and even to her his manner was wayward and uncertain---at times almost painfully fond, at others equally stern and harsh. Lilla's character was changed; she struggled to bear with him, unrepiningly, dutifully, conscious that the eye of her God was upon her, however her father might appear insensible to her affection.

Even the society of Mr. Howard and Mr. Hamilton was irksome; their efforts to rouse and cheer him were unavailing, and they could only hope time would achieve that for which friendship was inadequate.

Herbert's engagement with Mary Greville still remained untold, but he looked forward to discovering his long-treasured secret, when he beheld himself indeed an ordained minister of God; Percy perhaps was in his confidence, but neither his sisters nor Ellen. Mary's letters were full of comfort to him; such pure and beautiful affection breathed in every line, that even the sadness which the few last unconsciously betrayed did not alarm him. He accounted for it by her reluctance to quit her beautiful retreat in the Swiss mountains for the confusion and heat of Paris, where she now resided. A few months previously they had been visited in their retreat by her father; scarcely more surprised were they at his appearance than at his manner, which was kinder and more indulgent than Mary had ever remembered it. For a short time Mrs. Greville indulged hopes, that their long separation had effected a change in her husband, and that they should at length be happy together.

He did not know much about Alfred, he said, except that he was well, and travelling with some friends in different parts of the Continent.

Mrs. Greville tried to be satisfied, and her cheering hopes did not desert her even when her husband expressed a wish that she would reside with him at Paris. The wish rather confirmed them, as it evinced that he was no longer indifferent to her own and his child's society. With joyful alacrity she consented, but in vain endeavoured to banish from Mary's mind the foreboding fears that appeared to have filled it, from the hour it was settled they were to leave Monte Rosa. In vain her mother affectionately represented how much nearer she would be to Herbert; nothing could remove, though she strove to conquer, this seemingly uncalled-for and indefinable despondency.

"I confess my weakness," she wrote to her betrothed, "but I had so often pictured remaining at Monte Rosa till you came for me, as you had promised, so often pictured to myself the delight of showing to you my favourite haunts, ere we left them together for still dearer England, that I cannot bear to find these visions dispelled without pain. I know you will tell me I ought to be thankful for this great and happy change in my father, and bear every privation for the chance of binding him to us for ever. Do not reprove me, dear Herbert, but there is that about my father that bids me tremble still, and whispers the calm is not lasting; in vain I strive against it, but a voice tells me, in thus leaving Monte Rosa, peace lingers in its beautiful shades, and woe's dark shadow stands threatening before me."

Herbert longed to go to her, and thus disperse all these foreboding fears, but that pleasure the near approach of his ordination prevented; but fondly he looked forward with unalloyed hope in a few months to seek his Mary, and at once banish all indefinable sorrow by making her his own. Not a doubt entered his mind of Mr. Greville's consent, when he should in person demand it, and he was eager to do so while this strangely indulgent humour continued.

The first few months of her residence in Paris were fraught with happiness for Mrs. Greville. Her husband's manner did not change. They mingled in society, and the admiration Mary's quiet beauty excited afforded the greatest pleasure to her mother, and even appeared to inspire her father with some pride. To the poor girl herself it was irksome and painful; but she tried to convince herself these feelings were wrong, and checked them even in her letters to Herbert.

Ellen returned from Moorlands, where she had been staying with Lilla, whose affection for her continued unabated; for she found in her society and sympathy much comfort since her mother's death. There was little change visible in Ellen. Her health was established, her pensive beauty unimpaired. Still was she the meek, unassuming, gentle girl she had long been; still to the eye of strangers somewhat cold and indifferent. Her inward self was becoming every year more strengthened; she was resolved to use every effort to *suffer*, without the slightest portion of bitterness impregnating her sentiments towards her fellow-creatures, or the world in general. Her lot she *knew* was to *bear*; her duty she *felt* was to *conceal*.

Ellen, on her return home, gave her cousin the letter which Emmeline had mentioned as having forwarded to her that morning. It was fraught with interest, and the anxious eye of Mrs. Hamilton moved not from her daughter's countenance as she read. Still was it so calm that even she was puzzled; and again the thought, "Is it for him" she is thus drooping, fading like a flower before me? is it, indeed, the struggle between love and duty which has made her thus? crossed her mind, as it had often, very often done before, and brought with it renewed perplexity.

Lady Florence had written in the highest spirits, announcing the return of her father, Lord Louis, and his tutor; that her brother was looking quite well and strong, and was the same dear, merry, mischievous boy as ever; delighted to be in England, abusing all the Germans, and professing and displaying the most extreme fondness for Mr. Myrvin.

"He speaks of Mr. Myrvin in terms that bring tears to my eyes, tears of which, my dear Ellen, I am not at all ashamed. The only drawback to the life of a soldier, which my brother has now positively resolved on, in spite of all our persuasions, exists, he says, in the consequent separation from Mr. Myrvin, and he almost wishes to go to Cambridge, to chain him to his side; but for Mr. Myrvin's sake, I am glad this will not be. He is looking ill, very ill, quite different to the Arthur Myrvin we knew at Oakwood; a change has come over him which I cannot describe, and even to myself can scarcely define. He is much more polished in his manner, but it is tinged with such deep melancholy, or intense thought, I really do not know which it is, that he appears many years older than when he left England. My father has at length prevailed on him to resign all idea of again seeking the arduous charge of tutor, but, with that honest pride which I so much admire and esteem, he has refused all papa's offers of advancement, only consenting to accept the living on Eugene's estate, when Louis shall require his services no longer. I trust the healthy air of Cornwall and the quiet of his parish will restore him to health, for the care which preserved that of Louis has, I fear, ruined his own. He goes to London to-morrow to see Herbert; the society of your cousins cannot fail to do him good. Louis joins the army in a few

months, and then Mr. Myrvin will take possession of his living; but you will in all probability see them before, as Lord and Lady St. Eval have sent a pressing invitation for them to come down to Castle Terryn, and as soon as Mr. Myrvin returns from London, Louis intends doing so. I want to hear Herbert's opinion of his friend, as my dismal fancies concerning him may, after all, be only a woman's fancy, yet looking ill he decidedly is."

So wrote Lady Florence, and very soon Herbert and Percy's letters home confirmed all she had said. Either the air of Germany had not been congenial, or some other cause had so changed his outward appearance and tinged his manner, that Herbert could not look on him without pain; but the restless irritation, the haughty indifference which had been his before he left Oakwood, no longer existed. There was a quiet dignity about him that prevented all intrusive sympathy, a mild, steady lustre in his dark grey eye, which so clearly said conscience was at peace, that Herbert instinctively felt the bonds of friendship stronger than they had ever been before; he was no longer anxious, for he felt assured the errors of Arthur's former life were conquered, and he wrote to his father concerning his friend with all his native eloquence.

Emmeline made no observation; her young soul was absorbed in an intense feeling of thanksgiving, that her prayers had been heard. Strength had been granted him, and he had done his duty; he was esteemed, beloved; his character was pure and bright; and if the gulf between them remained impassable, should she murmur, when *all* for which she had prayed had been vouchsafed her? But a sterner call of obedience appeared about to hover over her, from which her young spirit shrunk back appalled.

Herbert's anxious wishes were accomplished; there was no longer any barrier to his earnest prayers to become a servant of his God, and of service to his fellow-creatures. The six years in which he had laboured unceasingly, untiringly, to prepare himself for the life which from his boyhood he had chosen, now appeared but as a passing dream, and as he knelt before the venerable bishop, his feelings became almost overpowering. Tears rose in his eyes, and he drooped his head upon his hands to conceal them. He felt this was no common life on which he entered, no mere profession, in which he would be at liberty to think and act as he pleased. Herbert felt that he had vowed himself to do the work of God; that in it was comprised the good of his fellow-creatures. The stern conquest of his own rebellious will; that his *actions*, not his language only, should uphold the glory of his Maker.

The return of Percy and Herbert brought pleasure to Oakwood, and a week or two afterwards Lord and Lady St. Eval, with their little boy, arrived, imparting additional happiness. Emmeline was surprised at seeing them, for she thought Lord Louis and his preceptor were expected at Castle Terryn. Lord St. Eval often spoke of his brother, and alluded to Myrvin, and even hinted his thanks to Emmeline for her exertions in the latter's favour, when the Marquis was hesitating whether or not to intrust him with the charge of his son; but on such matters he never spoke openly, yet not so guardedly as to betray to Emmeline he was acquainted with her secret.

Mr. Hamilton had many private conversations both with the young Earl and his son Herbert, but what the subject was which so engrossed him only Mrs. Hamilton knew.

The return of Edward, too, from a short cruise gave additional spirit to Oakwood. The young sailor had rapidly run through the grades of lieutenant, and now stood the first on the line; his character both as a sailor and a man was confirmed. He was as deservedly respected by his messmates as beloved by his family, and to Ellen he was indeed dear. The most perfect confidence existed between this affectionate brother and sister, except on one point, and on that even to Edward she could not speak; but he had not one thought, one feeling which he concealed from her, he sought no other friend. Scarcely could Mrs. Cameron and her son Walter recognise in this amiable young man the headstrong, fiery, overbearing lad they had known in India.

The little party at Oakwood had all either walked or ridden out, and Mrs. Hamilton alone remained at home. She stood by the side of Emmeline, who was asleep, peacefully and sweetly; a smile bright and beautiful as of other days, played

round her lips. The mother reflected on the words of Mr. Maitland, who had assured her, the remedy he proposed would be successful. "Make her happy, remove this weighty load which weighs upon her heart, and she will live to be the blessing she has ever been to all who love her."

Tears of mingled feeling rose to the eyes of Mrs. Hamilton as she watched her child. Emmeline's lips moved. "Arthur, dear Arthur," she murmured, a faint flush rising to her cheek, and the smile heightened in its brilliancy; a few minutes, and her eyes unclosed; a shade of disappointment passed over her features, a faint sigh struggled to escape, but it was checked, for she met her mother's fond glance, and smiled.

"Why are you not gone out, dearest mother, this lovely evening? why stay with such a dull companion as I am? Percy and Edward could offer so many more attractions, and I am sure it is not with their good-will you are here."

"Would my Emmeline refuse me the sweet pleasure of watching her, tending her? believe me, dearest, without you at my side, the park and this lovely evening would lose half their attractions."

"Do not say so, my own mother. I am not ill, only lazy, and that you were not wont to encourage; my eyes would close, spite of all my efforts. But why should you have the uninteresting task of watching my slumbers?"

"Because, dearest, I will not abandon my office, till it is claimed as the right of another. It will soon be, my Emmeline; but do not send me from your side, till then."

"The right of another, dearest mother? whose right will it ever be but yours? who can ever be to me the tender nurse that you have been?"

"One who will vow to love, protect, and cherish you; one who loves you, my own Emmeline, and longs to claim you as his own, and restore, by his affection, the health and spirits you have lost; one who has the consent and blessing of your father and myself, and waits but for yours."

Emmeline started from her recumbent posture.

"Oh, send me not from you, mother, my own mother! Do not, oh, do not compel me to marry!" she exclaimed, in a tone of agony. "The affection of a husband restore my health! oh, no, no, it would break my heart at once, and you would send me from you but to die. Mother, oh, let me stay with you. Do not let my father command my obedience; in everything else I will obey but in this." She hid her face in Mrs. Hamilton's bosom, and wept bitterly.

"We will command nothing that can make you miserable, my own," replied her mother, soothingly. "But you will love him, my Emmeline, you will love him as he loves you; his fond affection cannot fail to make you happy. You will learn to know him---to value his noble virtues, his honourable principles. As his wife, new pleasures, new duties will be around you. Health will return, and I shall see my Emmeline once more as she was---my own happy child."

"And has it indeed gone so far that both you and my father have consented, and I must disobey and displease my parents, or be miserable for life?"

"My child," said Mrs. Hamilton, so solemnly, that Emmeline involuntarily checked her tears, "my child, you shall never marry the husband we have chosen for you, unless you can love and be happy with him: sacredly and irrevocably I promise this. You shall not sacrifice yourself for a doubtful duty. If, when you have seen and known him, your wishes still are contrary to ours, we will not demand your obedience. If you still prefer your mother's home, never, never shall you go from me. Be comforted, my Emmeline,---do not weep thus. Will you not trust me? If you cannot love, you

shall not marry."

"But, my father---oh, mamma, will he too promise me this?"

"Yes, love; doubt him not," and a smile so cheering, so happy, was round Mrs. Hamilton's lips as she spoke, that Emmeline unconsciously felt relieved. "We only wish our Emmeline's consent to an introduction to this estimable young man, who has so long and so faithfully loved her, and if still she is inexorable we must submit. Could I send you from me without your free consent? Could I part from you except for happiness?"

Emmeline threw her arms round her mother's neck. In vain she struggled to ask who was the young man of whom her mother spoke. Why should she inquire, when she felt that he never, never could be anything to her? Bitterly, painfully she struggled to dismiss the thought hastily from her mind, and gladly hailed the entrance of the nurse with her little nephew as a relief. Her mother joined her in caressing and playing with him, and ere he was dismissed the scattered parties had returned, and there was no opportunity for farther confidential converse.

It was a happy, merry party at Oakwood, but the presence of Lilla Grahame was wanting to make it complete. Ellen was constantly with her, for she would not permit the lively proceedings of home to interfere with the call of friendship; and in this task of kindness she was constantly joined by Edward, who would frequently leave gayer amusements to offer Lilla his company on her walk, and his intelligent conversation, his many amusing anecdotes, frequently drew a smile from his young listener, and, combined with Ellen's presence and more quiet sympathy, raised her spirits, and encouraged her in her painful task of bearing with, if she could not soothe, her father's still irritable temperament. Moorlands was to be sold; for Mr. Grahame had resolved on burying himself and his child in some retired cottage, where his very existence might be forgotten. In vain Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton combated this resolution, and entreated him at least to settle near them; gloomy, almost morose, he still spoke of Wales as the only place where he was not known, where his name might not be associated with disgrace. Lilla was just of an age to feel the parting with the kind friends of her childhood as a most painful trial, but she determined to reconcile herself to her father's will whatever it might be.

Captain Cameron too was an agreeable addition to the society of Oakwood; high-spirited, and naturally joyous, Percy liked him as a kindred spirit; and reserved, though intelligent, Herbert found many points of his character assimilate with his. Mrs. Cameron's station in life had been somewhat raised since her return to England. Sir Hector Cameron, her husband's elder brother, childless and widowed, found his morose and somewhat miserly disposition softened, and his wish to know his brother's family became too powerful to be resisted. He had seen Walter in Ireland, and admired the young man ere he knew who he was; a farther acquaintance, ere he discovered himself as his uncle, heightened these good impressions, and Walter, to his utter astonishment, found himself suddenly the heir to a rich baronetcy, and his mother and sisters comfortably provided for. He rejoiced at his good fortune, but not at the baronetcy itself; not for the many pleasures which, as Sir Hector's heir, now stood temptingly before him, but because he might now indeed encourage an affection, which he had once believed was as hopeless as it was intense.

There is but one person whom we knew in a former page whose fate we have omitted to mention; it may be well to do so here, ere we proceed regularly with our narrative. The high-minded, unselfish, truth-loving Lady Gertrude Lyle had at length, to the great joy of her parents, consented to reward long years of silent devotion, by bestowing her hand on the Marquis of Alford. They were married, and need we say that they were happy? Lady Gertrude's love to her husband increased with each passing year, and he, as time passed on, missed nothing of that bright example of goodness, of piety, and virtue, which had led him to deserve her love.

"Emmeline, dearest, put on your prettiest dress to-night, and confine those flowing curls with some tasteful wreath," said Mr. Hamilton, playfully addressing his daughter, about a week after the conversation with her mother. The dressing-bell had sounded, and the various inmates of Oakwood were obeying its summons as he spoke, and Caroline laughingly

asked her father how long he had taken such an interest in dress. "Does your ladyship think I never do?" he replied, with mock gravity.

"Do you remember when my dear father's own hand wreathed a sprig of scarlet geranium in my hair, some ten years ago, when I was a vain and wilful girl?" replied the young Countess, without heeding his question, and looking up with fond affection in his face. "Ah, papa, no flower, even when formed of gems, ever gave me so much pleasure as that."

"Not even when placed within these glossy curls by St. Eval's hand? Are you not jealous, Eugene?"

"Not in the least, my dear sir," replied the Earl, laughing. "I have heard of that flower, and the good effects it produced."

"You have heard of it, have you? I should have fancied my Caroline had long ere this forgotten it."

Lady St. Eval smiled reproachfully as she quitted the room, and Mr. Hamilton, turning to Emmeline, took her hand fondly, and said, "Why does my Emmeline look so grave? Does she not approve of her father taking an interest in her dress? But it is not for me I wish you to look pretty to-night, I will confess; for another, Emmeline, one whom I expect you will, for my sake, do all in your power to please, and---and love. Do not start, my child, the task will not be very difficult." He kissed her cheek with a cheerful smile, and left her, motionless and pale, every feature expressive of passive endurance, her hands clasped tightly on her heart. Emmeline sat before her mirror, and permitted Fanny to arrange her beautiful hair as she would; to her it mattered not. The words of her father alone rung in her ears. That night sealed her fate. Fanny spoke, for she was alarmed at her young lady's manner, but Emmeline answered as if she had heard her not, and the business of the toilette passed in silence. Yet so well had it been performed, so fair and lovely did that gentle girl look, as she entered the drawing-room, that every eye was fixed on her in admiration. The graceful folds of an Indian muslin dress enveloped her slight form, and a wreath of lilies of the valley, twined with the smallest pink rose-buds, confined her luxuriant hair; a scarcely perceptible blush was on her cheeks, and her eyes, continually wandering round the room, as if in search for some unseen object, shone with unusual brilliancy. Her father whispered, as he found himself near her---

"I do not expect my friend will arrive till late, my little Emmy, but look as pretty then as you do now, and I shall be satisfied."

She was relieved, but intelligence met her ear, ere dinner was concluded, that rendered it a fearful struggle to retain her composure. Mrs. Cameron's family, Mr. Howard, and one or two others, she knew were coming in the evening, but that Lord St. Eval expected his brother Louis to arrive at Oakwood by eight or nine o'clock that same evening, was indeed information startling in the extreme. Would he not be accompanied by his preceptor? Would she not see him, from whom she had so long been parted? see him, to whom her heart was given, and in his presence be introduced to the husband of her parents' choice?

Mrs. Hamilton watched her with extreme uneasiness, and when dinner was over, whispered, as it seemed, an earnest entreaty in her husband's ear. He shook his head in sportive refusal; she still appeared anxious, but acquiesced. The hours passed on. Emmeline for a few minutes had retired, for the happiness, the gaiety around her, pressed with over-powering heaviness on her heart; she had turned from it almost unconsciously. "Why, oh, why did I not confess to mamma that I could not wed another, because I still loved Arthur? why was I so foolish as to fear to confess the truth, we should not then have met? Why have I been so weak to hide these miserable feelings even from my mother? how can I expect her sympathy, when she knows them not?"

So she thought, but it was now too late. The affectionate caresses, the kind voice of her cousin Ellen roused her; controlling herself, she took Ellen's arm, and together they entered the drawing-room. She saw no strangers, all were

familiar to her eye, and rallying her spirits, she entered into conversation with St. Eval, who hastened up to her as she entered. Ellen joined the dancers.

"I wonder why we all seem so gay and happy to-night," said St. Eval. "Look at Captain Cameron and our pretty demure cousin Ellen, Emmeline; I never saw such devotion in my life. Take my word for it, that will be a match one of these days, and a very pretty one. Cameron is a good fellow, and if ever any one were smitten, he is."

"But Ellen's admiration of his character is rather too open and freely expressed for him to hope his affection, if he do love, is returned. No, Eugene, Captain Cameron may be attracted, I grant you, but I do not fancy he will be Ellen's choice."

"Do you know any whom you think will?"

"What a question," she said, smiling, "to tempt me to betray my cousin's secrets, if she had any, but candidly I must admit that as yet I know none. It is a strange fancy, but I often think Ellen will be an old maid."

"Why, is she so precise, so prim, so opinionated, so crabbed? For shame, Emmeline, even to hint such a thing."

"Nay, St. Eval, the shame is rather yours, for daring to associate such terms with a single woman. To go through life alone, without sympathy, without any call for natural affections, always appears at first sight rather melancholy than otherwise; but why should dislike and prejudice be added to them? I cannot think that a woman's remaining unmarried is any proof of her being unamiable."

"Indeed, I am not so unjust," said the Earl, smiling; "when old maids conduct themselves properly, I esteem them quite as much and more than some married women. But still Ellen shall not be an old maid; she is too pretty and too good, and would bless any man who may be happy enough to gain her affections and esteem. But you, Emmeline, you, surely, will not be an old maid, though you are so warm in their defence."

"My lot is not in my own hands---do not speak of that, Eugene," she said, with a quivering lip; and hastily turning from his gaze, she added, "as you seem to know everybody's concerns in the room, what are Mrs. Cameron and Florence talking so intently about?"

"On the old subject: my madcap brother Louis and his sage tutor. By the bye, Emmy, I have never asked what you think of Myrvin's conduct in this affair; did he not behave admirably?"

"He did but his duty," replied Emmeline, firmly. "He acted but as every man of generous feelings would have done; it was his duty, for he had pledged himself to the care of his pupil, and could he have left him in his sickness? The dictates of common humanity, the social duties of life would have prevented him."

"What a pity Florence does not hear you, such calm reasoning would destroy all the glow of romance which she has thrown around these incidents. But indeed you do not give Myrvin his due, every man does not perform his duty."

"Every man *ought*, and when he does not, he is wrong; as when he does, he is right."

"But this is contrary to your own principle, Emmeline. What has become of the enthusiasm which once bade you condemn all such cold judgments, such scanty praise? Once upon a time, you would have looked on such conduct very differently."

Emmeline turned away, but St. Eval saw her eyes were swimming in tears. He continued, sportively---

"Be assured, I will tell Myrvin as soon as I see him."

"I beg you will not, my lord," Emmeline said, struggling to retain her calmness; but failing, she added, entreatingly, "dearest Eugene, if you have any regard for me, do not repeat my words; let them pass with the subject, it has engrossed us quite enough."

St. Eval shook his head in playful reproof. They sat apart from the dancers, and feeling neither her words nor any subsequent agitation could be remarked, she placed her trembling hand in St. Eval's, and said, almost inarticulately---

"Eugene, tell me, does Arthur--Mr. Myrvin accompany Lord Louis to-night? Do not deceive me."

"He does," he replied instantly, "and what detains them I cannot understand. But fear nothing, dearest Emmeline, I know all; you may trust me, fear nothing. And now your promise--the quadrille is formed, they only wait for us."

"I know all, fear nothing," Emmeline internally repeated, her whole frame trembling with agitation, as kindly and encouragingly St. Eval led her to the place assigned them. She forced herself to think only on the dance, on the amusing anecdotes he was telling her, on the light laugh, the ready jest that were sparkling around her. Her natural grace in dancing forsook her not, nor did she refuse her sister's request, when the quadrille was finished, that she would take out her harp. She seated herself at the instrument and commenced.

Music had not lost its charm, rapt in the exquisite air she was playing, it seemed to soothe her agitated feelings, and bid her forget her usual timidity. All were silent, for the air was so sweet, so plaintive, not a voice could have disturbed it; it changed to a quicker, more animated strain, and at that instant Emmeline beheld Edward and Ellen hastily rise to greet a young man, who noiselessly yet eagerly came forward to meet them: it was Lord Louis. Emmeline started, a strong effort alone enabled her to command herself sufficiently to continue playing, but her fingers now moved mechanically; every pulse throbbed so violently, and to her ear so loudly, that she no longer heard the notes she played. All was a mist before her eyes, and the animated plaudits that greeted her as she ceased, rung in her ears as unmeaning, unintelligible sounds. Lord Louis hastily advanced to lead her from the harp, and to tell her how very glad he was to see her again, though even his usually careless eye lost its mirthful expression, as he marked the alteration in his favourite companion. Emmeline tried to smile and answer him in his own strain, but her smile was sickly and faint, and her voice trembled audibly as she spoke. She looked round, fearing, yet longing to see another, but Lord Louis was alone. His preceptor was not near him, but Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, St. Eval and Herbert had also left the room. Some little time passed in animated conversation, still Myrvin did not appear.

"You are wanted in the library, dearest Emmeline," said the young Countess St. Eval.

"Come with me, Emmeline: foolish girl, 'fear nothing,'" said the Earl, joyously.

"Smile, gentle one," he whispered, as she turned her beseeching glance towards him, "do not greet the husband your parents have selected for you with a countenance such as this; nay, fear nothing," he repeated, as her steps faltered, and every limb trembled at his words. Again he smiled as he had once before during that evening, and for the first time a gleam of sudden light darted across the bewildered mind of the agitated girl, but so dazzling were the rays, so overpowering the brilliancy, from the contrast with the deep gloom which had been there before, that she could not believe it real; she deemed it some wild freak of fancy, that sportive fancy which had so long deserted her. St. Eval hurried on, supporting rather than leading his companion. They reached the library, and Emmeline's agitation increased almost to fainting; she leaned more heavily on St. Eval's arm; though her heart beat almost audibly, and her cheek vied in

its paleness with a marble statue near her, not a word betrayed her emotion. There were many lights within the library, a group was gathered round the centre table, but to Emmeline all was indistinct, not one amongst them could she recognise. Her father hastened towards her, he took her trembling hand in his, and led her gently forward.

"Look up, my beloved," he said, tenderly, "we have sent for you to ratify the consent your mother and I have given, given on condition, that if yours be withheld, ours also is void. But will the long years of silent love and uncomplaining suffering for your sake, plead in vain to one so gentle as yourself? Look up, my Emmeline, and tell me, if the fond affection, the tender cares of him whom we have chosen, will not indeed prove the best restorative we can bestow?"

She did look up, and the quick gushing flow of blood dyed her pallid cheek with crimson, and lit up her soft eyes with their wonted lustre. There was one tall, manly form beside her, gazing on her with such devoted love, that she saw not how pale were those expressive features, what a deep impress of long suffering was on that high and noble brow. She heard naught but that deep rich voice pronounce her name, and call her "his own, own Emmeline," for she had sunk in his extended arms, she had hidden her face upon his shoulder and wept.

"Are we forgiven, Emmeline, dearest?" said Mrs. Hamilton, fondly, after a long pause, which many mingled feelings had occasioned. Her child withdrew for a moment from the arms of her betrothed, and flung herself upon her neck. "Your father bound me by a promise not to reveal his secret, and I kept it well till this evening; for did you not deserve some punishment, my child, for believing even for a single moment your parents would have rewarded your unwavering discharge of a most painful duty, your unhesitating submission to our will, by forcing you to bestow your hand upon another, when your heart was already engaged? No, my own Emmeline, we could not have been so cruel. Take her, my dear Arthur; freely, fearlessly I consign her happiness to your charge, for indeed you have well deserved her."

We need not lift the veil from the brief interview which the consideration of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton afforded to the lovers, it is enough that they were happy, happy in the consciousness not of present joy alone, but of duty unshrinkingly performed, of pain endured with unrepining fortitude; unalloyed in its purity indeed was their happiness, for it was the recompense of virtue.

When the tidings of what had passed were made known, there were few who did not feel as if some individual joy had been imparted. The universal sympathy occasioned by the happiness of a being so generally beloved as Emmeline shed new animation over the little party. And Ellen, the gentle affectionate Ellen, did not she rejoice? She did, unfeignedly, sincerely, but there was a pang of bitterness mingled with it which she vainly struggled to subdue.

"Can you consent to live in the humble vicarage of my estate, Emmeline?" whispered the young Earl in her ear, as she relinquished the arm of Arthur, whom Edward, Percy, and Ellen were eagerly surrounding. "You have often admired it. Will it serve you for a home, think you? if not, name what alterations you will like, and they shall be done, even as if Aladdin's wonderful genii had performed it."

"Dearest Eugene," said Emmeline, "I feel it is to you, to your generous pleadings in Arthur's favour, I greatly owe this happiness. Will you not let me thank you for that, instead of asking more?"

"No, little fairy, I will do no such thing, for I only spoke the truth, and that, Emmeline, 'was but my *duty*,' and demands no thanks or praise whatever; and as I have selected my friend Myrvin to supply the place of my late vicar, who was promoted last week to a better living, to see everything prepared for his comfort, and that of his wife, is also mine."

"Nay, spare me, dear St. Eval; I will plead guilty of not giving Arthur his due, if you will promise me not always to torment me with duty. I was unjust and unkind."

"No, dearest Emmy, you were neither unjust nor unkind; you only said one thing and meant another, and as *I* know *why* you did so, I forgive you."

Mrs. Cameron's family and the other guests having departed, and only Mr. Hamilton's own circle lingering in the drawing-room, some surprise was occasioned to all except Mrs. Hamilton and Percy, by Mr. Hamilton suddenly laying his hand gently on Herbert's shoulder, and saying earnestly, though somewhat playfully---

"One surprise and one cause for congratulation we might, I think, deem sufficient for *one* evening, but I intend being the happy messenger of another event, which may chance to be even more surprising, and certainly not less joyful. I beg you will all offer Mrs. Hamilton and myself your warmest congratulations, for the same day that gives us a new son will, I trust, bestow on us an other daughter. This quiet young man intends taking unto himself a wife; and as it may be some little time ere we can bring her home from France, the best thing we can do is to anticipate two marriages in one day."

"Herbert, my true English bred and English feeling cousin, marry a French woman, by my good sword, you shall not," said Edward, laughing, when the universal surprise and joy which this information had excited had somewhat subsided. The eager question who was Herbert's choice, was asked by Caroline and Emmeline together.

"Fear nothing, Master Lieutenant," St. Eval said, ere Herbert could reply; "my wits, though a landsman, are not quite so blunt as yours, and I guess better than you do. Is it possible no one here can tell? has my demure brother Herbert's secret never been suspected? Caroline, what has become of your penetration; and Emmeline, your romance? Ellen, cannot you guess?"

"Yes," she replied, instantly, though as she spoke a sudden crimson rose to her cheek, which, though unnoticed, had been, while Mr. Hamilton spoke, pale as death.

"May you, may you be happy, dearest Herbert," she added, calmly, as she extended her hand to him; "few are so fitted to make you so, few can so truly sympathise in your feelings as Mary Greville."

"You are right, you are right, Ellen," said Lady Emily Lyle, as Herbert warmly pressed his cousin's hand, and thanked her in that low thrilling voice so peculiarly his own; and then, with a countenance radiant with animated joy, turned towards the little group, and thanking them for the joy with which his Mary's name was universally greeted, turned to Edward and asked, with a smile, if Mary were not sufficiently English to content him.

"Quite, quite; I would even go over to France for the sake of bringing her to England in my gallant Gem," replied the young sailor. "She is the best wife you could have chosen, Herbert, for you were ever alongside, even in your boyish days; and it would have been a sin and shame for you to have married any one else. Percy, why do not you follow such an excellent example?"

"I---because a bachelor's life has not yet lost its charms for me, Edward! I like my own ease, my own pleasure best, and wish to be free a short time longer," replied the young man, stretching himself on a sofa, with a comic air of *nonchalance* and affectation; then starting up, he added, theatrically, "I am going to be a senator, a senator; and how in the world can I think of matrimony but as a state of felicity unsuited to such a hard-working fellow as I am, or rather mean to be."

"I commend you for the correction in your speech, Percy," said his mother, smiling. "*Mean to be* and *am*, are two very different things."

"But in me may chance so to amalgamate as to become the same. Mother, who would believe you could be so severe? But I forgive you; one of these days you will regret your injustice: that smile says I wish I may. Well, we shall see. And

now, lords and ladies, to bed, to bed. I have swallowed such large draughts of surprise to-night, I can bear no more. A kind good night to all. Myrvin," he called out from the hall, "if you are as early to-morrow as you were at Oxford, we will be off to Trevilion and inspect your new vicarage before breakfast, and back by night."

"Not to-morrow, Arthur," entreated Emmeline, in a low voice, as he followed her from the room.

"Not to-morrow, dearest," he replied, tenderly, as he drew her to his bosom, and bade God bless her.

The other members of the family also separated, Ellen one of the last, for Lady Emily at first detained her in some trifling converse, and Mrs. Hamilton was telling her of something she wished her niece to do for her the next morning. Ellen was standing in the shade as her aunt spoke; all had left the room except Edward and themselves, and humming a lively air, the former was departing, when, turning round to wish his sister good night, the light flashed full upon her face, and there was something in its expression, in its almost unearthly paleness, that made him suddenly start and cease his song.

"Merciful heaven! Ellen, what is the matter? You look like a ghost."

"Do not be silly, Edward, there is nothing the matter. I am quite well, only warm," she replied, struggling to smile, but her voice was so choked, her smile so unnatural, that not only her brother but her aunt was alarmed.

"You are deceiving us, my dear girl, you are not well. Are you in pain, dearest?" she said, hastening towards her.

Ellen had borne up well when unnoticed; but the voice of kindness, the fond caress her aunt bestowed completely overpowered her, and, sinking on a chair, she burst into tears.

"It is nothing, indeed it is nothing, my dear aunt," she said, with a strong effort checking the bursting sob. "I have felt the heat very oppressive all the evening, it is only that which makes me so foolish."

"I hope it is only the heat, my Ellen," replied Mrs. Hamilton, fondly, suspicion flashing across her mind, not indeed of the truth, but something near akin to it. For a few minutes Ellen leaned her head silently against her aunt, who continued bending over her, then returning her affectionate kiss, shook hands with her brother, assured him she was quite well, and quietly left the room.

"Now, then, I know indeed my fate," Ellen murmured internally, as her aching head rested on a sleepless pillow, and her clasped hands were pressed against her heart to stop its suffocating throbs. "Why am I thus overwhelmed, as if I had ever hoped, as if this were unexpected? Have I not known it, have I not felt that she would ever be his choice? that I was mad enough to love one, who from his boyhood loved another. Why has it fallen on me as a shock for which I was utterly unprepared? What has become of my many resolutions? Why should the task be more difficult now than it has been? I feel as if life were irksome to me, as if all I loved were turned to that bitterness of spirit against which I have striven, as if I could dash from my poor cousin's lips the cup of unexpected happiness she has only this evening tasted. Oh, merciful Father! forsake me not now, let me not feel thus, only fill my heart with love and charity, take from me this bitterness and envy. It is Thou that dispenseth this bitter cup. Father, I recognise Thy hand, and would indeed resign myself to Thee. Oh, enable me to do so; teach me to love Thee alone, to do Thy work, to subdue myself, and in thankfulness receive the many blessings still around me; let me but see *them* happy. Oh, my Father, let Thy choicest blessings be his lot, and for me" it was a bitter struggle, but ere the night had passed that young spirit had conquered, had uttered fervently, trustingly, heartfully,---"for me, oh, my Father, let Thy will be done." And Ellen joined the breakfast-table the following morning calm and cheerful; there was no trace of internal suffering, no sign to betray even to her aunt all that she endured. She entered cheerfully into all Emmeline's happiness, accompanied her and Arthur, with Lord and Lady St. Eval, to Trevilion, and entered into every suggested plan, as if indeed no other thoughts engrossed

her. Arthur and Emmeline found in her an active and affectionate friend, and the respect and love with which she felt herself regarded seemed to soothe, while it urged her on to increased exertion. Mrs. Hamilton watched her anxiously; she had at first fancied Arthur was the object of her niece's regard, but this idea was not strengthened, and though she felt assured such was not the real cause of Ellen's agitation that eventful evening, she could not, and did not guess the truth.

The revealing a long-treasured secret, the laying bare feelings of the heart, which have so long been concealed, even to our dearest friends, does not always produce happiness; there is a blank within us, a yearning after something we know not what, and the spirit loses for a time its elasticity. It may be that the treasured secret has been so long enshrined in our innermost souls, we have felt it so long as only our own, that when we betray it to others, it is as if we parted from a friend; it is no longer our own, we can no longer hold sweet communion with it, for the voice of the world hath also reached it, and though at first its revealing is joy, it is followed by a sorrow. So Herbert felt, when the excitement of congratulation, of the warm sympathy of his friends had given place to solicitude and thought. Mary had been so long the shrine of his secret, fondest thoughts, he had so long indulged in delicious fancies, known to few others save himself, that now they had been intruded on even by the voice of gratulation, they would no longer throng around. It was strange that on this night, when his choice had been so warmly approved of by all his friends, when words of such heartfelt kindness had been lavished in his ear, that the same dull foreboding of future evil, of suffering, of death, pressed heavily on him, as in earlier years it had been so wont to do. He struggled against it; he would not listen to its voice, but it would have sway. Donned it was not indeed, but from its mystery more saddening. Herbert wrestled with himself in fervent prayer; that night was to him almost as sleepless as it was to his cousin Ellen, but the cause of her weary watching was, alas! too well defined. The bright sun, the joyous voices of his brother and cousin beneath his window, roused Herbert from these thoughts, and ere the day had passed, he had partly recovered the usual tenor of his mind, though its buoyancy was still subdued, and its secret temperament somewhat sad, but to his family he seemed as usual.

CHAPTER VI.

Some weeks passed, and Emmeline's health was rapidly returning; her spirits were more like those of her girlhood, subdued indeed by past suffering, but only so far subdued as to render her, if possible, still dearer to all those who loved her; and she, too, beheld with delight the colour returning to her Arthur's cheek, his step regaining its elasticity; and there was a manly dignity about him now which, when she first loved, she had not seen, but which she felt rendered him still dearer, for she could look up to him for support, she could feel dependence on his stronger and more decisive character.

Each week confirmed Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton in the wisdom of their decision, by revealing more clearly Myrvin's character. He was more devoted to the duties of his clerical profession; pride, haughtiness, that dislike to mingle with his parishioners, had all departed, and as they observed how warmly and delightedly their Emmeline entered into his many plans for doing good, for increasing the happiness of the villagers under his spiritual charge, they felt that her domestic virtues, her gentle disposition, were far more suited to the wife of a clergyman, than to that life of bustling gaiety which might perhaps, under other circumstances, have been her portion.

"Are there not responsibilities attached to a clergyman's wife?" she once asked her mother. "I feel as if so much depended upon *me* to render him respected and beloved, that I sometimes fear I may fail in my duty, and, through ignorance, not intentional, perhaps bring discredit on his name. Dearest mother, how can I prevent this?"

"These fears are natural to one of your character, my Emmeline, but they will quickly pass away. You would be more likely to fail in the duties of fashionable life, than in those which you will soon have to fulfil. Occupation which, had you been more fashionably educated, must have been irksome, will to you remain the pleasures they have ever been, heightened and encouraged by the sympathy of your husband. A wife to be truly happy and virtuous, must entirely forget *self*; a truth which the partner of a country clergyman should ever remember, as his family is larger, more constant in their calls upon her attention and sympathy, and sometimes her exertions are less productive of satisfaction and

pleasure, than those of many other stations in life. Her own demeanour should be alike gentle, unassuming, persuasive, yet dignified, so that her actions may assist and uphold her husband's doctrines more than her language. You have but to follow the principles of Christianity and the dictates of your own heart, my Emmeline, and your duty will be done, almost unconsciously to yourself."

The only drawback to Emmeline's happiness was, that Lord and Lady St. Eval were obliged to leave England ere her marriage could be solemnized, the health of the latter prohibiting further delay. They did not expect to be absent much more than a twelvemonth, and the Earl, laughingly, told Emmeline, if she would defer her wedding till then, he would promise to be present; to that, however, none of the parties concerned seemed inclined to consent, and St. Eval owned he would much rather, on his return, see her comfortably settled at the Vicarage, where preparations were rapidly advancing. Percy, however, promised to defer his intended tour till his favourite sister should be Myrvin's bride, and Edward, on leaving to join his ship, declared, if wind and tide were not very contrary, he, too, would take a run down and dance at her wedding.

A short time after the departure of the Earl and Countess, and Edward, Ellen received from the hand of her cousin Herbert a letter, which for the moment caused her some emotion. She felt his eyes were fixed upon her with a peculiar expression, and shrinking from them, she was hastening to her own room to answer the letter there, when Herbert called after her---

"Do not run away from me, Nelly; whatever be your answer, I am to be the bearer."

Returning instantly, she asked, with cheek suddenly paled and lip compressed, "Are you then aware of the contents of this letter, Herbert; are you in Captain Cameron's confidence?"

"To both demands I am happy enough to answer, yes, Ellen," he replied, smiling archly. "Captain Cameron has made me his father confessor, and in return, I have promised to use all my influence in his favour, to tell you what his letter may perhaps have but incoherently expressed: that he loves you, Ellen, devotedly, faithfully; that he feels life without you, however brilliant in appearance, will be a blank. I promised him I would play the lover well, and indeed, my dear cousin, his affection and esteem for you do not admit a single doubt."

"I am sorry for it," said Ellen, calmly, "very sorry, as it is not in my power to return those feelings, and consequently I am compelled to give him pain. I am grateful, very grateful for the high opinion, the kind feelings, his letter expresses towards me. I shall never cease to respect and value him as a friend, but more I cannot give."

"Nay, Ellen, take time to consider of his offer; do not refuse him at once thus decidedly. You say you respect him. I know you admire his conduct, both as a son and brother, and as a man. What objections are there so great as to call for this decided and instant refusal?"

"Simply because, as a husband, I can never love him."

"Never is a long day, Ellen. You surely have not so much romance in your composition as to refuse a young man possessing every virtue which can make a woman happy, merely because he does not excite any very violent passion? Do you not know there are some dispositions which never love to the full extent of the word, and yet are perhaps happier in the marriage state than those who do? Now you may be one of these, Ellen."

"It may be so," she said, still calmly, though a deep flush stained her cheek. Herbert had spoken playfully, but there was that in his words which, to a heart seared as was hers, was productive of intense suffering.

"It may be so perhaps; I shall never meet one to love, as I believe a husband ought to be loved, yet that would not satisfy my conscience for accepting Walter. I trust I am not romantic, Herbert, but I will say, that the vow to love, honour, and obey, to think only of him, demands something more than the mere cold esteem which some may deem sufficient for happiness. Walter *is* an estimable young man, one who will make any woman happy, and deeply indeed I regret that he has chosen one who can only return his warm devoted affection with the comparatively chilling sentiments of friendship and esteem. I would not do his kind heart so much wrong as to accept him."

"But take time, Ellen, give him some hope. You can urge no objections against him, and his family are dear to you. He has told me that from his childhood he loved you, that your remembrance never left him, and when again he met you, his fanciful visions became a beautiful and palpable reality; give him, at least, some time for hope. It is impossible, with a heart disengaged as yours, to associate intimately with him and not love him."

"A heart disengaged as mine! how know you that, Herbert?" said his cousin, with a smile, which would have deceived the most penetrating eye. "Are you not presuming too far in your inspection of my heart, seeking in rather a roundabout way, to obtain my entire confidence?"

"No, dearest Ellen, I speak and feel in this business but as Edward would, were he in my place; your happiness is as dear to me as it is to him. We have for very many years been to each other as a brother and sister, and, believe me, in urging your acceptance of this good young man, I seek but your welfare alone."

"I believe you, my dear cousin," replied Ellen, frankly holding out her hand, which Herbert warmly pressed. "But indeed, in this instance, you are deceived. An union with Walter Cameron would not form my happiness, worthy as he is,---suitable as the world would deem such a match in all respects; and sorry as I am to inflict pain and disappointment on the companion of my childhood, as also, I fear, on his kind mother, I cannot be his wife."

"And if your affections be already engaged, far be it from me to urge you farther; but"---

"I said not that they were, Herbert," interrupted Ellen, steadily fixing, as she spoke, her large eyes unshrinkingly on her cousin's face. Herbert felt fairly puzzled, he could not read her heart; he would have asked her confidence, he would have promised to do all in his power to forward her happiness, but there was something around her that, while it called forth his almost unconscious respect, entirely checked all farther question. He did not fancy that she loved another, and yet why this determined rejection of a young man whom he knew she esteemed.

"I am only grieving you by continuing the subject," he said; "and therefore grant me your forgiveness, dearest Ellen, and your final answer to Cameron, and it shall be resumed no more."

"I have nothing to forgive, Herbert," replied Ellen, somewhat mournfully.

She sat a few minutes longer, in saddened thought, gazing on the open letter, and then quitted the room and sought her own. She softly closed the door, secured it, and then sinking on a low seat beside her couch, buried her pale face in her hands, and for a few minutes remained overwhelmed by that intensity of secret and tearless suffering. It was called forth afresh by this interview with her cousin: to hear his lips plead thus eloquently the cause of another; to hear him say that perhaps she was one of those who would never love to its full extent. When her young heart felt bursting beneath the load of deep affection pressing there, one sweet alone mingled in that cup of bitterness, Herbert guessed not, suspected not the truth. She had succeeded well in concealing the anguish called forth by unrequited love, and she would struggle on.

"Never, never shall it be known that I have given this rebellious heart to one who seeks it not. No, no, that tale shall live and die with me; no one shall know how low I have fallen. Poor Walter! he will think I cannot feel for his unreturned affection, when I know too well its pang; and why should I not be happy with him, why live on in lingering wretchedness, when, perhaps as a wife, new duties might rouse me from this lethargy? Away from Herbert I might forget---be reconciled; but swear to love Walter when I have no love to give---return his affection by indifference---oh, no, no, I will not be so guilty."

Ellen again hid her eyes in her hands, and thought long and painfully. Pride urged her to accept young Cameron, but every better feeling revolted from it. She started from that posture of despondency, and, with a bursting heart, answered Walter's eloquent appeal. Kindness breathed in every line she wrote---regard for his welfare---esteem for his character; but she calmly yet decidedly rejected his addresses. She was grieved, she said, most deeply grieved that anything in her manner towards him had encouraged his hopes. She had acted but as she felt, looking on the companion of her early childhood, the son of her father's and her own kind friend, as a brother and a friend, in which light she hoped he would ever permit her to regard him. Hope found no resting-place in her letter, but it breathed such true and gentle sympathy and kindness, that Walter could not but feel soothed, even in the midst of disappointment. Ellen paused ere she sealed her letter; she could not bear to act, even in this matter, without confiding in her aunt; that Captain Cameron had proposed and been rejected, she felt assured, report would soon convey to her ears. Why not then seek her herself? The task of writing had calmed her heart. Taking, therefore, Walter's letter and her own, she repaired to her aunt's dressing-room, and fortunately found her alone. Mrs. Hamilton looked earnestly at her as she entered, but she made no observation till, in compliance with Ellen's request, she perused the letters offered to her.

"Have you reflected sufficiently on your decision, my Ellen?" she said, after thanking her for the confidence she reposed in her. "Have you thought well on the estimable character of this young man? Far be it from me to urge or persuade you in such an important matter as marriage, but you have not, I trust, answered this letter on the impulse of the moment?"

"No, aunt, I have not indeed. Herbert has been most earnestly pleading Captain Cameron's cause, and I have thought on all he has said, and the little I can bring forward to combat it, but still I have refused him, because as a husband I can never love him. I honour all his good qualities. I cannot remember one fault or failing in his character, which might render a wife unhappy. I grieve for his disappointment, but I should not think I was doing either him or myself justice, to accept him merely on these considerations. Herbert, I know, considers me romantic, and perhaps unkind towards his friend; but painful as such an idea is, I cannot act otherwise than I have done."

"Do not let that idea, then, continue to give you pain, my dear girl; your manner towards Walter has never expressed more than kindness and friendly regard. If I had seen anything like encouragement to him on your part, do you not think I should have called you to account long ago?" she added, with a smile, as Ellen, much relieved, kissed her in silence. "Our young folks have, I know sometimes in sport, allied your name with his, but I have generally checked them. Walter I certainly did fancy admired you, but I did not imagine the feeling so decided as it has proved. I will not blame your decision, though perhaps it may not be a very wise one. Marriage is too serious a thing to be entered upon lightly, and if you cannot love Walter as a husband, why you are quite right not to accept him. I am not so eager to part with my Ellen as to advise her marrying, whether she likes it or not. I shall soon have only you to cheer my old age, you know. Do not look so pained and sad, love; it is not thus young ladies in general refuse an offer. Go and give your letter to Herbert, tell him it has my unqualified approval, and then return to me. I marked some beautiful passages in one of our favourite authors the other day and you shall read them to me. Now run away, and come back quickly."

Ellen obeyed gladly and gratefully, and was enabled playfully to return the smile with which Herbert received her letter and his mother's message. Mrs. Hamilton felt more and more convinced that her suspicions were correct, and that her niece's affections were unhappily engaged. She thought again and again who could be their object, and still she fancied it was Arthur Myrvin. She scarcely knew why herself, except from Ellen's agitation the night of his arrival at Oakwood,

and engagement with Emmeline. That Herbert was the object was to her so improbable, that the idea never crossed her mind. They had lived so long as brother and sister, they had from their earliest childhood so intimately associated with each other, Ellen and Edward were to her so like her own children, that not once did she imagine Ellen loved her cousin. She watched her closely, and she was more and more convinced that she had something to conceal. She was certain her decided rejection of Walter proceeded from her affections being already engaged, which had also blinded her to his attentions; and she was convinced also that Ellen loved in vain, and therefore, though she longed to console and soothe her, she resolved not to speak to her on the subject, and wring from her a secret which, when once betrayed, though revealed to her alone, might be still more painful to endure. Mrs. Hamilton's manner was so kind, so soothing, so calculated to support and strengthen, that Ellen more than once wondered whether her aunt had indeed discovered her secret; but she could not speak of it. She could not even to the being she loved best on earth, with the exception of one, thus lay bare her aching heart. Often and often she longed to throw herself in the arms of her aunt and weep, but she controlled the impulse, and bore on in silence and outward cheerfulness; strengthened in her efforts by the conviction that Herbert knew not, imagined not the truth.

Young Cameron was grieved and disappointed, for his love for Ellen was indeed sincere, but he could not mistake her letter; he saw there was no hope, her expressions of friendship and kindness were soothing and gratifying, they prevented all bitterness of feeling, and he determined to preserve the friendship and brotherly regard which she so frankly proffered.

Mrs. Cameron was at first somewhat hurt at Ellen's decided rejection of her son, but she could not long retain any emotion of coolness towards her, she could not resist the affectionate manner of Ellen, and all was soon as usual between them. A visit with Percy to Castle Malvern, at Lord Louis's earnest entreaty, to Walter was an agreeable change, though it had at first been a struggle to rouse himself sufficiently. There the character and conversation of Lady Florence Lyle, to his excited fancy, so much resembled Ellen's, that unconsciously he felt soothed and happy. From Castle Malvern, he joined his regiment with Lord Louis, who had received a commission in the same troop, and by the time Captain Cameron returned to Oakwood, he could associate with Ellen as a friend and a brother. Above a year, it is true, elapsed before that time, and in that period events had occurred at Oakwood, as unexpected as they were mournful---but we will not anticipate.

Soon after Lord and Lady St. Eval's departure for Italy, Mr. Grahame, despite the entreaties of his friends, even the silent eloquence of Lilla's appealing eyes, put his resolution into force, and retired to Wales. He had paid to the last farthing all his misguided son's honourable and dishonourable debts; and this proceeding, as might be expected, left him so reduced in fortune as to demand the greatest economy to live with any comfort. To such an evil Grahame seemed insensible; his only wish was to escape from the eye and tongue of the world. A mistaken view with regard to his child also urged him on. Why should he expose her to the attentions of the young noblemen so constantly visiting at Mr. Hamilton's house, when, he felt assured, however eagerly his alliance would once have been courted, now not one would unite himself to the sister of a publicly disgraced and privately dishonoured man? No, it was better for her to be far away; and though her mild submission to his wishes, notwithstanding the pain he knew it was to part from her friends at Oakwood, rendered her dearer to him than ever, still he wavered not in his resolution. The entreaties of Arthur Myrvin, Emmeline, and Ellen did, however, succeed in persuading him to fix his place of retirement at Llangwillan, so that all connection would not be so completely broken between them, as were he to seek some more distant part of the country. Llangwillan, Arthur urged, was scarcely known to the world at large, but it was to them, and they might hope sometimes, to see them; for he, Emmeline, and Ellen would often visit his father. Grahame consented, to the great joy of his child, who felt more than himself the force of Myrvin's arguments.

"Mr. Myrvin is such a dear, good, old man, you cannot fail to love him, Lilla," Ellen said, soothingly, as the day of parting neared. "You must ask him to show you the little cottage where the first eight weeks of my residence in England were passed, and make friends with the old widow and her daughter for my sake; you will find them willing enough to

talk about us and my poor mother, if you once speak on the subject. And my mother's grave, dear Lilla, you will visit that sometimes, will you not? and not permit a weed to mingle with the flowers Arthur planted around it after we left, to distinguish it, he said, from every other grave. It shall be your charge, dearest Lilla, and Edward and I will thank you for it; he never goes to Llangwillan without passing an hour of each day by that little humble mound."

"Edward, does he ever come to Llangwillan?" Lilla suddenly asked, her tears checked, and every feature expressive of such animated hope, that Ellen looked at her for a moment in astonishment, and then smilingly answered in the affirmative. Lilla clasped her hands in sudden joy, and then, as if ashamed, hid her face, burning with blushes, on Ellen's hand. Her companion stooped down to kiss her brow, and continued talking of her brother for some time longer.

From that day Ellen observed Lilla regained her usual animation, her eye sparkled, and her cheek often flushed, as if from some secret thought; her spirits only fell at the hour of parting, and Ellen felt assured they would quickly rise again, and the first packet she received from Llangwillan confirmed the supposition. Mrs. Hamilton was surprised, but Ellen was not.

Preparations were now actively making for Herbert's visit to France, thence to bring home his betrothed. His father and Percy had both resolved on accompanying him, and Mrs. Hamilton and Emmeline and Arthur anxiously anticipated the return of their long-absent friends.

A longer time than usual had elapsed between Mary's letters, and Herbert's anxiety was becoming more and more intense. Two or three of his letters had remained unanswered; there were no tidings of either herself or her mother. St. Eval had determined on not visiting Paris till his return from Switzerland, as his solicitude to arrive at his journey's end, and commence the prescribed remedies for Caroline would, he was quite sure, destroy all his pleasure. In vain his wife laughed at his hurry and his fears; much as he wished to see Mary, he was determined, and Caroline no farther opposed him. Through them, then, Herbert could receive no tidings; he had not heard since that event, which he believed would have been as much joy to Mary as to himself--his ordination. He struggled with his own anxiety that the intervening obstacles to his journey should not deprive him of serenity and trust, but the inward fever was ravaging within. Only one short week, and then he departed; ere, however, that time came, he received a letter, and with a sickening feeling of indefinable dread recognised the handwriting of his Mary. He left the breakfast-parlour to peruse it alone, and it was long before he returned to his family. They felt anxious, they knew not why; even Arthur and Emmeline were silent, and the ever-restless Percy remained leaning over a newspaper, as if determined not to move till his brother returned. A similar feeling appeared to detain his father, who did not seek the library as usual. Ellen appeared earnestly engaged in some communications from Lady Florence Lyle, and Mrs. Hamilton was perusing a letter from Caroline, which the same post had brought.

With a sudden spring Percy started from his seat, exclaiming, in a tone that betrayed unconsciously much internal anxiety--

"What in the world is Herbert about? He cannot have gone out without bringing us some intelligence. Robert, has Mr. Herbert gone out?" he called loudly to the servant, who was passing the open window.

"No, sir," was the reply; "he is still in his room."

"Then there will I seek him," he added, impetuously; but he was prevented by the entrance of Herbert himself, and Percy started from him in astonishment and alarm.

There was not a particle of colour on his cheek or lips; his eyes burned as with fever, and his lips quivered as in some unutterable anguish.

"Read," he said, in a voice so hoarse and unnatural, it startled even more than his appearance, and he placed the letter in his father's hand. "Father, read, and tell them all---I cannot. It is over!" he continued, sinking on a stool at his mother's feet, and laying his aching head on her lap. "My beautiful dream is over, and what is the waking? wretchedness, unutterable wretchedness! My God, my God, Thy hand is heavy upon me, yet I would submit." He clasped his mother's hands convulsively in his, he drooped his head upon them, and his slight frame shook beneath the agony, which for hours he had been struggling to subdue. Mrs. Hamilton clasped him to her bosom; she endeavoured to speak words of hope and comfort.

Silence deep and solemn fell over that little party; it was so fearful to see Herbert thus---the gentle, the self-controlled, the exalted Herbert thus bowed down even to the earth; he, whose mind ever seemed raised above this world; he, who to his family was ever a being of a brighter, holier sphere. If he bent thus beneath the pressure of earthly sorrow, what must that sorrow be? His family knew the depth of feeling existing in his breast, which the world around them never could suspect, and they looked on him and trembled. Myrvin raised him from the arms of his mother, and bore him to the nearest couch, and Mrs. Hamilton wiped from his damp brow the starting dew. Tears of alarm and sympathy were streaming from the eyes of Emmeline, and Myrvin resigned his post to Percy, to comfort her. But Ellen wept not; pale as Herbert, her features expressed suffering almost as keen as his, and yet she dared not do as her heart desired, fly to his side and speak the words that love dictated. What was her voice to him? *she* had no power to soothe.

Deep and varied emotions passed rapidly over Mr. Hamilton's countenance as he read the letter which had caused this misery. Percy could trace upon his features pity, sorrow, scorn, indignation, almost loathing, follow one another rapidly and powerfully, and even more violently did those emotions agitate him when the truth was known.

"It was an old tale, and often told, but that took not from its bitterness," Mary wrote, from a bed of suffering such as she had never before endured; for weeks she had been insensible to thought or action, but she had resolved no one but herself should inform her Herbert of all that had transpired, no hand but her own should trace her despairing words. They had lived, as we know, calmly at Paris, so peaceably, that Mrs. Greville had indulged in brighter hopes for the future than had ever before engrossed her. Mr. Greville spent much of his time from home, accompanying, however, his wife and daughter to their evening amusements, and always remained present when they received company in return. They lived in a style of more lavish expenditure than Mrs. Greville at all approved of. Her husband, however, only laughed good-humouredly whenever she ventured to remonstrate, and told her not to trouble herself or Mary about such things; they had enough, and he would take care that sufficiency should not fail. A dim foreboding crossed Mrs. Greville's mind at these words; but her husband's manner, though careless, preventing all further expostulation, she was compelled to suppress, if she could not conquer, her anxiety. At length, the storm that Mary had long felt was brooding in this unnatural calm, burst over her, and opened Mrs. Greville's eyes at once.

Among their most constant but least welcome visitors was a Monsieur Dupont, a man of polished manners certainly, the superficial polish of the Frenchman, but of no other attraction, and even in that there was something about him to Mary particularly repulsive. He had seen some threescore years; his countenance, in general inexpressive, at times betrayed that strong and evil passions were working at his heart. He was said to be very rich, though some reports had gone about that his fortune had all been amassed by gambling in no very honourable manner. With this man Mr. Greville was continually associated; they were seldom seen apart, and being thus the favourite of the master, he was constantly at the house. To Mrs. Greville as to Mary he was an object of indefinable yet strong aversion, and willingly would they have always denied themselves, and thus escaped his odious presence. Once they had done so, but the storm of fury that burst from Mr. Greville intimidated both; they felt some little concession on their parts was demanded to preserve peace, and Monsieur Dupont continued his visits.

To this man, publicly known as unprincipled, selfish, incapable of one exalted or generous feeling, Greville had sworn to give his gentle and unoffending child; this man he sternly commanded Mary to receive as her husband, and prepare

herself for her marriage within a month.

As if a thunderbolt had fallen, Mary and her mother listened to these terrible words, and scarcely had the latter sufficient courage to inform her un pitying husband of their child's engagement with Herbert Hamilton. For Mary's sake, she struggled and spoke, but her fears were not without foundation. A horrid imprecation on Mr. Hamilton and his family burst instantly from the lips of the now infuriated Greville; he had chosen for many years to fancy himself deeply injured by that gentleman, and, with an oath too fearful to be written, he solemnly swore that Mary should never be the wife of Herbert; he would rather see her dead. Louder and louder grew his passion, but Mrs. Greville heard him not. Mary had dropped as if lifeless at his feet. She had sprung up as if to arrest the imprecation on her father's lips, but when his dreadful oath reached her ears, her senses happily forsook her, and it was long, very long before she woke to consciousness and thought. Mrs. Greville hung in agony over the couch of her unhappy child; scarcely could she pray or wish for her recovery, for she knew there was no hope. Her husband had let fall hints of being so deeply pledged to Dupont, that his liberty or perhaps his life depended on his union with Mary, and could she wish her child to live to be the wife of such a man, yet could she see her die? What pen can describe the anguish of that fond mother, as for weeks she watched and tended her senseless child, or the contending feelings that wrung her heart when Mary woke again to consciousness and misery, and asked her, in a voice almost inarticulate from weakness, what had happened---why she was thus? Truth gradually broke upon her mind, and Mary too soon remembered all. The physician said she was recovering, that she would quickly be enabled to leave her bed and go about as usual. Greville swore he would no longer be prevented seeing her, and Mary made no opposition to his entrance. Calmly and passively she heard all he had to say; what he told her then she did not repeat in writing to Herbert. She merely said that she had implored him to wait till her health was a little more restored; not to force her to become the wife of Dupont, till she could stand *without support* beside the altar, and he had consented.

"Be comforted, then, my beloved Herbert," she wrote, as she concluded this brief tale of suffering. "They buoy me up with hopes that in a very few months I shall be as well as ever I was. I smile, for I know the blight has fallen, and I shall never stand beside an earthly altar; all I pray is, that death may not linger till my father's patience be exhausted, and he vent on my poor mother all the reproaches which my lingering illness will, I know, call forth. Oh, my beloved Herbert, there are moments when I think the bitterness of death is passed, when I am so calm, so happy, I feel as if I had already reached the confines of my blissful, my eternal home; but this is not always granted me. There are times when I can think only on the happiness I had once hoped to share with you when heaven itself seemed dimmed by the blessedness I had anticipated on earth. Herbert, I shall never be another's wife, and it will not be misery to think of me in heaven. Oh, no, we shall meet there soon, very soon, never, never more to part. Why does my pen linger? Alas! it cannot trace the word farewell. Yet why does it so weakly shrink? 'tis but for a brief space, and we shall meet where that word is never heard, where sorrow and sighing shall be no more. Farewell, then, my beloved Herbert, beloved faithfully, unchangeably in death as you have been in life. I know my last prayer to you is granted ere even it is spoken: you will protect and think of my poor mother; you will not permit her to droop and die of a broken heart, with no kind voice to soothe and cheer. I feel she will in time be happy; and oh, the unutterable comfort of that confiding trust. Once more, and for the last time, farewell, my beloved; think only that your Mary is in heaven, that her spirit, redeemed and blessed, waits for thee near the Saviour's throne, and be comforted. We shall meet again."

No sound broke the stillness when that sad letter had been perused. Mr. Hamilton had bowed his head upon his hands, for he could not speak of comfort; the long years of domestic bliss which had been his portion, made him feel bitterly the trial which the heart of his son was doomed to endure. And how was he to aid? Could he seek Greville, and condescend to use persuasions, arguments to force from him his consent? With clenched hand and knitted brow Percy stood, his thoughts forcibly drawn from the sufferers by the bitter indignation he felt towards the heartless, cruel man who had occasioned all. Mrs. Hamilton could think only of her son, of Mary, whom she had so long loved as her own child, and the longing to behold her once again, to speak the words of soothing and of love, with which her heart felt bursting. Emmeline could only weep, that such should be the fate of one whom from her childhood she had loved, and whom she

had lately anticipated with so much delight receiving as a sister. For some minutes Ellen sat in deep and painful thought, then starting up, she flew to the side of her uncle, and clasping his hand, entreated---

"Go to Paris, my dear uncle; go yourself, and see this relentless man; speak with him, know why he has commanded Mary to receive this Dupont as her husband; perhaps you may render Herbert's claims as valuable in his eyes. He has no cause of strife with you; he will hear you, I know he will; his fury was called forth because he thought Herbert stood in the way of his wishes. Prove to him the happiness, the life of his child, of yours, depend on their union. He cannot, he will not refuse to hear you. Oh, do not hesitate, go to him, my dear uncle; all may not be so desperate as at this distance we may fancy."

"My father may as well plead to the hard flint as to Alfred Greville's feelings," muttered Percy. "Ellen, you know not what you ask; would you have my father debase himself to a wretch like that?"

"'Tis Mr. Greville who will be debased, and not my uncle, Percy. The world might think him humbled to plead to such a man, but they would think falsely; he is raised above the cringing crowd, who from false pride would condemn the child of virtue to misery and death, because they would not bear with the vices of the parent. Were Mary, were Mrs. Greville in any point otherwise than they are, I would not thus plead, for there would be no necessity. She could not be so dear to Herbert. I do not ask my uncle to humble himself; I ask him but to reason with Mr. Greville, to convince him of his error."

"What says my Herbert?" demanded Mr. Hamilton, gazing with astonishment on his niece's animated features, and almost wondering at her unwonted eloquence.

"That she has spoken well, and may God in Heaven bless her for the thought!" exclaimed Herbert, who had roused himself to listen to her earnest words, and now, with sudden energy, sprung up. "Father, let us go. Ellen has spoken justly; he will listen to you, he will not hear my entreaties unmoved. I have never offended him; he is, indeed, a harsh and cruel man, one whom I would gladly shun, but the father of Mary. Oh, let us seek him, for her sake we will plead; he will wake from his dream, he will know he has been in error. Oh, my father, let us go. She may yet be saved to live and bless me."

He sunk back on the sofa, and burst into tears. Hope had suddenly sprung up from the dark void which had been in his heart. Mrs. Hamilton could not check that suddenly-excited hope, but she did not share it, for she felt it came but to deceive. She whispered gentle and consoling words, she spoke of comfort that she could not feel. But once his energies aroused, they did not fail him. To go instantly to Paris, to seek Mr. Greville, and plead his own cause, aided by his father's influence, acknowledge he had been wrong in not asking his consent before, such thoughts now alone occupied his mind, and Mr. Hamilton could not check them, though, even as his wife, he shared not his son's sanguine expectations. That he had once possessed more influence than any one else over Mr. Greville he well knew; but he thought with Percy, the dislike felt towards him originated from this, and that it was more than probable he would remain firm in his refusal to triumph over both himself and his son; yet he could not hesitate to comply with Herbert's wishes. Ellen's suggestion had roused him to exertion, and he should not be permitted to sink back into despondency, at least they should meet.

It would be difficult to define Ellen's feelings as she beheld her work, and marked the effect of her words upon her cousin. Not a particle of selfishness mingled in her feelings, but that deep pang was yet unconquered. Herbert's manner to her was even kinder, more affectionate than usual, during the few days that intervened ere they parted, as if he felt that she had drawn aside the dark veil of impenetrable gloom, and summoned hope to rise again; and could she see or feel this unmoved? Still was she calm and tranquil, and she would speak of Mary and of brighter hopes, and no emotion was betrayed in her pale cheek or in that tearless eye.

Percy accompanied his father and brother. They travelled rapidly, and a favourable voyage enabled them to reach Paris in a shorter time than usual. Mr. Hamilton had insisted on seeking Mr. Greville's mansion at first alone, and Percy controlled his own feelings. To calm the strong emotion, the deep anxiety, that now he was indeed in the same city as his Mary, almost overpowered Herbert; the struggle for composure, for resignation to whatever might be the will of his God, was too powerful for his exhausted strength. Sleep had only visited him by snatches, short and troubled, since he had received Mary's letter; the long interval which elapsed ere Mr. Hamilton returned was productive of even keener suffering than he had yet endured. Hope had sunk powerless before anxiety; the strength of mind which had borne him up so long was giving way beneath the exhaustion of bodily powers, which Percy saw with alarm and sorrow; his eyes had lost their lustre, and were becoming dim and haggard; more than once he observed a slight shudder pass through his frame, and felt his words of cheering and of comfort fell unheeded on his brother's ear. At length Mr. Hamilton returned.

"She lives, my son," were the first words he uttered, but his tone was not joyful; "our beloved and gentle Mary yet lives, and soon, very soon you shall meet, not to part on earth again."

Herbert gazed wildly in his face, he clasped his hands convulsively, and then he bowed his head in a deep and fervent burst of thanksgiving.

"And Greville," said Percy, impatiently, "has he so soon consented? father, you have not descended to entreaties, and to such a man?"

"Percy, peace," said his father, gravely. "With Mr. Greville I have exchanged no words. Thank God, I sought not his house with any hostile intention, with any irritation urging me against him. Percy, he is dead, and let his faults die with him."

"Dead!" repeated the young man, shocked and astonished, and Herbert started up. His lip quivered with the vain effort to ask an explanation.

It was even so, that very morning Greville had breathed his last, with all his sins upon his head, for no time had been allowed him either for repentance or atonement. A few days after Mary had written to Herbert, her father had been brought home senseless, and dreadfully injured, by a fall from his horse. His constitution, shattered by intemperance and continued dissipation, was not proof against the fever that ensued; delirium never left him. For five days Mrs. Greville and Mary watched over his couch. His ravings were dreadful; he would speak of Dupont, at one time, with imprecations; at others, as if imploring him to forbear. He would entreat his child to forgive him; and then, with fearful convulsions, appear struggling with the effort to drag her to the altar. Mary heard, and her slight frame shook and withered each day faster than the last, but she moved not from her father's side. In vain Mrs. Greville watched for some returning consciousness, for some sign to say he died in peace. Alas! there was none. He expired in convulsions; and scarcely had his wife and child recovered the awful scene, when the entrance of the hated Dupont roused them to exertion. He came to claim Mary as his promised wife, or send them forth as beggars. The house and all that it contained, even to their jewels, were his; for Greville had died, owing him debts to an amount which even the sale of all they possessed could not entirely repay. He had it in his power to arrest the burial of the scarcely cold corpse, to stain the name of the dead with undying infamy; and he vowed that he would use his power to its utmost extent, if Mary's consent were not instantly given. Four-and-twenty hours he gave her to decide, and departed, leaving inexpressible wretchedness behind him, on the part of Mrs. Greville, and the calm stupor of exhaustion and despair pervading Mary's every faculty.

"My child, my child, it shall not be; you shall not be that heartless villain's wife. I have health; I can work, teach, do anything to support us, and why, oh, why should you be thus sacrificed? Mary, Mary, you will live, my child, to bless your desolate and wretched mother. Oh, my God, my God, why hast thou thus forsaken me? I have trusted in thee, and wilt thou thus fail me? To whom can I appeal---what friend have I near me?"

"Mother, do not speak thus," exclaimed Mary, roused from the lethargy of exhaustion by her mother's despairing words, and she flung herself on her knees beside her, and threw her arms around her. "Mother, my own mother, the God of the widow and the fatherless is still our friend; He hath not forsaken us, though for a time His countenance is darkened towards us. Oh, he will have mercy; He will raise us up a friend---I feel, I know He will. He will relieve us. Let us but trust in Him, mother; let us not fail now. Oh, let us pray to Him, and He will answer."

The eyes of the good and gentle girl were lit up with sudden radiance. Her pallid cheek was faintly flushed; her whole countenance and tone expressed the enthusiasm, the holiness which had characterised her whole life. Mrs. Greville clasped her faded form convulsively to her aching bosom, and, drooping her head, wept long and freely.

"Father, I have sinned," she murmured; "oh, have mercy."

An hour passed, and neither Mary nor her mother moved from that posture of affliction, yet of prayer. They heard not the sound of many voices below, nor a rapid footstep on the stairs. The opening of the door aroused them, but Mary looked not up; she clung closer to her mother, for she feared to gaze again on Dupont. A wild exclamation of joy, of thanksgiving, bursting from Mrs. Greville's lips startled her; for a moment she trembled, yet she could not be mistaken, that tone was joy. Slowly she looked on the intruder. Wildly she sprung up---she clasped her hands together.

"My God, I thank thee, we are saved!" broke from her parched lips, and she sunk senseless at Mr. Hamilton's feet.

Emissaries of wickedness were not wanting to convey the intelligence very quickly to Dupont's ear, that Mrs. and Miss Greville had departed from the Rue Royale, under the protection of an English gentleman, who had stationed two of his servants at their house to protect Mr. Greville's body from insult, and give him information of all that took place during his absence. Furiously enraged, Dupont hastened to know the truth of these reports, and a scene of fierce altercation took place between him and Mr. Hamilton. The calm, steady firmness of his unexpected opponent daunted Dupont as much as his cool sarcastic bitterness galled him to the quick. The character of the man was known; he was convinced he dared not bring down shame on the memory of Greville, without inculcating himself, without irretrievably injuring his own character, and however he might use that threat as his weapon to compel Mary's submission, Mr. Hamilton was perfectly easy on that head. Dupont's cowardly nature very soon evinced itself. A few words from Mr. Hamilton convinced him that his true character had been penetrated, and dreading exposure, he changed his ground and his tone, acknowledged he had been too violent, but that his admiration for Miss Greville had been the sole cause; expressed deep sorrow for Mr. Greville's melancholy end, disavowed all intention of preventing the interment of the body, and finally consented to liquidate all debts, save those which the sale of the house and furniture might suffice to discharge.

Scarcely could Mr. Hamilton command his indignation during this interview, or listen to Dupont's professions, excuses, defences, and concessions, without losing temper. He would not consent to be under any obligation: if M. Dupont could *prove* that more was owing than that which he had consented to receive, it should be paid directly, but he should institute inquiries as to the legality of his claims, and carefully examine all the papers of the deceased.

"It was not at all necessary," Dupont replied. "The sum he demanded was due for debts of honour, which he had a slip of paper in Greville's own handwriting to prove."

Mr. Hamilton made no further reply, and they parted with nothing decided on either side, Dupont only repeating his extreme distress at having caused Miss Greville so much unnecessary pain; that had he known she was engaged to another, he would never have persisted in his suit, and deeply regretted he had been so deceived.

Mr. Hamilton heard him with an unchanging countenance, and gravely and formally bowed him out of the house. He then placed his seal on the lock of a small cabinet, which Mrs. Greville's one faithful English servant informed him

contained all his master's private papers, dismissed the French domestics, and charging the Englishmen to be careful in their watch that no strangers should be admitted, he hastened to impart to his anxiously-expecting sons all the important business he had transacted.

Early the following morning Mr. Hamilton received intelligence which very much annoyed and startled him. Notwithstanding the vigilant watch of the three Englishmen stationed at Mr. Greville's house, the cabinet, which contained all his private papers, was gone. The men declared again and again, no one could have entered the house without their knowledge, or removed such a thing as that without some noise. Mr. Hamilton went instantly with them to the house; how it had been taken he could not discover, but it was so small that Mr. Hamilton felt it could easily have been removed; and he had no doubt that Dupont had bribed one of the dismissed servants, who was well acquainted with every secret of the house, to purloin it for him, and Dupont he instantly determined on charging with the atrocious theft. Dupont, however, had decamped, he was nowhere to be found; but he had desired an agent to receive from Mr. Hamilton's hands the payment of the debts he still claimed, and from this man it was endeavoured by many questions to discover some traces of his employer, but all in vain. M. Dupont had left Paris, he said, the previous evening.

Mr. Hamilton was not satisfied, and, consequently, seeking an able solicitor, put the affair into his hands, and desired that he would use every means in his power to obtain the restoration of the papers. That Dupont had it in his power farther to injure the widow and child of the deceased he did not believe; he rather thought that his extreme desire to obtain them proceeded from a consciousness that they betrayed some of his own evil deeds, yet he could not feel easy till they were either regained, or he knew that they were destroyed. Mrs. Greville earnestly wished their recovery, for she feared they might, through the similarity of names, bring some evil on her son, towards whom her fond heart yet painfully yearned, though years had passed since she had seen, and many weary months since she had heard of him. Her fears on this head rendered both Mr. Hamilton and Percy still more active in their proceedings, and both determined on remaining at Paris even after Herbert and Mrs. Greville, with Mary, had left for England.

And what did Herbert feel as he looked on the fearful change in her he loved? Not yet did he think that she must die; that beaming eye, that radiant cheek, that soft, sweet smile---oh, could such things tell of death to him who loved? He held her to his heart, and only knew that he was blessed.

And Mary, she was happy; the past seemed as a dim and troubled vision; the smile of him she loved was ever near her, his low sweet voice was sounding in her ear. A calm had stolen over her, a holy soothing calm. She did not speak her thoughts to Herbert, for she saw that he still hoped on; they were together, and the present was enough. But silently she prayed that his mind might be so prepared, so chastened, that when his eyes were opened, the truth might not be so terrible to bear.

CHAPTER VII.

It was indeed a day of happiness that beheld the arrival of Mrs. Greville and Mary at Oakwood, unalloyed to them, but not so, alas! to those who received them. Mrs. Hamilton pressed the faded form of Mary to her heart, she kissed her repeatedly, but it was long before she could speak the words of greeting; she looked on her and on her son, and tears rose so thick and fast, she was compelled to turn away to hide them. Ellen alone retained her calmness. In the fond embrace that had passed between her and Mary, it is true her lip had quivered and her cheek had paled, but her agitation passed unnoticed.

"It was *her* voice, my Mary, that roused me to exertion, it was her representations that bade me not despair," whispered Herbert, as he hung over Mary's couch that evening, and perceived Ellen busily employed in arranging her pillows. "When, overwhelmed by the deep misery occasioned by your letter, I had no power to act, it was her ready thought that dictated to my father the course he so successfully pursued." Mary pressed the hand of Ellen within both her own, and

looked up gratefully in her face. A faint smile played round the orphan's lips, but she made no observation in reply.

A very few weeks elapsed before the dreaded truth forced itself upon the minds of all, even on her mother, that Mary was sinking, surely sinking, there was no longer hope. Devotedly as her friends loved her, they could not sorrow, before her they could not weep. She was spared all bodily suffering save that proceeding from debility, so extreme she could not walk across the room without assistance. No pain distorted the expression of her features, which, in this hour of approaching death, looked more lovely than they had ever seemed before; her soft blue eye beamed at times with a celestial light, and her fair hair shaded a brow and cheek so transparent, every blue vein could be clearly seen. One thought alone gave her pain, her Herbert she felt was still unprepared.

He was speaking one day of the future, anticipating the time when the Rectory would receive her as its gentle mistress, and of the many things which occupied his thoughts for the furtherance of her comfort, when Mary laid her hand gently on his arm, and, with a smile of peculiar sweetness, said---

"Do not think any more of such things, my beloved; the mansion which will behold our blessed union is already furnished and prepared; I may seek it first, but it will be but to render it even yet more desirable to you."

Herbert looked on her face to read the meaning of her words; he read them, alas! too plainly, but voice utterly failed.

"Look not on me thus," she continued, in that same pleading and soothing tone. "Our mansion is prepared for us above; below, my Herbert, oh, think not it will ever receive me. Why should I hesitate to speak the truth? The blessed Saviour, to whose arms I so soon shall go, will give you strength to bear this; He hath promised that He will, my own Herbert, my first, my only love. My Saviour calls me, and to Him, oh, can you not without tears resign me?"

"Mary," murmured the unhappy Herbert, "Mary, oh, do not, do not torture me. You will not die; you will not leave me desolate."

"I shall not die, but live, my beloved---live, oh, in such blessedness! 'tis but a brief, brief parting, Herbert, to meet and love eternally."

"You are ill, you are weak, my own Mary, and thus death is ever present to your mind; but you will recover, oh, I know, I feel you will. My God will hear my prayers."

"And He will grant them, Herbert---oh, doubt Him not, grant them, even in my removal. He takes me not from you, my Herbert, He but places me, where to seek me, you must look to and love but Him alone; and will you shrink from this? Will that spirit, vowed to His service from your earliest boyhood, now murmur at His will? Oh, no, no; my Herbert will yet support and strengthen his Mary, I know, I feel he will. Forgive me if I have pained you, my best love; but I could bear no other lips than mine to tell you, that on earth I may not live---but a brief space more, and I shall be called away. You must not mourn for me, my Herbert; I die so happy, oh, so very happy!"

Herbert had sunk on his knees beside her couch; he drooped his head upon his hands, and a strong convulsion shook his frame. He uttered no sound, he spoke no word, but Mary could read the overwhelming anguish that bowed his spirit to the earth. The words were spoken; he knew that she must die, and Mary raised her mild eyes to heaven, and clasped her hands in earnest prayer for him. "Forsake him not now, oh God; support him now; oh, give him strength to meet Thy will," was the import of her prayer. Long was that deep, deep stillness, but when Herbert looked up again he was calm.

"May God in heaven bless you, my beloved," he said, and imprinted a long fervent kiss upon her forehead. "You have taught me my Saviour's will, and I will meet it. May He forgive---" His words failed him; again he held her to his heart,

and then he sat by her side and read from the Book of Life, of peace, of comfort, those passages which might calm this anguish and strengthen her; he read till sleep closed the eyes of his beloved. Yes, she was the idol of his young affections; he felt her words were true, and when she was gone there would be naught to bind his spirit to this world.

It would be needless to lift the veil from Herbert's moments of solitary prayer. Those who have followed him through his boyhood and traced his character need no description of his feelings. We know the intensity of his earthly affections, the strength and force of his every emotion, the depth and holiness of his spiritual sentiments, and vain then would be the attempt to portray his private moments in this dread trial: yet before his family he was calm, before his Mary cheerful. She felt her prayers were heard, he was, he would be yet more supported, and her last pang was soothed.

Mr. Hamilton had returned from France, unsuccessful, however, in his wish to obtain the restitution of Greville's papers. Dupont had concealed his measures so artfully, and with such efficacy, that no traces were discovered regarding him, and Mr. Hamilton felt it was no use to remain himself, confident in the integrity and abilities of the solicitor to whom he had intrusted the whole affair; he was unaccompanied, however, by Percy, who, as his sister's wedding was, from Mary's illness, postponed, determined on paying Lord and Lady St. Eval a visit at Geneva.

As Emmeline's engagement with Arthur very frequently engrossed her time, Ellen had devoted herself assiduously as Mary's constant nurse, and well and tenderly she performed her office. There was no selfishness in her feelings, deeply, unfeignedly she sorrowed, and willingly, gladly would she have laid down her life to preserve Mary's, that this fearful trial might be removed from Herbert. To spare him one pang, oh, what would she not have endured. Controlled and calm, who could have guessed the chaos of contending feeling that was passing within; who, that had seen the gentle smile with which she would receive Herbert's impassioned thanks for her care of his Mary, could have suspected the thrill, the pang those simple words occasioned. Mary alone of those around her, except Mrs. Hamilton, was not deceived. She loved Ellen, had long done so, and the affectionate attention she so constantly received from her had drawn the bonds of friendship closer. She felt convinced she was not happy, that there was something heavy on her mind, and the quick intellect of a vivid fancy and loving nature guessed the truth. Her wish to see her happy became so powerful, that she could not control it. She fancied that Ellen might be herself deceived, and that the object of her affections once known, all difficulties would be smoothed. The idea that her last act might be to secure the happiness of Ellen, was so soothing to her grateful and affectionate feelings, that, after dwelling on it some time, she took the first opportunity of being alone with her friend to seek her confidence.

"No, dearest, do not read to me," she said, one evening, in answer to Ellen's question. "I would rather talk with you; do not look anxious, I will not fatigue myself. Come, and sit by me, dear Ellen, it is of you that I would speak."

"Of me?" repeated Ellen, surprised. "Nay, dearest Mary, can you not find a more interesting subject?"

"No, love, for you are often in my thoughts; the approach of death has, I think, sharpened every faculty, for I see and read trifles clearer than I ever did before; and I can read through all that calm control and constant smile that you are not happy, my kind Ellen; and will you think me a rude intruder on your thoughts if I ask you why?"

"Do you not remember, Mary, I was ever unlike others?" replied Ellen, shrinking from her penetrating gaze. "I never knew what it was to be lively and joyous even as a child, and as years increase, is it likely that I should? I am contented with my lot, and with so many blessings around, should I not be ungrateful were I otherwise?"

"You evade my question, Ellen, and convince me more and more that I am right. Ah, you know not how my last hour would be soothed, could I feel that I had done aught to restore happiness to one who has been to me the blessing you have been, dear Ellen."

"Think not of it, dearest Mary," said Ellen. "I ought to be happy, very happy, and if I am not, it is my own wayward temper. You cannot give me happiness, Mary; do not let the thought of me disturb you, dearest, kind as is your wish, it is unavailing."

"Do not say so, Ellen; we are apt to look on sorrow, while it is confined to our own anxious breasts, as incurable and lasting; but when once it is confessed, how quickly do difficulties vanish, and the grief is often gone before we are aware it is departing. Do not, dearest, magnify it by the encouragement which solitary thought bestows."

"Are there not some sorrows, Mary, which are better ever concealed? Does not the opening of a wound often make it bleed afresh, whereas, hidden in our own heart, it remains closed till time has healed it."

"Some there are," said Mary, "which are indeed irremediable, but"---she paused a moment, then slightly raising herself on her couch, she threw her arm round Ellen's neck, and said, in a low yet deeply expressive voice---"is your love, indeed, so hopeless, my poor Ellen? Oh, no, it cannot be; surely, there is not one whom you have known sufficiently to give your precious love, can look on you and not return it."

Ellen started, a deep and painful flush rose for a moment to her cheek, she struggled to speak calmly, to deny the truth of Mary's suspicion, but she could not, the secret of her heart was too suddenly exposed before her, and she burst into tears. How quickly will a word, a tone destroy the well-maintained calmness of years; how strangely and suddenly will the voice of sympathy lift from the heart its veil.

"You have penetrated my secret," she said, and her voice faltered, "and I will not deny it; but oh, Mary, let us speak no more of it. When a woman is weak enough to bestow her affections on one who never sought, who will never seek them, surely the more darkly they are hidden, the better for her own peace as well as character. My love was not called for. I never had aught to hope; and if that unrequited affection be the destroyer of my happiness, it has sprung from my own weakness, and I alone have but to bear it."

"But is there no hope, Ellen---none? Do not think so, dearest. If his affections be still disengaged, is there not hope they may one day be yours?"

"No, Mary, none. I knew his affections were engaged; I knew he never could be mine, and yet I loved him. Oh, Mary, do not scorn my weakness; you have wrung my secret from me, do not, oh, do not betray me. There is no shame in loving one so good, so holy, and yet---and yet---Mary, dearest Mary, promise me you will not speak it---I cannot rest unless you do; let it pass your lips to *none*."

"It shall not, my Ellen; be calm, your secret shall die with me, dearest," replied Mary, earnestly, for Ellen's feelings completely overpowered her, and bursting sobs choked her utterance.

"For me there is no hope. Oh, could I but see him happy, I should ask no more; but, oh, to see him miserable, and feel I have no power to soothe---when---" She paused abruptly, again the burning blood dyed her cheeks, even her temples with crimson. Mary's eyes were fixed upon her in sympathy, in love; Ellen fancied in surprise, yet suspicion. With one powerful effort she conquered herself, she forced back the scalding tears, the convulsive sob, and bending over Mary, pressed her trembling lips upon her pale brow.

"Let us speak no more of this, dearest Mary," she said, in a low calm voice. "May God bless you for your intended kindness. It is over now. Forgive me, dearest Mary, I have agitated and disturbed you."

"Nay, forgive me, my sweet Ellen. It is I who have given you pain, and should ask your forgiveness. I thought not of such utter hopelessness. I had hoped that, ere I departed, I might have seen the dawn of happiness for you; but I see, I feel now that cannot be. My own Ellen, I need not tell you the comfort, the blessed comfort of prayer."

For a few minutes there was silence. Ellen had clasped the hand of Mary, and turned aside her head to conceal the tears that slowly stole down her cheek. The entrance of Emmeline was a relief to both, and Ellen left the room; and when she returned, even to Mary's awakened eyes, there were no traces of agitation. Each week produced a visible change in Mary; she became weaker and weaker, but her mind retained its energy, and often her sorrowing friends feared she would pass from the detaining grasp of love, ere they were aware of the actual moment of her departure. One evening she begged that all the family might assemble in her room; she felt stronger, and wished to see them altogether again. Her wish was complied with, and she joined so cheerfully in the conversation that passed around, that her mother and Herbert forgot anxiety. It was a soft and lovely evening; her couch, at her own request, had been drawn to the open window, and the dying girl looked forth on the beautiful scene beneath. The trees bore the rich full green of summer, save where the brilliantly setting sun tinged them with hues of gold and crimson. Part of the river was also discernible at this point, lying in the bosom of trees, as a small lake, on which the heavens were reflected in all their surpassing splendour. The sun, or rather its remaining beams, rested on the brow of a hill, which, lying in the deepest shadow, formed a superb contrast with the flood of liquid gold that bathed its brow. Clouds of purple, gold, crimson, in some parts fading into pink, floated slowly along the azure heavens, and the perfect stillness that reigned around completed the enchantment of the scene.

"Look up, my Mary, and mark those clouds of light," said Herbert. "See the splendour of their hues, the unstained blue beyond; beautiful as is earth, it shows not such exquisite beauty as yon heaven displays, even to our mortal sight, nor calls such feelings of adoration forth. What then will it be when that blue arch is rent asunder, and the effulgent glory of the Maker of that heaven burst upon our view?"

"Blessed, oh, how blessed are those who, conducted by the Lamb of God, can share that glory," answered Mary, with sudden energy. "Who can speak the unutterable love which, while the beautiful earth yet retains the traces of an awful curse, hath washed from man his sin, and takes from death its sting?"

"And is it this thought, this faith which supports you now, my Mary?" demanded Herbert, with that deep tenderness of one so peculiarly his own.

"It is, it is," she answered, fervently, "My sins are washed away; my prayers are heard, for my Saviour pleads, and my home is prepared on high amid the redeemed and the saved. Oh, blessed be the God of truth that hath granted me this faith"---she paused a minute, then added---"and heard my prayer, my beloved Herbert, and permitted me thus to die in my native land, surrounded by those I love!"

She leaned her head on Herbert's bosom, and for some time remained silent; then looking up, said cheerfully, "Do you remember, Emmeline, when we were together some few years ago, we always said such a scene and hour as this only wanted music to make it perfect? I feel as if all those fresh delightful feelings of girlhood had come over me again. Bring your harp and sing to me, dearest, those words you read to me the other day."

"Nay, Mary, will it not disturb you?" said Emmeline, kneeling by her couch, and kissing the thin hand extended to her.

"No, dearest, not your soft, sweet voice, it will soothe and give me pleasure. I feel stronger and better to-night than I have done for some time. Sing to me, but only those words, dear Emmy; all others would neither suit this scene nor my feelings."

For a moment Emmeline hesitated, and looked towards her mother and Mrs. Greville. Neither was inclined to make any objection to her request, and on the appearance of her harp, under the superintendence of Arthur, Emmeline prepared to comply. She placed the instrument at the further end of the apartment, that the notes might fall softer on Mary's ear, and sung, in a sweet and plaintive voice, the following words:---

"Remember me! ah, not with sorrow,
'Tis but sleep to wake in bliss.
Life's gayest hours can seek to borrow
Vainly such a dream as this.

Ah, see, 'tis heaven itself revealing
To my dimmed and failing sight;
And hark! 'tis angels' voices stealing
Through the starry veil of night.

Come, brother, come; ah, quickly sever
The cold links of earth's dull chain;
Come to thy home, where thou wilt never
Pain or sorrow feel again.

Come, brother, come; we spread before thee
Visions of thy blissful home;
Heed not, if Death's cold pang come o'er thee,
It will but bid thee haste and come!

Ah, yes, I see bright forms are breaking
Through the mist that veils mine eyes;
Now gladly, gladly, earth forsaking,
Take, oh, take me to the skies.

The mournful strain ceased, and there was silence. Emmeline had adapted the words to that beautiful air of Weber's, the last composition of his gifted mind. Mary's head still rested on the bosom of Herbert, her hand clasped his. Evening was darkening into twilight, or the expression of her countenance might have been remarked as changed---more spiritual, as if the earthly shell had shared the beatified glory of the departing spirit. She fixed her fading eyes on Ellen, who was kneeling by her couch, steadily and calmly, but Ellen saw her not, for in that hour her eyes were fixed, as in fascination on the form of Herbert, as he bent over his beloved. The dying girl saw that mournful glance, and a gleam of intelligence passed over her beautiful features. She extended one hand to Ellen, who clasped it fondly, and then she tried to draw it towards Herbert. She looked up in his face, as if to explain the meaning of the action, but voice and strength utterly failed, and Ellen's hand dropped from her grasp.

"Kiss me, Herbert, I would sleep," she said, so faintly, Herbert alone heard it. Their lips met in one long lingering kiss, and then Mary drooped her head again upon his bosom, and seemed to sleep so gently, so sweetly, her friends held their breath lest they should disturb her. Nearly half an hour passed and still there was no movement. The full soft light of an unclouded moon fell within that silent chamber, and gilded the forms of Mary and Herbert with a silvery halo, that seemed to fall from heaven itself upon them. Mary's head had fallen slightly forward, and her long luxuriant hair, escaped from its confinement, concealed her features as a veil of shadowy gold. Gently and tenderly Herbert raised her head, so as to rest upon his arm; as he did so her hair fell back and fully exposed her countenance. A faint cry broke from his parched lips, and Ellen started in agony to her feet.

"Hush, hush, my Mary sleeps," Mrs. Greville said; but Mr. Hamilton gently drew her from the couch and from the room. Her eyes were closed; a smile illumined that sweet face, as in sleep it had so often done, and that soft and shadowy light took from her features all the harsher tale of death. Yes, she did sleep sweetly and calmly, but her pure spirit had departed.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was long, very long ere Mr. Hamilton's family recovered the shock of Mary's death. She had been so long loved, living amongst them from her birth, her virtues and gentleness were so well known and appreciated by every member. She had been by Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton so long considered as their child, by her betrothment with their Herbert, that they sorrowed for her as if indeed she had been bound to them by that tender tie; and her poor mother now indeed felt desolate: her only treasure, her precious, almost idolized Mary, was taken from her, and she was childless, for of Alfred she had long ceased to receive intelligence. She bowed her head, earnestly striving for submission, but it was long, long ere peace returned; soothed she was indeed by the tender kindness of her friends; but what on earth can soothe a bereaved and doting mother? Emmeline, Ellen, Herbert, even Arthur Myrvin, treated her with all the love and reverence of children, but neither could fill the aching void within. On Herbert indeed her spirit rested with more fondness than on any other object, but it was with a foreboding love; she looked on him and trembled. It was a strange and affecting sight, could any one have looked on those two afflicted ones: to hear Herbert speak words of holy comfort to the mother of his Mary, to hear him speak of hope, of resignation, mark the impress of that heavenly virtue on his pale features; his grief was all internal, not a word escaped his lips, not a thought of repining crossed his chastened mind. The extent of that deep anguish was seen alone in his fading form, in his pallid features; but it was known only to the Searcher of all hearts. He had wished to perform the last office to his Mary, but his father and Archdeacon Howard conjured him to abandon the idea, and suffer the latter to take his place. All were bathed in tears during that solemn and awful service. Scarcely could Mr. Howard command his voice throughout, and his concluding words were wholly inaudible. But no movement was observable in Herbert's slight and boyish form; enveloped in his long mourning robe, his features could not be seen, but there was somewhat around him that created in the breasts of all who beheld him a sensation of reverence. All departed from the lowly grave, but Herbert yet remained motionless and silent. His father and Myrvin gently sought to lead him away, but scarcely had he proceeded two paces, when he sunk down on the grass in a long and deathlike swoon; so painfully had it the appearance of death, that his father and friends believed for a time his spirit had indeed fled to seek his Mary; but he recovered. There was such an aspect of serenity and submission on his countenance, that all who loved him would have been at peace, had not the thought pressed heavily on their minds that such feelings were not long for earth.

These fainting fits returned at intervals, and Mrs. Hamilton, whilst she struggled to lift up her soul in undying faith to the God of Love, and resignedly commit into His hands the life and death of her beloved son, yet every time she gazed on him, while lying insensible before her, felt more and more how difficult was the lesson she so continually strove to learn; how hard it would be to part from him, if indeed he were called away. She compared her lot with Mrs. Greville's, and thought how much greater was her trial; and yet she, too, was a mother, and though so many other gifts were vouchsafed her, Herbert was as dear to her as Mary had been to Mrs. Greville. Must she lose him now, now that the fruit she had so fondly cherished, watched as it expanded from the infant germ, had bloomed so richly to repay her care, would he be taken from her now that every passing month appeared to increase his love for her and hers for him? for Herbert clung to his mother in this dread hour of affliction with increasing fondness. True, he never spoke the extent of his feelings even to her, but his manner betrayed how much he loved her, how deeply he felt her sympathy, which said that next to his God, he leaned on her.

At first Mr. Hamilton wished his son to resign the Rectory and join his brother and sister at Geneva, and then accompany Percy on his travels; but mournfully yet steadily Herbert rejected this plan.

"No, father," he said. "My duties as a son and brother, as well as the friend and father of the flock committed to my charge, will be far more soothing and beneficial, believe me, than travelling in far distant lands. My health is at present such, that my home and the beloved friends of my infancy appear dearer to me than ever, and I cannot part from them to seek happiness elsewhere. I will do all in my power, by the steady discharge of my many and interesting duties, to preserve my health and restore peace and contentment. I seek not to resign my charge in this world till my Saviour calls me; His work has yet to be done on, earth, and till He dismisses me, I will cheerfully perform it; till then do not ask me to forsake it."

Mr. Hamilton wrung his son's hand in silence, and never again urged his departure.

There was no selfishness in Herbert's sorrow; he was still the devoted son, the affectionate brother, the steady friend to his own immediate circle; and to the poor committed to his spiritual charge, he was in truth, as he had said he would be, a father and a friend. In soothing the sufferings of others, his own became less bitterly severe; in bidding others hope, and watch, and pray, he found his own spirit strengthened and its frequent struggles calmed. With such unwavering steadiness were his duties performed, that his bodily sufferings never could have been discovered, had not those alarming faints sometimes overpowered him in the cottages he visited ere his duties were completed; and he was thankful, when such was the case, that it occurred when from home, that his mother was thus sometimes spared anxiety. He would walk on quietly home, remain some little time in his own chamber, and then join his family cheerful and composed as usual, that no one might suspect he had been ill.

Arthur Myrvin often gazed on his friend with emotions of admiration, almost amounting to awe. His love for Emmeline was the strongest feeling of his heart, and when for a moment he fancied her snatched from him, as Mary had been from Herbert, he felt he knew he could not have acted like his friend: he must have flown from scenes, every trace of which could speak of the departed, or, if he had remained, he could not, as Herbert did, have attended to his duties, have been like him so calm.

In the society of his cousin Ellen, Herbert found both solace and pleasure. She had been so devoted to the departed, that he felt he loved her more fondly than he had ever done, and he would seek her as the companion of a walk, and give her directions as to the cottages he sometimes wished her to visit, with a portion of his former animation, but Ellen never permitted herself to be deceived; it was still a brother's love, she knew it never could be more, and she struggled long to control, if not to banish, the throb of joy that ever filled her bosom when she perceived there were times she had power to call the smile to Herbert's pensive features.

Percy's letters were such as to soothe his brother by his affectionate sympathy; to betray more powerfully than ever to Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton how dear to each other were their sons, how pure and consoling was the friendship subsisting between them, and on other points to give much pleasure to all his family. Caroline's health was much improved; her little son, Percy declared, was such a nice, merry fellow, and so handsome, that he was quite sure he resembled in all respects what he, Percy Hamilton, must have been at the venerable age of two years. He said farther, that as Lord and Lady St. Eval were going to make the tour of the principal cities of Europe, he should remain with them and be contented with what they saw, instead of rambling alone all over the world, as he had intended. At first Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton were somewhat surprised at this decision, but knowing the nature of their son, began to fancy that a certain Miss Manvers had something to do with it, the sister of Lord Delmont, the Earl St. Eval's most intimate friend, and the chosen friend of Mary Greville during her residence at Monte Rosa. In Lord Delmont's will he had left the Earl guardian of his sister during the year that intervened before her coming of age, an office which rendered St. Eval still more intimate with the family. On his way to Geneva he had heard from Miss Manvers of her mother's death, and that she was residing with an English family on the banks of the Lake. The information that her brother's friends, and indeed her own, with his wife and family, intended spending some little time at Geneva, was a source of so much pleasure, that after a little hesitation she accepted the earnest invitation of both the Earl and his lady, and gladly and gratefully consented to reside with them

during their stay in Switzerland, and then accompany them on their intended tour.

The strong affection Percy bore his brother rendered him long unable to regain his usual mirth and flow of spirits, and he found the conversation of Louisa Manvers even more pleasing than ever. Mary had made her perfectly acquainted with Herbert, and therefore, though she had never seen him, she was well enabled to enter into the deep affliction the loss of his betrothed must have occasioned him. Percy could speak to her as often as he pleased of his brother and Mary, and ever found sympathy and interest attached to the subject. Thus the idea of travelling alone, when his sister's family offered such attractions, became absolutely irksome to him, and he was pleased to see that his plan of joining them was not disagreeable to Miss Manvers. Mr. Hamilton sent his unqualified approval of Percy's intentions, and Herbert also wrote sufficiently of himself to satisfy the anxious affection of his brother.

There was only one disappointing clause in Percy's plans, and he regretted it himself, and even hinted that if his sister still very much wished it, he would give up his intention, and return home in time to be present, as he had promised, at her wedding. He wrote in his usual affectionate strain both to Emmeline and Myrvin, but neither was selfish enough to wish such a sacrifice.

At Herbert's earnest entreaty, the marriage of his sister was, however, fixed rather earlier than she had intended. It was not, he said, as if their marriage was to be like Caroline's, the signal for a long course of gaiety and pleasure; that Emmeline had always determined on only her own family being present, and everything would be so quiet, he was sure there could be no necessity for a longer postponement.

"My Mary wished to have beheld your union," his lip trembled as he spoke; "had not her illness so rapidly increased she wished to have been present, and could she now speak her wishes, it would be to bid you be happy---no longer to defer your union for her sake. Do not defer it, dear Emmeline," he added, in a somewhat sadder tone, "we know not the events of an hour, and wherefore should we delay? it will be such joy to me to unite my friend and my sister, to pour forth on their love the blessing of the Lord."

There was something so inexpressibly sweet yet mournful in his concluding words, that Emmeline, unable to restrain the impulse, leaned upon his neck and wept.

"Do not chide my weakness, Herbert," she tried to say, "these are not tears of unmingled sadness; oh, could I but see you happy."

"And you will, my sweet sister: soon---very soon, I shall be happy, quite---quite happy," he added, in a lower tone, as he fondly kissed her brow.

Emmeline had not marked the tone of his concluding words, she had not seen the expression of his features; but Ellen had, and a cold yet indefinable thrill passed through her heart, and left a pang behind, which she could not conquer the whole of that day. She understood it not, for she *would* not understand.

Urged on, however, a few days afterwards, during a walk with Herbert, she asked him why he was so anxious the ceremony should take place without delay.

"Because, my dear Ellen, I look forward to the performance of this ceremony as a source of pleasure which I could not bear to resign to another."

"To another, Herbert; what do you mean? Do you think of following my uncle's advice, and resigning your duties for a time, for the purpose of travel?"

"No, Ellen; those duties will not be resigned till I am called away; they are sources of enjoyment and consolation too pure to be given up. I do not wish my sister's wedding to be deferred, for I know not how soon my Saviour may call me to Himself."

"May we not all urge that plea, my dear cousin?" said Ellen; "and yet in your sermon last Sunday, you told us to do all things soberly, to give due reflection to things of weight, particularly those in which temporal and eternal interests were united; not to enter rashly and hastily into engagements, not too quickly to put off the garb of mourning, and plunge once more into the haunts of pleasure." She paused.

"I did say all this, Ellen, I own; but it has not much to do with our present subject. Emmeline's engagement with Arthur has not been entered on rashly or in haste. She does not throw off the garb of mourning to forget the serious thoughts it may have encouraged; and though you are right, we none of us can know how soon we may be called away, yet, surely, it behoves those unto whom the dart has sped, the mandate been given, to set their house in order for they shall surely die, and not live the usual period of mortals."

"But who can tell this, Herbert? who are so favoured as to know the actual moment when the dart has sped and how soon it will reach them? should we not all live as if death were near?"

"Undoubtedly, we should so order our souls, as ever to be ready to render them back to Him who gave them; but we cannot always so arrange our worldly matters, as we should, did we know the actual moment of death's appearance; our business may require constant care, we may have dear objects for whom it is our duty to provide, to the best of our power, and did we know when we should die, these things would lose the interest they demand. Death should, indeed, be ever present to our minds; it should follow us in our joy as in our sorrow, and never will it come as a dark and gloomy shadow to those who in truth believe; but wise and merciful is the decree that conceals from us the moment of our departure. Were the gates of Heaven thus visible, how tame and cold would this world appear; how few would be the ties we should form, how insignificant would seem those duties which on earth we are commanded to perform. No, to prepare our souls to be ready at a minute's warning to return to their heavenly home is the duty of all. More is not expected from those in perfect health; but, Ellen, when a mortal disease is consuming this earthly tabernacle, when, though Death linger, he is already seen, ay, and even felt approaching, then should we not wind up our worldly affairs, instead of wilfully blinding our eyes to the truth, as, alas! too many do? Then should we not 'watch and pray' yet more, not only for ourselves, but those dearest to us, and do all in our power to secure their happiness, ere we are called away?"

Ellen could not answer. She understood too well his meaning; a sickness as of death crept over her, but with an effort she subdued that deadly faintness; she would have spoken on other things, but her tongue was parched and dry.

Engrossed in his own solemn feelings, in the wish to prepare his cousin for the truth, Herbert perceived not her agitation, and, after a minute's pause, continued tenderly---

"My own cousin, death to you is, I know, not terrible; why then should I hesitate to impart tidings which to me are full of bliss? The shaft which bore away my Mary, also entered my heart, and implanted in me the disease which no mortal skill can cure. Do not chide me for entertaining an unfounded fancy. Ellen, dear Ellen, I look to you, under heaven, to support my mother under this affliction. I look to your fond cares to subdue the pang of parting. You alone of her children will be left near her, and you can do much to comfort and soothe not only her, but my father; they will mourn for me, nature will speak, though I go to joy inexpressible, unutterable! Ellen, speak to me; will you not do this, my sister, my friend?"

"Give me but a moment," she murmured almost inaudibly, as, overpowered by increasing faintness, she sunk down on a grassy bank near them, and buried her face in her hands. Minutes rolled by, and still there was silence. Herbert sat down

beside her, threw his arm around her, and pressed a brother's kiss upon her cold, damp brow. She started and would have risen, but strength failed; for a moment her head leaned against his bosom, and a burst of tears relieved her. "Forgive me, Herbert," she said, striving at once for composure and voice. "Oh, weak as I am, do not repent your confidence. It was unexpected, sudden; the idea of parting was sharper than at the first moment I could bear, but it will soon be over, very, very soon; do not doubt me, Herbert." She fixed her mournful eyes upon his face, and her cheek was very pale, "Yes," she said, with returning strength, "trust me, dear Herbert, I will be to my aunt, my more than mother, ever as you wish. My every care, my every energy shall be employed to soften that deep anguish which---" She could not complete the sentence, but quickly added, "the deep debt of gratitude I owe her, not a whole life can repay. Long have I felt it, long wished to devote myself to her and to my uncle, and this charge has confirmed me in my resolution. Yes, dearest Herbert, while Ellen lives, never, never shall my beloved aunt be lonely."

Herbert understood not the entire signification of his cousin's words; he knew not, that simple as they were to his ears, to her they were a vow sacred and irrevocable. She knew she could never, never love another, and there was something strangely soothing in the thought, that it was his last request that consecrated her to his mother, to her benefactress. To feel that, in endeavouring to repay the debt of gratitude she owed, she could associate Herbert intimately with her every action, so to perform his last charge, that could he look down from heaven it would be to bless her.

Herbert knew not the intensity of Ellen's feelings, still less did he imagine he was the object of her ill-fated affection. Never once had such a suspicion crossed his mind; that she loved him he doubted not, but he thought it was as Emmeline loved. He trusted in her strength of character, and therefore had he spoken openly; and could Ellen regret his confidence, when she found that after that painful day, her society appeared dearer, more consoling to him than ever?

Although some members of her family could not be present at Emmeline's wedding, a hasty visit from Edward was a source of joy to all. He was about to sail to the shores of Africa in a small frigate, in which he had been promoted to the second in command, an honour which had elevated his spirits even beyond their usual buoyancy. He had been much shocked and grieved at his sister's account of Mary's death, and Herbert's deep affliction; but after he had been at home a few days, the influence of his natural light-heartedness extended over all, and rendered Oakwood more cheerful than it had been since the melancholy event we have narrated.

To Lilla Grahame it was indeed a pleasure to revisit Oakwood, particularly when Lieutenant Fortescue was amongst its inmates. Edward's manner was gallantly courteous to all his fair friends; a stranger might have found it difficult to say which was his favourite, but there was something about both him and Miss Grahame which very often called from Ellen a smile.

It was an interesting group assembled in the old parish church on the day that united our favourite Emmeline with her long-beloved Arthur, but it was far from being a day of unmingled gladness. Deep and chastened as was the individual and mutual happiness of the young couple, they could neither of them forget that there was a beloved one wanting; that they had once hoped the same day that beheld their nuptials would have witnessed also those of Herbert and his Mary.

Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton had looked with some degree of dread to this day, as one of painful recollection to Herbert; but he, perhaps of all who were around him, was the most composed, and as the impressive ceremony continued, he thought only of those dear ones whose fate he thus united; he felt only the solemn import of the prayers he said, and his large and beautiful eyes glistened with enthusiasm as in former days. It would have been a sweet group for a skilful painter, those three principal figures beside the altar. Herbert, as we have described him; Emmeline, in her simple garb of white, her slight figure and peculiarly feminine expression of countenance causing her to appear very many years younger than in reality she was; and Arthur, too, his manly features radiant with chastened yet perfect happiness, seemed well fitted to be the protector, the friend of the gentle being who so soon would call him husband, and look to him alone for happiness. Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton rejoiced that their beloved child was at length blessed in the gratification of her long-cherished,

long-controlled hopes; that, as far as human eye could penetrate, they had secured her happiness by giving her to the man she loved. There was one other kneeling beside the altar on whom Mrs. Hamilton looked with no small anxiety, for the emotion she perceived, appeared to confirm the idea that it was indeed Arthur Myrvin who had engrossed the affections of her niece. There are mysteries in the human heart for which we seek in vain to account; associations and sympathies that come often uncalled-for and unwished. Ellen knew not wherefore the scene she witnessed pressed strangely on her heart; she struggled against the feeling, and she might perhaps have succeeded in concealing her inward emotions, but suddenly she looked on Herbert. She marked him radiant, it seemed, in health and animation, his words flashed across her mind; soon would the hue of death be on that cheek, the light of that eye be dimmed, that sweet and thrilling voice be hushed on earth for ever; that beautiful form bent down as a flower, "the wind passeth over it and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more;" and thus would it soon be with him she loved. The gush of feeling mocked all her efforts at control, Ellen buried her face in her hands, and her slight frame shook, and the low choking sob was distinctly heard in the brief silence that followed the words, "Those whom God hath joined let no man put asunder."

Arthur, at Emmeline's own desire, conducted his bride at once to the small yet comfortable home which had been prepared for her in his vicarage on Lord St. Eval's estate. That her residence was so near them was a great source of pleasure to both her parents, and the feeling that her home was in the centre of all she loved, not only so near the beloved guardians of her infancy but Caroline and St. Eval, would have added to her cup of joy, had it not been already full to overflowing; the pang of parting was thus soothed to both mother and child. Even more than Caroline, Mrs. Hamilton felt she should miss the gentle girl, who scarcely from her infancy had given her one moment's pain; but in the happiness of her child she too was blessed, and thankfully she raised her voice to Him whose blessing, in the rearing of her children, she had so constantly and fervently implored, and the mother's fond and yearning heart was comforted.

Though Ellen had smiled, and seemed to every eye but that of her watchful aunt the same as usual the whole of that day, yet Mrs. Hamilton could not resist the impulse that bade her seek her when all had retired to their separate apartments. Ellen had been gone some time, but she was sitting in a posture of deep thought, in which she had sunk on first entering her room. She did not observe her aunt, and Mrs. Hamilton traced many tears slowly, almost one by one, fall upon her tightly-clasped hands, ere she found voice to speak.

"Ellen, my sweet child!"

Ellen sprung up, she threw herself into those extended arms, and hid her tearful eyes on her aunt's bosom.

"I have but you now, my own Ellen, to cheer my old age and enliven our deserted hearth. You must not leave me yet, dearest. I cannot part with you."

"Oh, no, no; I will never, never leave you. Your home shall be my home, my more than mother; and where you go, Ellen will follow," she murmured, speaking unconsciously in the spirit of one of the sweetest characters the Sacred Book presents. "Do not ask me to leave you; indeed, indeed, no home will be to me like yours."

"Speak not, then, so despondingly, my Ellen," replied Mrs. Hamilton, fondly kissing her. "Never shall you leave me without your own full and free consent. Do you remember, love, when I first promised that?" she continued, playfully; for she sought not to draw from Ellen the secret of her love, she only wished to soothe, to cheer, to tell her, however unrequited might be her affections, still she was not desolate, and when she left her, fully had she succeeded. Ellen was comforted, though she scarcely knew wherefore.

Some few months passed after the marriage of Emmeline, and the domestic peace of Oakwood yet remained undisturbed. There were times when Ellen hoped she had been deceived, that Herbert had been deceived himself. But Myrvin dared not hope; he was not with his friend as constantly as Ellen was, and almost every time he beheld him he

fancied he perceived an alarming change.

About this time a malignant disease broke out in the neighbourhood of the Dart, whose awful ravages it appeared as if no medical aid was adequate to stop. In Herbert Hamilton's parish the mortality was dreadful, and his duties were consequently increased, painfully to himself and alarmingly to his family. A superhuman strength seemed, however, suddenly granted him. Whole days, frequently whole nights, he spent in the cottages of the afflicted poor. Soothing, encouraging, compelling even the hardened and impenitent to own the power of the religion he taught; bidding even them bow in unfeigned penitence at the footstool of their Redeemer, and robbing death, in very truth, of its sting. The young, the old, men in their prime, were carried off. The terrible destroyer knew no distinction of age or sex or rank. Many a young child would cease its wailing cry of suffering when its beloved pastor entered the lowly cot, and with the fondness of a parent, with that smile of pitying love which few hearts can resist, would seek to soothe the bodily anguish, while at the same moment he taught the young soul that death was not terrible; that it was but a few moments of pain to end in everlasting bliss; that they were going to Him who had said "Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." From the old, Herbert would learn many a lesson of piety and resignation, and feel that attendance on such beds of death was in truth a blessing to himself.

Fearlessly, for her trust was fixed on the Rock of Righteousness, did Ellen second the exertions of her cousin in this time of general affliction. There were many who sought to deter her, for they whispered the disease was contagious, but Ellen heeded them not, nor did Mrs. Hamilton, herself so active in seasons of distress, seek to dissuade her. "The arm of my God is around me, alike in the cottages of the dying as in the fancied security of Oakwood," she said one day to Herbert, who trembled for her safety, though for himself no fears had ever entered his mind. "If it is His will that I too should feel His chastening rod, it will find me though I should never leave my home; my trust is in Him. I go in the humble hope to do His work, and He will not forsake me, Herbert."

Herbert trembled for her no more, and an active and judicious assistant did he find her. For six weeks the disease continued unabated; about that time it began to decline, and hopes were entertained that it was indeed departing.

There was moisture in the eyes of the young minister, as he looked around him one Sabbath evening on the diminished number of his congregation; so many of whom were either clad in mourning, or bore on their countenance the marks of recent suffering, over the last victim the whole family at Oakwood had sincerely mourned, for it was that kind old woman whom we have mentioned more than once as being connected with the affairs we have related. Nurse Langford had gone to her last home, and both Ellen and Herbert dreaded writing the intelligence to her affectionate son, who was now in Percy's service. She had been buried only the day previous. Her seat was exactly opposite the pulpit, where she had so often said it was such a blessing to look on the face of her dear Master Herbert, and hear such blessed truths from his lips. She now was gone. Herbert looked on her vacant seat, and it was then his eyes glistened in starting tears. He had seen his cousin look towards the same place, and though her veil was closely drawn down, he *felt* her tears were falling fast and thick upon her book. More than usually eloquent was the young clergyman that day, in the discourse he had selected as most appropriate to the feelings of those present. He spoke of death, and, with an eloquence affecting in its pure simplicity, he alluded to the loss of those we love. "Wherefore should I say loss, my brethren?" he said, in conclusion. "They have but departed to mansions of undying joy: to earth they may be lost, but not to us. Oh, no, God cursed the ground for man's sake--it is fading, perishable! There will be a new heaven and a new earth, but the spirit which God breathed within us shall not see corruption. Released from this earthly shell, we shall again behold those who have departed first; they will meet us rejoicing, singing aloud the praises of that unutterable love that redeemed and saved us, removing the curse pronounced on man, even as on earth, making us heirs of eternal life, of everlasting glory! My brethren, Death has been amongst us, but how clothed? to us who remain, perhaps for a time in sadness; but to those who have triumphantly departed, even as an angel of light, guiding them to the portals of heaven. Purified by suffering and repentance, their garments white as snow, they encircle the throne of their Saviour; and those whose lives below were those of toil and long suffering, are now among the blessed. Shall we then weep for them, my friends? Surely not.

Let us think of them, and follow in their paths, that our last end may be like theirs, that we may rejoin them, never again to part!

"Are there any here who fear to die? Are there any who shrink and tremble when they think they may be the next it may please the Lord to call? My Christian brethren, think awhile, and such thoughts will cease to appal you. To the heathen alone is death the evil spirit, the blackening shadow which, when called to mind, will poison his dearest joys! To us, brethren, what is it? In pain it tells us of ease; in strife or tumult, that the grave is a place of quiet; in the weariness of exhausted spirits, that the end of all these things is at hand. Who ever found perfect joy on earth? Are we not restless, even in the midst of happiness? Death tells us of a purer happiness, in which there is no weariness, no satiety. When we look around on those we love, when we feel the blessings of affection, death tells us that we shall love them still better in heaven! Is death then so terrible? Oh, let us think on it thus in life and health, and in the solitude and silence of our chamber such thoughts will not depart from us. Let these reflections pervade us as we witness the dying moments of those we love, and we shall find even for us death has no sting; for we shall meet again in a world where death and time shall be no more! Oh, my beloved brethren, let us go home, and in our closets thank God that His chastening hand appears about to be removed from us, and so beseech Him to enlighten our eyes to look on death, and so to give us that faith, which alone can make us whole, and give us peace, that we may say with the venerable Simeon, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.'"

He ceased, and a solemn stillness reigned within the church. For a moment the young clergyman bowed his head in silent prayer upon his book, and then he raised his clasped hands on high, and, in a voice of almost unearthly sweetness and power, gave the parting benediction. The flush was observed to fade from his cheek, the lustre depart from his eye; he raised his hand languidly to his damp brow, and in another minute Mr. Hamilton darted from his seat, and received his son in his arms, in a long and deathlike swoon, That same evening beheld Herbert Hamilton, the beloved, the good, stretched on his couch a victim to the same fearful disease, to remove the sting of which he had so long and perseveringly laboured.

CHAPTER IX.

There was joy in the superb hotel at Frankfort-sur-Maine which served as the temporary residence of Lord St. Eval's family, domestic joy, for the danger which had threatened the young Countess in her confinement had passed away, and she and her beautiful babe were doing as well as the fond heart of a father and husband could desire. They had been at Frankfort for the last two months, at which place, however, Percy Hamilton had not been stationary, taking advantage of this pause in St. Eval's intended plans, by seeing as much of Germany as he could during that time; and short as it was, his energetic mind had derived more improvement and pleasure in the places he had visited, than many who had lingered over the same space of ground more than double the time. Intelligence that Caroline was not quite so well as her friends wished, aided perhaps by his secret desire to see again her gentle companion, Percy determined for a short time to return to Frankfort, till his sister's health was perfectly restored, and they might be again enabled to travel together. His almost unexpected arrival added to the happiness of the young Earl's domestic circle, and there was somewhat in his arch yet expressive glance, as he received his baby niece from the arms of Miss Manvers, and imprinted a light kiss on the infant's sleeping features, that dyed her cheek with blushes, and bade her heart beat quick with an indefinable sense of pleasure.

The sisterly friendship of Louisa Manvers had been a source of real gratification to both the Earl St. Eval and his Countess during their travels, more particularly now, when the health of the latter required such kindly tending. Mrs. Hamilton had deeply regretted the impossibility of her being with her child at such a time; the letter Lord St. Eval had despatched was, however, calculated to disperse all her anxiety, the danger appearing after the letter had gone, and not lasting sufficiently long to justify his writing again. They were sitting round the breakfast-table the morning after Percy's return, lengthening the usual time of the meal by lively and intelligent conversation; Miss Manvers was presiding at the table, and Percy did not feel the least inclined to move, declaring he would wait for his English despatches, if there were

any, before he went out. The post happened to be rather late that morning, a circumstance, wonderful to say, which did not occasion Percy annoyance. It came in, however, at length, bringing several papers for Lord St. Eval and his wife, from the Malvern family, but only two from Oakwood, one, in the handwriting of Ellen, to Percy, and one for Robert Langford, evidently from Mr Hamilton.

"This is most extraordinary," Percy said, much surprised. "My mother not written to Caroline, and none from Herbert to me; his duties are increased, I know, but surely he could find time to write to me."

"Mrs. Hamilton has written to Caroline since her confinement, and so did all her family four or five days ago," said Lord St. Eval, but his words fell unheeded on the ear of Percy, who had hastily torn open his cousin's letter, and glanced his eye over its contents. Engaged in his own letters, the Earl did not observe the agitation of his friend, but Miss Manvers saw his hand tremble so violently, that he could scarcely hold the paper.

"Merciful heaven! Mr. Hamilton---Percy, what is the matter?" she exclaimed, suddenly losing all her wonted reserve, as she remarked his strange emotion, and her words, connected with the low groan that burst from Percy's heart, effectually roused the Earl's attention.

"Hamilton, speak; are there ill news from Oakwood? In mercy, speak!" he said, almost as much agitated as his friend.

"Herbert," was all Percy could articulate, "Herbert, my brother; oh God, he is dying, and I am not near him. Read, St. Eval, for pity; I cannot see the words. Is there yet time---can I reach England in time? or is this only a preparation to tell me he is---is dead?"

"He lives, Percy; there may be yet time, if you set off at once," exclaimed the Earl, who saw the necessity of rousing his friend to exertion, for the sudden blow had bewildered his every faculty. He started up wildly, and was darting from the room, when he suddenly paused---

"Keep it from Caroline---tell her not now, it will kill her," he cried. "May God in heaven bless you for those tears!" he continued, springing towards Louisa, and clasping her hands convulsively in his, as the sight of her unfeigned emotion caused the hot tears slowly to trickle down his own cheek, and his lip quivered, till he could scarcely speak the words of parting. "Oh, think of me; I go to the dying bed of him, whom I had hoped would one day have been to you a brother---would have joined---" He paused in overwhelming emotion, took the hand of the trembling girl, raised it to his lips, and darted from the apartment.

St. Eval hastily followed him, for he saw Percy was in no state to think of anything himself, and the letter Robert had received, telling him of the death of his mother, rendered him almost as incapable of exertion as his master; but as soon as he heard the cause of Percy's very visible but at first incomprehensible agitation, his own deep affliction was at once subdued; he was ready and active in Percy's service. That Mr. Hamilton should thus have written to him, to alleviate the blow of a parent's death, to comfort him when his own son lay on a dying bed, penetrated at once the heart of the young man, and urged him to exertion.

Day and night Percy travelled; but we must outstrip even his rapid course, and conduct our readers to Oakwood, the evening of the second day after Percy's arrival at Ostend.

Herbert Hamilton lay on his couch, the cold hand of Death upon his brow; but instead of robbing his features with a ghastly hue, it had spread over them even more than usual beauty. Reduced he was to a mere shadow, but his prayers in his days of health and life had been heard; the delirium of fever had passed, and he met death unshrinkingly, his mind retaining even more than its wonted powers. It was the Sabbath evening, and all around him was still and calm. For the

first two days after the delirium had departed, his mind had still been darkened, restless, and uneasy. Perseveringly as he had laboured in his calling, he had felt in those darker days the utter nothingness of his own works, how wholly insufficient they had been to secure his salvation; and the love of his God, the infinite atonement in which he so steadily believed, shone not with sufficient brightness to remove this painful darkness. Death was very near, and it no longer seemed the angel of light he had ever regarded it; but on the Saturday the mist was mercifully dispelled from his mind, the clouds dispersed, and faith shone forth with a brilliancy, a lustre overpowering; it told of heaven with an eloquence that banished every other thought, and Herbert's bodily sufferings were felt no longer; the confines of heaven were gained---but a brief space, one mortal struggle, and he would meet his Mary at the footstool of his God.

With solemn impressiveness, yet affecting tenderness, Archdeacon Howard had administered the sacrament to him, whom he regarded at once as pupil, friend, and brother; and the whole family of the dying youth, at his own particular request, had shared it with him. Exhausted by the earnestness in which he had joined in the solemn service, Herbert now lay with one hand clasped in his mother's, who sat by his side, her head bent over his, and her whole countenance, save when the gaze of her son was turned towards her, expressive of tearless, heart-rending sorrow, struggling for resignation to the will of Him, who called her Herbert to Himself. Emmeline was kneeling by her mother's side. Mr. Hamilton leaned against the wall, pale and still; it was only the agonized expression of his manly features that betrayed he was a living being. On the left side of the dying youth stood Arthur Myrvin, who, from the moment of his arrival at Oakwood, had never once left Herbert's couch, night and day he remained beside him; and near Arthur, but yet closer to her cousin, knelt the orphan, her eyes tearless indeed, but her whole countenance so haggard and wan, that had not all been engrossed in individual suffering, it could not have passed unobserved. The tall, venerable figure of the Archdeacon, as he stood a little aloof from the principal figures, completed the painful group.

"My own mother, your Herbert is so happy, so very happy! you must not weep for me, mother. Oh, it is your fostering love and care, the remembrance of all your tenderness from my infancy, gilding my boyhood with sunshine, my manhood with such refreshing rays---it is that which is resting on my heart, and I would give it words and thank and bless you, but I cannot. And my father, too, my beloved, my revered father---oh, but little have I done to repay your tender care, my brother and sisters' love, but my Father in heaven will bless---bless you all; I know, I feel He will."

"Percy," repeated the dying youth, a gleam of light kindling in his eye and flushing his cheek. "Is there indeed a hope that I may see him, that I may trace those beloved features once again?"

He closed his eyes, and his lips moved in silent yet fervent prayer, that wish was still powerful within; it was the only thought of earth that lingered.

"Tell him," he said, and his voice sounded weaker and weaker, "tell him, Herbert's last prayer was for him, that he was in my last thoughts; tell him to seek for comfort at the foot of that Throne where we have so often knelt together. Oh, let him not sorrow, for I shall be happy---oh, so happy!"

Again he was silent, and for a much longer interval; but when he reopened his eyes, they were fixed on Ellen.

"My sister, my kind and tender nurse, what shall I say to you?" he said, languidly, but in a tone that thrilled to her aching heart. "I can but commend you to His care, who can take from grief its sting, even as He hath clothed this moment in victory. May His spirit rest upon you, Ellen, and give you peace. May He bless you, not only for your affectionate kindness towards me, but to her who went before me. You will not forget, Ellen." His glance wandered from his cousin to his mother, and then returned to her. She bowed her head upon his extended hand, but her choking voice could speak no word. "Caroline, too, she will weep for me, but St. Eval will dry her tears; tell them I did not forget them; that my love and blessing is theirs even as if they had been around me. Emmeline, Arthur,---Mr. Howard, oh, where are you? my eyes are dim, my voice is failing, yet"---

"I am here, my beloved son," said the Archdeacon, and Herbert fixed a kind glance upon his face, and leaned his head against him.

"I would tell you, that it is the sense of the Divine presence, of love, unutterable, infinite, inexhaustible, that has taken all anguish from this moment. My spirit rises triumphant, secure of eternal salvation, triumphing in the love of Him who died for me. Oh, Death, well may I say, where is thy sting? oh, grave, where is thy victory? they are passed; heaven is opening. Oh, bliss unutterable, undying!" He sunk back utterly exhausted, but the expression of his countenance still evinced the internal triumph of his soul.

A faint sound, as of the distant trampling of horses, suddenly came upon the ear. Nearer, nearer still, and a flush of excitement rose to Herbert's cheek. "Percy---can it be? My God, I thank thee for this mercy!"

Arthur darted from the room, as the sound appeared rapidly approaching; evidently it was a horse urged to its utmost speed, and it could be none other save Percy. Arthur flew across the hall, and through the entrance, which had been flung widely open, as the figure of the young heir of Oakwood had been recognised by the streaming eyes of the faithful Morris, who stood by his young master's stirrup, but without uttering a word. Percy's tongue clove to the roof of his mouth; his eyes were bloodshot and haggard. He had no power to ask a question, and it was only the appearance of Myrvin, his entreaty that he would be calm ere Herbert saw him, that roused him to exertion. His brother yet lived; it was enough, and in another minute he stood on the threshold of Herbert's room. With an overpowering effort the dying youth raised himself on his couch, and extended his arms towards him.

"Percy, my own Percy, this is kind," he said, and his voice suddenly regained its wonted power. Percy sprung towards him, and the brothers were clasped in each other's arms. No word did Percy speak, but his choking sobs were heard; there was no movement in the drooping form of his brother to say that he had heard the sound; he did not raise his head from Percy's shoulder, or seek to speak of comfort.

"Speak to me, oh, once again, but once more, Herbert!" exclaimed Percy. Fearful agony was in his voice, but, oh, it could not rouse the *dead*: Herbert Hamilton had departed. His last wish on earth was fulfilled. It was but the lifeless form of his beloved brother that Percy held in the stern grasp of despairing woe. It was long ere the truth was known, and when it was, there was no sound of wailing heard within the chamber, no cry of sorrow broke the solemn stillness. For him they could not weep, and for themselves, oh, it was a grief too deep for tears.

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We will not linger on the first few weeks that passed over the inmates of Oakwood after the death of one we have followed so long, and beheld so fondly and deservedly beloved. Silent and profound was that sorrow, but it was the sorrow of those who, in all things, both great and small, beheld the hand of a God of love. Could the faith, the truth, which from her girlhood's years had distinguished Mrs. Hamilton, desert her now? Would her husband permit her to look to him for support and consolation under this deep affliction, and yet not find it? No; they looked up to their God; they rejoiced that so peaceful, so blessed had been the death of their beloved one. His last words to them came again and again on the heart of each parent as soothing balm, of which nor time nor circumstance could deprive them. For the sake of each other, they exerted themselves, an example followed by their children; but each felt years must pass ere the loss they had sustained would lose its pang, ere they could cease to miss the being they had so dearly loved, who had been such a brilliant light in their domestic circle---brilliant, yet how gentle; not one that was ever sparkling, ever changing, but of a soft and steady lustre. On earth that light had set, but in heaven it was dawning never to set again.

For some few weeks the family remained all together, as far at least as Arthur's ministerial duties permitted. Mr. Hamilton wished much to see that living, now vacant by the death of his son, transferred to Myrvin, and he exerted

himself towards effecting an exchange. Ere, however, Percy could return to the Continent, or Emmeline return to her husband's home, the sudden and alarming illness of Mrs. Hamilton detained them both at Oakwood. The fever which had been raging in the village, and which had hastened the death of Herbert, had also entered the household of Mrs. Hamilton. Resolved that no affliction of her own should interfere with those duties of benevolence, to exercise which was her constant practice, Mrs. Hamilton had compelled herself to exertion beyond the strength of a frame already wearied and exhausted by long-continued but forcibly-suppressed anxiety, and three weeks after the death of her son she too was stretched on a bed of suffering, which, for the first few days during the violence of the fever, her afflicted family believed might also be of death. In this trying time, it was to Ellen that not only her cousin but even her uncle turned, by her example to obtain more control and strength. No persuasions could induce her to leave the side of her aunt's couch, or resign to another the painful yet soothing task of nursing. Young and inexperienced she was, but her strong affection for her aunt, heightened by some other feeling which was hidden in her own breast, endowed her at once with strength to endure continued fatigue, with an experience that often made Mr. Maitland contemplate her with astonishment. From the period of Herbert's death, Ellen had placed her feelings under a restraint that utterly prevented all relief in tears. She was never seen to weep; every feature had indeed spoken the deep affliction that was hers, but it never interfered with the devoted care she manifested towards her aunt. Silently yet perseveringly she laboured to soften the intense suffering in the mother's heart; it was on her neck Mrs. Hamilton had first wept freely and relievingly, and as she clasped the orphan to her bosom, had lifted up her heart in thanksgiving that such a precious gift was yet preserved her, how little did even she imagine all that was passing in Ellen's heart; that Herbert to her young fancy had been how much dearer than a brother; that she mourned not only a cousin's loss, but one round whom her first affections had been twined with an intensity that death alone could sever. How little could she guess the continued struggle pressing on that young mind, the anguish of her solitary moments, ere she could by prayer so calm her bursting heart as to appear the composed and tranquil being she ever seemed before the family. Mrs. Hamilton could only feel that the comfort her niece bestowed in this hour of affliction, her controlled yet sympathising conduct, repaid her for all the care and sorrow Ellen once had caused. Never had she regretted she had taken the orphans to her heart and cherished them as her own; but now it was she felt the Lord had indeed returned the blessing tenfold in her own bosom; and still more did she feel this in the long and painful convalescence that followed her brief but severe attack of fever, when Ellen was the only one of her children remaining near her.

Completely worn out by previous anxiety, the subsequent affliction, and, finally, her mother's dangerous illness, Emmeline's health appeared so shattered, that as soon as the actual danger was passed, Myrvin insisted on her going with him, for change of air and scene, to Llangwillan, a proposal that both her father and Mr. Maitland seconded; trembling for the precious girl so lately made his own, Arthur resisted her entreaties to remain a little longer at Oakwood, and conveyed her at once to his father's vicarage, where time and improved tidings of her mother restored at length the bloom to her cheek and the smile to her lip.

It was strange to observe the difference of character which opposite circumstances and opposite treatment in their infant years had made in these two cousins. Emmeline and Ellen, had they been brought up from babes together, and the same discipline extended to each, would, in all probability, have in after years displayed precisely the same disposition; but though weak indulgence had never been extended to Emmeline, prosperity unalloyed, save in the affair with Arthur Myrvin, had been her portion. Affection and caresses had been ever lavished almost unconsciously upon her, but instead of cherishing faults, such treatment had formed her happiness, and had encouraged and led her on in the paths of virtue. Every thought and feeling were expressed without disguise; she had been so accustomed to think aloud to her mother from childhood, so accustomed to give vent to her little vexations in words, her sorrows in tears, which were quickly dried, that as years increased, she found it a very difficult task either to restrain her sentiments or control her feelings. Her mind could not be called weak, for in her affection for Arthur Myrvin, as we have seen, when there was a peremptory call for exertion or self-control, it was ever heard and attended to. Her health indeed suffered, but that very fact proved the mind was stronger than the frame; though when she marked Ellen's superior composure and coolness, Emmeline would sometimes bitterly reproach herself. From her birth, Ellen had been initiated in sorrow, her infant years

had been one scene of trial. Never caressed by her mother or those around her, save when her poor father was near, she had learned to bury every affectionate yearning deep within her own little heart, every childish sentiment was carefully concealed, and her father's death, the horrors of that night, appeared to have placed the seal on her character, infant as she was. She was scarcely ten when she became an inmate of her aunt's family, but then it was too late for her character to become as Emmeline's. The impression had been made on the yielding wax, and now it could not be effaced. Many circumstances contributed to strengthen this impression, as in the first portion of this history we have seen. Adversity had made Ellen as she was, and self-control had become her second nature, long before she knew the meaning of the word.

The intelligence of Herbert's death, though deferred till St. Eval thought his wife enabled to bear it with some composure, had, however, so completely thrown her back, that she was quite unequal to travel to England, as her wishes had instantly dictated, and her husband was compelled to keep up a constant system of deception with regard to her mother's illness, lest she should insist, weak as she was, on immediately flying to her aid. As soon as sufficient strength returned for Mrs. Hamilton to express her wishes, she entreated Percy to rejoin his sister, that all alarm on her account might subside. The thought of her child was still uppermost in the mother's mind, though her excessive debility compelled her to lie motionless for hours on her couch, scarcely sensible of anything passing around her, or that her husband and Ellen hardly for one moment left her side. The plan succeeded, Caroline recovered soon after Percy's arrival; and at the earnest message Percy bore her from her mother, that she would not think of returning to England till her health was quite restored, she consented leisurely to take the celebrated excursion down the Rhine, ere she returned home.

It would have seemed as though no other grief could be the portion of Ellen, but another sorrow was impending over her, which, while it lasted, was a source of distress inferior only to Herbert's death. Entering the library one morning, she was rather surprised to find not only Mr. Maitland but Archdeacon Howard with her uncle.

The former was now too constantly a visitor at the Hall to occasion individually much surprise, but it was the expression on the countenances of each that created alarm. Mr. Hamilton appeared struggling with some strong and painful emotion, and had started as Ellen entered the room, while he looked imploringly towards the Archdeacon, as if seeking his counsel and assistance.

"Can we indeed trust her?" Mr. Maitland said, doubtingly, and in a low voice, as he looked sadly upon Ellen. "Can we be sure these melancholy tidings will be for the present inviolably kept from Mrs. Hamilton, for suspense such as this, in her present state of health, might produce consequences on which I tremble to think?"

"You may depend upon me, Mr. Maitland," Ellen said, firmly, as she came forward. "What new affliction can have happened of which you so dread my aunt being informed? Oh, do not deceive me. I have heard enough to make fancy perhaps more dreadful than reality, Mr. Howard. My dear uncle, will you not trust me?"

"My poor Ellen," her uncle said, in a faltering voice, "you have indeed borne sorrow well; but this will demand even a greater share of fortitude. All is not yet known, there may be hope, but I dare not encourage it. Tell her, Howard," he added, hastily, shrinking from her sorrowful glance, "I cannot."

"Is it of Edward you would tell me? Oh, what of him?" she exclaimed. "Oh, tell me at once, Mr. Howard, indeed, indeed, I can bear it."

With the tenderness of a father, Mr. Howard gently and soothingly told her that letters had that morning arrived from Edward's captain, informing them that the young lieutenant had been despatched with a boat's crew, on a message to a ship stationed about twelve miles southward, towards the Cape of Good Hope; a storm had arisen as the night darkened, but still Captain Seaforth had felt no uneasiness, imagining his young officer had deemed it better remaining on board the

Stranger all night, though somewhat contrary to his usual habits of promptness and activity. As the day, however, waned to noon, and still Lieutenant Fortescue did not appear, the captain despatched another boat to know why he tarried. The sea was still raging in fury from the last night's storm, but the foaming billows had never before detained Edward from his duty. With increasing anxiety, Captain Seaforth paced the deck for several hours, until indeed the last boat he had sent returned. He scanned the crew with an eye that never failed him, and saw with dismay, that neither his lieutenant nor one of his men were amongst them. Horror-stricken and distressed, the sailors related that, despite every persuasion of the captain of the Stranger, Lieutenant Fortescue had resolved on returning to the Gem the moment his message had been delivered and the answer given; his men had seconded him, though many signs denoted that as the evening advanced, so too would the impending storm. Twilight was darkening around him when, urged on by a mistaken sense of duty, the intrepid young man descended into the boat, and not half an hour afterwards the storm came on with terrific violence, and the pitchy darkness had entirely frustrated every effort of the crew of the Stranger to trace the boat. Morning dawned, and brought with it some faint confirmation of the fate which all had dreaded. Some spars on which the name of the Gem was impressed, and which were easily recognised as belonging to the long-boat, floated on the foaming waves, and the men sent out to reconnoitre had discovered the dead body of one of the unfortunate sailors, who the evening previous had been so full of life and mirth, clinging to some sea-weed; while a hat bearing the name of Edward Fortescue, caused the painful suspicion that the young and gallant officer had shared the same fate. Every inquiry was set afloat, every exertion made, to discover something more certain concerning him, but without any effect. Some faint hope there yet existed, that he might have been picked up by one of the ships which were continually passing and repassing on that course; and Captain Seaforth concluded his melancholy narration by entreating Mr. Hamilton not to permit himself to despair, as hope there yet was, though but faint. Evidently he wrote as he felt, not merely to calm the minds of Edward's sorrowing friends, but Mr. Hamilton could not share these sanguine expectations. Mystery had also enveloped the fate of his brother-in-law, Charles Manvers; long, very long, had he hoped that he lived, that he would yet return; but year after year had passed, till four-and-twenty had rolled by, and still there were no tidings. Well did he remember the heart-sickening that had attended his hopes deferred, the anguish of suspense which for many weary months had been the portion of his wife, and he thought it almost better for Ellen to believe her brother dead, than to live on in the indulgence of hopes that might have no foundation; yet how could he tell her he was dead, when there was one gleam of hope, however faint. Well did he know the devoted affection which the orphans bore to each other. He gazed on her in deep commiseration, as in unbroken silence she listened to the tenderly-told tale; and, drawing her once more to his bosom as Mr. Howard ceased, he fondly and repeatedly kissed her brow, as he entreated her not to despair; Edward might yet be saved. No word came from Ellen's parched lips, but he felt the cold shudder of suffering pass through her frame. Several minutes passed, and still she raised not her head. Impressively the venerable clergyman addressed her in tones and words that never failed to find their way to the orphan's heart. He spoke of a love and mercy that sent these continued trials to mark her as more peculiarly His own. He told of comfort, that even in such a moment she could feel. He bade her cease not to pray for her brother's safety; that nothing was too great for the power or the mercy of the Lord; that however it might appear impossible to worldly minds that he could be saved, yet if the Almighty's hand had been stretched forth, a hundred storms might have passed him by unhurt; yet he bade her not entertain too sanguine hopes. "Place our beloved Edward and yourself in the hands of our Father in heaven, my child; implore Him for strength to meet His will, whatever it may be, and if, indeed, He hath taken him in mercy to a happier world, He will give you strength and grace to meet His ordinance of love; but if hope still lingers, check it not—he may be spared. Be comforted, then, my child, and for the sake of the beloved relative yet spared you, try and compose your agitated spirits. We may trust to your care in retaining this fresh grief from her, I know we may."

"You are right. Mr. Howard; oh, may God bless you for your kindness!" said the almost heart-broken girl, as she raised her head and placed her trembling hands in his. Her cheeks were colourless as marble, but the long dark fringes that rested on them were unwetted by tears; she had forcibly sent them back. Her heart throbbed almost to suffocation, but she would not listen to its anguish. The form of Herbert seemed to flit before her and remind her of her promise, that her every care, her every energy should be devoted to his mother; and that remembrance, strengthened as it was by Mr. Howard's words, nerved her to the painful duty which was now hers to perform. "You may indeed trust me. My Father

in heaven will support me, and give me strength to conceal this intelligence effectually, till my beloved aunt is enabled to hear it with composure. Do not fear me, Mr. Maitland; it is not in my own strength I trust, for that I feel too painfully at this moment is less than nothing. My dearest uncle, will you not trust your Ellen?"

She turned towards him as she spoke, and Mr. Hamilton felt the tears glisten in his eyes as he met the upturned glance of the afflicted orphan--now indeed, as it seemed, so utterly alone.

"Yes I do and ever will trust you, my beloved Ellen," he said, with emotion. "May God grant you His blessing in this most painful duty. To Him I commend you, my child; I would speak of comfort and hope, but He alone can give them."

"And He *will*," replied Ellen, in a low, steady voice; and gently withdrawing her hand from Mr. Howard's, she softly but quickly left the library. But half an hour elapsed, and Ellen was once more seated by her aunt's couch. The struggle of that half hour we will not follow; it was too sacred, too painful to be divulged, and many, many solitary hours were thus spent in suffering, known only to herself and to her God.

"You have been long away from me, my Ellen, or else my selfish wish to have you again near me has made me think so," Mrs. Hamilton said that eventful morning.

"Have you then missed me, my dear aunt? I am glad of it, for comfort as it is to be allowed to remain always with you, it is even greater pleasure to think you like to have me near you," replied Ellen.

"Can I do otherwise, my own Ellen? Where can I find a nurse so tender, affectionate, and attentive as you are? Who would know so well how to cheer and soothe me as the child whose smallest action proves how much she loves me?"

Tears glistened in the eyes of Ellen as her aunt spoke, for if she had wanted fresh incentive for exertion, those simple words would have given it. Oh, how much encouragement may be given in one sentence from those we love; how is every effort to please lightened by the consciousness it is appreciated; how is every duty sweetened when we feel we are beloved.

Mrs. Hamilton knew not how that expression of her feelings had fallen on the torn heart of her niece; she guessed not one-half Ellen endured in secret for her sake, but she felt, and showed she felt, the full value of the unremitting affectionate attentions she received.

Days, weeks passed by; at length, Mrs. Hamilton's extreme debility began to give place to the more restless weariness of convalescence. It was comparatively an easy task to sit in continued silence by the couch, actively yet quietly to anticipate her faintest wish, and attend to all the duties of nurse, which demanded no exertion in the way of talking, and other efforts at amusement; there were then very many hours that Ellen's saddened thoughts could dwell on the painful past.

She struggled to behold heaven's mercy in affliction, and rapidly, more rapidly than she was herself aware of, was this young and gentle girl progressing in the paths of grace. Had Herbert and Mary both lived and been united, Ellen would, in all probability, have at length so conquered her feelings, as to have been happy in the marriage state, and though she could not have bestowed the first freshness of young affection, she would ever have so felt and acted as to be in very truth, as Lord St. Eval had said, a treasure to any man who had the felicity to call her his. Had her cousin indeed married, Ellen might have felt it incumbent on her as an actual duty so to conquer herself; but now that he was dead she felt it no sin to love, in devoting herself to his parents in their advancing age, partly for his sake, in associating him with all she did for them, and for all whom he loved; there was no sin now in all this, but she felt it would be a crime to give her hand to another, when her whole heart was thus devoted to the dead. There was something peculiarly soothing to the grateful

and affectionate feelings with which she regarded her aunt and uncle; that she perhaps would be the only one of all those who had---

"Played

Beneath the same green tree,
Whose voices mingled as they prayed
Around one parent knee"---

would remain with nothing to divert her attention from the pleasing task of soothing and cheering their advancing years, and her every effort was now turned towards making her *single* life, indeed, one of *blessedness*, by works of good and thoughts of love towards all with whom she might associate; but in these visions her brother had ever intimately mingled. She had pictured herself beholding and rejoicing in his happiness, loving his children as her own, being to them a second mother. She had fancied herself ever received with joy, a welcome inmate of her Edward's home, and so strongly had her imagination become impressed with this idea, that its annihilation appeared to heighten the anguish with which the news of his untimely fate had overwhelmed her. He was gone; and it seemed as if she had never, never felt so utterly desolate before; as if advancing years had entirely lost the soft and gentle colouring with which they had so lately been invested. It seemed but a very short interval since she had seen him, the lovely, playful child, his mother's pet, the admiration of all who looked on him; then he stood before her, the handsome, manly boy she had parted with, when he first left the sheltering roof of Oakwood, to become a sailor. Then, shuddering, she recalled him when they had met again, after a lapse of suffering in the young life of each; and her too sensitive fancy conjured up the thought that her fault had not yet been sufficiently chastised, that he was taken from her because she had loved him too well; because her deep intense affection for him had caused her once to forget the mandate of her God. In the deep agony of that thought, it seemed as if she lived over again those months of suffering, which in a former pages we have endeavoured to describe.

Humbled to the dust, she recognised the chastising hand of her Maker, and as if it had only now been committed, she acknowledged and repented the transgression a moment's powerful temptation had forced her to commit. Had there been one to whom she could have confessed these feelings, whose soothing friendship would have whispered it was needless and uncalled-for to enhance the suffering of Edward's fate by such self-reproach, Ellen's young heart would have been relieved; but from that beloved relative who might have consoled and alleviated her grief, this bitter trial she must still conceal. Mr. Hamilton dared not encourage the hope which he had never felt but his bosom swelled with love and almost veneration for the gentle being, to whose care Mr. Maitland had assured him the recovery of his beloved wife was, under Providence, greatly owing. He longed to speak of comfort; but, alas! what could he say? he would have praised, encouraged, but there was that about his niece that utterly forbade it; for it silently yet impressively told whence that sustaining strength arose.

It was when Mrs. Hamilton was beginning to recover, that still more active exertions on the part of Ellen were demanded. Every effort was now made to prevent her relapsing into that despondency which convalescence so often engenders, however we may strive to resist it. She was ready at a minute's notice to comply with and often to anticipate her aunt's most faintly-hinted wishes; she would read to her, sing her favourite airs, or by a thousand little winning arts unconsciously entice the interest of her aunt to her various pursuits, as had been her wont in former days. There was no appearance of effort on her part, and Mrs. Hamilton insensibly, at first, but surely felt that with her strength her habitual cheerfulness was returning, and fervently she blessed her God for this abundant mercy. No exertion on her side was wanting to become to her husband and household as she had been before the death of her beloved son; she felt the beautiful flower was transplanted above; the hand of the reaper had laid it low, though the eye of faith beheld it in perfect undying loveliness, and though the mother's heart yet sorrowed, 'twas a sorrow now in which no pain was mingled.

One evening they had been speaking, among other subjects, of Lilla Grahame, whose letters, Mrs. Hamilton had observed, were not written in her usual style. Too well did Ellen guess the reason; once only the poor girl had alluded to Edward's supposed fate, but that once had more than sufficiently betrayed to Ellen's quickly-excited sympathy the true nature of her feelings towards him. As Lilla had not, however, written in perfect confidence, but still as if she feared to write too much on emotions she scarcely understood herself, Ellen had not answered her as she would otherwise have done. That her sympathy was Lilla's was very clearly evident, but as the secrecy preserved towards Mrs. Hamilton had been made known to her by Emmeline, she had not written again on the subject, but yet Ellen was not deceived; in every letter she received she could easily penetrate where Lilla's anxious thoughts were wandering. Of Cecil Grahame there were still no tidings, and, all circumstances considered, it did not seem strange she should often be sorrowful and anxious. On dismissing this subject, Mrs. Hamilton had asked Ellen to sing to her, and selected, as a very old favourite, "The Graves of the Household." She had always forgotten it, she said, before, when Ellen wished her to select one she preferred. She was surprised that Ellen had not reminded her of it, as it had once been an equal favourite with her. For a moment Ellen hesitated, and then hastened to the piano. In a low, sweet, yet unfaltering voice, she complied with her aunt's request; once only her lip quivered, for she could not sing that verse without the thought of Edward.

"The sea, the blue lone sea, hath one,
He lies where pearls lie deep;
He was the loved of all, yet none
O'er his low bed may weep."

Mr. Hamilton unobserved had entered the room, and now stood with folded arms and mournful glance, alternately regarding his wife and niece. Mr. Maitland had that morning told him there was not now the slightest danger remaining, and he rather advised that Mrs. Hamilton should be informed of what had passed, lest the painful intelligence should come upon her when quite unprepared. He had striven for composure, and he now entered expressly to execute this painful task; he had marked the suffering imprinted on his niece's face, and he could continue the deception no longer. On the conclusion of her song, Ellen reseated herself on the stool she had occupied at her aunt's feet, her heart too full to speak.

"Why are you so silent, my dear husband?" Mrs. Hamilton said, addressing him, and who almost started at her address. "May I know the subject of such very deep thought?"

"Ellen, partly," he replied, and he spoke the truth. "I was thinking how pale and thin she looks, and how much she has lately had to distress and cause her anxiety."

"She has, indeed, and therefore the sooner we can leave Oakwood for a few months, as we intended, the better. I have been a long and troublesome patient, my Ellen, and all your efforts to restore me to perfect health will be quite ineffectual unless I see the colour return to your cheek, and your step resume its elasticity."

"Do not fear for me, my beloved aunt; indeed I am quite well," answered Ellen, not daring to look up, lest her tears should be discovered.

"You are right, my Emmeline," suddenly exclaimed Mr. Hamilton, rousing himself with a strong effort, and advancing to the couch where his wife sat, he threw his arms around her. "You do not yet know all that our Ellen has in secret borne for your sake. You do not yet know the deep affliction which is the real cause of that alteration in her health, which only now you are beginning to discover. Oh, my beloved wife, I have feared to tell you, but now that strength is returning, I may hesitate no longer; for her sake you will bear these cruel tidings even as she has done. Will you not comfort her? Will you---" The sudden opening of the door arrested the words upon his lips. Touched by indefinable alarm, Mrs. Hamilton's hand grasped his without the power of speech. Ellen had risen, for she felt she could not hear those sad words

again spoken.

It was James the footman who entered, and he placed a letter in her hand. She looked at the direction, a faint cry broke from her lips; she tore it open, gazed on the signature, and sunk senseless on the floor. She who had borne suffering so well, who had successfully struggled to conceal every trace of emotion, when affliction was her allotted portion, was now too weak to bear the sudden transition from such bitter grief to overwhelming joy. Mr. Hamilton sprung forward; he could not arrest her fall, but his eye had caught the well-known writing of him he had believed lay buried in the ocean, and conquering her own extreme agitation, Mrs. Hamilton compelled herself to think of nothing but restoring the still senseless girl to life. A few, very few words told her all. At first Mr. Hamilton's words had been almost inarticulate from the thankfulness that filled his heart. It was long ere Ellen awoke to consciousness. Her slight frame was utterly exhausted by its continued conflict with the mind within, and now that joy had come, that there was no more need for control or sorrow, her extraordinary energy of character for the moment fled, and left her in very truth the weak and loving woman. Before she could restore life to Ellen's inanimate form, Mrs. Hamilton had time to hear that simple tale of silent suffering, to feel her bosom glow in increasing love and gratitude towards the gentle being who for her sake had endured so much.

"Was it but a dream, or did I not read that Edward lived, was spared,---that he was not drowned? Oh, tell me, my brain seems still to swim. Did they not give me a letter signed by him himself? Oh, was it only fancy?"

"It is truth, my beloved; the Almighty mercifully stretched forth His arm and saved him. Should we not give Him thanks, my child?"

Like dew upon the arid desert, or healing balm to a throbbing wound, so did those few and simple words fall on Ellen's ear; but the fervent thanksgiving that rose swelling in her heart, wanted not words to render it acceptable to Him, whose unbounded mercy she thus acknowledged and adored.

Mrs. Hamilton pressed her closer to her bosom, again and again she kissed her, and tried to speak the words of affectionate soothing, which seldom failed to restore Ellen to composure.

"You told me once, my Ellen, that you never, never could repay the large debt of gratitude you seemed to think you owed me. Do you remember my saying you could not tell that one day you might make me your debtor, and are not my words truth? Did I not prophesy rightly? What do I not owe you, my own love, for sparing me so much anxiety and wretchedness? Look up and smile, my Ellen, and let us try if we can listen composedly to our dear Edward's account of his providential escape. If he were near me I would scold him for giving you such inexpressible joy so suddenly."

Ellen did look up and did smile, a bright beaming smile of chastened happiness, and again and again did she read over that letter, as if it were tidings too blessed to be believed, as if it could not be Edward himself who had written. His letter was hasty, nor did he enter into very many particulars, which, to render a particular part of our tale intelligible, we must relate at large in another chapter. This epistle was dated from Rio Janeiro, and written evidently under the idea that his sister had received a former letter containing every minutiae of his escape, which he had forwarded to her, under cover to Captain Seaforth, only seven days after his supposed death. Had the captain received this letter, all anxiety would have been spared, for as he did not write to Mr. Hamilton for above a week after Edward's disappearance, it would have reached him first; it was therefore very clear it had been lost on its way, and Edward fearing such might be the case, from the uncertain method by which it had been sent, wrote again. He had quite recovered, he said, all ill effects from being so long floating in the water on a narrow plank; that he was treated with marked kindness and attention by all the crew of the *Alma*, a Spanish vessel bound to Rio Janeiro and thence to New York, particularly by an Englishman, Lieutenant Mordaunt, to whose energetic exertions he said he greatly owed his preservation; for it was he who had prevailed on the captain to lower a boat, to discover what that strange object was floating on the waves. He continued, there was

something about Lieutenant Mordaunt he could not define, but which had the power of irresistibly attracting his respect, if not affection. His story he believed was uncommon, but he had not yet heard it all, and had no time to repeat it, as he was writing in great haste. Affectionately he hoped no alarm amongst his friends had been entertained on his account, that it would not be long before he returned home; for as soon as the slow-sailing Spaniard could finish her affairs with the ports along the coast of Spanish America and reach New York, Lieutenant Mordaunt and himself had determined on quitting her, and returning to England by the first packet that sailed. A letter to New York might reach him, but it was a chance; therefore he did not expect to receive any certain intelligence of home---a truth which only made him the more anxious to reach it.

Quickly the news that Edward Fortescue lived, and was returning home in perfect health, extended far and wide, and brought joy to all who heard it. A messenger was instantly despatched to Trevilion Vicarage to impart the joyful intelligence to Arthur and Emmeline, and the next day saw them both at Oakwood to rejoice with Ellen at this unexpected but most welcome news. There was not one who had been aware of the suspense Mr. Hamilton and Ellen had been enduring who did not sympathise in their relief. Even Mrs. Greville left her solitary home to seek the friends of her youth: she had done so previously when affliction was their portion. She had more than once shared Ellen's anxious task of nursing, when Mrs. Hamilton's fever had been highest; kindly and judiciously she had soothed in grief, and Mrs. Greville's character was too unselfish to refuse her sympathy in joy.

A few weeks after the receipt of that letter, Mr. Hamilton, his wife, and Ellen removed to a beautiful little villa in the neighbourhood of Richmond, where they intended to pass some of the winter months. A change was desirable, indeed requisite for all. But a short interval had passed since the death of their beloved Herbert, and there were many times when the parents' hearts yet painfully bled, and each felt retirement, the society of each other, and sometimes of their most valued friends, the exercise of domestic and religious duties, would be the most efficient means of acquiring that peace of which even the greatest affliction cannot deprive the truly religious mind. At Christmas, St. Eval had promised his family should join them, and all looked forward to that period with pleasure.

CHAPTER X.

Although we are as much averse to retrospection in a tale as our readers can be, yet to retrace our steps for a short interval is a necessity. Edward had written highly of Lieutenant Mordaunt, but as he happens to be a personage of rather more consequence to him than young Fortescue imagined, we must be allowed to introduce him more intimately to our readers.

It was the evening after that in which Lieutenant Fortescue had so rashly encountered the storm, that a Spanish vessel, of ill-shaped bulk and of some hundred tons, was slowly pursuing her course from the coast of Guinea towards Rio Janeiro. The sea was calm, almost motionless, compared with its previous fearful agitation. The sailors were gaily employed in their various avocations, declaring loudly that this respite of calm was entirely owing to the interposition of St. Jago in their favour, he being the saint to whom they had last appealed during the continuance of the tempest. Aloof from the crew, and leaning against a mast, stood one apparently very different to those by whom he was surrounded. It was an English countenance, but embrowned almost to a swarthy hue, from continued exposure to a tropical sun. Tall and remarkably well formed, he might well have been supposed of noble birth; there were, however, traces of long-continued suffering imprinted on his manly face and in his form, which sometimes was slightly bent, as if from weakness rather than from age. His dark brown hair was in many parts silvered with grey, which made him appear as if he had seen some fifty years at least; though at times, by the expression of his countenance, he might have been thought full ten years younger. Melancholy was the characteristic of his features; but his eye would kindle and that cheek flush, betraying that a high, warm spirit still lurked within, one which a keen observer might have fancied had been suppressed by injury and suffering. It was in truth a countenance on which a physiognomist or painter would have loved to dwell, for both would have found in it an interest they could scarcely have defined.

Thus resting in meditative silence, Lieutenant Mordaunt's attention was attracted by a strange object floating on the now calm ocean. There were no ships near, and Mordaunt felt his eyes fascinated in that direction, and looking still more attentively, he felt convinced it was a human body secured to a plank. He sought the captain instantly, and used every persuasion humanity could dictate to urge him to lower a boat. For some time he entreated in vain. Captain Bartholomew said it was mere folly to think there was any chance of saving a man's life, who had been so long tossed about on the water, it would be only detaining him for nothing; his ship was already too full either for comfort or profit, and he would not do it.

Fire flashed from the dark eyes of Mordaunt at the captain's positive and careless language, and he spoke again with all the spirited eloquence of a British sailor. He did not spare the cruel recklessness that could thus refuse to save a fellow-creature's life, merely because it might occasion a little delay and trouble. Captain Bartholomew looked at him in astonishment; he little expected such a burst of indignant feeling from one whose melancholy and love of solitude he had despised; and, without answering a word, led the way to the deck, looked in the direction of the plank, which had now floated near enough to the ship for the body of Edward to be clearly visible upon it, and then instantly commanded a boat to be lowered and bring it on board.

"It will be but taking him out of the sea to plunge him back again, Senor," he said, in Spanish, to the Lieutenant, who was now anxiously watching the proceedings of the sailors, who, more active than their captain, had carefully laid the plank and its burden at the bottom of the boat, and were now rapidly rowing to the ship. "Never was death more clearly imprinted on a man's countenance than it is there, but have your own will; only do not ask me to keep a dead man on board, I should have my men mutiny in a twinkling."

Mordaunt made him no answer, but hastened towards the gangway, where the men were now ascending. They carefully unloosed the bonds that attached the body to the plank, and laid him on a pile of cushions where the light of the setting sun shone full on his face and form. One glance sufficed for Mordaunt to perceive he was an English officer; another caused him to start some paces back in astonishment. As the youth thus lay, the deadly paleness of his countenance, the extreme fairness of his throat and part of his neck, which, as the sailors hastily untied his neckcloth and opened his jacket, were fully exposed to view, the beautifully formed brow strewed by thick masses of golden curls gave him so much the appearance of a delicate female, that the sailors looked humorously at each other, as if wondering what right he had to a sailor's jacket; but Mordaunt's eyes never moved from him. Thoughts came crowding over him, so full of youth, of home and joy, that tears gushed to his eyes, tears which had not glistened there for many a long year; and yet he knew not wherefore, he knew not, he could not, had he been asked, have defined the cause of that strong emotion; but the more he looked upon that beautiful face, the faster and thicker came those visions on his soul. Memories came rushing back, days of his fresh and happy boyhood, affections, long slumbering, recalled in all their purity, and his bosom yearned towards home, as if no time had elapsed since last he had beheld it, as if he should find all those he loved even as he had left them. And what had brought them back? who was the youth on whom he gazed, and towards whom he felt affection strangely and suddenly aroused, affection so powerful, he could not shake it off? Nothing in all probability to him; and vainly he sought to account for the emotions those bright features awakened within him. Rousing himself, as symptoms of life began to appear in the exhausted form before him, he desired that the youth might be carried to his own cabin. He was his countryman, he said; an officer of equal rank it appeared, from his epaulette, and he should not feel comfortable were he under the care of any other. On bearing him from the deck to the cabin, a small volume fell from his loosened vest, which Mordaunt raised from the ground with some curiosity, to know what could be so precious to a youthful sailor. It was a pocket Bible, so much resembling one Mordaunt possessed himself, that scarcely knowing what he was about, he drew it from his pocket to compare them. "How can I be so silly?" he thought; "is there anything strange in two English Bibles resembling each other?" He replaced his own, opened the other, and started in increased amazement. "Charles Manvers!" he cried, as that name met his eye. "Merciful heaven! who is this youth? to whom would this Bible ever have been given?" So great was his agitation, that it was with difficulty he read the words which were written beneath.

"Edward Fortescue! oh, when will that name rival his to whom this book once belonged? I may be as brave a sailor, but what will make me as good a man? This Sacred Book, he loved it, and so will I." Underneath, and evidently added at a later period, was the following:

"I began to read this for the sake of those beloved ones to whom I knew it was all in all. I thought, for its own sake, it would never have become the dear and sacred volume they regarded it, but I am mistaken; how often has it soothed me in my hour of temptation, guided me in my duties, restrained my angry moments, and brought me penitent and humble to the footstool of my God. Oh, my beloved Ellen, had this been my companion three years ago as it is now, what misery I should have spared you."

Other memorandums in the same style were written in the blank leaves which appeared attached for the purpose, but it so happened that not one of them solved the mystery which so completely puzzled Mordaunt. The name of Fortescue was utterly unknown to him, and increased the mystery of the youth's having produced such a strange effect upon his mind. There were many names introduced in these memorandums, but they explained nothing; one only struck him, it was one which in his hours of suffering, of slavery, ever sounded in his ear, the fondly-remembered name of her whom he longed to clasp to his aching heart---it was *Emmeline*; and as he read it, the same gush of memory came over him as when he first gazed on Edward. In vain reason whispered there were many, very many Emmelines in his native land; that name only brought one to his remembrance. Though recovering, the youth was still much too weak and exhausted to attempt speaking, and Mordaunt watched by his couch for one day and two nights, ere the surgeon permitted him to ask a question or Edward to answer it. Often, however, during that interval had the young stranger turned his bright blue eyes with a look of intelligence and feeling on him who attended him with the care of a father, and the colour, the expression of those eyes seemed to thrill to Mordaunt's heart, and speak even yet more forcibly of days gone by.

"Let me write but two lines, to tell Captain Seaforth I am safe and well," said Edward impetuously, as he sprung with renewed spirits from the couch on which he had been so long an unwilling prisoner.

"And how send it, my young friend? There is not a vessel within sight on the wide sea."

Edward uttered an exclamation of impatience, then instantly checking himself, said, with a smile---

"Forgive me, sir; I should think only of my merciful preservation, and of endeavouring to express in some manner my obligations to you, to whose generous exertions, blessed as they were by heaven, I owe my life. Oh, would that my aunt and sister were near me, their gratitude for the preservation of one whom they perhaps too fondly and too partially love, would indeed be gratifying to feelings such as yours. I can feel what I owe you, Lieutenant Mordaunt, but I cannot express myself sufficiently in words."

"In the name of heaven, young man, in pity tell me who you are!" gasped Mordaunt, almost inarticulately, as he grasped Edward's hand and gazed intently on his face; for every word he spoke, heightened by the kindling animation of his features, appeared to render that extraordinary likeness yet more perfect.

"Edward Fortescue is my name."

"But your mother's, boy,---your mother's? I ask not from idle curiosity."

"She was the youngest daughter of Lord Delmont, Eleanor Manvers."

Mordaunt gazed yet more intently on the youth, then hoarsely murmuring, "I knew it,---it was no fancy," sunk back almost overpowered with momentary agitation. Recovering himself almost instantly, and before Edward could give vent

to his surprise and sympathy in words, he asked, "Is Lord Delmont yet alive? I knew him once; he was a kind old man." His lip quivered, so as almost to prevent the articulation of his words.

"Oh, no; the departure of my mother for India was a trial he never recovered, and the intelligence that his only son, a noble and gallant officer, perished with the crew of the *Leander*, finally broke his heart; he never held up his head again, and died a very few months afterwards."

Mordaunt buried his face in his hands, and for several minutes remained silent, as if struggling with some powerful emotion, then asked, "You spoke only of your aunt and sister. Does not your mother live?"

"She died when I was little more than eleven years old, and my sister scarcely ten. My father, Colonel Fortescue, dying in India, she could not bear to remain there, but we were compelled to take refuge off the coast of Wales from the storms which had arisen, and then she had only time to give us to the care of her sister, for whom she had sent, and died in her arms."

"And is it her sister, or your father's, of whom you spoke just now?"

"Hers---Mrs. Hamilton."

"Hamilton, and she lives still! you said you knew her," repeated Mordaunt, suddenly springing up and speaking in a tone of animation, that bewildered Edward almost as much as his former agitation. "Speak of her, young man; tell me something of her. Oh, it is long since I have heard her name."

"Did you know my aunt? I have never heard her mention your name, Lieutenant Mordaunt."

"Very likely not," he replied, and a faint smile played round his lip, creating an expression which made young Fortescue start, for the features seemed familiar to him. "It was only in my boyhood that I knew her, and she was kind to me. We do not easily forget the associations of our boyhood, my young friend, particularly when manhood has been a dreary blank, or tinged with pain. In my hours of slavery, the smile and look of Emmeline Manvers has often haunted my waking and my sleeping dreams; but she is married---is in all probability a happy wife and loving mother; prosperity is around her, and it is most likely she has forgotten the boy to whom her kindness was so dear."

"Hours of slavery?" asked Edward, for those words had alone riveted his attention. "Can you, a free and British sailor, have ever been a slave?"

"Even so, my young friend; for seven years I languished in the loathsome dungeons of Algiers, and the last sixteen years have been a slave."

Edward grasped his hand with an uncontrollable impulse, while at the same moment he clenched his sword, and his countenance expressed the powerful indignation of his young and gallant spirit, though words for the moment he had none. Lieutenant Mordaunt again smiled---that smile which by some indefinable power inspired Edward with affection and esteem.

"I am free now, my gallant boy," he said; "free as if the galling fetters of slavery had never bowed down my neck. Another day you shall hear more. Now gratify me by some account of your aunt; speak of her---tell me if she have children---if her husband still lives. If Mrs. Hamilton is still the same gentle, affectionate being---the same firm, unflinching character, when duty called her, as the Emmeline Manvers it was once my joy to know."

With an animation that again riveted the eyes of Lieutenant Mordaunt on his countenance, Edward eagerly entered on the subject. No other could have been dearer to him; Mordaunt could have fixed on few which would thus have called forth the eloquence of his young companion. Sailor as he was, truly enthusiastic in his profession, yet home to Edward still possessed invincible attractions, and the devoted affection, gratitude, and reverence he felt for his aunt appeared to increase with his years. Neither Percy nor Herbert could have loved her more. He spoke as he felt; he told of all he owed her, and not only himself but his orphan sister; he said that as a mother she had been to them both, that never once had she made the slightest difference between them and her own children. He painted in vivid colours the domestic joys of Oakwood, the affectionate harmony that reigned there, till Mordaunt felt his eyes glisten with emotion, and ere that conversation ceased, all that affection which for many a long and weary year had pined for some one on which to expend its force, now centred in the noble youth of whose preservation he had been so strangely and providentially an instrument. To Edward it was not in the least strange, that any one who had once known his aunt, it mattered not how many years previous, should still retain a lively remembrance of her, and wish to know more concerning her, and his feelings were strongly excited towards one, whose interest in all that concerned her was evidently so great. His first letter to his family, which he enclosed in one to his captain, spoke very much of Lieutenant Mordaunt, wondering that his aunt had never mentioned one who remembered her so well. This letter, as we know, was never received, and the next he wrote was too hurried to enter into particulars, except those that related to himself alone. When he again wrote home, he had become so attached and so used to Mordaunt, that he fancied he must be as well known to his family as himself, and though he mentioned his name repeatedly, he did not think of inquiring anything concerning him.

The able activity as a sailor, the graceful, courteous manner of Edward as a man, soon won him the hearts of Captain Bartholomew and all his crew. Ever the first when there was anything to be done on board or on shore, lively, high-spirited, and condescending, his appearance on deck after any absence was generally acknowledged with respect. The various characters thus presented to his notice in the Spanish crew, the many ports he touched at, afforded him continual and exciting amusement, although his thoughts very often lingered on his darling "Gem," with the ardent desire to be once more doing his duty on her decks. But amid all these changing scenes, Edward and his friend, diverse as were their ages and apparently their dispositions, became almost inseparable. An irresistible impulse urged Edward repeatedly to talk to him of his home, till Mordaunt became intimately acquainted with every member of the family. Of Herbert, Edward would speak with enthusiasm; he little knew, poor fellow, that the cousin whose character he almost venerated was gone to his last home, that he should never see him more. Letters detailing that melancholy event had been forwarded to the Gem, arriving there just one week after the young sailor's disappearance; and, when informed of his safety, Captain Seaforth, then on his way to England, had no opportunity of forwarding them to him. His repeated mention of Herbert in his letters home, his anxious desire to hear something of him, were most painful to his family, and Ellen was more than ever anxious he should receive the account ere he returned.

Among other subjects discussed between them, Mordaunt once asked Edward who now bore the title of Lord Delmont, and had appeared somewhat agitated when told the title was now extinct, and had become so from the melancholy death of the promising young nobleman on whom it had devolved.

"Sir George Wilmot is out in his prognostication then," he observed, after a pause. "I remember, when a youngster under his command, hearing him repeatedly prophesy that a Delmont would revive the honour of his ancient house by naval fame. Poor Charles was ever his favourite amongst us."

"You were my uncle's messmate then," said Edward, in a tone of surprise and joy. "Why did you not tell me this before, that I might ask all the questions I long to know concerning him?"

"And what have you heard of Charles to call for this extreme interest?" replied Mordaunt, with his peculiar smile. "I should have thought that long ere this my poor friend had been forgotten in his native land."

"Forgotten! and by a sister who doted on him; who has never ceased to lament his melancholy fate; who ever held him up to my young fancy as one of those whom it should be my glory to resemble. Did you know my aunt, as, by two or three things I have heard you say, I fancy you must, you could never suspect her of forgetting one she loved as she did her brother. My uncle Charles is enshrined in her memory too fondly for time to efface it."

Tears rose to Mordaunt's eager eyes at these words; he turned aside a moment to conceal his agitation, then asked if Sir George Wilmot ever spoke of Manvers. Animatedly Edward related the old Admiral's agitation the first night he had seen him at Oakwood; how feelingly he had spoken of one, whom he said he had ever regarded as the adopted son of his affections, the darling of his childless years, his gallant, merry Charles. Mordaunt twined his arm in Edward's, and looked up in his face, as if to thank him for the consolation his words imparted. Again was there an expression in his countenance, which sent a thrill to the young man's heart, but vainly he tried to discover wherefore.

We may here perhaps relate in a very few words Mordaunt's tale of suffering, which he imparted at different times to Edward. The wreck of the vessel to which he belonged had cast him, with one or two others of his hapless companions, on the coast of Morocco and Algiers. There they were seized by the cruel Moors, and carried as spies before the Dey, and by his command immured in the dungeons of the fortress where many unhappy captives were also confined, and had been for many years. For eight years he was an inmate of these horrible prisons, a sickening witness of many of those tortures and cruelties which were inflicted on his fellow-prisoners, and often on himself. All those at all acquainted with the bombardment of Algiers, so ably carried on by Admiral Sir Edward Pellew, afterwards Viscount Exmouth, an enterprise which was entered on to avenge the atrocious indignities practised by the Dey on all the unfortunate foreigners that visited his coast, can well imagine the sufferings Mordaunt had not only to witness but to endure. On the first report of a hostile fleet appearing off the coast of Barbary, the most active and able of the prisoners were marched out to various markets and there sold as slaves. Mordaunt was one of these: imprisonment and suffering had not quenched his youthful spirit, nor so bowed his frame as to render him incapable of energy. Scarcely twenty when this cruel reverse of fortune overtook him, the tortures of his mind during the eight, nearly nine, years of his captivity may be better conceived than described. He had entered prison a boy, with all the fresh, elastic buoyancy of youth, he quitted it a man; but, oh, how was that manhood's prime, to which in his visions of futurity he had looked with such bright anticipation as the zenith of his naval fame, now about to pass? as a slave; exposed to increased oppression and indignity on account of his religion, which he had inwardly vowed never to give up. He secured the Bible, which had first been a treasure to him merely as the gift of a beloved sister, and throughout all his change of destiny it was never taken from him. To submit calmly to slavery, Mordaunt felt at first his spirit never could, and various were the schemes he planned, and in part executed, towards obtaining his freedom, but all were eventually frustrated by the observation of his masters, who were too well accustomed to insubordination on the part of their slaves for such attempts to cause them much trouble or uneasiness. Still Mordaunt despaired not; still was the hope of freedom uppermost in his breast, even when he became the property of a Turk, who, had he been but a Christian, Mordaunt declared, must have commanded his reverence if not his affection. Five times he had been exposed for sale, and each master had appeared to him more cruel and oppressive than the last. To relate all he suffered would occupy a much larger portion of our tale than we could allow, but they were such that any one but Mordaunt would have felt comparative contentment and happiness when changed for the service of Mahommed Ali, an officer of eminence in the court of Tunis. He was indeed one who might well exemplify the assertion, that in all religions there is some good. Suffering and sorrow were aliens from his roof, misery approached not his doors, and Mordaunt had, in fact, been purchased from motives of compassion, which his evident wretchedness, both bodily and mental, had excited; to cure his bodily ills no kindly attention was spared, but vainly Mahommed Ali sought to lessen the load of anguish he saw imprinted on the brow of his Christian captive. Mordaunt's noble spirit was touched by the indulgence and kindness he received, and he made no effort to escape, for he felt it would be but an ungenerous, dishonourable return---but still he was a slave. No fetters galled his limbs, but the fetters of slavery galled his spirits with a deep anguish; no taskmaster was now set over him with the knotted whip, to spur on each slackening effort; but the groan which no bodily suffering could wring, which he had suppressed, lest his persecutors should triumph, now burst from his sorrowing heart, and scalding drops stole down his cheeks, when he deemed no eye was near. Slavery,

slavery seemed his for ever, and each fond vision of his native land and all he loved but added to the burden on his soul.

Mahommed at length became so deeply interested in his Christian slave, that he offered him freedom, wealth, distinction, his own friendship and support, all on the one, he thought, simple and easy condition of giving up his country and his faith, and embracing the one holy creed of Mahomet. In kindness was the offer made, but mournfully, yet with a steadiness that gave no hope of change, was it refused; vainly Mahommed urged the happiness its acceptance would bring, that he knew not all he so rashly refused; still he wavered not, and Ali with a weary heart gave up the attempt. Time passed, but its fleeting years reconciled not Mordaunt to his situation, nor lessened the kindly interest he excited in the heart of the good old man; and when at length it happened that Mordaunt, almost unconsciously to himself, became the fortunate instrument of reconciling some affairs of his master, which were in confusion, and had been so for years, when, among many other unexpected services which it had been in his power to perform, he rescued the favourite son of Mahommed from an infuriated tiger, which had unexpectedly sprung upon him during a hunting expedition, the old man could contain his wishes no longer, but gave him his freedom on the spot. Unconditional liberty to return to his native land was very soon after accorded, and loading him with rich gifts, Ali himself accompanied him to the deck of the *Alma*, which was the only vessel then starting from the coast of Guinea, where Mahommed in general resided. Mordaunt was too impatient to wait for an English vessel, nor did he wish to incur the risk of encountering any hostile to his interests, by crossing the country and embarking from Algiers or Tunis. While in Africa he felt that the chain of slavery still hovered round his neck. He could not feel himself once more a freeborn Briton till he was indeed on the bounding ocean.

Once on the way to Europe, there was hope, even though that way was by America. He parted from his former master, now his friend, with a feeling of regret; but the fresh breezes, the consciousness he stood on deck free as the wind, free as the ocean that bore him onward to his native land, removed from his mind all lingering dread, and filled his soul with joy; but the human heart is not now in a state to feel for any length of time unchecked happiness. Four-and-twenty years had elapsed since Mordaunt had been imagined dead; six-and-twenty since he had departed from his native land, and had last beheld his friends he so dearly loved. He might return, and be by all considered an intruder, perhaps not recognised, his tale not believed; he might see his family scattered, all of them with new ties, new joys, and with no place for the long-absent exile. The thought was anguish, but Mordaunt had weakly indulged it too long to enable him at first to conquer it, even when Edward's tale of the fond remembrance in which his uncle was held by all who had loved him, unconsciously penetrated his soul with a sense of the injustice he had done his friends, and brought consolation with it.

These facts, which we have so briefly thrown together, formed most interesting subjects to Edward many times during his voyage to New York. Edward hung as in fascination on the stranger's history, innate nobleness was stamped in every word. More than once the thought struck him that he was more than what he appeared to be, but Edward knew he had a slight tendency towards romance in his composition, and fearful of lowering himself in the estimation of his newfound friend by the avowal of such fanciful sentiments, he kept them to himself.

At length the wished-for port to both the Englishmen (New York) was gained, and their passage secured in the first packet sailing for England. Edward's heart beat high with anticipated pleasure; he longed to introduce his new friend to his family, and his bright anticipations shed a kindred glow over the mind of Mordaunt, who had now become so devotedly attached to the youth, that he could scarcely bear him out of his sight; and had he wanted fresh incentive to affection, the deep affliction of the young sailor on receiving the intelligence of his cousin Herbert's death, would have been sufficient. Edward had one day sought the post-office, declaring, however, that it was quite impossible such increased joy could be in store for him, as a letter from home. There were two instead of one: one from his aunt and uncle, the other from his sister; the black seal painfully startled him. Mourning for poor Mary is over long ere this, he thought, and scarcely had he strength to break the seal, and when he had read the fatal news, he sat for some time as if overwhelmed with the sudden and unexpected blow.

Mordaunt's words of consolation fell at first unheeded on his ear; it was not for Herbert alone he sorrowed, it was for his aunt. He knew how devotedly she loved her son, and though she did not write much on the actual loss she had sustained, yet every word seemed to reach his heart, and Edward leaned his head upon the paper, and wept like a child. Herbert, the bright, the good, the gentle companion of his boyhood, the faithful friend of his maturer years, had he indeed gone---his place would know him no more? And oh, how desolate must Oakwood seem. Percy, though in affection for his parents and his family, in his devoted attention to their comfort, equalled only by his brother, yet never could he be to Oakwood as Herbert. He was as the brilliant planet, shedding lustre indeed on all over whom it gleamed, but never still, continually roving, changing its course, as if its light would be more glittering from such unsteady movements; but Herbert was as the mild and lucid star, stationary in its appointed orbit, gilding all things with its mellow light, but darting its most intense and radiant lustre on that home which was to him indeed the centre-point of love. Such was the description of his two cousins given by Edward to his sympathising companion, and Mordaunt looked on the young sailor in wondering admiration. Eagerly, delightedly, he had perused the letters, which Edward intrusted to him; that of Mrs. Hamilton was pressed to his lips, but engrossed in his own thoughts, Edward observed him not. Sadness lingered on Edward's heart during the whole of that voyage homeward; his conversation was tinged with the same spirit, but it brought out so many points of his character, which in his joyous moods Mordaunt never could have discovered, that the links of that strangely-aroused affection became even stronger than before. Edward returned his regard with all the warmth of his enthusiastic nature strengthened by the manner in which his letters from home alluded to Lieutenant Mordaunt as his preserver; and before their voyage was completed, Mordaunt, in compliance with the young man's earnest entreaty, consented to accompany him, in the first place, to Richmond, whence Edward promised, after introducing him to his family, and finding him a safe harbour there, he would leave no stone unturned to discover every possible information concerning Mordaunt's family. That same peculiar smile curled the stranger's lips as Edward thus animatedly spoke, and he promised unqualified compliance.

Having thus brought Edward and his friend within but a few weeks' voyage to England, we may now leave them and return to Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, who were both rejoicing in the improved looks of their niece at Richmond.

The delightful calmness of their beautiful retreat, the suspension of all anxiety, the total change of scene which was around them, had done much towards restoring peace, not only to Ellen but to her aunt. The feeling that she was now indeed called upon to fulfil the promise she had made to Herbert, that the enjoyment and cheerfulness of home depended on her alone, had inspired exertions which had partially enabled her to conquer her own grief; and every week seemed to bring forward some new quality, of which her relatives imagined they must have been ignorant before. Ellen's character was one not to attract at first, but to win affection slowly but surely; her merits were not dazzling, it was generally long before they were all discovered, but when they were, they ever commanded reverence and love. In all her children Mrs. Hamilton felt indeed her cares fully repaid, and in Ellen more, far more than she had ventured to anticipate. Thus left alone in her filial cares, Ellen's character appeared different to what it had been when one of many. Steady, quiet cheerfulness was restored to the hearts of all who now composed the small domestic circle of Mr. Hamilton's family; each had their private moments when sorrow for the loss of their beloved Herbert was indeed recalled in all its bitterness, but such sacred hours never were permitted to tinge their daily lives with gloom.

They were now in daily expectation of St. Eval's return to England, with Miss Manvers, who, at Mrs. Hamilton's particular request, was to join their family party. An understanding had taken place between her and Percy, but not yet did either intend their engagement to be known. The sympathy and affection of Louisa were indeed most soothing to Percy in this affliction, which, even when months had passed, he could not conquer, but he could not think of entering into the bonds of marriage, even with the woman he sincerely loved, till his heart could, in some degree, recover the deep wound which the death of his only brother had so painfully inflicted. To his parents indeed, and all his family, he revealed his engagement, and Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton anxiously anticipated the return of Lord and Lady St. Eval, to introduce them to the intended bride of their only son. Their intention was to remain at Richmond till the spring, when Arthur and his wife would pay their promised visit at Oakwood, instead of spending the Christmas with them---an

arrangement Emmeline had herself suggested; because, she said, if she and her husband were away, the family party which had ever assembled at Oakwood during that festive season would be broken up, and Herbert's absence be less painfully felt. Mrs. Hamilton noticed it to none, but her penetration discovered the cause of this change in Emmeline's intentions, and tears of delicious feeling filled her eyes, as for a moment she permitted that gentle and affectionate girl to occupy that thought which she was about to bestow on Herbert.

"We have received interesting news this morning, my dear Arthur," Mrs. Hamilton said, as her husband entered the parlour, where she and Ellen were seated. "Lucy Harcourt is returning to England, and has requested us to look out for a little cottage for her near Oakwood. The severe illness, and finally the death of her cousin, Mr. Seymour, has been the cause of my not hearing from her so long. Poor fellow, he has been for so many years such a sad sufferer, that a peaceful death must indeed be a blessed release."

"It was a peaceful death, Lucy writes, mournfully but resignedly; she says she cannot be sufficiently thankful that he was spared long enough to see his daughters would both be happy under her charge. That she had gained their young affections, and that, as far as mortal eye could see, by leaving them entirely under her guardianship and maternal care, he had provided for their happiness. He said this almost with his last breath; and poor Lucy says that, among her many consolations in this trying time, this assertion was not one of the least precious to her heart."

"No doubt it was. To be the friend and adopted mother of his children must be one of the many blessings created for herself by her noble conduct in youth. I am glad now my prophecy was not verified, and that she never became his wife."

"Did you ever think she would, uncle?" asked Ellen, surprised.

"I fancied Seymour must have discovered her affection, and then admiration on his part would have done the rest. It is, I own, much better as it is; his children will love her more, regarding her in the light of his sister and their aunt, than had she become their stepmother. But why did you seem so surprised at my prophecy, Nelly? Was there anything very impossible in their union?"

"Not impossible; but I do not think it likely Miss Harcourt would have betrayed her affection, at the very time when she was endeavouring to soothe her cousin for the loss of a beloved wife. She was much more likely to conceal it, even more effectually than she had ever done before. Nor do I think it probable Mr. Seymour, accustomed from his very earliest years to regard her as a sister, could ever succeed in looking on her in any other light."

"You seem well skilled in the history of the human heart, my little Ellen," said her uncle, smiling. "Do you think it then quite impossible for cousins to love?"

Ellen bent lower over her embroidery-frame, for she felt a tell-tale flush was rising to her cheek, and without looking up, replied calmly---

"Miss Harcourt is a proof that such love can and does exist---more often, perhaps, in a woman's heart. In a man seldom, unless educated and living entirely apart from each other."

"I think you are right, Ellen," said her aunt. "I never thought, with your uncle, that Lucy would become Mr. Seymour's wife."

"Had I prophesied such a thing, uncle, what would you have called me?" said Ellen, looking up archly from her frame, for the momentary flush had gone.

"That it was the prophecy of a most romantic young lady, much more like Emmeline's heroics than the quiet, sober Ellen," he answered, in the same tone; "but as my own idea, of course it is wisdom itself. But jokes apart, as you are so skilled in the knowledge of the human heart, my dear Ellen, you must know I entered this room to-day for the purpose of probing your own."

"Mine!" exclaimed the astonished girl, turning suddenly pale; "what do you mean?"

"Only that the Rev. Ernest Lacy has been with me this morning entreating my permission to address you, and indeed making proposals for your hand. I told him that my permission he could have, with my earnest wishes for his success, and that I did not doubt your aunt's consent would be as readily given. Do not look so terribly alarmed; I told him I could not let the matter proceed any farther without first speaking to you."

"Pray let it go no farther, then, my dear uncle," said Ellen, very earnestly, as her needle fell from her hand, and she turned her eyes beseechingly on her uncle's face. "I thank Mr. Lacy for the high opinion he must have of me in making me this offer, but indeed I cannot accept it. Do not, by your consent, let him encourage hopes which must end in disappointment."

"My approbation I cannot withdraw, Ellen, for most sincerely do I esteem the young man; and there are few whom I would so gladly behold united to my family as himself. Why do you so positively refuse to hear him? You may not know him sufficiently now, I grant you, to love him, yet believe me, the more you know him the more will you find in him both to esteem and love."

"I do not doubt it, my dear uncle. He is one among the young men who visit here whom I most highly esteem, and I should be sorry to lose his friendship by the refusal of his hand."

"But why not allow him to plead for himself? You are not one of those romantic beings, Ellen, who often refuse an excellent offer, because they imagine they are not violently in love."

"Pray do not condemn me as such, my dear uncle; indeed, it is not the case. Mr. Lacy, the little I know of him, appears to possess every virtue calculated to make an excellent husband. I know no fault to which I can bring forward any objection; but"---

"But what, my dear niece? Surely, you are not afraid of speaking freely before your aunt and myself?"

"No, uncle; but I have little to say except that I have no wish to marry; that it would be more pain to leave you and my aunt than marriage could ever compensate."

"Why, Nelly, do you mean to devote yourself to us all your young life, old and irritable as we shall in all probability become? think again, my dear girl, many enjoyments, much happiness, as far as human eye can see, await the wife of Lacy. Emmeline, you are silent; do you not agree with me in wishing to behold our gentle Ellen the wife of one so universally beloved as this young clergyman?"

"Not if her wishes lead her to remain with us, my husband," replied Mrs. Hamilton, impressively. She had not spoken before, for she had been too attentively observing the fluctuation of Ellen's countenance; but now her tone was such as to check the forced smile with which her niece had tried to reply to Mr. Hamilton's suggestion of becoming old and irritable, and bring the painfully-checked tears back to her eyes, too powerfully to be restrained. She tried to retain her calmness, but the effort was vain, and springing from her seat, she flew to the couch where her aunt sat, and kneeling by her side, buried her face on her shoulder, and murmured, almost inaudibly,---

"Oh, do not, do not bid me leave you, I am happy here; but elsewhere, oh, I should be so very, very wretched. I own Mr. Lacy is all that I could wish for in a husband; precious, indeed, would be his love to any girl who could return it, but not to me; oh, not to one who can give him nothing in return."

She paused abruptly; the crimson had mounted to both cheek and brow, and the choking sob prevented farther utterance.

Mrs. Hamilton pressed her lips to Ellen's heated brow in silence, while her husband looked at his niece in silent amazement.

"Are your affections then given to another, my dear child?" he said, gently and tenderly; "but why this overwhelming grief, my Ellen? Surely, you do not believe we could thwart the happiness of one so dear to us, by refusing our consent to the man of your choice, if he be worthy of you? Speak, then, my dear girl, without reserve; who has so secretly gained your young affections, that for his sake every other offer is rejected?"

Ellen raised her head and looked mournfully in her uncle's face. She tried to obey, but voice for the moment failed.

"*My love is given to the dead*" she murmured at length, clasping her aunt's hands in hers, the words slowly falling from her parched lips; then added, hurriedly, "oh, do not reprove my weakness, I thought my secret never would have passed my lips in life, but wherefore should I hide it now? It is no sin to love the dead, though had he lived, never would I have ceased to struggle till this wild pang was conquered, till calmly I could have beheld him happy with the wife of his choice, of his love. Oh, condemn me not for loving one who never thought of me save as a sister; one whom I knew from his boyhood loved another. None on earth can tell how I have struggled to subdue myself. I knew not my own heart till it was too late to school it into apathy. He has gone, but while my heart still clings to Herbert only, oh, can I give my hand unto another?"

"Herbert!" burst from Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton at the same instant, and Ellen, turning from their glance, hid her flushing and paling cheek in her hands; for a moment there was silence, and then Mrs. Hamilton drew the agitated girl closer to her, and murmuring, in a tone of intense feeling, "my poor, poor Ellen!" mingled a mother's tears with those of her niece. Mr. Hamilton looked on them both with extreme emotion; his mind's eye rapidly glanced over the past, and in an instant he saw what a heavy load of suffering must have been his niece's portion from the first moment she awoke to the consciousness of her ill-fated love; and how had she borne it? so uncomplainingly, so cheerfully, that no one could suspect that inward sorrow. When cheering himself and his wife under their deep affliction, it was with her own heart breaking all the while. When inciting Herbert to exertion, during that painful trial occasioned by his Mary's letter, when doing everything in her power to secure his happiness, what must have been her own feelings? Yes, in very truth she had loved, loved with all the purity, the self-devotedness of woman; and Mr. Hamilton felt that which at the moment he could not speak. He raised his niece from the ground, where she still knelt beside her aunt, folded her to his bosom, kissed her tearful cheek, and placing her in Mrs. Hamilton's arms, hastily left the room.

The same thoughts had likewise occupied the mind of her aunt, as Ellen still seemed to cling to her for support and comfort; but they were mingled with a sensation almost amounting to self-reproach at her own blindness in not earlier discovering the truth. Why not imagine Ellen's affections fixed on Herbert as on Arthur Myrvin? both were equally probable. She could now well understand Ellen's agitation when Herbert's engagement with Mary was published, when he performed the marriage ceremony for Arthur and Emmeline; and when Mrs. Hamilton recalled how completely Ellen had appeared to forget herself, in devotedness to her; how, instead of weakly sinking beneath her severe trials, she had borne up through all, had suppressed her own suffering to alleviate those of others, was it strange, that admiration and respect should mingle with the love she bore her? that from that hour Ellen appeared dearer to her aunt than she had ever done before? Nor was it only on this account her affection increased. For the sake of her beloved son it was that her niece refused to marry; for love of him, even though he had departed, her heart rejected every other love; and the fond

mother unconsciously felt soothed, consoled. It seemed a tribute to the memory of her sainted boy, that he was thus beloved, and she who had thus loved him--oh, was there not some new and precious link between them?

It was some time before either could give vent in words to the feelings that swelled within. Ellen's tears fell fast and unrestrainedly on the bosom of her aunt, who sought not to check them, for she knew how blessed they must be to one who so seldom wept; and they were blessed, for a heavy weight seemed removed from the orphan's heart, the torturing secret was revealed; she might weep now without restraint, and never more would her conduct appear mysterious either to her aunt or uncle. They now knew it was no caprice that bade her refuse every offer of marriage that was made her. How that treasured secret had escaped her she knew not; she had been carried on by an impulse she could neither resist nor understand. At the first, a sensation of shame had overpowered her, that she could thus have given words to an unrequited affection; but ere long, the gentle soothing of her aunt caused that painful feeling to pass away. Consoling, indeed, was the voice of sympathy on a subject which to another ear had never been disclosed. It was some little time ere she could conquer her extreme agitation, her overcharged heart released from its rigorous restraint, appeared to spurn all effort of control; but after that day no violent emotion disturbed the calm serenity that resumed its sway. Never again was the subject alluded to in that little family circle, but the whole conduct of her aunt and uncle evinced they felt for and with their Ellen; confidence increased between them, and after the first few days, the orphan's life was more calmly happy than it had been for many a long year.

The return of Lord St. Eval's family to England, and their meeting with Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, was attended with some alloy. Caroline and her parents had not met since the death of Herbert, and that affliction appeared at the first moment recalled in all its bitterness. The presence of a comparative stranger, as was Miss Manvers, did much towards calming the excited feelings of each, and the exertions of Lord St. Eval and Ellen restored composure and cheerfulness sooner than they could have anticipated.

With Miss Manvers Mrs. Hamilton was much pleased. Gentle and unassuming, she won her way to every heart that knew her; she was the only remaining scion of Mrs. Hamilton's own family, and she felt pleased that by her union with Percy the families of Manvers and Hamilton would be yet more closely connected. She had regretted much, at a former time, the extinction of the line of Delmont; for she had recalled those visions of her girlhood, when she had looked to her brother to support the ancient line, and gilding it with naval honours, bid it stand forth as it had done some centuries before. Mrs. Hamilton had but little of what is termed family pride, but these feelings were associated with the brother whom she had so dearly loved, and whose loss she so painfully deplored.

The season of Christmas passed more cheerfully than Ellen had dared to hope. The scene was entirely changed; never before had they passed a Christmas anywhere but at Oakwood, and that simple circumstance prevented the void in that domestic circle from being so sadly felt. That Herbert was in the thoughts of all his family, that it was an effort for them to retain the cheerfulness which in them was ever the characteristic of the season, we will not deny, but affliction took not from the calm beauty which ever rested round Mr. Hamilton's hearth. All appeared as if an even more hallowed and mellowed light was cast around them; for it displayed, even more powerfully than when unalloyed prosperity was their portion, the true beauty of the religious character. Herbert and Mary were not lost to them; they were but removed to another sphere, that eternal Home, to which all who loved them looked with an eye of faith.

Sir George Wilmot was the only guest at Richmond during the Christmas season, but so long had he been a friend of the family and of Lord Delmont's, when Mrs. Hamilton was a mere child, that he could scarcely be looked on in the light of a mere guest. The kind old man had sorrowed deeply for Herbert's death, had felt himself attracted even more irresistibly to his friends in their sorrow than even in their joy, and so constantly had he been invited to make his stay at Mr. Hamilton's residence, wherever that might be, that he often declared he had now no other home. The tale of Edward's peril interested him much; he would make Ellen repeat it over and over again, and admire the daring rashness which urged the young sailor not to defer his return to his commander, even though a storm was threatening around him; and

when Mr. Hamilton related the story of Ellen's fortitude in bearing as she did this painful suspense, the old man would conceal his admiration of his young friend under a joke, and laughingly protest she was as fitted to be a gallant sailor as her noble brother.

On the character of the young heir of Oakwood the death of his brother appeared to have made an impression, which neither time nor circumstances could efface. He was not outwardly sad, but his volatile nature appeared departed. He was no longer the same wild, boisterous youth, ever on the look-out for some change, some new diversion or practical joke, which had been his characteristics while Herbert lived. A species of quiet dignity was now his own, combined with a devotedness to his parents, which before had never been so distinctly visible. He had ever loved them, ever sought their happiness, their wishes in preference to his own. Herbert himself had not surpassed him in filial love and reverence, but now, though his feelings were the same, their expression was different; cheerful and animated he still was, but the ringing laugh which had so often echoed through the halls of Oakwood had gone. It seemed as if the death of a brother so beloved, had suddenly transformed Percy Hamilton from the wild and thoughtless pleasure-seeking, joke-loving lad into the calm and serious man. To the eyes of his family, opposite as the brothers in youth had been, there were now many points of Herbert's character reflected upon Percy, and dearer than ever he became; and the love which had been excited in the gentle heart of Louisa Manvers by the wild spirits, the animation, the harmless recklessness, the freedom of thought and word, which had characterised Percy, when she first knew him, was purified and heightened by the calm dignity, the more serious thought, the solid qualities of the virtuous and honourable man.

Lieutenant Fortescue was now daily expected in England, much to the delight of his family and Sir George Wilmot, who declared he should have no peace till he was introduced to the preserver of his gallant boy, as he chose to call Edward. Lieutenant Mordaunt; he never heard of such a name, and he was quite sure he had never been a youngster in his cockpit. "What does he mean by saying he knows me, that he sailed with me, when a mid? he must be some impostor, Mistress Nell, take my word for it," Sir George would laughingly say, and vow vengeance on Ellen, for daring to doubt the excellence of his memory; as she one day ventured to hint that it was so very many years, it was quite impossible Sir George could remember the names of all the middies under him. It was much more probable, Sir George would retort, that slavery had bewildered the poor man's understanding, and that he fancied he was acquainted with the first English names he heard.

"Never mind, Nell, he has been a slave, poor fellow, so we will not treat him as an impostor, the first moment he reaches his native land," was the general conclusion of the old Admiral's jokes, as each day increased his impatience for Edward's return.

He was gratified at length, and as generally happens, when least expected, for protesting he would not be impatient any more, he amused himself by setting little Lord Lyle on his knee, and was so amused by the child's playful prattle and joyous laugh, that he forgot to watch at the window, which was his general post. Ellen was busily engaged in nursing Caroline's babe, now about six months old.

"Give me Mary, Ellen," said the young Earl, entering the room, with pleasure visibly impressed on his features. "You will have somebody else to kiss in a moment, and unless you can bear joy as composedly as you can sorrow, why I tremble for the fate of my little Mary."

"What do you mean, St. Eval? you shall not take my baby from me, unless you can give me a better reason."

"I mean that Edward will be here in five minutes, if he be not already. Ah, Ellen, you will resign Mary now. Come to me, little lady," and the young father caught his child from Ellen's trembling hands, and dancing her high in the air, was rewarded by her loud cry of joy.

In another minute, Edward was in the room, and clasped to his sister's beating heart. It was an agitating moment, for it seemed to Ellen's excited fancy that Edward was indeed restored to her from the dead, he had not merely returned from a long and dangerous voyage. The young sailor, as he released her from his embrace, looked with an uncontrolled impulse round the room. All were not there he loved; he did not miss Emmeline, but Herbert---oh, his gentle voice was not heard amongst the many that crowded round to greet him. He looked on his aunt, her deep mourning robe, he thought her paler, thinner than he had ever seen her before, and the impetuous young man could not be restrained, he flung himself within her extended arms, and burst into tears.

Mr. Hamilton hastened towards them. "Our beloved Herbert is happy," he said, solemnly, as he wrung his nephew's hands. "Let us not mourn for him now, Edward, but rather rejoice, as were he amongst us he would do, gratefully rejoice that the same gracious hand which removed him in love to a brighter world was stretched over you in your hour of peril, and preserved you to those who so dearly love you. You, too, we might for a time have lost, my beloved Edward. Shall we not rejoice that you are spared us? Emmeline, my own Emmeline, think on the blessings still surrounding us."

His impressive words had their effect on both his agitated auditors. Edward gently withdrew himself from the detaining arms of his aunt; he pressed a long, lingering kiss upon her cheek, and hastily conquering his emotion, clasped Sir George Wilmot's extended hand, after a few minutes' silence, greeted all his cousins with his accustomed warmth, and spoke as usual.

There had been one unseen, unthought-of spectator of this little scene; all had been too much startled and affected at Edward's unexpected burst of sorrow, to think of the stranger who had entered the room with him; but that stranger had looked around him, more particularly on Mrs. Hamilton, with feelings of intensity utterly depriving him of either speech or motion. Years had passed lightly over Mrs. Hamilton's head; she had borne trials, cares, and sorrows, as all her fellow-creatures, but her burden had ever been cast upon Him who had promised to sustain her, and therefore on her it had not weighed so heavily; and years had neither bent that graceful figure, nor robbed her features of their bloom. Hers had never been extraordinary beauty, it had been the expression only, which was ever the charm in her, an expression of purity of thought and deed, of gentle unassuming piety. Time cannot triumph over that beauty which is reflected from the soul; and Mordaunt gazed on her till he could scarcely restrain himself from rushing forward, and clasping her to his bosom, proclaim aloud who and what he was; but he did command himself, though his limbs trembled under him, and he was thankful that as yet he was unobserved. He looked on the blooming family around him---they were children, and yet to them he was as the dead; and now would she indeed remember him? Edward suddenly recalled the presence of his friend, and springing towards him, with an exclamation of regret at his neglect, instantly attracted the attention of all, and Mordaunt suddenly found himself the centre of a group, who were listening with much interest to Edward's animated account of all he owed him, a recital which Mordaunt vainly endeavoured to suppress, by declaring he had done nothing worth speaking of. Mrs. Hamilton joined her husband in welcoming the stranger, with that grace and kindness so peculiarly her own. She thanked him warmly for the care he had taken, and the exertions he had made for her nephew; and as she did so, the colour so completely faded from Mordaunt's sunburnt cheek, that Edward, declaring he was ill and exhausted by the exertions he had made from the first moment of their landing at Portsmouth, entreated him to retire to the chamber which had been prepared for him, but this Mordaunt refused, saying he was perfectly well.

"It is long I have heard the voice of kindness in my native tongue---long since English faces and English hearts have thus blessed me, and would you bid me leave them, my young friend?"

His mournful voice thrilled to Mrs. Hamilton's heart, as he laid his hand appealingly on Edward's arm.

"Not for worlds," replied the young sailor, cheerfully. "Sir George Wilmot, my dear aunt, have you any recollection of my good friend here? he says he knew you both when he was a boy."

Sir George Wilmot's eyes had never moved from Mordaunt since he had withdrawn his attention from Edward, and he now replied somewhat gravely---

"Of the name of Mordaunt I have no recollection as being borne by any youngsters on board my ship, but those features seem strangely familiar to me. I beg your pardon, sir, but have you always borne that name?"

"From the time I can remember, Sir George; but this may perhaps convince you I have been on board your ship. Was there not one amongst us in the cockpit, a young lad whom you ever treated with distinguished favour, whom, however unworthy, you ever held up to his comrades as a pattern of all that was excellent in a seaman and a youth, whom you ever loved and treated as a son? I was near him when he flung himself in the sea, with a sword in his mouth, and entering the enemy's ship by one of the cabin-windows, fought his way to the quarter-deck, and hauling down the French standard, retained his post till relieved by his comrades; and when the fight was over, hung back and gave to others the meed of praise you were so eager to bestow. Have you forgotten this, Sir George?"

"No!" replied the Admiral, with sudden animation. "Often have I recalled that day, one amongst the many in which my Charles distinguished himself."

"And you told him he would rise to eminence ere many years had passed---the name of Delmont would rival that of Nelson ere his career had run."

The old Admiral looked on the stranger with increased astonishment and agitation.

"Delmont! you knew my brother, then, Lieutenant Mordaunt," Mrs. Hamilton could not refrain from saying. "Many, many years have passed, yet tell me when you saw him last."

"I was with him in his last voyage, lady," replied the stranger, in a low and peculiar voice, for it was evidently an effort to retain his calmness. Six-and-twenty years have gone by since the Leander left the coasts of England never to return; six-and-twenty years since I set foot in my native land."

"And did all indeed perish, save yourself? Were you alone saved? saw you my brother after the vessel sunk?" inquired Mrs. Hamilton, hurriedly, laying her trembling hand on the stranger's arm, scarcely conscious of what she did. "He too might be spared even as yourself; but oh, death were preferable to lingering on his years in slavery."

"Alas! my Emmeline, wherefore indulge in such fallacious hope?" said her husband, tenderly, for he saw she was excessively agitated.

"Mrs. Hamilton," said Sir George Wilmot, earnestly, speaking at the same moment, "Emmeline, child of my best, my earliest friend, look on those features, look well; do you not know them? six-and-twenty years have done their work, yet surely not sufficiently to conceal him from your eyes. Have you not seen that flashing eye, that curling lip before? look well ere you decide."

"Lady, Charles Manvers lives!" murmured the stranger, in the voice of one whom strong emotion deprived of utterance, and he pushed from his brow the hair which thickly clustered there and in part concealed the natural expression of his features, and gazed on her face. A gleam of sunshine at this instant threw a sudden glow upon his countenance, and Mr. Hamilton started forward, and an exclamation of astonishment, of pleasure escaped his lips, but Mrs. Hamilton's eyes moved not from the stranger's face.

"Emmeline, my sister, my own sister, will you not know me? can you not believe that Charles is spared?" he exclaimed, in a tone of excited feeling.

"Oh, God, it is Charles himself?" she sobbed, and sunk almost fainting in his embrace; convulsively the brother pressed her to his bosom. It seemed as if the happiness of that moment was too great for reality, as if it were but some dream of bliss; scarcely was he conscious of the warm greeting he received; the uncontrollable emotion of the old Admiral, who, as he wrung his hand again and again, wept like a child. His brain seemed to reel, and every object danced before his eyes, he was alone sensible that he held his sister in his arms, that sister whom he had loved even more devotedly, more constantly in his hours of slavery, than when she had been ever near him. Her counsels, her example had had but little apparent effect on him when a wild and reckless boy at his father's house, but they had sustained him in his affliction; it was then he knew the value of those serious thoughts and feelings his sister had so laboured to inculcate, and associated as they were with her, she became dearer each time he felt himself supported, under his many trials, by fervent prayer and that implicit trust, of which she had so often spoken.

In wondering astonishment the younger members of the family had regarded this little scene some minutes before the truth had flashed on the mind of Mrs. Hamilton. Both St. Eval and Percy had guessed who in reality the stranger was, and waited in some anxiety for the effect that recognition would have on Mrs. Hamilton, whom Edward had already considerably agitated. With characteristic delicacy of feeling, all then left the room, Sir George Wilmot and Mr. Hamilton alone remaining with the long-separated brother and sister.

"My uncle Charles himself! Fool, idiot that I was never to discover this before!" had been Edward's exclamation, in a tone of unrestrained joy.

A short time sufficed to restore all to comparative composure, but a longer interval was required for Charles Manvers, whom we must now term Lord Delmont, to ask and to answer the innumerable questions which were naturally called forth by his unexpected return; much had he to hear and much to tell, even leaving, as he said he would, the history of his adventures in Algiers to amuse two or three winter evenings, when all his family were around him.

"All my family," he repeated, in a tone of deep feeling. "Do I say this? I, the isolated, desolate being I imagined myself; I, who believed so many years had passed, that I should remain unrecognised, unloved, forgotten. Reproach me not, my sister, the misery I occasioned myself, the emotions of this moment are punishment enough. And are all those whom I saw here yours, Hamilton?" he continued, more cheerfully. "Oh, let me claim their love; I know them all already, for Edward has long ere this made me acquainted with them, both individually and as the united members of one affectionate family; I long to judge for myself if his account be indeed correct, though I doubt it not. Poor fellow, I deserve his reproaches for continuing my deception to him so long."

"And why was that name assumed at all, dear Charles?" inquired Mr. Hamilton. "Why not resume your own when the chains of slavery were broken?"

"And how dare you say Mordaunt was yours as long as you can remember?" demanded Sir George, holding up his hand in a threatening attitude, as if the full-grown man before him were still the slight stripling he last remembered him. "Deception was never permitted on my decks, Master Charles."

Mrs. Hamilton smiled.

"Nor have I practised it, Sir George," he replied. "Mordaunt was my name, as my sister can vouch. Charles Mordaunt Manvers I was christened, Mordaunt being the name of my godfather, between whom and my father, however, a dispute arose, when I was about seven years old, completely setting aside old friendship and causing them to be at enmity till Sir

Henry Mordaunt's death. The tale was repeated to me when I was about ten years old, much exaggerated of course, and I declared I would bear his name no longer. I remember well my gentle sister Emmeline's entreaties and persuasions that I would not interfere, that I knew nothing about the quarrel, and had no right to be so angry. However, I carried my point, as I generally did, with my too indulgent parent, and therefore from that time I was only known as Charles Manvers, for my father could not bear the name spoken before him. Do you not remember it, Emmeline?"

"Perfectly well, now it is recalled, though I candidly own I had forgotten the circumstance."

"But, still, why was Manvers disused?" Mr. Hamilton again inquired.

"For perhaps an unjust and foolish fancy, my dear friend. I could not enjoy my freedom, because of the thought I mentioned before. I knew not if my beloved father still lived, nor who bore the title of Lord Delmont, which, if he were no more, was mine by inheritance; for four-and-twenty years I had heard nothing of all whom I loved, they looked on me as dead: they might be scattered, dispersed; instead of joy, my return might bring with it sorrow, vexation, discontent. It was for this reason I relinquished the name of Manvers, and adopted the one I had well-nigh forgotten as being mine by an equal right; I wished to visit my native land unknown, and bearing that name, any inquiries I might have made would be unsuspected."

Surrounded by those whom in waking and sleeping dreams he had so long loved, the clouds which had overhung Lord Delmont's mind as a thick mist, even when he found himself free, dissolved before the calm sunshine of domestic love. A sense of happiness pervaded his heart, happiness chastened by a deep feeling of gratitude to Him who had ordained it. Affected he was almost to tears, as the manner of his nephew and nieces towards him unconsciously betrayed how affectionately they had ever been taught to regard his memory. Rapidly he became acquainted with each and all, and eagerly looked forward to the arrival of Emmeline and her husband to look on them likewise as his own; but though Edward laughingly protested he should tremble now for the continuance of his uncle's preference towards himself, he ever retained his place. He had been the first known; his society, his soothing words, his animated buoyancy of spirit, his strong affection and respect for his uncle's memory when he believed him dead, and perhaps the freemasonry of brother sailors, had bound him to Lord Delmont's heart with ties too strong to be riven. The more he heard of, and the more he associated with him in the intimacy of home, the stronger these feelings became; and Edward on his part unconsciously increased them by his devotedness to his uncle himself, the manner with which he ever treated Mrs. Hamilton, and his conduct to his sister whose quiet unselfish happiness at his return, and thus accompanied, was indeed heightened, more than she herself a few months previous could have believed possible.

CHAPTER XI.

Our little narrative must here transport the reader to a small cottage in the picturesque village of Llangwillan, where, about three months after the events we have narrated, Lilla Grahame sat one evening in solitude, and it seemed in sorrow. The room in which she was seated was small, but furnished and adorned with the refined and elegant taste of one whose rank appeared much higher than the general occupants of such a dwelling. A large window, reaching to the ground, opened on a smooth and sloping lawn, which was adorned by most beautiful flowers. It led to a small gate opening on a long, narrow lane, which led to the Vicarage, leaving the little church and its picturesque burying-ground a little to the right; the thick grove which surrounded it forming a leafy yet impenetrable wall to one side of the garden. There were many very pretty tombs in this churchyard; perhaps its beauty consisted in its extreme neatness, and the flowers that the vicar, Mr. Myrvin, took so much pleasure in carefully preserving. One lowly grave, beneath a large and spreading yew, was never passed unnoticed. A plain marble stone denoted that there lay one, who had once been the brightest amid the bright, the brilliant star of a lordly circle. The name, her age, and two simple verses were there inscribed; but around that humble grave there were sweet flowers flourishing more luxuriantly than in any other part of the churchyard; the climbing honeysuckle twined its odoriferous clusters up the dark trunk of the storm-resisting yew.

Roses of various kinds intermingled with the lowly violet, the snowdrop, lily of the valley, the drooping convolvulus, which, closing its petals for a time, is a fit emblem of that sleep which, closing our eyes on earth, reopens them in heaven, beneath the general warmth of the sun of righteousness. These flowers were sacred in the eyes of the villagers, and their children were charged not to despoil them; and too deep was their reverence for their minister, and too sacred was that little spot of earth, even to their uncultured eyes, for those commands ever to be disobeyed. But it was not to Mr. Myrvin's care alone that part of the churchyard owed its beauty. It had ever been distinguished from the rest by the flowers around it; but it was only the last two years they had flourished so luxuriantly; the hand of Lilla Grahame watered and tended them with unceasing care. In the early morning or the calm twilight she was seen beside the grave, and many might have believed that there reposed the ashes of a near and dear relation, but it was not so. Lilla had never seen and never known the lovely being whose last home she thus affectionately tended. It was dear to her from its association with him whom she loved, there her thoughts could wander to him; and surely the love thus cherished beside the dead must have been purity itself.

It was the hour that Lilla usually sought the churchyard, but she came not, and the lengthening shadows of a soft and lovely May evening fell around the graceful figure of a tall and elegant young man, in naval uniform, who lingered beside the grave; pensive, it seemed, yet scarcely melancholy. His fine expressive countenance seemed to breathe of happiness proceeding from the heart, chastened and softened by holier thoughts. A smile of deep feeling encircled his lips as he looked on the flowers, which in this season were just bursting into beautiful bloom; and plucking an early violet, he pressed it to his lips and placed it next his heart. "Doubly precious," he said, internally, "planted by the hand of her I love, it flourished on my mother's grave. Oh, my mother, would that you could behold your Edward now; that your blessing could be mine. It cannot be, and thrice blessed as I am, why should I seek for more?" A few moments longer he lingered, then turned in the direction of the Vicarage.

Lilla's spirits harmonized not as they generally did with the calm beauty of nature around her. Anxious and sorrowful, her tears more than once fell slowly and unheeded on her work; but little improvement had taken place in her father's temper. She had much, very much to bear, even though she knew he loved her, and that his chief cares were for her; retirement had not relieved his irritated spirit. Had he, instead of retreating from, mingled as formerly in, the world, he might have been much happier, for he would have found the dishonourable conduct of his son had not tarnished his own. He had been too long and too well known as the soul of honour and integrity, for one doubt or aspersion to be cast upon his name. Lady Helen's injudicious conduct towards her children was indeed often blamed, and Grahame's own severity much regretted, but it was much more of sympathy he now commanded than scorn or suspicion, and all his friends lamented his retirement. Had not Lilla's spirits been naturally elastic, they must have bent beneath these continued and painful trials; her young heart often felt breaking, but the sense of religion, the excellent principles instilled both by Mrs. Douglas and Mrs. Hamilton now had their full effect, and sustained her amidst all. She never wavered in her duty to her father; she never complained even in her letters to her dearest and most confidential friends.

"Have you thought on the subject we spoke of last night, Lilla?" asked her father, entering suddenly, and seating himself gloomily on a chair some paces from her. His daughter started as she saw him, for the first tone of his voice betrayed he was more than usually irritable and gloomy.

"Yes, father, I have," she replied, somewhat timidly.

"And what is your answer?"

"I fear you will be displeased, my dear father; but indeed I cannot answer differently to last night."

"You are still resolved then to refuse Philip Clapperton?"

Lilla was silent.

"And pray may I ask the cause of your fastidiousness, Miss Grahame? Your burst of tears last night made a very pretty scene no doubt, but they gave me no proper answer."

"It is not only that I cannot love Mr. Clapperton, father, but I cannot respect him."

"And pray why not? I tell you, Lilla, blunt, even coarse, if you like, as he is, unpolished, hasty, yet he has a better heart by far than many of those more elegant and attractive sprigs of nobility, amongst which perhaps your romantic fancy has wandered, as being the only husbands fitted for you."

"You do me injustice, father. I have never indulged in such romantic visions, but I cannot willingly unite my fate with one in whom I see no fixed principle of action--one who owns no guide but pleasure. His heart may be good, I doubt it not; but I cannot respect one who spends his whole life in fox-hunting, drinking, and all the pleasures peculiar to the members of country clubs."

"In other words, a plain, honest-speaking, English gentleman is not fine enough for you. What harm is there in the amusements you have enumerated? Why should not a fox-hunter make as good a husband as any other member of society?"

Lilla looked at her father in astonishment. These were not always his sentiments she painfully thought.

"I do not mean to condemn these amusements, my dear father, but when they are carried on without either principle or religion. How can I venture to intrust my happiness to such a man?"

"And where do you expect to find either principle or religion now? Not in those polished circles, where I can perceive your hopes are fixed. Girl, banish such hopes. Not one amongst them would unite himself to the sister of that dishonoured outcast Cecil Grahame."

Grahame's whole frame shook as he pronounced his son's name, but sternness still characterised his voice.

"Never would I unite myself with one who considered himself degraded by an union with our family, father, be assured," said Lilla, earnestly. "My hopes are not high. I have thought little of marriage, and till I am sought, have no wish to leave this sequestered spot, believe me."

"And who, think you, will seek you here? You had better banish such idle hopes, for they will end in disappointment."

"Be it so, then," Lilla replied, calmly, though had her father been near her, he would have seen her cheek suddenly become pale and her eyelids quiver, as if by the pressure of a tear. "Is marriage a thing so indispensable, that you would compel me to leave you, my dear father?"

"To you it is indispensable; when once you have lost the name you now hold, the world and all its pleasures will be spread before you, the stain will be remembered no more; your life need not be spent in gloom and exile like this."

"And what, then, will become of you?"

"Of me! who cares. What am I, and what have I ever been to either of my children, that they should care for me? I scorn the mere act of duty, and which of you can love me? no, Lilla, not even you."

"Father, you do me wrong; oh, do not speak such cruel words," said Lilla, springing from her seat, and flinging herself on her knees by her father's side. "Have I indeed so failed in testimonies of love, that you can for one instant believe it is only the duty of a child I feel and practise? Oh, my father, do me not such harsh injustice; could you read my inmost heart, you would see how full it is of love and reverence for you, though I have not always courage to express it. Ask of me any, every proof but this, and I will do it, but, oh, do not command me to wed Mr. Clapperton; why, oh, why would you thus seek to send me from you?"

"I speak but for your happiness, Lilla;" his voice was somewhat softened. "You cannot be happy now with one so harsh, irritable, cruel as, I know, I am too often."

"And would you compare the occasional irritation proceeding from the failing health of a beloved father, with the fierce passion and constant impatience of a husband, with whom I could not have one idea in common, whom I could neither love nor reverence, to whom even my duty would be wretchedness? oh, my father, can you compare the two? Think of Mrs. Greville: Philip Clapperton ever reminds me of Mr. Greville, of what at least he must have been in his youth, and would you sentence me to all the misery that has been poor Mrs. Greville's lot and her children's likewise?"

"You do not know enough of Clapperton to judge him thus harshly, Lilla; I know him better, and I cannot see the faults against which you are so inveterate. Your sister chose a husband for herself, and how has she fared? is she happy?"

"Annie cannot be happy, father, even if her husband were of a very different character. She disobeyed; a parent's blessing hallowed not her nuptials, and strange indeed would it be were her lot otherwise; but though I cannot love the husband of your choice, you may trust me, father, without your consent and blessing, I will never marry."

"Do not say you *cannot* love Philip Clapperton, Lilla; when once his wife, you could not fail to do so. I would see you united to one who loves you, my child, ere your affections are bestowed on another, who may be less willing to return them."

Grahame spoke in a tone of such unwonted softness, that the tears now rolled unchecked down Lilla's cheeks. Her ingenuous nature could not be restrained; she felt as if, were she still silent, she would be deceiving him, and hiding her face in her hand, she almost inaudibly said---

"For that, then, it is too late, father; I cannot love Mr. Clapperton, because---because I love another."

"Ha!" exclaimed Grahame, starting, then laying his trembling hand on Lilla's head, he continued, struggling with strong emotion, "this, then, is the cause of your determined refusal. Poor child, poor child, what misery have you formed for yourself!"

"And wherefore misery, my father?" replied Lilla, raising her head somewhat proudly, and speaking as firmly as her tears would permit. "Your child would not have loved had she not deemed her affections sought, ay, and valued too. Think not I would degrade myself by giving my heart to any one who deemed me or my father beneath his notice. If ever eye or act can speak, I do not love in vain."

"And would you believe in trifles such as these?" asked her father, sorrowfully. "Alas! poor child, words are often false, still less can you rely on the language of the eye. Has anything like an understanding taken place between you?"

"Alas! my father, no; and yet---and yet---oh, I know he loves me."

"And so he may, my child, and yet break his own heart and yours, poor guileless girl, rather than unite himself with the dishonoured and the base. Lilla, my own Lilla, I have been harsh and cruel; it is because I feel too keenly perhaps the gall in which your wretched brother's conduct has steeped your life and mine; mine will soon pass away, but the dark shadow will linger still round you, my child, and condemn you to wretchedness; I cannot, cannot bear that thought!" and he struck his clenched hand against his brow. "Why on the innocent should fall the chastisement of the guilty? My child, my child, oh, banish from your unsuspecting heart the hopes of love returned. Where in this selfish world will you find one to love you so for yourself alone, that family and fortune are as naught?"

"Why judge so harshly of your sex, Mr. Grahame?" said a rich and thrilling voice, in unexpected answer to his words, and the same young man whom we before mentioned as lingering by a village grave, stepping lightly from the terrace on which the large window opened into the room, stood suddenly before the astonished father and his child. On the latter the effect of his presence was almost electric. The rich crimson mantled at once over cheek and brow and neck, a faint cry burst from her lips, and as the thought flashed across her, that her perhaps too presumptuous hopes of love returned had been overheard, as well as her father's words, she suddenly burst into tears of mingled feeling, and darting by the intruder, passed by the way he had entered into the garden; but even when away from him, composure for a time returned not. She forgot entirely that no name had been spoken either by her father or by herself to designate him whom she confessed she loved; her only feeling was, she had betrayed a truth, which from him she would ever have concealed, till he indeed had sought it; and injured modesty now gave her so much pain, it permitted her not to rejoice in this unexpected appearance of one whom she had not seen since she had believed him dead. She knew the churchyard was at this period of the evening quite deserted, and almost unconscious what she was about, she hastily tied on her bonnet, and with the speed of a young fawn, she bounded through the narrow lane, and rested not till she found herself seated beside her favourite grave; there she gave full vent to the thoughts in which pleasure and confusion somewhat strangely and painfully mingled.

"Can you, will you forgive this unceremonious and, I fear, unwished-for intrusion?" was the young stranger's address to Grahame, when he had recovered from the agitation which Lilla's emotion had called forth, he scarcely knew wherefore. "To me you have ever extended the hand of friendship, Mr. Grahame, however severe upon the world in general, and will you refuse it now, when my errand here is to seek an even nearer and a dearer name?"

"You are welcome, ever welcome to my humble home, my dear boy, for your own sake, and for those dear to you," replied Grahame, with a return of former warmth and cordiality. "More than usually welcome I may say, Edward, as this is your first visit here since your rescue from the bowels of the great deep. You look confused and heated, and as if you would much rather run after your old companion than stay with me, but indeed I cannot spare you yet, I have so many questions to ask you."

"Forgive me, Mr. Grahame, but indeed you must hear me first."

"I came here to speak to you on a subject nearest my heart, and till that is told, till from your lips I know my fate, do not, for pity, ask me to speak on any other. I meant not to have entered so abruptly on my mission, but that which Mr. Myrvin has imparted to me, and what I undesignedly overheard as I stood unseen on that terrace, have taken from me all the eloquence with which I meant to plead my cause."

"Speak in your own proper person, Edward, and then I may perhaps hear you," replied Grahame, from whom the sight of his young friend appeared to have banished all misanthropy. "What I can, however, have to do with your fate, I know not, except that I will acquit you of all intentional eaves-dropping, if it be that which troubles you; and what can Mr. Myrvin have said to rob you of eloquence?"

"He told me that--that you had encouraged Philip Clapperton's addresses to Lilla--to Miss Grahame," answered Edward, with increasing agitation, for he perceived, what was indeed the truth, that Grahame had not the least idea of his intentions.

"And what can that have to do with you, young man?" inquired Grahame, somewhat haughtily, and his brow darkened. "You have not seen Lilla, to be infected with her prejudices, and in what manner can my wishes with regard to my daughter on that head concern you?"

"In what manner? Mr. Grahame, I came hither with my aunt's and uncle's blessing on my purpose, to seek from you your gentle daughter's hand. I am not a man of many words, and all I had to say appears to have departed, and left me speechless. I came here to implore your consent, for without it I knew 'twere vain to think or hope to make your Lilla mine. I came to plead to you, and armed with your blessing, plead my cause to her, and you ask me how Mr. Myrvin's intelligence can affect me. Speak, then, at once; in pity to that weakness which makes me feel as if my lasting happiness or misery depends upon your answer."

"And do you, Edward, do you love my poor child?" asked the father, with a quivering lip and glistening eye, as he laid his hand, which trembled, on the young man's shoulder.

"Love her? oh, Mr. Grahame, she has been the bright beaming star that has shone on my ocean course for many a long year. I know not when I first began to love, but from my cousin Caroline's wedding-day the thoughts of Lilla lingered with me, and gilded many a vision of domestic peace and love, and each time I looked on her bright face, and marked her kindling spirit, heard and responded inwardly to her animated voice, I felt that she was dearer still; and when again I saw her in her sorrow, and sought with Ellen to soothe and cheer her, oh, no one can know the pain it was to restrain the absorbing wish to ask her, if indeed one day she would be mine, but that was no time to speak of love. Besides, I knew not if I had the means to offer her a comfortable home, I knew not how long I might be spared to linger near her; but now, when of both I am assured, wherefore should I hesitate longer? With the title of captain, that for which I have so long pined, I am at liberty to retire on half-pay, till farther orders; the adopted son and acknowledged heir to my uncle, Lord Delmont, I have now enough to offer her my hand, without one remaining scruple. You are silent. Oh, Mr. Grahame, must I plead in vain?"

"And would you marry her, would you indeed take my child as your chosen bride?" faltered Grahame, deeply moved. "Honoured, titled as you are, my poor, portionless Lilla is no meet bride for you."

"Perish honours and title too, if they could deprive me of the gentle girl I love!" exclaimed the young captain, impetuously. "Do not speak thus, Mr. Grahame. In what was my lamented father better than yourself--my mother than Lady Helen? and if she were in very truth my inferior in birth, the virtues and beauty of Lilla Grahame would do honour to the proudest peer of this proud land."

"My boy, my gallant boy!" sobbed the agitated father, his irritability gone, dissolved, like the threatening cloud of a summer day beneath some genial sunbeam, and as he wrung Captain Fortescue's hand again and again in his, the tears streamed like an infant's down his cheek.

"Will I consent, will I give you my blessing? Oh, to see you the husband of my poor child would be *too, too* much happiness, happiness wholly, utterly undeserved. But, oh, Edward, can Mr. Hamilton, can Lord Delmont consent to your union with one, whose only brother is a disgraced, dishonoured outcast, whose father is a selfish, irritable misanthrope?"

"Can the misconduct of Cecil cast in the eyes of the just and good one shadow on the fair fame of his sister? No, my dear sir; it is you who have looked somewhat unkindly and unjustly on the world, as when you mingle again with your

friends, in company with your children, you will not fail, with your usual candour, to acknowledge. A selfish, irritable misanthrope," he added, archly smiling. "You cannot terrify me, Mr. Grahame. I know the charge is false, and I dread it not."

"Ask me not to join the world again," said Grahame, hoarsely; "in all else, the duties of my children shall be as laws, but that"---

"Well, well, we will not urge it now, my dear sir," replied the young sailor, cheerfully; then added, with the eager agitation of affection, "But Lilla, my Lilla. Oh, may I hope that she will in truth be mine? Oh, have I, can I have been too presumptuous in the thought I have not loved in vain?"

"Away with you, and seek the answer from her own lips," said Mr. Grahame, with more of his former manner than he had yet evinced, for he now entertained not one doubt as to Edward being the chosen one on whom his daughter's young affections had been so firmly fixed. "Go to her, my boy; she will not fly a second time, so like a startled hare, from your approach; tell her, had she told her father Edward Fortescue was the worthy object of her love, he would not thus have thrown a damp upon her young heart, he would not have condemned him as being incapable of loving her for herself alone. Tell her, too, the name of Philip Clapperton shall offend her no more. Away with you, my boy."

Edward awaited not a second bidding. In a very few minutes the whole garden had been searched, and Miss Grahame inquired for all over the house, then he bounded through the lane, and scarcely five minutes after he had quitted Mr. Grahame, he stood by the side of Lilla; the consciousness that she had confessed her love, that he might have overheard it, was still paramount in her modest bosom, and she would have avoided him, but quickly was her design prevented. Rapidly, almost incoherently, was the conversation of the last half hour repeated, and with all the eloquence of his enthusiastic nature, Edward pleaded his cause, and, need it be said, not in vain. Lilla neither wished nor sought to conceal her feelings, and long, long did those two young and animated beings remain in sweet and heartfelt commune beside that lowly grave.

"What place so fitted where to pledge our troth, my Lilla, as by my mother's resting-place?" said Edward. "Would that she could look upon us now and smile her blessing."

Happily indeed flew those evening hours unheeded by the young lovers. Grahame, on the entrance of his happy child, folded her to his bosom; his blessing descended on her head, mingled with tears, which sprung at once from a father's love and self-reproach at all the suffering his irritability had occasioned her. And that evening Lilla indeed felt that all her sorrows, all her struggles, all her dutiful forbearance, were rewarded. Not only was her long-cherished love returned, not only did she feel that in a few short months she should be her Edward's own, that he, the brave, the gallant, honoured sailor, had chosen her in preference to any of those fairer and nobler maidens with whom he had so often associated, but her father, her dear father, was more like himself than he had been since her mother's death. He looked, he spoke the Montrose Grahame we have known him in former years. Edward had ever been a favourite with him, but he and Lilla had been so intimate from their earliest childhood, that he had never thought of him as a son; and when the truth was known, so truly did Grahame rejoice, that the bitterness in his earthly cup was well-nigh drowned by its present sweetness.

Innumerable were the questions both Lilla and Grahame had to ask, and Edward answered all with that peculiar joyousness which ever threw a charm around him. The adventures of his voyage, his dangers, the extraordinary means of his long-lost uncle being instrumental in his preservation, Lord Delmont's varied tale, all was animatedly discussed till a late hour. A smile was on Grahame's lip, as his now awakened eye recalled the drooping spirits and fading cheek of his Lilla during those three months of suspense, when Captain Fortescue was supposed drowned, and the equally strange and sudden restoration to health and cheerfulness when Ellen's letter was received, detailing her brother's safety. Lilla's

streaming eyes were hid on her lover's shoulder as he detailed his danger, but quickly her tears were kissed away; thankfulness that he was indeed spared, again filled her heart, and the bright smile returned. He accounted for not seeking them earlier by the fact that, while they remained at Richmond, his uncle, whose health from long-continued suffering was but weakly established, could not bear him out of his sight, and that he had entreated him not to leave him till they returned to Oakwood. This, young Fortescue afterwards discovered, was to give Lord Delmont time for the gratification of his wishes, which, from the time he had heard the line of Delmont was extinct, had occupied his mind. Many of his father's old friends recognised him at once. His father's and his sister's friends were eager to see and pay him every attention in their power. He found himself ever a welcome and a courted guest, and happiness, so long a stranger from his breast, now faded not again. To adopt Edward as his son, to leave him heir to his title and estate, was now, as it had been from the first moment he recognised his nephew, the dearest wish of his heart, "if it were only to fulfil Sir George Wilmot's prophecy," he jestingly told the old Admiral, who, with Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, warmly seconded his wishes. The necessary formula met with no opposition, and the same day that gave to Edward his promotion of captain, informed him of the secretly-formed and secretly-acted-upon desire of his uncle.

In the time of Edward's grandfather, the Delmont estates, as some of our readers may remember, were, from the carelessness of stewards and the complete negligence of their lord, in such an embarrassed state, as barely to return a sufficient income for the expenses of Lord Delmont's establishment. Affairs, however, were not in a worse state than that a little energy and foresight might remedy. The guardian of Henry Manvers, who, as we know already, became Lord Delmont when only three years old, had acted his part with so much straightforwardness and trust, that when Manvers came of age he found his estates in such a thriving condition, that he was a very much richer nobleman than many of his predecessors had been. Well able to discern true merit, and grateful for the services already rendered, his guardian, by his earnest entreaty, remained his agent during his residence with his mother and sister in Switzerland. There, living very much within his income, his fortune accumulated, and by his early death it fell to the Crown, from which Lord Delmont, on his return from his weary years of slavery, received it with the title of earl, bestowed to prove that the tale of a British sailor's sufferings and indignities had not fallen unheeded on the royal ear. The long-banished seaman was presented to his Majesty by the Duke of Clarence himself, and had no need to regret the gracious interview. His intentions concerning the young officer Captain Fortescue met with an unqualified approval. Ardently loving his profession, the royal Duke thought the more naval heroes filled the nobility of his country the better for England, and an invitation to Bushy Park was soon afterwards forwarded, both to Lord Delmont and his gallant nephew.

Edward, already well-nigh beside himself by his unexpected promotion, no longer knew how to contain the exuberance of his spirits, much to the amusement of his domestic circle; particularly to his quiet, gentle sister, who, as she looked on her brother, felt how truly, how inexpressibly her happiness increased with his prosperity. She too had wound herself round the heart of her uncle; she loved him, first for his partiality to her brother, but quickly her affection was extended to himself. Mrs. Hamilton had related to him every particular of her history, with which he had been deeply and painfully affected, and as he quickly perceived how much his sister's gentle firmness and constant watchfulness had done towards forming the character of not only Edward and Ellen but of her own children, his admiration for her hourly increased.

A very few days brought Lord Delmont and his niece Ellen to Mr. Grahame's cottage, and Lilla's delight at seeing Ellen was only second to that she felt when Edward came. The presence, the cordial greeting of Lord Delmont removed from the mind of Grahame every remaining doubt of his approbation of the bride his nephew had chosen. As a faithful historian, however, I must acknowledge the wishes of Lord Delmont had pointed out Lady Emily Lyle as the most suitable connection for Edward. Lady Florence he would have preferred, but there were many whispers going about that she was engaged to the handsome young baronet Sir Walter Cameron, who, by the death of his uncle Sir Hector, had lately inherited some extensive estates in the south-west of Scotland. When, however, Lord Delmont perceived his nephew's affections were irrevocably fixed, and he heard from his sister's lips the character of Lilla Grahame, he made no opposition, but consented with much warmth and willingness. He was not only content, but resolved on being introduced

to Miss Grahame as soon as possible, without, however, saying a word to Edward of his intentions. He took Ellen with him, he said, to convoy him safely and secure him a welcome reception; neither of which, she assured him, he needed, though she very gladly accompanied him.

A few weeks passed too quickly by, imparting happiness even to Ellen, for had she been permitted the liberty of choosing a wife for her Edward, Lilla Grahame would have been her choice. Deeply and almost painfully affected had she been indeed, when her brother first sought her to reveal the secret of his love.

"I cannot," he said, "I will not marry without your sympathy, your approval, my sister---my more than sister, my faithful friend, my gentle mistress, for such you have ever been to me," and he folded her in his arms with a brother's love, and Ellen had concealed upon his manly bosom the glistening tears, whose source she scarcely knew. "I would have you love my wife, not only for my sake but for herself alone. Never will I marry one who will refuse to look on you with the reverential affection your brother does. Lilla Grahame does this, my Ellen; it was her girlish affection for you that first attracted my attention to her. She will regard you as I do; she will teach her children, if it please heaven to grant us any, to look on you even as I would; her heart and home will be as open to my beloved sister as mine. Speak then, my ever-cherished, ever faithful friend; tell me if, in seeking Lilla, your sympathy, your blessing will be mine."

Tears of joy choked her utterance, but quickly recovering herself, Ellen answered him in a manner calculated indeed to increase his happiness, and her presence at Llangwillan satisfied every wish.

Unable to resist the eloquent entreaties of all his friends and the appealing eyes of his child, Grahame at last consented to spend the month which was to intervene ere his daughter's nuptials, at Oakwood. That period Edward intended to employ in visiting the ancient hall on the Delmont estate, which for the last three months had been in a state of active preparation for the reception of its long-absent master. It was beautifully situated in the vicinity of the New Forest, Hampshire. There Edward was to take his bride, considering the whole estate, his uncle declared, already as his own, as he did not mean to be a fixture there, but live alternately with his sister and his nephew. Oakwood should see quite as much of him as Beech Hill, and young people were better alone, particularly the first year of their marriage. Vainly Edward and Lilla sought to combat his resolution; the only concession they could obtain was, that when their honeymoon was over, he and Ellen would pay them a visit, just to see how they were getting on.

"You must never marry, Nelly, for I don't know what my sister will do without you," said Lord Delmont, laughing.

"Be assured, uncle Charles, I never will. I love the freedom of this old hall much too well; and, unless my aunt absolutely sends me away, I shall not go."

"And that she never will, Ellen," said Lilla earnestly. "She said the other day she did not know how she should ever spare you even to us; but you must come to us very often, dearest Ellen. I shall never perform my part well as mistress of the large establishment with which Edward threatens me, without your counsel and support"

"I will not come at all, if you and Edward lay your wise heads together, as you already seem inclined to do, to win me by flattery," replied Ellen, playfully, endeavouring to look grave, though she refused not the kiss of peace for which Lilla looked up so appealingly.

The first week in July was fixed for the celebration of the two marriages in Mr. Hamilton's family. As both Edward and Percy wished the ceremony should take place in the parish church of Oakwood, and be performed by Archdeacon Howard, it was agreed the same day should witness both bridals; and that Miss Manvers, who had been residing at Castle Terryn with the Earl and Countess St. Eval, should accompany them to Oakwood a few days previous. Young Hamilton took his bride to Paris, to which capital he had been intrusted with some government commission. It was not till the end

of July he had originally intended his nuptials should take place; but he did not choose to leave England for an uncertain period without his Louisa, and consequently it was agreed their honeymoon should be passed in France. It may be well to mention here that Mr. Hamilton had effected the exchange he desired, and that Arthur Myrvin and his beloved Emmeline were now comfortably installed in the Rectory, which had been so long the residence of Mr. Howard; and that Myrvin now performed his pastoral duties in a manner that reflected happiness not only on his parishioners, but on all his friends, and enabled him to enjoy that true peace springing from a satisfied conscience. He trod in the steps of his lamented friend; he knew not himself how often his poor yet contented flock compared him in their humble cottages with Herbert, and that in their eyes he did not lose by the comparison. Some, indeed, would say, "It is all Master Herbert's example, and the society of that sweet young creature, Miss Emmeline, that has made him what he is." But whatever might be the reason, Arthur was universally beloved; and that the village favourite, Miss Emmeline, who had grown up amongst them from infancy, was their Rector's wife---that she still mingled amongst them, the same gentle, loveable being she had ever been---that it was to her and not to a stranger, they were ever at liberty to seek for relief in trouble, or sympathy in joy, was indeed a source of unbounded pleasure. And Emmeline was happy, truly, gratefully happy; never did she regret the choice she had made, nor envy her family the higher stations of life it was theirs to fill. She had not a wish beyond the homes of those she loved; her husband was all in all to her, her child a treasure for which she could not be sufficiently thankful. She was still the same playful, guileless being to her family which she had ever been; but to strangers a greater degree of dignity characterised her deportment, and commanded their involuntary respect. The home of Arthur Myrvin was indeed one over which peace and love had entwined their roseate wings; a lowly yet a beautiful spot, over which the storms of the busy troubled world might burst, but never reach; and for other sorrows, piety and submission were alike their watchword and their safeguard. Lord St. Eval was the only person who regretted Arthur's promotion to the rectory of Oakwood, as it deprived him, he declared, of his chaplain, his vicar, and his friend. However, he willingly accepted a friend of Mr. Hamilton's to supply his place, a clergyman not much beyond the prime of life; one who for seven years had devoted himself, laboriously and unceasingly, to a poor and unprofitable parish in one of the Feroe Islands; in the service of Mr. Hamilton he had been employed, though voluntarily he had accepted, nay, eloquently he had pleaded for the office. To those of our readers who are acquainted with the story of Home Influence, the Rev. Henry Morton is no stranger. They may remember that he accompanied Mr. Hamilton on his perilous expedition, and had joyfully consented to remaining there till the young Christian, Wilson, was capable of undertaking the ministry. He had done so; his pupil promised fair to reward his every care, and preserve his countrymen in that state of peace, prosperity, and virtue, to which they had been brought by the unceasing cares of Morton; and that worthy man returned to his native land seven years after he had quitted it, improved not only in inward peace but in health, and consequently appearances. A perceptible lameness was now the only remains of what had been before painful deformity. The bracing air of the island had invigorated his nerves; the consciousness that he was active in the service of his fellow-creatures removed from his mind the morbid sensibility that had formerly so oppressed him; and Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton perceived, with benevolent pleasure, that life was to him no longer a burden. He had become a cheerful, happy member of society, willing to enjoy the blessings that now surrounded him with a truly chastened, grateful spirit: Oakwood and Castle Terryn were ever enlivened when he was present. After the cold and barren living at Feroe, exiled as he there had been from any of his own rank in life, the Vicarage at Castle Terryn and the society those duties included, formed to him indeed a happy resting-place; while his many excellent qualities soon reconciled St. Eval and his Countess to Myrvin's desertion, as they called his accepting the rectory at Oakwood. No untoward event occurred to prevent the celebration of Percy and Edward's bridals as intended. They took place, attended with all that chastened joy and innocent festivity which might have been expected from the characters of those principally concerned. No cloud obscured the happiness of the affectionate united family, which witnessed these gladdening nuptials. Each might, perhaps, in secret have felt there was one blank in every heart, that when thus united, there was still a void on earth. In their breasts the fond memory of Herbert lingered still. Mr. Grahame forgot his moroseness, though he had resolved on returning to his cottage in Wales. He could feel nothing but delight as he looked on his Lilla in her chaste and simple bridal robes, and felt that of her he might indeed be proud. Fondly he dried the tear that fell from her bright eyes, as she clung to him in parting, and promised to see her soon, very soon at Beech Hill.

It was the amusement of the village gossips for many a long evening to discuss over and over again the various merits of the two brides; some preferring the tearful, blushing Lilla, others the pale, yet composed and dignified demeanour of Miss Manvers. Some said Captain Fortescue looked much more agitated than he did when he saved his uncle's life off Dartmouth, some years before; it was marvellously strange for a brave young officer such as he, to be so flustered at such a simple thing as taking a pretty girl for better or worse. And Mr. Percy Hamilton, some said, was very much too serious for such a joyous occasion; if they had been Miss Manvers they should not have liked it, and so unlike himself, too.

"Hold your tongue, silly woman," a venerable old man interposed, at this part of the conversation, "the poor lad's thoughts were with his brother, to whom this day would have been as great a source of joy as to himself. He has not been the same man since dear Master Herbert's death, and no wonder, poor fellow."

This observation effectually put an end to the remarks on Percy's demeanour, and some owned, after all, marriage was somehow a solemn ceremony, and it was better to be too serious at such a time than too gay.

Percy and his bride stayed a week in London, and thence proceeded to Paris, which place, a very short scrutiny convinced Percy was internally in no quiet condition; some disturbance, he was convinced, was threatening, though of what nature he could not at first comprehend. He had not, however, left England a fortnight before his family were alarmed by the reports which so quickly flew over to our island of that extraordinary revolution which in three short days completely changed the sovereign dynasty of France, and threatened a renewal of those horrors which had deluged that fair capital with blood in the time of the unfortunate Louis XVI. We have neither space nor inclination to enter into such details; some extracts of a letter from Percy, which Mr. Hamilton received, after a week of extreme anxiety on his account, we feel, however, compelled to transcribe, as the ultimate fates of two individuals, whose names have more than once been mentioned in the course of these memoirs, may there perhaps be discovered.

"Your anxiety, my dearest mother, and that of my father and Ellen, I can well understand, but for myself I had no fear. Had I been alone, I believe a species of pleasurable excitement would have been the prevailing feeling, but for my Louisa I did tremble very often; the scenes passing around us were to a gentle eye and feeling heart terrible indeed, and so suddenly they had come upon us, we had no time to attempt retreat to a place of greater safety. Cannonballs were flying in all directions, shattering the windows, killing some, and fearfully wounding many others; for several hours I concealed Louisa in the cellar, which was the only secure abode our house presented. Mounted guards, to the number of six or seven hundred, were dashing down the various streets, with a noise like thunder, diversified only by the clash of arms, the shrieks of the wounded, and the fierce cries of the populace. It was indeed terrible--the butchery of lives has indeed been awful; in these sanguinary conflicts between desperate men, pent up in narrow streets, innocent lives have also been taken, for it was next to impossible to distinguish between those who took an active part in the affray, and those who were merely paralysed spectators. In their own defence the gendarmes were compelled to fire, and their artillery did fearful havoc among the people.

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Crossing the Quai de la Tournelle, at the commencement of the first day, I was startled by being addressed by name, and turning round, beheld, to my utter astonishment, Cecil Grahame at my elbow; he was in the uniform of a gendarme, in which corps, he told me, with some glee, his brother-in-law, Lord Alphingham, who was high in favour with the French court, had obtained him a commission; he spoke lightly, and with that same recklessness of spirit and want of principle which unfortunately has ever characterised him, declaring he was far better off than he had ever been in England, which country he hoped never to see again, as he utterly abhorred the very sight of it. The French people were rather more agreeable to live with; he could enjoy his pleasures without any confounded restraint. I suppose he saw how little I sympathised in his excited spirits, for, with a hoarse laugh and an oath of levity, he swore that I had not a bit more spirit in me than when I was a craven-hearted lad, always cringing before the frown of a saintly father, and therefore no fit

companion for a jolly fellow like himself. 'Have you followed Herbert's example, and are you, too, a godly-minded parson? then, good day, and good riddance to you, my lad,' was the conclusion of his boisterous speech, and setting spurs to his horse, he would have galloped off, when I detained him, to ask why he had not informed his family of his present place of abode and situation. My blood had boiled as he spoke, that such rude and scurrilous lips should thus scornfully have spoken my sainted brother's name; passion rose fierce within me, but I thought of him whose name he spoke, and was calm. He swore that he had had quite enough of his father's severity, that he never meant to see his face again. He was now, thank heaven, his own master, and would take care to remain so; that he had been a fool to address me, as he might be sure I should tell of his doings, and bring the old fellow after him. Disgusted beyond measure, yet I could not forbear asking him if he had heard of his mother's death. Without the least change of countenance or of voice, he replied---

"'Heard of it, man, aye, and forgotten it by this; why it is some centuries ago. It would have been a good thing for me had she died years before she did.'

"'Cecil Grahame!' I exclaimed, in a tone that rung in my ears some hours afterwards, and I believe made him start, daring even as he was, 'do you know it is your mother of whom you speak? a mother whose only fault towards you was too much love, a mother whose too fond heart your cruel conduct broke; are you so completely devoid of feeling that not even this can move you?'

"'Pray add to your long list of my good mother's perfections a weakness that ruined me, that made me the wretch I am,' he wildly exclaimed, and he clenched his hand and bit his lip till the blood came, while his cheek became livid with some feeling I could not fathom. He spurred his horse violently, the spirited animal started forward, a kind of spell seemed to rivet my eyes upon him. There was a loud report of cannon from the Place de Greve, several balls whizzed close by me, evidently fired to disperse the multitude, who were tumultuously assembling on the Pont de la Cite, and ere I could recover from the startling effects of the report, I heard a shrill scream of mortal agony, and Cecil Grahame fell from his horse a shattered corpse.

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For several minutes I was wholly unconscious of all that was passing around me. I stood by the body of the unfortunate young man, quite insensible to the danger I was incurring from the shot. I could only see him before my eyes, as I had known him in his boyhood and his earliest youth, full of fair promises, of hopeful futurity, the darling of his mother's eye, the pride of his father, spite of his faults; and now what was he? a mangled corpse, cut off without warning or preparation in his early youth. But, oh, worse, far worse than all, with the words of hatred, of defiance on his lips. I sought in vain for life; there was no sign, no hope. To attempt to rescue the body was vain, the tumult was increasing fearfully around me; many gendarmes were falling indiscriminately with the populace, and the countenance of Cecil was so fearfully disfigured, that to attempt to recognise it when all might again be quiet would, I knew, be useless. One effort I made, I inquired for and sought Lord Alphingham's hotel, intending to obtain his assistance in the proper interment of this unfortunate young man, but in this was equally frustrated; the hotel was closely shut up. Lord and Lady Alphingham had, at the earliest threatening of disturbances, retreated to their chateau in the province of Champagne. I forwarded the melancholy intelligence to them, and returned to my own hotel sick at heart with the sight I had witnessed. The fearful tone of his last words, the agonized shriek, rung in my ears, as the shattered form and face floated before my eyes, with a tenacity no effort of my own or even of my Louisa's could dispel. Oh, my mother, what do I not owe you for guarding me from the temptations that have assailed this wretched young man, or rather for imprinting on my infant mind those principles which, with the blessing of our heavenly Father, have thus preserved me. Naturally, my temper, my passions were like his, in nothing was I his superior; but it was your hand, your prayers, my mother, planted the seeds of virtue, your gentle firmness eradicated those faults which, had they been fostered by indulgence, might have rendered my life like Cecil Grahame's, and exposed me in the end to a death like his. What would have availed my father's judicious

guidance, my brother's mild example, had not the soil been prepared by a mother's hand and watered by a mother's prayers? blessings, a thousand blessings on your head, my mother! Oh, may my children learn to bless theirs even as I do mine; they cannot know a purer joy on earth.

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"We have arrived at Rouen in safety. I am truly thankful to feel my beloved wife is far from the scene of confusion and danger to which she has been so unavoidably exposed. I am not deceived in her strength of nerve, my dear mother; I did not think, when I boasted of it as one of her truly valuable acquirements, I should so soon have seen it put to the proof; to her letter to Caroline I refer you for all entertaining matter.

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"I have been interrupted by an interview as unexpected as it promises to be gratifying. One dear to us all may, at length, rejoice there is hope; but I dare not say too much, for the health of this unhappy young man is so shattered, he may never yet embrace his mother. But to be more explicit, I was engaged in writing, unconsciously with the door of my apartment half open, when I was roused by the voice of the waiter, exclaiming, 'Not that room, sir, if you please, yours is yonder.' I looked up and met the glance of a young man, whom, notwithstanding the long lapse of years, spite of faded form and attenuated features, I recognised on the instant. It was Alfred Greville. I was far more surprised and inconceivably more shocked than when Cecil Grahame crossed my path; I had marked no change in the features or the expression of the latter, but both in Alfred Greville were so totally altered, that he stood before me the living image of his sister, a likeness I had never perceived before. I was too much astonished to address him, and before I could frame words, he had sprung forward, with a burning flush on his cheek, and grasping my hand, wildly exclaimed, 'Do not shun me, Hamilton, I am not yet an utter reprobate. Tell me of my mother; does she live?'"

"'She does,' I replied; instantly a burst of thanksgiving broke from his lips, at least so I imagined, from the expression of his features, for there were no articulate sounds, and a swoon resembling death immediately followed. Medical assistance was instantly procured, but though actual insensibility was not of long continuance, he is pronounced to be in such an utterly exhausted state, that we dare not encourage hopes for his final recovery; yet still I cannot but believe he will be spared---spared not only in health, but as a reformed and better man, to bless that mother whose cares for him, despite long years of difficulties and sorrow, have never failed. In vain I entreated him not to exhaust himself by speaking; that I would not leave him, and if he would only be quiet, he might be better able on the morrow to tell me all he desired. He would not be checked; he might not, he said, be spared many hours, and he must speak ere he died. Comparatively speaking, but little actual vice has stained the conduct of Greville. Throughout all his career the remembrance of his mother has often, very often mingled in his gayest hours, and dashed them with remorseful bitterness. He owns that often of late years her image, and that of his sister Mary, have risen so mildly, so impressively before him, that he has flown almost like a maniac from the gay and heartless throngs, to solitude and silence, and as the thoughts of home and his infancy, when he first lisped out his boyish prayer by the side of his sister at his mother's knee, came thronging over him, he has sobbed and wept like a child. These feelings returned at length so often and so powerfully, that he felt to resist them was even more difficult and painful than to break from the flowery chains which his gay companions had woven round him. He declared his resolution; he resisted ridicule and persuasion. Almost for the first time in his life he remained steadily firm, and when he had indeed succeeded, and found himself some distance from the scenes of luxurious pleasure, he felt himself suddenly endowed with an elasticity of spirit, which he had not experienced for many a long year. The last tidings he had received of his mother and sister were that they were at Paris, and thither he determined to go, having parted from his companions at Florence. During the greater part of his journey to the French capital, he fancied his movements were watched by a stranger, gentlemanly in his appearance, and not refusing to enter into conversation when Greville accosted him; but still Alfred did not feel satisfied with his companionship, though to get rid of him seemed an impossibility, for however he changed his course, the day never

passed without his shadow darkening Greville's path. Within eighty miles of Paris, however, he lost all traces of him, and he then reproached himself for indulging in unnecessary fears. He was not in Paris two days, however, before, to his utter astonishment, he was arrested and thrown into prison on the charge of forging bank-notes, two years previous, to a very considerable amount. In vain he protested against the accusation alleging at that time he had been in Italy and not in Paris. Notes bearing his own signature, and papers betraying other misdemeanours, were brought forward, and on their testimony and that of the stranger, whose name he found to be *Dupont*, he was thrown into prison to await his trial. To him the whole business was an impenetrable mystery. To us, my dear father, it is all clear as day. Poor Mrs. Greville's fears were certainly not without foundation, and when affairs are somewhat more quiet in Paris, I shall leave no stone unturned to prove young Greville's perfect innocence to the public, and bring that wretch Dupont to the same justice to which his hatred would have condemned the son of his old companion. Alfred's agitation on hearing my explanation of the circumstance was extreme. The errors of his father appeared to fall heavily on him, and yet he uttered no word of reproach on his memory. The relation of his melancholy death, and the misery in which we found Mrs. Greville and poor Mary affected him so deeply, I dreaded their effect on his health; but this was nothing to his wretchedness when, by his repeated questions, he absolutely wrung from me the tale of his sister's death, his mother's desolation: no words can portray the extent of his self-reproach. It is misery to look upon him now, and feel what he might have been, had his mother been indeed permitted to exercise her rights. There is no happiness for Alfred Greville this side of the Channel; he pines for home---for his mother's blessing and forgiveness, and till he receives them, health will not, cannot return.

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In prison he remained for six long weary months, with the consciousness that, amidst the many light companions with whom he had associated, there was not one to whom he could appeal for friendship and assistance in his present situation, and the thoughts of his mother and sister returned with greater force, from the impossibility of learning anything concerning them. The hope of escaping never left him, and, with the assistance of a comrade, he finally effected it on the 27th of July, the confusion of the city aiding him far more effectually than he believed possible. He came down to Rouen in a coal-berge, so completely exhausted, that he declared, had not the thought of England and his mother been uppermost, he would gladly have laid down in the open streets to die. To England he felt impelled, he scarcely knew wherefore, save that he looked to us for the information he so ardently desired. Our family had often been among his waking visions, and this accounts for the agitation I witnessed when I first looked up. He said he felt he knew me, but he strove to move or speak in vain; he could not utter the only question he wished to frame, and was unable to depart without being convinced if I indeed were Percy Hamilton.

"And now I have seen you, what have I learnt?" he said, as he ceased a tale, more of sorrow than of crime.

"That your mother lives," I replied, 'that she has never ceased to pray for and love her son, that you can yet be to her a blessing and support.'

"Should he wish her sent for, I asked, I knew she would not demand a second summons. He would not hear of it.

"Not while I have life enough to seek her. What, bring her all these miles to me. My mother, my poor forsaken mother. Oh, no, if indeed I may not live, if strength be not granted me to seek her, then, then it will be time enough to think of beseeching her to come to me; but not while a hope of life remains, speak not of it, Percy. Let her know nothing of me, nothing, till I can implore her blessing on my knees."

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"I have ceased to argue with him, for he is bent upon it, and perhaps it is better thus. His mind appears much relieved, he has passed a quiet night, and this morning the physician finds a wonderful improvement, wonderful to him perhaps, but

not to me."

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Percy's letters containing the above extracts, were productive of much interest to his friends at Oakwood. The details of Cecil's death, alleviated by sympathy, were forwarded to his father and sister. The words that had preceded his death Mr. Hamilton carefully suppressed from his friend, and Mr. Grahame, as if dreading to hear anything that could confirm his son's reckless disposition, asked no particulars. For three months he buried himself in increased seclusion at Llangwillan, refusing all invitations, and denying himself steadfastly to all. At the termination of that period, however, he once more joined his friends, an altered and a happier man. His misanthropy had departed, and often Mr. Hamilton remarked to his wife, that the Grahame of fifty resembled the Grahame of five-and-twenty far more than he had during the intervening years. Lilla and Edward were sources of such deep interest to him, that in their society he seemed to forget the misery occasioned by his other children. The shock of her brother's death was long felt by Lilla; she sorrowed that he was thus suddenly cut off without time for one thought of eternity, one word of penitence, of prayer. The affection of her husband, however, gradually dispelled these melancholy thoughts, and when Lord Delmont paid his promised visit to his nephew, he found no abatement in those light and joyous spirits which had at first attracted him towards Lilla.

Ellen, at her own particular request, had undertaken to prepare Mrs. Greville for the return of her son, and the change that had taken place in him. Each letter from Percy continued his recovery, and here we may notice, though somewhat out of place, as several months elapsed ere he was enabled fully to succeed, that, by the active exertions of himself and of the solicitor his father had originally employed, Dupont was at length brought to justice, his criminal machinations fully exposed to view, and the innocence of Alfred Greville, the son of the deceased, as fully established in the eyes of all men.

Gently and cautiously Ellen performed her office, and vain would be the effort to portray the feelings or the fond and desolate mother, as she anticipated the return of her long-absent, dearly-loved son. Of his own accord he came back to her; he had tried the pleasures of the world, and proved them hollow; he had formed friendships with the young, the gay, the bright, the lovely, and he had found them all wanting in stability and happiness. Amid them all his heart had yearned for home and for domestic love; that mother had not prayed in vain.

Softly and beautifully fell the light of a setting sun around the pretty little cottage, on the banks of the Dart, which was now the residence of Mrs. Greville; the lattice was thrown widely back, and the perfume of unnumbered flowers scented the apartment, which Ellen's hand had loved to decorate, that Mrs. Greville might often, very often forget she was indeed alone. It was the early part of September, and a delicious breeze passed by, bearing health and elasticity upon its wing, and breathing soft melody amid the trees and shrubs. Softly and calmly glided the smooth waters at the base of the garden. The green verandah running round the cottage was filled with beautiful exotics, which Ellen's hand had transported from the conservatory at Oakwood. It was a sweet and soothing sight to see how judiciously, how unassumingly Ellen devoted herself to the desolate mother, without once permitting that work of love to interfere with her still nearer, still dearer ties at home. She knew how Herbert would have loved and devoted himself to the mother of his Mary, and in this, as in all things, she followed in his steps. Untiringly would she listen to and speak on Mrs. Greville's favourite theme, her Mary; and now she sat beside her, enlivening by gentle converse the hours that must intervene ere Alfred came. There was an expression of such calm, such chastened thanksgiving on Mrs. Greville's features, changed as they were by years of sorrow, that none could gaze on her without a kindred feeling stealing over the heart, and in very truth those feelings seemed reflected on the young and lovely countenance beside her. A pensive yet a sweet and pleasing smile rested on Ellen's lips, and her dark eye shone softly bright in the light of sympathy. Beautiful indeed were the orphan's features, but not the dazzling beauty of early youth. If a stranger had gazed on her countenance when in calm repose, he would have thought she had seen sorrow; but when that beaming smile of true benevolence, that

eye of intellectual and soul-speaking beauty met his glance, as certain would he have felt that sorrow, whatever it might have been, indeed had lost its sting.

"It was such an evening, such an hour my Mary died," Mrs. Greville said, as she laid her hand in Ellen's. "I thought not then to have reflected on it with feelings such as now fill my heart. Oh, when I look back on past years, and recall the prayers I have uttered in tears for my son, my Alfred, the doubts, the fears that have arisen to check my prayer, I wonder wherefore am I thus blessed."

"Our God is a God of truth, and He promiseth to answer prayer, dearest Mrs. Greville," replied Ellen, earnestly; "and He is a God of love, and will bless those who seek Him and trust in Him as you have done."

"He gave me grace to trust in Him, my child. I trusted, I doubted not He would answer me in another world, but I thought not such blessing was reserved for me in this. A God of love---ay, in my hour of affliction. I have felt Him so. Oh, may the blessings of His loving-kindness shower down upon me, soften yet more my heart to receive His glorious image."

She ceased to speak, but her lips moved still as in inward prayer. Some few minutes elapsed, and suddenly the glowing light of the sun was darkened, as by an intervening shadow. The mother raised her head, and in another instant her son was at her feet.

"Mother, can you forgive, receive me? Bid me not go forth---I cannot, may not leave you."

"Go forth, my son, my son---oh, never, never!" she cried, and clasping him to her bosom, the quick glad tears fell fast upon his brow. She released him to gaze again and again upon his face, and fold him closer to her heart, to read in those sunken features, that faded form, the tale that he had come back to her heart and to her home, never, never more to leave her.

In that one moment years of error were forgotten. The mother only felt she hold her son to her heart, a suffering, yet an altered and a better man; and he, that he knelt once more beside his mother, forgiven and beloved.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION

And now, what can we more say? Will not the Hamilton family, and those intimately connected with them, indeed be deemed complete? It was our intention to trace in the first part of our tale the cares, the joys, the sorrows of parental love, during the years of childhood and earliest youth; in the second, to mark the *effect* of those cares, when those on whom they were so lavishly bestowed attained a period of life in which it depends more upon themselves than on their parents to frame their own happiness or misery, as far, at least, as we ourselves can do so. It may please our Almighty Father to darken our earthly course by the trial of adversity, and yet that peace founded on religion, which it was Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton's first care to inculcate, may seldom be disturbed. It may please Him to bless us with prosperity, but from characters such as Annie Grahame happiness is a perpetual exile, which no prosperity has power to recall. We have followed Mr. Hamilton's family from childhood, we have known them from their earliest years, and now that it has become their parts to feel those same cares and joys, and perform those precious but solemn duties which we have watched in Mrs. Hamilton, our task is done; and we must bid farewell to those we have known and loved so long; those whom we have seen the happy inmates of one home, o'er whom---

"The same fond mother bent at night,"

who shared the same joys, the same cares, whose deepest affections were confined to their parents and each other, are now scattered in different parts of their native land, distinct members of society, each with his own individual cares and joys, with new and precious ties to divide that heart whose whole affection had once been centred in one spot and in one circle; and can we be accused in thus terminating our simple annals of wandering from the real course of life. Is it not thus with very many families of England? Are not marriage and death twined hand in hand, to render that home desolate which once resounded with the laugh of many gleesome hearts, with the glad tones of youthful revelling and joy? True, in those halls they often meet again, and the hearts of the parents are not lone, for the family of each child is a source of inexpressible interest to them; there is still a link, a precious link to bind them together, but vain and difficult would be the attempt to continue the history of a family when thus dispersed. Sweet and pleasing the task to watch the unfledged nestlings while under a mother's fostering wing, but when they spread their wings and fly, where is the eye or pen that can follow them on their eager way?

Once more, but once, we will glance within the halls of Oakwood, and then will we bid them farewell, for our task will be done, and the last desires of fancy, we trust, to have appeased.

It was in the September of the year 1830 we closed our narrative. Let us then, for one moment, imagine the veil of fancy is upraised on the first day of the year, 1838, and gaze within that self-same room, which twenty years before we had seen lighted up on a similar occasion, the anniversary of a new year, bright with youthful beauty, and enlivened by the silvery laugh of early childhood. But few, very few, were the strangers that this night mingled with Mr. Hamilton's family. It was not, as it had been twenty years previous, a children's ball on which we glance. It was but the happy reunion of every member of that truly happy family, and the lovely, mirthful children there assembled were, with the exception of a very few, closely connected one with another by the near relationship of brothers, sisters, and cousins. In Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, Mrs. Greville, Montrose Grahame, Lucy Harcourt, and Mr. Morton, who were all present, time had comparatively made but little difference; but it was in those who twenty years before had so well acted the part of youthful entertainers to their various guests that the change was striking, yet far, very far from being mournful.

On one side might be seen Percy Hamilton, M.P., in earnest yet pleasurable conversation with Mr. Grahame. It was generally noticed that these two gentlemen were always talking politics, discussing, whenever they met, the affairs of the nation, for no senator was more earnest and interested in his vocation than Percy Hamilton, but certainly on this night there was no thoughtful gravity of a senator imprinted on his brow; he was looking and laughing at the childish efforts of the little Lord Manvers, eldest child of the Earl of Delmont, then in his seventh year, to emulate the ease and dignity of his cousins, Lord Lyle and Herbert and Allan Myrvin, some two or three years older than himself, who, from being rather more often at Oakwood, considered themselves quite lords of the soil and masters of the ceremonies, during the present night at least. The Ladies Mary and Gertrude Lyle, distinguished by the perfect simplicity of their dress, had each twined an arm in that of the gentle, retiring Caroline Myrvin, and tried to draw her from her young mother's side, where, somewhat abashed at the number that night assembled in her grandfather's hall, she seemed determined to remain, while a younger sister frolicked about the room, making friends with all, in such wild exuberance of spirits, that Mrs. Myrvin's gentle voice was more than once raised in playful reproach to reduce her to order, while her husband and Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton seemed to take delight in her movements of elasticity and joy. The Countess St. Eval, as majestic and fascinating in womanhood as her early youth had promised, one moment watched with a proud yet softly flashing eye the graceful movements of her son, and the next, was conversing eagerly and gaily with her brother Percy and the young Earl of Delmont, who were standing near her; seven years had wrought but little change in him, whom till now we have only known by the simple designation of Edward Fortescue. Manhood, in his prime, had rather increased than lessened the extreme beauty of his face and form; few gazed on him once but turned to gaze again, and the little smiling cherub of five years, whose soft, round arms were twined round Miss Fortescue's neck, the Lady Ellen Fortescue, promised fair to inherit all her father's beauty and peculiar grace, and endeared her to her young mother's heart with an increased warmth of love, while the dark flashing eyes of Lord Manvers and his glossy, flowing, ebon curls rendered him, Edward declared, the perfect likeness of his mother, and therefore he was the father's pet. Round Mr. Hamilton were grouped, in

attitudes which an artist might have been glad to catch for natural grace, about three or four younger grandchildren, the eldest not exceeding four years, who, too young to join in the dance and sports of their elder brethren, were listening with eager attention to the entertaining stories grandpapa was relating, calling forth peals of laughter from his infant auditors, particularly from the fine curly-headed boy who was installed on the seat of honour, Mr. Hamilton's knee, being the only child of Percy and Louisa, and consequently the pet of all. It was to that group Herbert Myrvin wished to confine the attention of his merry little sister, who, however, did not choose to be so governed, and frisked about from one group to another, regardless of her graver brother's warning glances; one minute seated on Mrs. Hamilton's knee and nestling her little head on her bosom, the next pulling her uncle Lord St. Eval's coat, to make him turn round and play with her, and then running away with a wild and ringing laugh.

"Do not look so anxious, my own Emmeline," Mrs. Hamilton said fondly, as she met her daughter's glance fixed somewhat anxiously on her little Minnie, for so she was generally called, to distinguish her from Lady St. Eval's Mary. "You will have no trouble to check those wild spirits when there is need to do so; her heart is like your own, and then sweet is the task of rearing."

With all the grateful fondness of earlier years did Mrs. Myrvin look up in her mother's face, as she thus spoke, and press her hand in hers.

"Not even yet have you ceased to penetrate my thoughts, my dearest mother," she replied; "from childhood unto the present hour you have read my countenance as an open book."

"And have not you, too, learned that lesson, my child? Is it not to you your gentle, timid Caroline clings most fondly? Is it not to you Herbert comes with his favourite book, and Allan with his tales of glee? Minnie's mirth is not complete unless she meets your smile, and even little Florence looks for some sign of sympathy. You have not found the task so difficult, that you should wonder I should love it?"

"For those beloved ones, oh, what would I not do?" said Mrs. Myrvin, in a tone of animated fervour, and turning her glistening eyes on her mother, she added, "My own mother, marriage may bring with it new tics, new joys, but, oh, who can say it severs the first bright links of life between a mother and a child? it is now, only now, I feel how much you loved me."

"May your children be to you what mine have ever been to me, my Emmeline; I can wish you no greater blessing," replied Mrs. Hamilton, in a tone of deep emotion, and twining Emmeline's arm in hers, they joined Mrs. Greville and Miss Harcourt, who were standing together near the pianoforte, where Edith Seymour, the latter's younger niece, a pleasing girl of seventeen, was good-naturedly playing the music of the various dances which Lord Lyle and Herbert Myrvin were calling in rapid succession. In another part of the room Alfred Greville and Laura Seymour were engaged in such earnest conversation, that Lord Delmont indulged in more than one joke at their expense, of which, however, they were perfectly unconscious; and this had occurred so often, that many of Mrs. Greville's friends entertained the hope of seeing the happiness now so softly and calmly imprinted on her expressive features, very shortly heightened by the union of her now truly estimable son with an amiable and accomplished young woman, fitted in all respects to supply the place of the daughter she had lost.

And what had these seven years done for the Countess of Delmont, who had completely won the delighted kiss and smiles of Minnie Myrvin, by joining in all her frolics, and finally accepting Allan's blushing invitation, and joining the waltz with him, to the admiration of all the children. The girlish vivacity of Lilla Grahame had not deserted Lady Dolmont; conjugal and maternal love had indeed softened and subdued a nature, which in early years had been perhaps too petulant; had heightened yet chastened sensibility. Never was happiness more visibly impressed or more keenly felt than by the youthful Countess. Her husband, in his extreme fondness, had so fostered her at times almost childish glee,

that he might have unfitted her for her duties, had not the mild counsels, the example of his sister, Miss Fortescue, turned aside the threatening danger, and to all the fascination of early childhood Lady Delmont united the more solid and enduring qualities of pious, well-regulated womanhood.

"I wonder Charles is not jealous," observed Mrs. Percy Hamilton, playfully, after admiring to Lord Delmont his wife's peculiar grace in waltzing. "Allan seems to have claimed her attention entirely."

"Charles has something better to do," replied his father, laughing, as the little Lord Manvers flew by him, with his arm twined round his cousin Gertrude in the inspiring galop, and seemed to have neither ear nor eye for any one or anything else. "Caroline, do you permit your daughter to play the coquette so early?"

"Better at seven than seventeen, Edward, believe me; had she numbered the latter, I might be rather more uneasy, at present I can admire that pretty little pair without any such feeling. Gertrude told me to-day, she did not like to see her cousin Charles so shy, and she should do all she could to make him as much at home as she and her brother are."

"She has succeeded, then, admirably," replied Edward, laughing, "for the little rogue has not much shyness in him now. Herbert and Mary have got that corner all to themselves; I should like to go slyly behind them, and find out what they are talking about."

"Try and remember what you used to talk about to your partners in this very room, some twenty years back, and perhaps recollection will satisfy your curiosity," said Lady St. Eval, smiling, but faintly, however; the names Herbert and Mary had recalled a time when those names had often been joined before, and the silent prayer arose that their fates might not resemble those whose names they bore, that they might be spared a longer time to bless those who loved them.

"Twenty years back, Caroline, what an undertaking. Allan is more like the madcap I was then, so I can better enter into his feelings of pleasure. By-the-bye, why are not Mrs. Cameron's family here to-night? I half expected to meet them here yesterday."

"They spend this season with Sir Walter and Lady Cameron in Scotland," replied Lady St. Eval. "Florence declared she would take no excuse; the Marquis and Marchioness of Malvern, with Emily and Louis, are there also, and Lady Alford is to join them in a week or two."

"You were there last summer, were you not?"

"We were. They are one of the happiest couples I know, and their estate is most beautiful. Florence declares that, were Sir Walter Scott still living, she intended to have made him take her for a heroine, her husband for a hero, and transport them some centuries back, to figure on that same romantic estate in some very exciting scenes."

"Had he killed Cameron's first love and rendered him desperate, and made Florence some consoling spirit, to remove his despair, instead of making him so unromantically enabled to conquer his passion, because unreturned. Why I could make as good a story as Sir Walter himself; if she will reward me liberally, I will set about it."

"It will never do, Lord Delmont, it is much too common-place," said Mrs. Percy Hamilton, smiling. "It is a very improper question, I allow, but who was Sir Walter's first love?"

"Do you not know? A certain friend of yours whom I torment, by declaring she is invulnerable to the little god's arrows," he answered, joyously.

"She may be invulnerable to Cupid, but certainly not to any other kind of love," remarked Lady St. Eval, as she smilingly pointed out to Mrs. Percy's notice Miss Fortescue, surrounded by a group of children, and bearing on her expressive countenance unanswerable evidences of her interest in the happiness of all around her.

"And is it possible, after loving *her* he could love another?" she exclaimed, in unfeigned astonishment.

"Disagreeably unromantic, Louisa, is it not?" said Lord Delmont, laughing heartily; "but what was the poor man to do? Ellen was inexorable, and refused to bestow on him anything but her friendship."

"Which he truly values," interrupted Lady St. Eval. "You must allow, Louisa, he was wise, however free from romance; the character of Florence, in many points, very much resembles Ellen's. She is one of the very few whom I do not wonder at his choosing, after what had passed. Do you know, Edward, Flora Cameron marries in the spring?"

"I heard something about it; tell me who to."

She complied, and Percy and Mr. Grahame joining them, the conversation extended to more general topics.

"Nay, Allan, dear, do not tease your sister," was Miss Fortescue's gentle remonstrance, as Allan endeavoured, somewhat roughly, to draw Minnie from her side, where, however, she clung with a pertinacity no persuasion or reproach could shake.

"She will hurt Ellen," replied the boy, sturdily, "and she has no right to take her place by you."

"But she may stand here too, there is room for us both," interrupted the little Ellen, though she did not offer to give up her place in her aunt's lap to her cousin.

"Go away, Allan, I choose to stand here, and aunt Ellen says I may," was Minnie's somewhat impatient rejoinder, as she tried to push her brother away, though her pretty little features expressed no ill-temper on the occasion, for she laughed as she spoke.

"Aunt Ellen promised to dance with me," retorted Allan, "and so I will not go away unless she comes too."

"With me, with me!" exclaimed Lord Manvers, bounding forward to join the group. "She promised three months ago to dance with me."

"And how often have I not performed that promise, Master Charlie?" replied Ellen, laughing, "even more often with you than with Allan, so I must give him the preference first."

Her good-natured smiles, the voice which betrayed such real interest in all that pleased her little companions, banished every appearance of discontent. The magic power of affection and sympathy rendered every little pleader satisfied and pleased; and, after performing her promise with Allan, she put the final seal to his enjoyment by confiding the little bashful Ellen to his especial care; a charge, which Myrvin declared, caused his son to hold himself up two inches higher than he had done yet.

"Ellen, if you do not make yourself as great and deservedly a favourite with my children as with your brother's and Emmeline's, I shall never forgive you," said the Earl St. Eval, who had been watching Miss Fortescue's cheerful gambols with the children for the last half hour, in extreme amusement, and now joined her.

"Am I not so already, Eugene?" she said, smiling that peculiar smile of quiet happiness which was now natural to her countenance. "I should be sorry if I thought they did not love me equally; for believe me, with the sole exception of my little namesake and godchild, my nephews and nieces are all equally dear to me. I have no right to make an exception even in favour of my little Ellen, but Edward has so often called her mine, and even Lilla has promised to share her maternal rights with me, that I really cannot help it. Your children do not see so much of me as Emmeline's, and that is the reason perhaps they are not quite so free with me; but believe me, dear St. Eval, it will not be my fault if they do not love me."

"I do believe you," replied the Earl, warmly. "I have but one regret, Ellen, when I see you loving and beloved by so many little creatures."

"And what may that be?"

"That they are not some of them your own, my dear girl. I cannot tell you how I regret the fact, of which each year the more and more convinces me, that you are determined ever to remain single. There are very few in my list of female friends so fitted to adorn the marriage state, very few who would make a better mother, and I cannot but regret there are none on whom you seem inclined to bestow those endearing and invaluable qualities."

"Regret it then no more, my dear St. Eval," replied Ellen, calmly, yet with feeling. "I thank you for that high opinion which I believe you entertain of me, too flattering as it may be; but cease to regret that I have determined to live an old maid's life. To me, believe me, it has no terrors. To single women the opportunities of doing good, of making others happy, are more frequent than those granted to mothers and wives; and while such is the case, is it not our own fault if we are not happy? I own that the life of solitude which an old maid's includes, may, if the heart be so inclined, be equally productive of selfishness, moroseness of temper, and obstinacy in opinion and judgment, but most fervently I trust such will never be my attributes. It can never be while my beloved aunt and uncle are spared to me, which I trust they will be for many, many years longer; and even should they be removed before I anticipate, I have so many to love me, so many to dearly love, that I can have no time, no room for selfishness."

"Do not mistake me, Ellen," St. Eval replied, earnestly; "I do not wish to see you married because I dread your becoming like some single women; with your principles such can never be. Your society---your influence over the minds of our children---is far too precious to be lightly wished removed, as it would be were you to marry. It is for your own sake, dearest Ellen, I regret it, and for the sake of him you might select, that you, who are so fitted to enjoy and to fulfil them, can never know the pleasures attendant on the duties of a happy wife and mother; that by a husband and child, the dearest ties of earth, you will go down to the grave unloved."

"You are right, St. Eval, they are the dearest ties on earth; but pleasures, the pleasures of affection, too, are yet left to us, who may never know them. Think you not, that to feel it is my place to cheer and soothe the declining years of those dear and tender guardians of my infancy must bring with it enjoyment---to see myself welcomed by smiles of love and words of kindness by all my brothers and sisters---to see their children flock around me as I enter, each seeking to be the first to obtain my smile or kiss---to know myself of service to my fellow-creatures, I mean not in my own rank, but those beneath me---to feel conscious that in every event of life, particularly in sickness or in sorrow, if those I so love require my presence, or I feel I may give them comfort or sympathy, at least I may fly to them, for I shall have no tie, no dearer or more imperious duty to keep me from them---are not these considerations enough to render a single life indeed one of happiness, St. Eval? Even from this calm, unruffled stream of life can I not gather flowers?"

"You would gather them wherever you were placed, my dear and noble-minded Ellen," said the Earl, with a warmth that caused her eye to glisten. "You are right: with a disposition such as yours, I have no need to regret you have so steadfastly refused every offer of marriage. My girls shall come to you in that age when they think matrimony is the only

chance of happiness, and you shall teach them felicity dwells not so much in outward circumstances as in the temper of the mind. Perhaps, after all, Ellen, you are happier as it is. You might not find such a husband as I would wish you, and I should be sorry to see your maternal cares rewarded as were poor Mrs. Greville's."

"I rather think, in the blessedness of the present the past is entirely forgotten," observed Ellen, thoughtfully. "There are cares and sorrows attendant on the happiest lot; but if a mother does her duty, in my opinion she seldom fails to obtain her recompense, however long deferred."

"You are right, my Ellen," said Mrs. Hamilton, who had been listening to the conversation some little time unobserved. "There are many sorrows and many cares inseparable from maternal love, but they are forgotten, or only remembered to enhance the sweetness of the recompense that ever follows. Do you not think, to see my children, as I do now around me, walking in that path which alone can lead to eternal life, and leading their offspring with them, bringing up so tenderly, so fondly their children as heirs of immortality, and yet lavishing on me, as on their father, the love and duty of former years---is not this a precious recompense for all which for them I may have done or borne? Even as I watched the departing moments of my Herbert, as I marked the triumphant and joyful flight of his pure spirit to his heavenly home,---even then was I not rewarded? I saw the fruit of those lessons I had been permitted through grace to inculcate; his last breath blessed me, and was not that enough? Oh, my beloved children, let no difficulties deter you, no temptation, no selfish suffering prevent your training up the lovely infants now gambolling around you, in the way that they should go;---solemn is the charge, awful the responsibility, but sweeter far than words can give it, the reward which either in life or death will then be yours."

"Ah, could we perform our parts as you have yours, dearest mother, then indeed might we hope it," exclaimed the Countess St. Eval and Mrs. Myrvin at the same moment, as they drew closer to their mother, the eyes of both glistening with emotion as they spoke.

"And if we do reap the happiness of which you spoke, to whom shall we owe it, mother?" demanded Percy, feelingly; for he too, attracted by his mother's emotion, had joined the group. "Whose care, under God's blessing, has made us as we are, and taught us, not only by precept but example, how to conduct ourselves and our children? yours and my father's; and if indeed in after years our children look up to us and bless us as we do you, oh, my mother, the remembrance of you will mingle with that blessedness, and render it yet purer."

"Truly have you spoken, my son," said Mr. Hamilton, whose little companions had about half an hour before been transported to their nursery. "While sharing with your dear mother the happiness arising from your conduct, my children, often and often has the remembrance of my mother entered my heart to chasten and enhance those feelings. Gratitude to her, reverence of her memory, have mingled with the present joy, and so will it be with you. Your parents may have descended to the grave before your children can be to you what you have been to us, but we shall be remembered. Long, long may you feel as you think on your mother, my beloved children, and teach your offspring to venerate her memory, that the path of the just is indeed as a shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

THE END.