

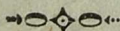
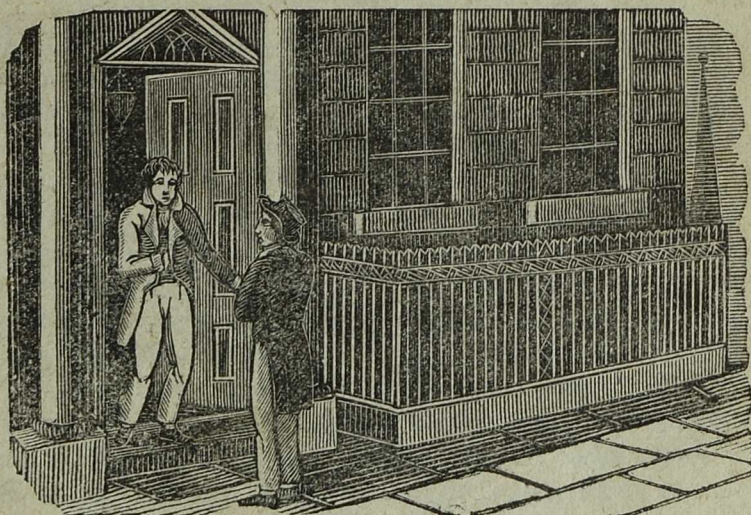
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THE
YOUNG FORESTER.
PART IV.

BY MRS. SHERWOOD,

Author of "Little Henry and his Bearer," &c.



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THE

Young Forester.



PART IV.

MARTEN was not without some little fear, for a considerable time after this affair, lest the smugglers should encourage one another to revenge themselves upon him in some bloody way. But his fears were not productive of any tormenting solicitude, inasmuch as they were accompanied with a consciousness that he had acted with the strictest propriety on the late trying occasion. He placed his cause in the hands of the Supreme Ruler of the world; and, humbly confiding in his providential care, he was gradually delivered from all painful apprehension.

In a short time, the smugglers had removed all their goods; and thus Marten was made the favoured instrument of withdrawing his family from one of those evil connections which had caused the ruin of several individual members of it. But still he had much to try him. His father continued to suffer greatly with his shattered arm; neither was it judged advisable to call in a doctor who knew how to dress it properly: and it soon became evident to Marten, that his sister was in a very unpromising state of mind.

In the mean time, young Webb and his sister Dolly had been from home, leaving the business of the house to the

management of an old servant of their father's: and, when they at length returned, Marten was not long in discovering the attachment between his sister and the young man; nor could he observe it without sorrow, since young Webb appeared to him to be an utterly worthless character. Marten also found considerable difficulty in managing his father's business; and, though he took directions from him every day, he was sometimes totally at a loss how to act. For the sake, however, of his afflicted parent, he resolved to exert himself to the uttermost; and, having a very good character with the ranger of the forest, who had witnessed his upright conduct in many little matters, his lord was soon persuaded to overlook his inexperience, considering that every day would serve in some degree to remedy that deficiency.

Marten soon perceived that his father's situation as forest-keeper was really a very desirable place, and such a one as promised, in the hands of an upright careful man, to maintain a family in a very creditable manner. He saw also that in the open and orderly exercise of this business, there was no cause for cruelty: since although hares and deer were occasionally to be killed, yet there were ways of executing this unpleasant work in a humane and speedy manner.

Poor James Taylor had now lingered several months in a state of almost total confinement, and there was very little hope of his ever being restored to health. Upon which the ranger, who had long suspected him of dishonest practices, was glad of the opportunity of taking the situation from him, and giving it to his son: so that Marten became the real master of the house during the latter part of his father's life.

Poor James Taylor did not however continue long after this change had taken place. The pain of his broken limb had been so exquisite and incessant as gradually to wear away his constitution: and he died, at length, in the arms of his beloved Marten, blessing him for all his kindness; but above all for the infinite labour he had taken to bring him in the days of his affliction to the knowledge of an all-sufficient Saviour—by which expression it appeared that the affectionate solicitude of his son had not been altogether in vain.

Marten Taylor had scarcely had time to put his poor father decently into the ground, before he found new troubles arising from his near neighbours the Webbs, who, on one account or other, were almost constantly in his house. Young Webb and Alice Taylor were perpetually together; and it was easy to perceive that Dolly Webb, who was some years older than young Taylor, was exceedingly solicitous to cultivate a familiar intimacy with him. But, although Dolly was a handsome girl, and could make herself very agreeable, Marten had known too much of the family to entertain any such desire on his part; and he had often reason to account himself particularly happy in being able to withstand the enticements of this young woman.

After his poor father's death, Marten made many convenient alterations in his house and gardens. His landlord was prevailed with to make several repairs in the house and premises, and he employed a labourer to assist him in digging and planting the garden. His father had formed a cock-pit near the house, as I have before said, and had in training the finest breed of fighting-cocks in all that neighbourhood. Marten filled up the cock-pit; and, fearing that if he sold the young cocks alive they might fall into the hands of cock-fighters, he had them all killed, and plucked, and sent to the poulterers, to fetch what they would.

On this occasion, he had no little contention with his sister, who called him a fool for preferring the peace of the brute creation to his own interest and pleasure. Marten took this opportunity to assure his sister, that, since it had pleased the Almighty to give him any just sense of religion, he had found it as impossible to take any delight in putting the inferior creatures to pain, as in burning his own flesh, or in putting his body to any other kind of torture. "On the contrary," said he, "when it becomes necessary for me to put any animal to death, that necessity never fails to excite in me a most uneasy sensation, and prompts me to do it in as speedy a manner as possible."

"I suppose then," said Alice, "that you take great credit to yourself for being thus chicken-hearted, and that you consider it as something sufficiently meritorious to fit you for heaven."

"Sister," replied Marten, "I do not consider this or any other thing which I am capable of *feeling* or *doing*, as in any

way meritorious, or in any degree likely to secure my admission into heaven, should it please God to appoint me an entrance into that blessed place. But this I would say, that if any man pretending to be a Christian, should at the same time take pleasure in any species of cruelty, such a man most assuredly deceives himself, and his religion is vain."

Marten then went on to say something concerning the work of the Spirit in changing the heart; and especially in producing those feelings of love and tenderness, which, though inferior in degree, must needs bear some just resemblance to the very feelings of the Creator towards his creatures.

He would have proceeded to speak of that most glorious and unexampled proof of divine love, the salvation of man by Jesus Christ; but Alice, who had heard him for a long time with impatience, now suddenly interrupted him with some profane remark, and walked out of the hall.

Notwithstanding the many ill conditions of his sister Alice, Marten contrived to wear out two years in her company. Though her behaviour very often rendered him extremely uncomfortable, yet he thought it his duty to bear with her as long as he could. But, about the end of the second year, young Webb, being afraid of detection in some poaching or smuggling business, withdrew from the place, and enlisted in a marching regiment, then lying on the coast; whither Alice almost immediately followed him, and shortly afterwards became his wife. At the same time, Webb's house and situation being given to another person, Dolly Webb found it necessary to leave the country in pursuit of some service, having no longer any hope of connecting herself with Marten.

When all Webb's family and his sister were gone, Marten could not but feel himself in a very deserted and solitary situation. He remembered the time, when his brothers and sister with the two young Webbs used to play together before his father's door, while the old people looked on. But now, where were all these? Not one of them was left. On these occasions the words of the psalmist were brought to the recollection of Marten—"I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree: yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. (Psalm xxxvii. 35, 36.)

At some seasons Marten felt so uncomfortable in his wide house by himself, as to meditate an entire removal from it: but at other times he would say to himself—"This situation is in itself a good one for a poor man like me; and if I should ever marry, it would afford a comfortable subsistence for my family." Marten then began to consider, that, in his circumstances, a proper wife would be a great comfort to him; but he had never yet seen the woman with whom he thought he could be happy.

It was now as much as four years since Marten had left his master; and during all that time, he had never once seen the old gentleman, who no longer paid his usual visits in that neighbourhood: and owing to a great variety of circumstances not necessary to mention in this place, Marten had not been able to leave his home. But about this time, he received a letter from Mr. Hartley, saying that he was about to pay a visit for some weeks at the house of a Mr. Jameson, who resided in Salisbury, and that he should be much pleased if Marten could take a walk over, in order to meet him there, the distance being not considerable.

Marten was much gratified on the receipt of this letter, and having engaged an old cottager in the neighbourhood, whom he believed to be an honest man, and whom he had kept in almost constant employment ever since his sister's removal, to take charge of his house and concerns during his absence, he set off with a bundle in his hand for Salisbury.

Marten had started early in the day, and having been detained about half way by a little business, arrived at Salisbury about three o'clock, which, at that time, was the customary dinner hour in genteel families. As Mr. Hartley had given him very particular directions, it was no hard matter for him to find his way to Mr. Jameson's house. It stood in one of the best streets of the town. It was a new building; and the kitchen and offices, though underground, were by no means dark or inconvenient, the area before the kitchen-windows being very spacious.

Marten read the name of Jameson on the door, nearly where he had expected to find the house; and on knocking, he was received by the footman, who told him, that Mr. Hartley, for whom he enquired, was then from home, but would be in at dinner. The footman, who told him that he had been directed by Mr. Hartley, if a young man

called for him in his absence, to be sure to make him welcome, asked him in, shewed him the kitchen-stairs, and, requesting him to walk down, promised to follow him in a few minutes, when he should have finished laying the cloth in the dining-room.

Marten walked down stairs into the kitchen, where he saw many symptoms of a good dinner nearly ready to be served up, but no appearance of cook or kitchen-maid. Hearing, however, several female voices issuing from the back-kitchen, he could not help also overhearing all that was said as distinctly as if he had been in the same room.

The persons discoursing together, were Dolly the cook, Sally the housemaid, and Mrs. Biddy the lady's maid, which last-mentioned person had just gone into the back-kitchen to wash her hands, after having dressed her lady's hair with powder and pomatum according to the fashion of those times.

"Where are the eels?" said the cook. "I shall be too late. Who, in the name of fortune, can have moved them from the place in which I left them?"

"Don't frighten yourself, cook," replied the housemaid, "I removed them! here they are!"

"What had you to do with them?" returned the first voice. "Why, I'll be hanged if you have not killed them! What was that for?"

"To prevent your skinning them alive, cook," said the housemaid. "You know, I told you that I should do so by the next which came into the house, the last time we had eels for dinner; for my very heart bled to see you treat the poor creatures as you did."

"Where's the soap?" said a third voice, which was that of the lady's maid.

"O you are wonderfully tender-hearted!" said the cook, still addressing herself to the housemaid.

"Tender-hearted!" repeated the lady's maid. "I am sure I don't understand where her tender heart is. What! to go and cut a poor creature's head off for pleasure? Is that the sign of a tender heart? I am sure, if you would give me the whole world, I could never do such a thing as to kill any animal."

"What, not to save them greater pain, Mrs. Bridget?" said the housemaid.

"No," said the lady's maid, "indeed, I could not, Sally. My feelings would not let me; and I am sure you have not the delicate nerves I have, or you never could have gone and killed all those eels, when it was no part of your business to do so."

"Well, as you have taken upon you to kill the eels, now help me to skin them, Sally, and talk no more about it," said the cook. "I suppose you are made of the same stuff as your neighbours, neither better nor worse."

When the eels were skinned, and the damsels had washed their hands, they made their appearance in the kitchen. First, the lady's maid; an ordinary looking woman, though much set off by dress: secondly, the housemaid, a pretty neat looking young woman, of a peculiarly modest and agreeable aspect: and thirdly, the cook, who proved to be no other than Dolly Webb.

The women all seemed somewhat startled at the appearance of Marten Taylor; but more especially Dolly Webb, who nevertheless soon expressed her joy in a very loud manner. But as business then pressed, she was obliged to leave it to the lady's maid and footman to make an old acquaintance welcome.

While Marten was listening to the polite and complimentary speeches of these persons, he could not help now and then looking towards a little table at the further end of the kitchen, at which the housemaid had sat down to her sewing, apparently paying little regard to what was passing. Marten had, from the first, been much gratified with the humane sentiments of this young woman; and this prepared him to admire the modest expression of her countenance, and the great neatness of her person. He was also pleased to observe, that, happen what would in the kitchen, she still seemed intent on her work; and he remarked, that he had seldom seen any one more diligent or expeditious with their needle.

By this time, dinner was dished up; so the footman being engaged up stairs, and the lady's maid being called away also, no one was left below but the housemaid and cook; the latter of whom bustled in and out, sometimes standing to talk a minute, and sometimes running to prepare what the footman called for. In the mean time, Marten Taylor had got up from his chair, and moved near to the little table at

which the housemaid sat at work; and leaning his back against the window, he ventured to put one or two questions to the young woman. As he accosted her in terms of great civility, she answered him in like manner: and Marten could not but admire the propriety with which she spoke, without boldness on the one hand, or awkward bashfulness on the other.

The conversation between Marten Taylor and this young woman did not last long; for Sally being called away by the cook, he was left alone standing near the table.

Marten, as I have before remarked, had thought for some time past that a virtuous and agreeable wife would greatly add to his happiness; and especially, as he had wherewithal to keep a family comfortably. It was natural for him, therefore, to look with an enquiring eye on every young woman whom he thought within his reach. Had Dolly Webb been a modest and pious girl, he no doubt would have chosen her; and indeed it had cost him many struggles in times past to acquire any thing like a feeling of indifference towards her. But what he had heard that day concerning the cruelty of her temper, trifling as some might have considered it, had so entirely turned his heart from her, that he could no longer think of her without disgust.

While Marten stood with his back to the window, thinking upon these subjects, his eyes wandered over the table on which Sally's work was laid; where he perceived, in the midst of the working-materials, though nearly concealed by them, a book, which from its being set open he had every reason to believe that the young woman had been consulting, and perhaps committing to memory as she worked. Marten thought that much depended upon the character of that unknown book. "This book was not put here for me or any one to see," said Marten to himself, "because it seems to have been carefully hid. If this is a light book, I will think no more of the young woman; but if it be a godly book, I should surely do well to look further after her."

Hereupon Marten ventured somewhat cautiously to lift up a part of the muslin which covered the book; when he perceived it to be no other than the Bible.

The history of Marten Taylor has now run to such a length, that I must endeavour to bring it to an end: otherwise, I could tell you a great deal about his meeting with

his old master, to whom he broke his mind concerning the housemaid, and was encouraged to seek her as a wife by Mr. Hartley, who informed him, that she had been reared in Mr. Jameson's family, and was known to be a truly pious girl.

Marten made several visits to Salisbury, before he fully opened his mind to Sally; but, when he did so, he was favourably heard, and, after a short courtship, she became his wife.

The last account I heard of Marten, which is now as much as thirty years ago, was, that he was living happily in his house on the forest, where he was blessed with three sweet babies; and, to add to his satisfaction, his old master had fitted up two rooms in his house, resolving, if Heaven should permit, there to finish his days.

Marten, though holding the office of game and forest-keeper, continued to display, among many other tokens of a truly religious feeling, a peculiar degree of tenderness towards all the dumb creatures depending on him; insomuch, that he never put any animal to needless pain—thus verifying the words of holy writ, *A good man is merciful even to his beast.*

Of Alice and her husband, of Marten's brothers, and Dolly Webb, I never could get any tidings.

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