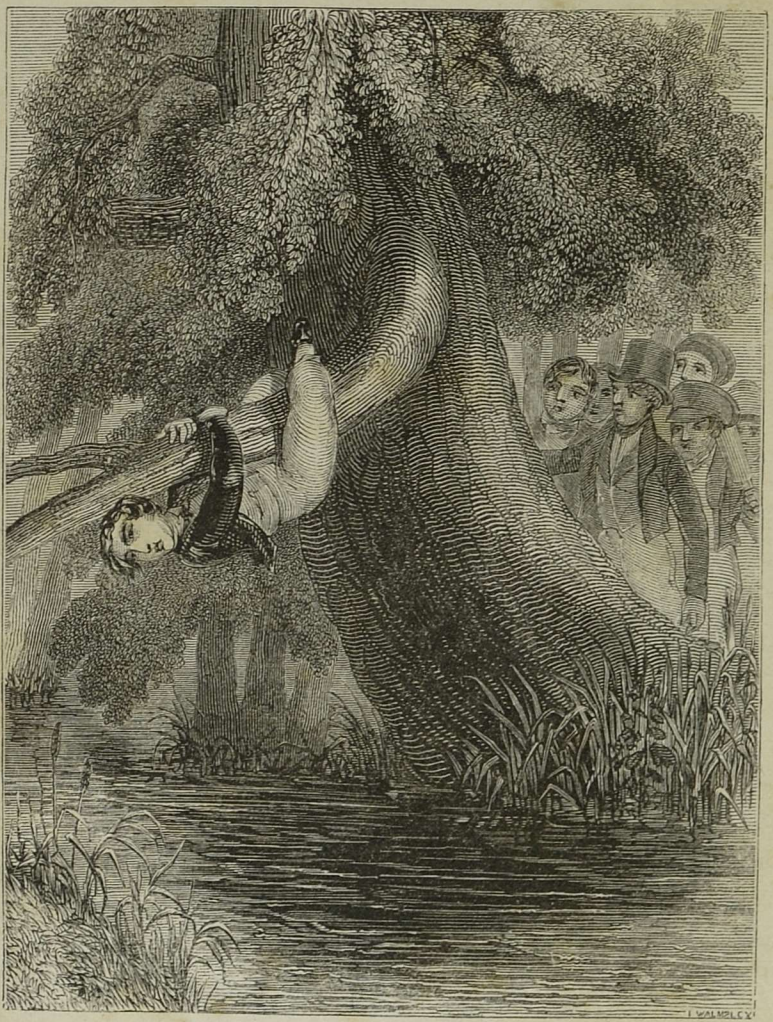
Graham Parker

M. R. Stewart.

May 1839.



His companions watched his movements with silent interest, and when he had accomplished his undertaking, a shout of triumph and applause burst from every lip.

Trials of Strength,

MORAL AND PHYSICAL.

By MRS. BARWELL.

LONDON:
HARVEY AND DARTON,
GRACECHURCH-STREET.

TRIALS OF STRENGTH.

A Tale,

ILLUSTRATIVE OF

MORAL AND PHYSICAL COURAGE.

By MRS. BARWELL,

Author of "Little Lessons," "Nursery Government," "The Novel Adventures of Tom Thumb," &c. &c.

LONDON:

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TRIALS OF STRENGTH,

MORAL AND PHYSICAL.

CHAPTER I.

THE HALF-HOLIDAY.

It was a bright afternoon in May, when the sun was shining, the fresh breeze blowing, the birds singing, the air filled with the fragrance of blossoms and flowers, the tender green of the foliage gladdening the eye, every thing, in short, combining to delight each and all the senses, that the boys of Mr. Armstrong's school assembled on their play-ground, to enjoy the freedom of a half-holiday. The balmy air, the bright blue sky, had imparted to the youthful party the same joyous and buoyant spirit with which the season of spring appears to inspire uni-

versal nature: the boys gazed at the high walls around them, their looks sufficiently indicating that the spot was too limited for their desires. Their feelings soon found vent in words: "I wish," said one, "we could get out from this cooped-up place; we can see nothing but the tops of the trees in old Murray's garden. This is just a day for kites, but it is no use sending them up here, they will only get foul."

"Besides," said another, "I like a country walk."

"Oh, a walk is all very well," replied the first speaker, "when we are not obliged to march two and two by the road-side, as if we were going to a funeral: I like a place where you can run a mile out without knocking down fine ladies, old women, and young children, or being smothered by the dust of carts, coaches, and cattle."

"Weldale Common," said a third, joining in the conversation, "is just the place you

mean; there we can fly kites, hunt the hare, play cricket"—

"Just the place for them, and for every thing else," added a fourth, who heard the last few words: "I wish we might go there for the afternoon; it is only three miles off. Let us ask Mr. Armstrong."

"It is of no use; he would not let us go last half-year."

"But then it was winter, and now it is summer (or spring I should say:) the weather was uncertain, and the days short; those were his reasons for refusing us, and you must allow they were good ones: it is very different to-day."

"Well, let us try him. Who will go and ask? Call a council." "A council! a council!" was shouted forth. This word seemed an understood signal; the rest of the boys left their various sports, and flocked to the spot whence the summons had been issued.

"What is to be done? What is going on?" were but a few of the many enquiries.

"We propose," said George Dalton, one of the original discussors, "to get leave to go to Weldale common. Do you all agree?"

"Yes, yes, yes," was the unanimous reply.

"Who is to ask leave?" was the next query: the answer was not equally prompt. "Do you, Tom." "Cannot you, Harry Seymour?" "Will you, John?" "You had better go, Carlton Reynolds; you are a bit of a favourite;" with the replies:—"No, I dare not," and "I am afraid," or "I am in his black book this week," were the few disjointed sentences that most distinctly prevailed.

"George Dalton, you are the boy; you are not afraid of any thing."

"No," said George, "I am not afraid; but I do not exactly wish to go. Perhaps he will not like being asked; or perhaps"—

"Ah, you are afraid, you are afraid."

"No, I tell you I am not afraid: not wishing to go is not being afraid, is it? You would not say I was afraid of my fingers, because I did not at this particular moment wish to play cricket, would you?"

"Well, it is no use arguing about who is afraid, let us settle who is to go."

"I will go if you like," said William Dalton, the brother of George. "There is no harm in asking, and if he refuse I cannot help it."

"There is a good fellow; make haste; luck to you," was the simultaneous exclamation, and William ran off. While he was gone, some of the boys discussed the probable chances of his success; others remarked how strange it was that George Dalton, who was considered one of the bravest lads in the school, dared not go to make their request to Mr. Armstrong, while William, who was remarkable for a timidity approaching to cowardice, should boldly

offer to be their ambassador. They were still endeavouring to reconcile this seeming contradiction, when William returned. They ran to meet him.

"We may go," he said, breathless with haste and pleasure. "Huzza!" burst from the troop: up went the caps into the air; and many of the lads laid hold of each other in an amicable struggle, as if it were necessary to express their delight forcibly, as well as audibly.

"Stop," cried William, endeavouring to make himself heard amidst the uproar of voices, "you have not heard all. We may go to Weldale Common," he repeated, as soon as silence was partially obtained; "but," (the *but* produced him an immediate hearing,) "but we must be home by seven; and we are not to go near the water. As the ushers are out, we must go alone, and Mr. Armstrong relies upon our promise."

"We will promise," was the ready answer; "we do not want to go to the river, only to the

common; and though seven o'clock is rather early, we may be off by two, and shall have five hours of it."

And at two o'clock the happy troop started, well armed with kites, bats, balls, and hoops, together with the various describable and indescribable articles usually stored in the pockets of a school-boy. They beguiled the way to the common by searching for birds-nests, cutting sticks out of the hedges, or playing leap-frog along the road; while some of the youngest amongst them slyly adorned the backs of their companions with the long clinging plants called cleavers; their harmless mischief sometimes eliciting a good-humoured laugh, sometimes a surly reproof, and occasionally a more violent remonstrance.

On arriving at the common, an open space was selected for trap-ball, and the sides being chosen, the game commenced. The ball flew swiftly over the smooth turf,

enticing its pursuers to risk many a fall on the slippery grass; such mishaps being generally followed by a shout of laughter. Noise, indeed, characterised their mirth; success and ill-luck, awkwardness and skill, being equally hailed by joyous merriment. Over the heads of the players hovered the kites of the younger lads, as if in contempt of the flying ball; while the distant halloo, or shrill whistle announced from a more distant group some other source of amusement, or the fortunate discovery of fresh pleasures.

At length William Dalton reminded them that it must be almost time to return, and one of the few lads who possessed a watch, announced that it wanted a quarter to six. Some thought there was yet time to stay another half-hour; but the most prudent declared if they went back at the same pace they came, there was not a moment to spare. The prospect of the walk seemed much less

agreeable than it had done when they contemplated it from the play-ground.

"Let us go home another way," said one of the boys.

"Is there another way?" asked William Dalton.

"To be sure there must be," was the reply.

"I see no *must* in the case," argued William.

"Why, we all know the direction of Wighton, and we have only to go as the crow flies: I dare say it is a much pleasanter way than by the road; and I am sure it must be shorter, because we shall go in a straight line, and the road winds. Besides, it is so stupid to go back the way we came; nothing new to see."

"But suppose we get into some scrape," urged William, "and do not get home at the time."

"Aye," said George Dalton, "that would never do: we had better not risk it."

"Why, what is come to you, George? you are quite an altered fellow; you used never to mind any thing."

"I do not know that I am altered," said George, looking a little confused; for all the boys had gathered round and were listening to, and occasionally echoing the sentiments of the principal speakers.

"George," said William, "it will be very silly of us to get into a scrape, only for the sake of changing the road home."

"That is just what I think," replied George: "we had better go home the way we came."

"Why, what are you afraid of?" asked one of the boys jeeringly. "Afraid, I suppose, of scratching your face with the brambles."

"I am not afraid of any such thing," said William, while George evidently hesitated more and more; "but I own I am afraid of being too late."

"You are always afraid of something,"

cried another taunting voice: "and now George is getting as much of a coward as you are. Come along; let us leave them to walk home by the road, and then they can tell Mr. Armstrong what good boys they have been." A laugh of derision followed on this speech; George's resolution could not withstand the force of ridicule. "To show you, now," he said, "that I am not afraid, I will go with you."

"That is right; we thought you would never slink off by yourself. We will have a regular steeple-chase; you shall be leader, and let those that are still *afraid* go by the road."

"I do not mind being thought afraid," said William, aware that the taunt conveyed in the last words was meant for him. "I am not afraid of being laughed at, but I own I fear getting into a scrape, which we shall certainly do, if we go scampering over hedges and ditches in the way you propose, so I shall take the safe road."

"Ah, do, do, and then Mr. Armstrong will find us out. Take care of yourself, my boy; that is right, you are not afraid for any body but yourself."

"Of course, William," said George, "it will then be known that we did not return by the road, and though I cannot exactly see that any harm can come of going by the fields, if we are but home in time, yet if Mr. Armstrong know it, he must find fault, as a matter of course."

"Of course, of course," echoed the crowd; "William knows that very well."

"No," interrupted William, "I do not wish to get you found out; I will go your way instead of my own, even though I know it is not right."

"It cannot make any difference: time is the only thing we have to think of, so let us be off at once, or we shall hardly, as it is, get home by seven o'clock. Come, George, my boy, lead off."

William yielded, lest he should entail

punishment upon his schoolfellows. Mr. Armstrong might find them out if he went back alone, whereas the chances would, perhaps, be diminished, if they all returned together.

The different characters of the Daltons were exhibited in the above dialogue. George generally secured the admiration of his comrades by his prowess and contempt of danger, for boys do not often define admiration aright. They applaud the deed, and think not of the consequences. A bold attempt, boldly executed, commands *admiration*, in whatever cause it may be employed. Approbation is a quieter sentiment, sanctioned by reason and excited by rational causes. William had no personal courage; he could not dare or face danger with his person, but he could meet it with his mind. George, on the contrary, was personally brave, but mentally a coward. He was afraid of ridicule; he feared to be blamed

more than he feared to deserve reproof; he dared to do right when the many would approve, but not when the many either could not understand or ridiculed his motives. The present situation of the two boys was a case in point. George knew that it was most reasonable to return home by the road, and resolved to do so, until the ridicule and insinuations of his schoolfellows persuaded him out of these wiser resolves.

William was equally convinced of the propriety of his own determination, and regarded not the sneers of his opponents; he yielded not to these, but to the painful anticipation that he might be the cause of his brother's and their punishment. We shall presently see how his want of personal courage inflicted upon himself the pain he dreaded for them.

We will now return to our friends on Weldale Common. George, proud of his station as leader, and anxious to show his

followers he deserved their warmest encomiums, dashed straight along, undaunted by hedge or ditch, corn-field or pasture, wood or fen. Away they ran, "through bush through briar," heedless of falls, bruises, or scratches, in the wake of their commander; and all went well with the exception of these mishaps; trifles, which only excited laughter and added to what they called "*fun*." William Dalton was always in the rear, and was observed to select the securest path, even when not quite the most direct. On arriving at the bottom of a plantation, their mirth received a check; they had come suddenly upon a rivulet—what was to be done? It was too wide to be leaped, too deep to be waded; and, moreover, here they were at the water-side, in direct opposition to their master's commands. They stood gazing upon this Rubicon of their fate in silence. "Let us turn back," said William.

"It is too late for that; it wants but twenty minutes to seven," said the possessor of the watch.

"I do not think it is very deep," said George; "let us pull off our shoes and stockings and wade through."

"Then," said William, "we cannot say that we have not been in the water. Indeed we had better go back; we shall not be many minutes after our time."

"No, no," cried several voices, "no turning back."

"I have it," cried George, quickly; "I have it. Look at this large tree; the branches reach nearly over to the other side —we can climb it, and swing ourselves over easily."

"I am sure that is a very dangerous plan, and not at all easy," urged William: "suppose the bough should break."—"Well, and suppose it does," replied George, "you can catch hold of another, cannot you? No

one would be fool enough to trust to one small branch only."

"None of those low boughs look very strong," said William: "I am afraid they will never bear the weight."

"There, he is afraid again," said one of the elder boys: "do not attend to him; he is afraid of every thing. The heaviest shall go first, and if it bear them it will be sure to carry the little ones, and as you are not one of the biggest, William, depend on it you will be safe."

"Now William," said George, "I assure you nothing can be more certain, if you have but courage. I will go first, and then you will see how I manage it: only swing yourself boldly over, and all is right."

William would again have remonstrated upon what he considered his brother's rashness, but George did not stop to hear more: he climbed the tree, deliberately selected the bough best suited to his purpose, crept

along it till it began to bend, when he gently let himself down, holding firmly by his hands—then swinging himself gradually till he had acquired the necessary impetus, he jumped lightly but steadily on the opposite bank.

His companions had watched his movements with silent interest, and when he had accomplished his undertaking (in truth, he exhibited much dexterity, judgment, and even grace,) a shout of triumph and applause burst from every lip. Following his example, another and another and another performed the passage with various degrees of skill, till all had crossed except William. The difficulties in his eyes increased with every passenger: his fears grew more, and his confidence grew less—he could not escape—yet, instead of summoning all his energies, and directing the strength of mind and body to the accomplishment of his object, his attention was distracted and

withdrawn from the main point, and his limbs, following the impulse of his mind, were feeble, uncertain, hesitating and weak. Had his tongue given utterance to his feelings, he would have expressed himself much as follows:

How dangerous it is! What shall I do? I wish I could turn back! I know I shall fall. I do not know which bough is the strongest: this finger of mine is so sore from the ball I can hardly bear to touch it! Those boughs are most likely cracked with the weight of all the boys. I wish I was safe on the other side! Well, it is no use waiting any longer.

And William at length prevailed upon himself to make the attempt. The observations and criticisms of his companions did not tend to encourage or assist him. "Look at him," cried one, "he is as nimble as a squirrel." "Rather more like a sloth," observed a second.

"Have a care," shouted a third, "that bough will not bear you." "Hold tight," cried a fourth, laughing at the eagerness with which William adopted his advice.

"Let him alone," said George; "you worry him till he does not know what he is about. Now steady, William, and only listen to me: come on; do not let yourself down yet, come on further."

But William had now no self-direction; in lowering himself he lost his hold and his presence of mind together, and fell plump into the water beneath. A burst of laughter greeted his failure, but a moment's reflection told them that the accident would lead to the discovery of their disobedience, and their mirth was speedily changed into lamentation. As William emerged from the stream (for on that side the brook was shallow,) dripping like a water-spaniel, he received more reproaches than sympathy from his friends.

"Clumsy, stupid, awkward, foolish, cowardly," were the epithets most liberally bestowed upon him. George alone, with all brotherly affection, kindly inquired if he were hurt.

"I do not know," said William; "my right wrist and arm feel very numb, but I dare say it is nothing."

"We shall all be punished," said a desponding voice, "and only because of him!"

"I am quite willing to bear the blame," said William, "although I cannot see I am alone in fault. I was the only one against coming this way."

"But our coming this way would have done no harm, if you had only crossed the brook as boldly as the rest; so *it is* all your fault."

"Well, I tell you again, I am quite ready to bear all the blame. When Mr. Armstrong questions me I shall not betray you. I will not tell a lie, but neither will I say one

word more than I am absolutely obliged to do. He may not find out that I am wet; we are in good time, he cannot know that you did not come home by the road."

The boys, willing to cling to the smallest hope of escape, proceeded homewards. William's determination to keep silence had a little turned the general feeling in his favour.

"What a pity," said one, "his courage does not stand good in time of need; he always bears misfortune well. I wonder he should be such a coward. George, now, is as bold as a lion when any thing is to be done; but he cannot suffer like William, nor can he face particular things as he does." In such discourse they reached home. On entering the school-room they gathered round William to hide him from observation. Mr. Armstrong was reading by one of the windows: it was growing dusk, and William took care to keep aloof in the darkest part

of the room. Mr. Armstrong having expressed his approbation of their punctuality inquired how they had passed their time, and whether they had received the gratification they anticipated. The answers were not given altogether in as free or as hearty a tone as he expected, but he concluded they were tired. Having wished them a good night, and recommended that they should have their suppers immediately and go to bed, he left the room: a whispered murmur of mutual congratulation went round, but before it had reached its height, it was hushed by the re-appearance of their master.

"William Dalton," he said, "you have left your Virgil in my study: come with me, now, and fetch it."

"I will come, sir," said a lad nearest the door, in a particularly amiable tone of voice.

"You are very obliging, my little fellow," replied Mr. Armstrong, "but I dare say

William Dalton will prefer to do the errand himself."

William came forward, but his step was not so light nor so rapid as usual.

"What, quite knocked up," said Mr. Armstrong, kindly, and at the same time patting him on the shoulder,—"Why! how is this?" he added; "the sleeve of your jacket is perfectly wet; so, indeed, is the whole of your dress." Mr. Armstrong's tone and manner changed: "how has this happened?"

"I have fallen into the water, sir," replied William.

"Therefore you must have transgressed the conditions made expressly with yourself, and upon which I gave you permission to go to Weldale. George Dalton, come hither. Have you, too, been in the water?"

"No, sir," replied George, in as steady a voice as he could command.

"Nor any of the other boys?"

"No, sir."

"Did you, when you were at Weldale, go down to the river?"

"No, sir, we did not go near the river at Weldale," replied George.

"You have answered candidly, and to the purpose," observed Mr. Armstrong. "I am glad to see you do not endeavour to exculpate your brother at the expence of truth."

George blushed at the unmerited praise; it sounded in his ears like severe censure and bitter sarcasm. He had not, indeed, expressly told a lie, but he had allowed Mr. Armstrong to deceive himself, and had virtually connived at a falsehood. He felt this, yet he had not the moral courage to accuse himself, or by so doing meet the complaints of his companions; and they, even while they openly congratulated themselves and him on their escape, and commended his discretion, inwardly acknowledged his meanness, and contrasted it with William's mag-

nanimity. "I am glad to find," continued Mr. Armstrong, "that I have but one disobedient pupil. Go immediately, sir, to bed, I do not desire that your health, perhaps your life, should pay the forfeit of your fault. That you have no supper is a small part of the punishment I feel it right to inflict on you. For you, young men," he added, turning to the other lads, "you are at liberty to enjoy the rest of your holiday until bed-time."

But there was no more real enjoyment for them, and especially none for George. He followed his brother to bed immediately that the usher had, as usual, read prayers: he found him awake, but felt ashamed to speak to him. William asked whether Mr. Armstrong had made any further discovery. "None," said George. "What a pity you were afraid, you might have escaped as well as the rest."

"At all events," said William, "no one

suffers but myself. My opinion is, that the greatest fault was our not returning by the road, and I said so at the time. I gave up because I feared I might be the cause of your being found out. I am the only one punished."

"And although I am very sorry for you, I cannot help saying you would now have been as well off as the rest of us, if you had had as much courage."

"George, there are many things you are afraid of, and therefore you might make some allowance for me: you were frightened when Mr. Armstrong questioned you."

"I do not call that fear," said George.

"What do you call it, then?"

"I call it a sort of dislike—a sort of uncomfortable feeling—a wish not to own myself in the wrong—but that is not fear, you know."

"I tell you what it is," said William, "you are afraid of the opinions of others, I am afraid for myself: my fear seems to have

had the worst consequences in this instance, but I think you will some day or other feel the bad effects of yours. However, it is no use arguing about it. All I know is that my arm is very painful, I wish it may not keep me awake all night."

And it did keep him awake all night. He endeavoured to divert his thoughts by preparing a theme, which formed a part of his morning's lesson, and in spite of the pain and other very uncomfortable feelings he completed his task in his head. It was daylight when he had finished, and he rose to write down his thoughts lest they should slip his memory, but his fingers, hand, and wrist were so swelled and stiff he could not hold his pen. He went to bed again, and when the clock struck six he awoke his brother and requested him to write from his dictation. George readily complied, and William, when his turn came, carried up his theme to Mr. Armstrong in his study.

Mr. Armstrong received him in silence,

took the paper, and having read it through attentively, he said—"The ideas are good, and well expressed; it is a pity they are not your own."

"I am not aware of having borrowed them, sir," said William firmly, but respectfully.

"I mean to say," said Mr. Armstrong, "I regret that you should have employed another person to perform your duty. This theme is written by your brother."

"It is in his handwriting, sir; but he wrote it from my dictation, and he has not added, altered, or suggested a single word. My hand is so much hurt by a fall I got last night, that I am unable to hold a pen."

Mr. Armstrong immediately examined the hand, moving the fingers and the joints. William gave no sign of suffering, but when Mr. Armstrong looked in the lad's face he saw the large drops of perspiration standing on his forehead and upper lip, caused evidently by the pain endured in the examination.

"I fear you are much hurt," said Mr. Armstrong, ringing the bell, and desiring the servant who answered the summons to go instantly for the surgeon. "Sit down, William," he said, kindly. "I am very sorry for you: why did you not tell me of this last night?"

Mr. Armstrong's manner affected William more powerfully than any harshness could have done, the tears trembled in his eyes as he replied,

"Sir, I thought then I was slightly hurt, but I have been in great pain all night, so great, indeed, that I have had no sleep, and I now feel very unwell."

"You shall have some breakfast here. I wish you to be kept as quiet as possible. I hope the injury is not very severe, but I know enough of these matters to feel assured it is by no means slight."

Mr. Armstrong made no further allusion to the cause of the accident, but endeavoured by conversation on other matters to with-

draw William's attention from himself; and except from the worn-out expression of his countenance no one would have discovered that he was suffering, for he made no complaint, but, on the contrary, was patient and cheerful. The surgeon arrived, and having examined the limb pronounced the wrist to be dislocated, and that the swelling must subside before the joint could be set. He ordered that the patient should go to bed, and be kept particularly quiet, as he was in a state of feverish excitement, which it was necessary to allay. A composing draught procured him several hours' refreshing sleep.

CHAPTER II.

THE DISCOVERY.

In the mean time, George Dalton, though unhurt, unpunished, and unsuspected, suffered almost as much as his brother. He could not conceal from himself that the most innocent of the party was labouring under an undeserved stigma, from which a word would exculpate him. He felt, too, that it was now more difficult to tell the whole truth, than it would have been the night before, for he must confess his mean prevarication in addition to his first fault. Another source of pain arose from not being permitted to see William, from whose room he, with every one else, was excluded, except the servant and Mr. Armstrong. He, however, endeavoured to comfort himself with the re-

flection that his confession would not alleviate his brother's pain, nor set his dislocated wrist; that certainly William had crossed the brook, as well as the rest, and but for his want of courage he might have done so in safety; that if he explained everything he should only bring others, as well as himself, into a scrape; he had no doubt the affair would be a lesson to them all, as it assuredly would be to himself, for he was quite as sorry, and should avoid the like in future, just as much as if he were punished.

After a few days, William's wrist was set: he bore the operation with perfect fortitude; and he could not help confessing to himself that had his courage been equally great, the accident would never have occurred. His quiet endurance of the inconvenience and pain he necessarily suffered, assisted to hasten his recovery, and after the limb was set he was allowed to go down stairs.

It will be remembered the walk to Weldale took place on a Saturday: William's wrist was set on the following Tuesday. On the Thursday of the same week, just as the hour of twelve was about to release the boys from their studies, a servant announced to Mr. Armstrong, that a neighbouring farmer named Cross wished to speak to him, and he particularly requested he might be admitted to the school-room, before the young gentlemen were dismissed to play.

"Show Mr. Cross in. Resume your places, gentlemen," said Mr. Armstrong.

"Sir, I am sorry to be troublesome," said Mr. Cross, taking off his hat, and smoothing down his hair; "and I am sorry to be obliged to complain, especially of young folks; but I have considered a good deal about the matter, and I think it best, for their sakes as well as my own, to mention what has happened."

"Mr. Cross," said Mr. Armstrong, "if

you are aware of any misconduct amongst these lads, I shall be obliged by your naming it at once, and without any concealment."

"Why, sir, the truth is this: on Saturday last, these young gentlemen were on the common at Weldale: I saw them there, as I was riding down to market, and happy enough they seemed to be; but instead of keeping to the turnpike, they chose to return through my fields, where there is no path; and in their way trampled down my young corn, broke through my hedges, making gaps, which have let my sheep in amongst my wheat. Now, sir, though they have done me a good deal of mischief, it is not so much for that I speak, as for the principle of the thing; if a man's fields are not safe when he do not happen to be in them, why, there is no security for any body. How they got home I cannot say; nor how they crossed the run of water, at the bottom of my planta-

tion, I cannot guess—but get over it they certainly did, for there are their foot-marks on each side. I suppose they waded it, though it is over deep for such youngsters. However, sir, I do not come here to get them punished, only to let them know they have not acted the part that is right; and mayhap if they had done the same thing on neighbour Bates's farm, they might have chanced to have catched a good horse-whipping. However, sir, as I said before, I do not come here to get them punished; I only wish to prevent any more such doings."

"I am very much vexed, my good neighbour," said Mr. Armstrong, "that you should have suffered from the misconduct of those I believed I could have trusted. I shall be glad to know the amount of the damage you have sustained, and will endeavour, as much as possible, to repair your losses."

"No, sir, no, I cannot listen to any thing of that kind. Thank God, I am not poor enough

to make the loss an object: I did not come here for that; so you will excuse my refusing what it would hurt my feelings to accept."

"I do not wish to insist on what is painful to you," replied Mr. Armstrong: "I will endeavour to prevent your suffering any further annoyance. Within the limits of the play-ground I shall be sure that no such conduct can be repeated. I regret to find that beyond its walls I can have no confidence in the actions of these boys."

"Well, sir, I wish you a good morning. I hope," added Mr. Cross, in a whisper, as Mr. Armstrong opened the door for him, "you will not be very hard upon them; you cannot put old heads on young shoulders, you know, sir."

The door closed on Mr. Cross, and Mr. Armstrong resumed his seat at the top of the room.

"I ask for no explanation," he said, "of this affair from any here, as I can put no trust in the words of those who have deceived

me so entirely. It is unnecessary for me to enquire into all the particulars of your conduct; I can safely draw my own conclusions from the facts already before me; but there is one point upon which I shall enquire. George Dalton, you said, I think, that you did not go near the water; you must then have told me a deliberate lie."

"Sir," replied George, "I said I did not go near the river at Weldale."

"A very nice distinction indeed," observed Mr. Armstrong, in a tone of irony: "there is, however, but little difference between a prevarication and a lie. When I gave you all leave to go to Weldale, the condition was that you should not go near the water. I did not specify the place."

"Sir," said one of the other boys, "we did not know we should have been obliged to cross any water when we set out for home."

"Nor did you give the matter any con-

sideration," replied Mr. Armstrong. "Tell William Dalton I want him: he is in my study." On his entrance, Mr. Armstrong said to him—

"Were you the only boy who crossed the water on Saturday evening?"

William looked astonished at the question, but answered unhesitatingly, "No, sir."

"By what means did you cross the stream?"

"We climbed a tree and swung ourselves across; but as I was afraid (here he looked down) I fell in: the others all got over safely."

"You have severely suffered from the consequences of your want of courage." Then addressing the whole school, Mr. Armstrong went on—"Your leaving the turnpike for a path of which you were ignorant, and where there was no beaten track, was both foolish and thoughtless; but it was not disobedient; for I had given no direc-

tions on that point. When you came to the river's bank, you committed an act of disobedience in not turning back."

"Sir," said several voices, "we were afraid of being too late: you told us to be home by seven."

"True, I did so; but as you had thoughtlessly placed yourselves in such a situation that you could not avoid breaking one of the conditions, you should have chosen the smallest evil: you had better have been too late than have risked your lives and limbs. Now mark me! had you on your return come to me, and candidly related all the circumstances, I should have respected your honesty, though I might have lamented your indiscretion; as it is, I look upon your conduct with contempt as well as concern: you had the hardihood, the courage, to do wrong, but not the courage to confess it—you have waited to be *found* out. Who proposed the means of crossing the water?"

" George Dalton, sir."

" You were bold enough to counsel evil, and mean enough to permit another to bear the ignominy incurred by following your advice. We have here a notable example in the one brother of the insufficiency of personal courage, if not supported by the courage of the mind; and in the other, of the necessity of personal bravery to complete the good resolves of mental strength. I must say, that it surprises me a little, how William was hardy enough to encounter the unforeseen risks of an unknown road."

" Sir," said George, speaking for the first time, " he tried to persuade us not to leave the high-road; and only joined us because we said his returning alone would get us into disgrace."

" Then you did contemplate my disapprobation, and induced him to give up his sense of right, yet slunk from him at the last, leaving him to bear the whole blame, and

saving yourself by a mean prevarication. I regret, William, that you had not the firmness to act upon your first resolution, and that you did not return by yourself."

Mr. Armstrong then proceeded to name the punishment he thought right to inflict. It consisted of privations from their accustomed pleasures, and additional restraints. William had undergone the consequences of his want of resolution, and in consideration of this, he suffered no further.

George Dalton felt a good deal of shame at the exposure of his meanness and duplicity. He made many good resolves not to incur a like disgrace. We shall see how he kept them.

Time went on, and the little world of Mr. Armstrong's school proceeded on its way, without any event much worth recording, till on one occasion, when the boys were amusing themselves by guessing charades and riddles: one of the younger lads was very

ready with the answers, and was therefore soon looked upon as a clever fellow; while, on the contrary, George Dalton, though much older, had been quite unsuccessful in his replies. At length a charade was proposed, and, as before, almost immediately answered by Hugh Carlton.

"I knew that," cried George.

"Why did you not say it then?" was the natural and univeral question.

"Because," replied George, "I did not think it worth while; besides, Hugh is so conceited that he never gives another person time to speak."

"Well, then, allow five minutes before any one speaks," said Hugh, a little indignant at being thus accused.

The proposal was agreed to, and another charade was repeated. At the end of five minutes several guesses were made, but the correct answer was not given. Hugh said something, which though not exactly right,

was very nearly so: George Dalton took up the idea, and gave the exact answer.

"There," he said, triumphantly, "I was sure I could guess them if I had fair play."

"You call it fair play, then," said Hugh, "to take the words out of my mouth."

"Pray, cannot two people hit on the same idea?" asked George, turning very red.

"Oh, certainly, certainly," said Hugh, in a sarcastic tone. "Now, I will ask you one—let us see if you can guess this."

George tried in vain to give the answer, and at length said, "I believe it is all nonsense, and has no meaning at all."

"Ah, that is because you cannot guess it," exclaimed several of the boys, laughing.

"I could guess it, if I chose to take the trouble, but it is not worth wasting my time on such stuff; I shall not try any longer:" and George was strutting off with an air of contempt, amidst the universal derision, and the following remarks.

"George Dalton never dare confess himself in the wrong: he is always afraid of being thought less clever than others."

"Who says I am afraid?" said George fiercely; "I am not afraid of any of you;" and he inflicted on the foremost boy something between a blow and a push, which taking him unawares, threw him off his balance, and he fell with his head against a desk.

"Shame! shame!" burst from every tongue.

"I did not mean it," George immediately began, alarmed at what he had done. "I only just gave him a slight push: I did not intend to do it."

"Do you mean that you did not intend to push him down, or that you did not mean to hurt him?"

"I mean," said George, catching at the hope of excusing himself, "I was turning round, and accidently—that is, I did not intend—"

"Yes, you did intend," interrupted Sydney, the boy who was hurt: "you could not have pushed me hard enough to knock me down, if you had not intended it."

"Knock you down, indeed!" repeated George. "Knocking you down, and just pushing you down, are two very different things."

"They feel pretty much alike, however," said Sydney.

"He pushed Sydney down purposely; I am sure he did," cried some of the boys who had been most active in laughing at George, "and now he has not the courage to own it."

"I do not think," said William, "that he intended to push him down; he was in a passion, and—"

"Then why does he not acknowledge it? It is just the same as with the riddles; he cannot bear to confess that he is wrong."

"If he had said at once that he was angry," observed Sydney, "I should have cared no more about it, and have soon forgotten the thump on the head; but no one likes to be hurt, and then to be told, by way of an excuse, that being knocked down and pushed down are quite different things."

George still defended himself, ashamed to confess his error; and indeed, becoming less able to do so after the mean excuse and subterfuge he had been guilty of. His first folly had only excited the laughter of his companions—his want of temper roused their indignation—his prevarications raised their contempt. They would listen to him no longer, and his attempts to speak were drowned in the various noises school-boys are so well able to invent and execute. George turned on his heel, and left the room, unable to contend against the uproar. His brother soon after followed him.

"Why did not you own yourself in the wrong?" he said; "you would have come out of this scrape much better."

"No, indeed," replied George; "I am rather too proud for that."

"You were not too proud to push Sydney down, nor to deny it," said William.

"How do you know I did it on purpose?" asked George, fiercely.

"I think," said William, "you did not much care whether you hurt him or not; and if you had acknowledged this at first all would have been right; but now they are saying all sorts of things of you—that you are a coward, afraid to speak out"——

"They may say what they please," interrupted George; "I do not care for any of them."

In spite, however, of his assertions to the contrary, George *did* care for the good opinion of his comrades; the approbation and admiration of others was what he most

coveted; he mistook the means whereby to attain it. Finding that he had forfeited this good opinion, he became very desirous of regaining it; but this was not so easily done. His former acts of personal daring were forgotten in his want of moral courage, and yet he endured more ridicule on account of this failing than an honest and fearless avowal of his loss of temper could have entailed upon him.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHALLENGE TO CRICKET.

The late occurrence, like matters of greater importance, was, however, in time forgotten, and things went on much as usual. Just before the close of the summer a challenge was sent by the boys of another school in the neighbourhood to play a match of cricket. Mr. Armstrong consented that it should be accepted, and George, as one of the best players, was appointed to settle the terms of the match; another lad was named as his coadjutor, the two having full powers to make a final arrangement. George's companion, Tom Nettleby, had one of those captious tempers that is always imagining

intentional disrespect, or some sinister design, before calmly examining into the probable truth. He could not reason, and supplied the defect by suspicion. His manners were consequently abrupt and overbearing. He believed himself very sincere, and plain-spoken, when, in fact, he was only rude; for despite his bluntness, he never had the courage to express his real sentiments. The two ambassadors were met by two deputies from the other side, who had also full powers to act. They were both youths of birth and station, one being the Honourable Mr. Courton, the other Mr. Acres, the son of a rich country gentleman. George was aware of their rank and was (though unconsciously) a little impressed by their implied superiority, while Tom Nettleby's natural proneness to suspicion was increased by the presumed arrogance and probable insolence of the "grandees" as he called them.

The Hon. Mr. Courton and Mr. Acres, or the young Squire as he was designated by his father's tenants, received their fellow-deputies with an easy superiority, which served to assure George Dalton that they were really entitled to consideration, and to convince Nettleby that they were to the full as insolent as he had expected to find them. The two young gentlemen did, it is true, somewhat rely upon their family wealth and honours, advantages by which they had often been benefited, and their manners partook of this self-confidence. They had too seen a little of the world; had heard in their fathers' houses bets made, races discussed, sporting matches settled, and such like topics treated of, with all the science and ability of experience and practice. When the discussion begun, the profusion of phrases and flow of cant perfectly astonished George, and gave him a high respect for their abilities and information; at the same

time, not wishing to appear inferior in experience, he acquiesced as a matter of course, echoed and coincided, when, had he consulted his own good sense and discretion, he would have differed and disagreed. But he dared not contradict such very knowing fellows; he would not have them suppose that he was not as knowing as themselves, and dissent he thought might be construed into ignorance. Nettleby was also overpowered by the dash of the ambassadors, yet equally desirous with George to prove that he was as acute as themselves, took occasion to give a flat contradiction, or some captious dissent, generally upon points of no importance. The Hon. Mr. Courton, perceiving his advantage, made a few trifling concessions, and Nettleby flattered himself his acuteness and plain speaking had detected and frustrated the tactics of the enemy. George, distressed at the ill-breeding of his coadjutor, endeavoured to make amends for

it by his own increased suavity, and losing sight of the interests of his friends in his fear of offending his adversaries, he gave away the power confided to him; and weakly, though unintentionally, betrayed his trust. The deputies parted in great apparent good humour and cordiality, Mr. Courton complimenting George and Nettleby on their honourable spirit; but scarcely had they parted, when he said to his companion, "What a couple of flats! if they cannot play a match better than they can make one, our side will win easy."

"And that snob, Nettleby, thought he was chiselling us," added Acres; and laughing, they returned to their companions, triumphing in their successful negociation.

Meanwhile Nettleby began to boast of his skill in discovering the intentions of his opponents, and his courage in opposing them. "If it had not been for me," he said, "the match would have been given

away; they wanted to bar Adamson's bowling."

"And if they had, what then?" asked George.

"To be sure he is nothing very particular as a bowler, but I did not see why they were to have every thing their own way."

"No, but really, Tom, you were so blunt that I was forced to be all the more civil, or they would have taken us for a couple of snobs, that had never been in decent company."

"What you call bluntness I call self-defence," said Nettleby: "if you do not look out for number one, nobody will do it for you, I can tell you. Besides, I saw from the first these chaps thought themselves somebodies, so I determined to show them I thought them nobodies; and I think I succeeded, for they became amazingly polite at last."

The boys now read over the terms of their

agreement; and George, uninfluenced by the presence of others, and left to his own judgment, began to discover that he had on many points lost sight of the main chance. His next reflection was, that he must meet his constituents, and be submitted to their animadversions. This prospect he did not at all like, and the nearer it approached the less agreeable it became. Anxious to avoid, at least the first burst of the storm, he said to Nettleby, "Tom, you certainly did the most of the work this morning, and it is therefore only fair you should have the credit of it, so you shall read over the agreement to our fellows; and as you are such a good hand at an argument, you can answer their objections, for you may depend upon it they will make some; it is quite impossible to please every body, you know."

"Oh, quite, quite," answered Nettleby, consequentially; "but I am not afraid of their objections; I will soon settle them.

If you are afraid of saying what you think, leave it to me."

"Afraid, indeed!" replied George; "no, no, that is rather too good a joke: if you think I have any fears, why let me do it. I only thought you would like the credit of it."

Nettleby, afraid to lose his importance, made some shuffling answer, and the two lads having mutually deceived each other, by the time they reached the school had almost persuaded themselves of their own disinterestedness.

When they entered the play-ground, they were surrounded by the eager throng, anxious to hear the result of the mission.

"Nettleby will tell you all," said George, a little confused: "he managed the principal part of it, so he knows most about it: besides, I must go and learn my Horace; I have not looked at my lessons for the afternoon."

And away slunk George, hoping to escape some, if not all the blame he felt assured would fall upon him. But he was not long permitted this impunity; in about ten minutes two or three of his schoolfellows burst into the room, exclaiming,

"Come here, Dalton, come this way directly! Hang Horace!" they added, as George pretended to be deeply buried in study; "Hang Horace!" and they jerked the book from his hand, and sent it across the room. "That blundering chap, Nettleby, has made some mistake, or else cannot read his own writing. Come along, and tell us what you have done."

"Indeed," said George, "he knows as much about it as I do. I have had trouble enough already, without getting into a scrape with Armstrong."

Not heeding his remonstrances, they pulled him into the play-ground, where he found the whole party in commotion, every body

speaking at once, accusing, blaming, and vociferating at Nettleby, who, after vainly endeavouring to brave the popular fury, had now assumed a look of martyrdom.

"Pretty fellows you to make a match!" exclaimed several voices, turning their attack upon George.

"Why, what is the matter?" said Dalton, appearing greatly astonished.

"The matter, indeed! why you have just given the game away, that is all!"

"Why, how so?" again inquired George.

"Did not we tell you to bar Hazleby's bowling?"

"Yes," said George, "but they said that Hazleby had been ill, and it was very doubtful whether he would be strong enough to bowl?"

"And you believed them?"

"Yes," interrupted Nettleby, with an air of importance; "but I insisted that Adamson should bowl for us."

"Very clever that, when we never intended any thing else. Then there is Herbert; did not we agree that he should not play for them; why he is worth six of any of us."

"Aye, last year he was," said George; "but they say he cannot play this year at all."

"Then why do they wish to have him?" asked one.

"I suppose Nettleby meant to back himself against him," said another.

"No," said Nettleby, "I had nothing to do with it, I left Dalton to settle about Herbert."

"Did you, indeed," said George; "that is pretty good, when I asked you what you thought of it, and you said that we must give and take a little."

"Give and take a little—yes; but that did not mean giving them Herbert, did it?"

"That is only a get off," retorted George; "it was but just now, as we walked home,

you were boasting that if it had not been for you the match would have been given away."

"And so it would," replied Nettleby, who had become obstinately angry, "for you were so much afraid of those chaps, because you fancied them people of consequence, that you did nothing but say, 'Oh certainly,' 'of course,' 'quite right,' as if you were settling their match instead of ours."

"And you," retorted George, "contradicted every thing, growling like a bear, and then could neither state nor defend your objections."

"Ho! ho!" said Hugh Carlton, slyly, "I begin to see now how it was. Dalton thought the Hon. Mr. Courton could not be wrong, and Nettleby thought he could not be right."

"You always turn every thing into ridicule," said George, sharply; "I wish I had never undertaken the business: I might have known I could not give satisfaction."

"There you are mistaken," observed Hugh; "depend upon it you have given great satisfaction to the opposite side."

"Take care, Hugh, that I do not make you give me satisfaction," said George, warmly: "this may be all very good fun to you, and to those who are such admirers of your wit; but I do not intend to be a laughing-stock; I give you notice I shall not stand it much longer."

"It is much easier to find fault than to propose a remedy," said William, speaking for the first time: "would it not be better for George and Nettleby to go back, and say our side will not agree to the terms?"

"And a couple of pretty fools we should look like," said Nettleby, in his usual blunt coarse manner.

"No," added George, "I will have nothing more to do with it. Let those who find so much fault, find the remedy also: I am not going back to those fellows, like a child."

"But," said William, "surely it is not

like a child to own yourself wrong? I must say, the advantages are all on their side, and it is very disheartening to go into the field, with a certainty of losing. It would be much better to give up playing altogether."

"And own ourselves afraid to meet them! No, no, no," cried several voices: "let us fight it out, any how. Dalton ought to go back."

"It is a sneaking thing to get us into a scrape, and then not help us out of it. He is afraid of the grandees, as Nettleby calls them."

"We thought him a better sort of fellow."

Such animadversions and observations passed through the little crowd, while William had drawn his brother aside, and was evidently trying to persuade him to return to the other party, and endeavour to make a better arrangement. But George would not be persuaded; he knew he could not face them. At length, William, finding all his

arguments unavailing, and feeling anxious to remove the impression against his brother, offered to go himself, and try to arrange matters better.

Some of the boys laughed outright at the proposal.

"You go, indeed! why what good will you do? If George is afraid what will become of you?"

William looked and felt greatly annoyed: he said, however, firmly, but modestly, "You need not send me unless you choose: I shall not do any harm, even if I do not do any good."

His decided manner surprised and silenced his hearers; it set them thinking. After a short consultation, it was unanimously decided that William should go, and that he should go alone.

Before he set out, he had the prudence to insist on receiving general directions (and where it was possible, minute orders) for his

conduct. The variety of opinions upon every point sufficiently manifested his discretion. At length, something like a conclusion was arrived at, and he departed on his mission.

On reaching the school, he enquired for the Honourable Mr. Courton and Mr. Acres, and having given his name, he was shown into a room, where the two lads soon joined him. They were evidently surprised at seeing another person under the name of Dalton, and though they affected great wonder when they heard the object of William's visit, it was clear to the latter that their astonishment was only assumed. They blustered a great deal, declaring any alteration was impossible: they were utterly surprised that *gentlemen* (they put great emphasis on this term) should think of breaking their agreement; they were pledged to their own friends, who were perfectly satisfied with the agreement as it stood, and from which they could not retract.

William listened in silence, allowing them to say all this, and much more, without interruption. His silence was, however, neither the result of fear nor of conviction; he was neither impressed by their ostentation, daunted by their consequential demeanour, nor convinced by their arguments.

Having allowed them to talk till they had nothing more to say, he replied, quietly and unaffectedly: "I know that we cannot insist upon your giving up any of the advantages you have already obtained: you certainly had a right to take all the care you could of yourselves; but I suppose you would wish to gain some honour by beating us, and would not like to have it said, that the match was mere child's play."

The Honourable Mr. Courton was puzzled by William's plain speaking, and did not know how to reply.

Mr. Acres, who was intended for the bar, came to his assistance.

"Very clever argument *that* of yours; certainly, we must allow *that;* but *that* will not do at all. No, no; we cannot stand *that*, thank you."

William was undisturbed by the eloquence of the speaker; *that* was no answer to his question.

"I ask you," he repeated, "whether the game is not won already, without the help of bats or balls?"

"Why, I must confess," said Courton, smiling with the consciousness of his own acuteness, "we certainly have the best of it." And looking at Acres, he laughed, and his friend joined in the self-congratulating sound. "But, I assure you," he added, "your brother and his friend made no objections; they were perfectly satisfied, and I think I can also convince *you* that our side is not a *particularly* strong one."

Courton then took the list of names, and read them over, making remarks on each as

he went on, endeavouring to show, that they were by no means alarming competitors.

In reply, William said: "I know very well what all these names are worth; and I have only to make you a proposal, which even if you accept, the advantage will still be on your side, although the odds will not be so hollow against us. We are not afraid of being beaten, but you have not given us a chance."

William then stated his proposal, to which Courton replied, first, by assuring him that he was bound to his companions not to alter the original conditions; then he said, the odds were not so hollow as William supposed; next, he urged, that the new terms proposed were quite inadmissible; and he ended by a grand flourish upon the regular rules of all sporting men, throwing in, by way of embellishment, and in the expectation of overpowering William, the example and opinions of the Marylebone Club, and

of several celebrated sporting men, with whom he declared himself particularly intimate.

But William was not to be drawn from his ground by such weapons.

"Well," he said, "I have nothing more to say, except that as you refuse a fair proposal, we will play you on your own terms, but we shall take care that it is understood how you have made the match. I know nothing about sporting men, but I know what is fair and honest, and I should have expected that those who call themselves *gentlemen*, whether sporting men or not, would not stoop to take mean advantages."

"You had better be careful what you say, my lad," said the Honourable Mr. Courton, with pompous affectation; "and I should recommend you not to talk about what you do not understand. I have no idea that you know much about the habits of gentlemen at Armstrong's."

"We do not intend to be insulted by you or your set," blustered Acres.

"I do not mean to insult any body," replied William; "but I say again, that the match is most unfairly made, and if you do not choose to make it more fairly you must expect to hear the truth. I ask again, for the last time, will you withdraw Herbert?"

"I tell you," said Acres, "he has been ill, and is worth nothing."

"Then why object to withdraw him?"

This plain question puzzled Mr. Acres; he hummed and hesitated, and at last stammered out, "Because he particularly wishes to play."

"Let him play on our side, then," said William, quickly.

"That is rather too good," cried Courton, "give you our best player." The words had scarcely passed his lips when he saw how he had betrayed himself.

William repeated his words—"Your best player! then it seems he is worth something."

There was a pause; he saw he had gained

an advantage, and he followed it up. "If you will not withdraw Herbert altogether, at least agree that he shall not bowl. We have no one on our side at all a match for him, and with the exception of Stanley, who is our best man, all your players are equal to, or better than ours."

Acres and Courton whispered together, and the latter then said, "Although we know we shall displease our own men, we will agree that Herbert shall not bowl, but I must say it is quite an unusual thing amongst us to go from an agreement."

"The agreement was not made," replied William, "because the players had not consented to it; and *I must say amongst us* it is quite as unusual to make a match that leaves our adversaries without a chance. However, thank you for giving up something, we shall, at least, have a pleasanter game. Good evening."

"A sharp fellow that," said Acres, when he was gone.

"And not afraid to speak out," added Courton.

William ran home in high spirits: the news he brought made him very welcome to his companions, and gained him great credit as a diplomatist.

Nettleby, on learning the result, obstinately declared that it was all nonsense and stuff, for that he was quite sure Herbert's bowling was good for nothing. George expressed his pleasure at William's success, but took pains to show that his brother owned he had great difficulty in gaining his point.

William was now rising to the top of the scale in the favour of his schoolfellows, and George had sunk proportionately low.

CHAPTER IV.

A PREVARICATION.

NOTHING but the expected match was talked of, and all the play-hours were devoted to practice. It was fixed for the day-week previous to breaking up; the weather was exceedingly fine and warm, and some of the players improved so rapidly that great hopes were entertained, if not of victory, at least of making a good game.

Before we proceed to relate the results of the day's sport we must describe an event which caused a great sensation throughout the school. Mr. Armstrong had one child, a boy of about five years old, a fine high-spirited little fellow, and a universal favour-

ite ; indeed so much so, that his father found it necessary to limit little Harry's visits to the school-room and play-ground to certain hours.

Many were the toys made and bought for the child, and on a half-holiday his little pleasures and pastimes were the first consideration with the boys. One morning Harry, unperceived by his maid, slipped out of his nursery before he was quite dressed, and made his way into a long gallery communicating with several of the boys' bedrooms, which was forbidden ground to the child. The little truant seeing one of the doors open peeped in. It chanced to be George Dalton's room, and he himself was there. In a moment of thoughtlessness, he cried out,

"Come in, Harry; how are you my boy?"

Harry bounded in at the invitation, exclaiming, "Look at my new flyer!"

George was admiring the new toy when the voice of Harry's nurse was heard calling him from the bottom of the stairs: the sound reminded George that he had done wrong in inviting the child into his room.

The fault was so slight that a moment's reflection would have enabled him to meet the trifling blame he might have incurred, but he yielded to habit, and almost instinctively whispered—"Run away, Harry."

The child, more in sport than any thing else, obeyed, and spying another room open went softly in and closed the door.

The nurse, on reaching George's apartment, inquired if he had seen Master Harry.

"I saw him in the passage a minute ago," he replied, and his cheeks burned with shame, even as the words escaped his lips; for though he told no lie, his answer was an unworthy subterfuge, and conveyed a false impression to the hearer. The servant

passed on through the gallery, and went down a flight of stairs at the other end.

In another minute George heard a piercing shriek; it was Harry's voice—he rushed into the passage—a second scream directed him to the room where the boy had concealed himself. He burst open the door, and as he did so beheld a cat in the act of springing at the child, who stood in the middle of the room, his side streaming with blood. As the cat made the spring, George darted forward, dashed the animal down with his fist, and then grappling with her, despite of several severe scratches, held her down till the child's continued screams brought some of the servants, and finally Mr. Armstrong to the spot.

Alarm and consternation prevailed: the cat having been secured, and the extent of the injury to the child ascertained, the cause of the accident was enquired into. How Harry came into that room, or why the cat

had been so enraged against him, was for some time a perfect mystery; but by degrees it was found that Harry had wandered from his nursery into this room, where, tempted by a shower-bath, and half-dressed as he was, he had easily slipped himself out of his clothes to enjoy the fun of the bath. In stripping himself, he unfortunately trod on a litter of young kittens, which, unperceived by him, lay on a mat, where their mother had deposited them the previous night. Alarmed and enraged at the cries of her young, the mother, with savage fury, flew upon their unintentional offender, and had in the first attack lacerated his side with her claws; she was about to make another onset, when, as we have seen, George fortunately arrived to rescue her victim.

When this had been explained, and the child was somewhat calmed, Mr. Armstrong thanked his deliverer, with all the gratitude of an affectionate parent.

This was the moment for George to overcome his natural defect, and to explain that he himself had been the cause of the child's danger. But no, even now, when his fault would assuredly have been forgotten and forgiven in his subsequent conduct, he had not the resolution to confess his error.

Terror had apparently obliterated from Harry's memory all recollection of what had happened after his escape from the nursery, and thus *all the truth* was never known.

In spite of the universal commendation bestowed upon him, George felt many secret upbraidings, which he tried to silence by many fallacious arguments; he was yet to feel more deeply his own meanness.

Some of the boys had been practising for their cricket-match at the further end of their large play-ground, and had heard nothing of little Harry's danger and George's courageous rescue, till some minutes after they had occurred. Amongst these boys was William Dalton. As soon as they did learn

what had happened, they repaired to the scene, anxious to see and know every thing. They found an enquiry going on, as to how Harry could have got out of the nursery: it was well known he was not able by himself to open the door. The nurse was just explaining as they entered, that she had left him and gone down stairs to air a clean dress for him; that she had been detained a minute or two, and had not hurried, believing him to be quite safe; but that when she returned, he was gone and the door stood open.

"I am afraid," said William, interrupting her, "I may have been the cause of all this. Last night I made Harry a little flyer on the end of a long stick, to run against the wind; and hearing him singing in the nursery as I passed this morning, I went in and gave it to him. I do not recollect that I left the door open; but I suppose I must have done so."

"No, William, no; you did not," sobbed

Harry, not recovered from his alarm. "I wanted to run in the long gallery with my pretty new flyer, so I tried if I could reach the latch of the door with this long handle, (he pointed to the flyer, which lay on the floor,) and I could, (a loud sob,) and I did, (another sob,) and I got out, and I——." Here the poor child burst into a fit of crying at the recollection of all that had happened to him since, and he could say no more.

What a reproach to George! There he stood an object of admiration to all, of gratitude to many, while in fact he was vanquished in candour and generosity by a child of five years old!!

With that changeableness which usually prevails in a multitude, whether formed of the old or the young, George was again a hero. Hugh Carlton, who made fun of every thing, had many jokes on the occasion. He bestowed on George the classical appellations of *Cat*ullus and *Cat*aline taking care to pronounce them with a proper em-

phasis on the first syllable; George always had a great dislike to being made the subject of a joke, and he was particularly annoyed by it on the present occasion. Although it was impossible to turn his late heroic action into ridicule, yet Hugh, with his usual ingenuity, contrived to extract from it a good deal of mirth, and chiefly by the following means. With the help of Johnson's Dictionary, (to whose assistance we must also refer our young readers,) he constructed what he called a *cat*aphrastical address on the late *cat*astrophe. It ran as follows:—

"Oh brave as Catullus! destructive as *Cat*aline! you rushed on like a *cat*aract, and as a *cat*apult discharged your blows. Fierce as the *cat* o'mountain, the furious *cat* lashed it's one tail with the force of a *cat* o'nine tails: you heeded it not, nor the *cat*calls of the young cats around; like a *Cat*aplaract you encountered your foe, and overwhelmed it in the *cat*aclysm of your rage. A *cat*echis-

ing posterity will demand a *cat*alogue of your virtues. May all your enemies be *cat*ched and suspended by a *cat*enarian curve; may you be fed upon *cat*es; may your drink be *cat*sup! may your fields abound in *cat*tle; your orchards with *cats*-heads; your gardens be free from *cat*erpillars, *cat*sfoot, and *cat*stail! may your mines be rich in *cat*s-eyes and *cat*-silver! may your music be the harmony of *cat*-gut, *cat*-calls, and *cat*-pipes! may your speech be ever *cat*egorical! may *cat*arrh never afflict you! and should you die of a *cat*alepsis, may a *cat*hedral be your *cat*acomb!"

"I wonder, William, you can be amused by such nonsense," said George, drawing his brother away from the throng who had been listening to Hugh's address, which he had delivered in a tone, and with gestures suited to the ridiculous bombast.

"It is very droll," replied William; "besides, you laughed yourself when he repeated it."

"I pretended to laugh, like the rest, although much against my inclination, for I think Hugh Carlton a perfect Tom Fool."

"You told him it was very cleverly done," observed William.

"They all thought so, and had I said otherwise they might have thought me annoyed by it. I hate such stuff. I should like to give him a good thrashing. Hark! how they are all laughing!"

"And that is just the best thing to do. If you could laugh too, you would be much more comfortable than you are now. I wonder, George, you should run away from a harmless joke."

"I tell you I do not like to be nicknamed, and to be made to look ridiculous."

"You look much more ridiculous when you are angry at such nonsense."

"I did not let *them* see that I was angry."

"But you *are* angry; and their seeing it makes no difference; your anger and uncom-

fortable feelings are the same. Oh, do not mind being laughed at, when you have done nothing to deserve it! Join in the fun, and you will soon enjoy it as much as the rest: depend on it people always laugh least at those who can laugh with them."

But George could not face the jokers; and turned away alone, disconcerted and out of temper—another instance of the importance of mental courage, even in trifles. And here I may observe that trifles, for the most part, make up the sum of human happiness or misery. Great events seldom occur, and though it may appear strange, it is nevertheless true, that it is easier to act well in great emergencies, than in the trifling circumstances of ordinary life; and this because the importance of the former arouses our faculties, force themselves upon our attention, and compel us to action. We choose the best line of conduct, for in such cases our interests are more apparent, and

perhaps, too, our vanity is piqued to do what will procure us most approbation or admiration. On the contrary, we are apt to overlook trifles from their very insignificance; and yet trifles excite us to anger, induce us to falsehood, tempt us to acts of folly, and alarm us into false shame, or mean actions; the indulgence of these feelings lead to many evil consequences; we do not feel the importance of guarding against trifles, and we are therefore overcome by trifles. Those who are preparing to combat a giant may, in the meantime, be hamstringed by a dwarf.

CHAPTER V.

THE MATCH.

The cricket-match had to be contested upon the public ground, which was about half a mile from the town. Two or three tents had been pitched for the accommodation of the players: the morning was lovely, and the smooth green turf, the neighbouring trees, through which was seen grove, hill, and valley, the blue distance, and the silver stream, lent a beauty to the scene which exhilarated and animated the young combatants, all unconscious as they were of its inspiring influence.

Umpires having been appointed, the ground measured, and the wickets pitched,

lots were cast to decide which side should have the choice of going in first.

Luck was here in favour of the Mannings, (for each party called themselves by the names of their masters,) and they put in their own men. These preliminaries occupied some time. The impression made by George Dalton and Nettleby on Courton and Acres, was perceptible in their desire to arrange matters with them in preference to William; they nevertheless treated the latter with more deference. It was to William alone that every thing was entrusted by his companions, and they had no reason to repent their choice.

We shall not give a minute account of the game; there was a good deal of skill and courage displayed on both sides. One occurrence we must however relate: William Dalton exhibited unwonted steadiness during the commencement of the first innings, while the opposite side were in, and he, consequently, in the field: six of their players

had gone out with a smaller number of runs than had been anticipated; the seventh was the redoubted Herbert, and he realized to the full the hopes of his own friends, and the fears of his opponents. His score already numbered fifteen; when, growing presumptuous, he took a ball carelessly, and hit it up. It was struck with great force and went straight towards William.

He meets it boldly! will he take it? will he hold it? No! his courage fails at the instant. His eye but winked from apprehension, the ball fell to the ground.

A stifled groan of disappointment was heard from one party; a suppressed shout of joy from the other. William saw and felt all that he had lost: had he caught out Herbert, he would probably have saved the game; as it was, the latter made ten more runs and finally carried out his bat.

When the innings were over, William bore all the reproaches of his comrades with

patience, owned their justice and his own timidity.

"You cannot blame me," he said, "more than I blame myself. I thought it was in my hands, and though I know that I must have been afraid, I declare I was not aware of it till I saw the ball on the ground."

This honest avowal silenced his schoolfellows; they could no longer reproach one who acknowledged even more than their disappointment imputed to him, for they had not supposed him influenced by fear, but had attributed his failure to awkwardness and stupidity.

"Poor William!" they said or rather thought, "he never has courage to do all he wishes and undertakes! What a pity he cannot make as good a fight with his body as he does with his head!"

The Armstrongs made a good innings; their score falling short of that of the other side by ten, the precise number of runs got

by Herbert, after William had missed catching him out.

It was now apparent that Herbert was the player they had most to dread; it was however observed that he was bold even to rashness, and had an overweening confidence in his own strength and activity. He tried at every thing possible and impossible, and even impeded others by his unnecessary exertions.

This gave the Armstrongs reason to expect that he might commit himself to their advantage, and they cautioned each other to watch him narrowly, and neglect no opportunity of taking advantage of his rashness.

An hour was allowed between the first and second innings for rest and refreshment. The boys of the two schools, who were not amongst the players, took this occasion to divert themselves—spreading over the ground, running, leaping or throwing the

ball about, according to their several tastes and inclinations.

Several persons had arrived from the town to witness the match, and amongst them was a young man on a pony, the beauty and excellence of which rendered it an object of general attention. The rider (a friend of Herbert) had several times made the circuit of the field, exhibiting the animal's paces and mettle, when a bystander inquired if it could leap.

An answer was given in the affirmative, and the keeper of the ground was requested to put up the leaping-bar, the ground being used for the practice of riding and other athletic exercises, as well as for cricket. Accordingly the bar was put up, but on trial it appeared that the pony had not been regularly trained to leap, and consequently was rather awkward in its attempts. Nor was the rider much less so in his endeavours to direct it. Herbert, who amongst other

things piqued himself on his horsemanship, begged his friend to let him mount, as he was certain he could train the pony to leap beautifully. One of his schoolfellows hinted to him to keep quiet, as should any accident happen to him their game was lost. Herbert, indignant at the bare idea that it was possible any accident should occur while he was riding, was the more determined to mount, and his friend having great confidence in him resigned the pony. Herbert mounted, and incautiously urged the horse at once to take the leap. The animal, already much irritated, bolted and set off round the ground at full gallop. Herbert maintained his seat, after a while checked the pony, and once again brought him to the bar.

By this time all the cricket-players had assembled at the spot, and Herbert's comrades called to him to dismount, and not persist in such folly. His temper, never of the mildest, chafed by the obstinacy of the

pony, was still more irritated by the clamour of his companions, and by their unceremonious commands. He positively refused to give up the point, vowing that he would neither be overcome by a horse nor submit to the orders of a pack of simpletons, who, because they could not ride, fancied every one as ignorant as themselves. The owner of the pony, a very weak-minded youth, having heard that a horse should never be allowed to get the master of its rider, begged Herbert to persist. Calling to the spectators to stand aside, the latter again urged the pony forward, but he had lost his own self-controul, and with it all caution and discretion. Furiously checking the bridle to lift the pony to the leap, the frightened and irritated animal reared; Herbert, instead of releasing the rein, checked it still more violently; the pony fell over, rolling upon his rider, who lay helpless beneath its weight. The bystanders rushed to his assistance, and extri-

cated him from his fearful situation, uncertain what might be his condition. His right arm and leg were dreadfully bruised; fortunately no bones were broken, but he was totally useless as a cricket-player, and spite of his hurts, his companions bitterly upbraided him for his folly and rashness.

In reply, he said, "I never was afraid, nor ever will be afraid of any thing."

"What is the use of your courage? You have gained nothing by it, but, on the contrary, lost every thing; your courage is of no use, unless you have more sense to guide it."

The speaker was scarcely aware of the importance of the truth he uttered; we entreat our readers to observe and reflect upon it.

The loss of Herbert's services depressed the spirits of his friends, and raised in proportion those of their opponents. The former made a very small innings. The latter

won by twelve runs. It was, however, undeniable, that but for Herbert's accident they would probably have been the losers; and in avowing this it was equally impossible not to admit that had William Dalton caught Herbert out, as he ought to have done, the chances would have been in favour of the Armstrongs.

CHAPTER VI.

BREAKING-UP AND RETURNING HOME.

It will be remembered that the cricket-match took place the day-week previous to breaking up. The rejoicings for the victory were enhanced by the anticipations of home and holidays.

On sitting down to breakfast on the morning of the general departure, Mr. Armstrong, in the presence of the whole school, presented George Dalton with a watch, in remembrance of his child's rescue. He expressed his gratitude with such simplicity and kindness, that his young auditors were touched; George himself was quite overcome, and could only repeat his thanks in imperfect sentences.

On the watch was engraved the following inscription:—

GEORGE DALTON,
FROM
HENRY ARMSTRONG,
IN TESTIMONY OF HIS GRATITUDE AND FRIENDSHIP.
JUNE 24, 18—.

Mr. Armstrong and his scholars parted with mutual feelings of regard, and many expressed their pleasure at the prospect of returning to him after the holidays.

His kindness had won their affections, his justice and firmness their respect, and the moment of taking leave sufficiently manifested, on both parts, that the school master was forgotten in the friend.

In bidding adieu to the Daltons, his manner was even more affectionate and impressive, he mingled with his good wishes advice that seemed to look forward to a period of separation far beyond the few weeks devoted to the holidays, and his last words

dwelt on the memory of the boys, and were pondered on by them for many miles of their homeward journey.

"God bless you," he said; "your father looks to your virtues for consolation and support. Let him not be disappointed. May he find in you what the world has denied him!"

There was something in this that seemed to prognosticate evil: yet what could it be? Poor boys, their young experience had not instructed them in the various calamities of life. They knew that their father was well; and, confident of his excellence, they could not suppose any loss of respect from the world; yet Mr. Armstrong had said "the world." He spoke, too, of consolation and support. At length they came to the conclusion, that he had alluded to the death of their mother, whose loss, though it had occurred four years previously, had been a blow to their father, from which he had never re-

covered. It is true his industry had never relaxed, nor his attention to the comforts and necessities of those around him; neither did he allow his sadness to cast a gloom over the mirth or cheerfulness of others. His sorrow, though not selfish, was not the less heavy; and those only who knew him before and after the death of his wife, were aware that he was "acquainted with grief."

As they drew nearer home their uncomfortable forebodings gradually wore away, and had wholly vanished by the time they reached Kensington, for they entered London on the west side. It was about seven o'clock, and, as has been already said, in the month of June. Although London was not new to them, yet they looked at every object with interest and even curiosity. At this hour of the evening, the road was thronged with every description of carriage: they met market-carts piled up with empty baskets, and passed others laden with vegetables and fruit, for the sup-

ply of the early markets. Stage-coaches and omnibuses, some bound for the country, others returning thence to town, open carriages with ladies and children, hastening from the confined and heated atmosphere of London, to enjoy the cool evening air of the parks and suburbs; gentlemen on horseback, on the same errand; close-carriages containing parties, whose dress proclaimed they were prepared to mingle in the gaieties of parties and theatres. As they entered Piccadilly, the noise, bustle, and excitement increased, as did the variety of character and costume; and yet, amongst all this crowd, these hundreds, aye thousands, not one face turned towards them with friendly welcome, not one glance of recognition met their eyes. They felt depressed, they knew not why; and when the post-chaise drove up the more quiet street where their father lived, they gazed out of the window; their delight at seeing the well-known spot mingled with a

vague unacknowledged feeling of apprehension.

The door of the house opened, even before the postillion had alighted from his horse: they saw their father in the hall; they did not wait for the steps to be let down, but springing from the chaise, the next instant they were in the arms of their beloved and affectionate parent. Their depression of spirits was gone—they were at home, surrounded by old familiar objects—the furniture they had remembered from their earliest childhood—animate and inanimate objects seemed alike to welcome them; the old man-servant expatiated to his master, with the freedom claimed and permitted by long service, on the growth and good looks of the young gentlemen—"Pity," he added, "such happy young faces should ever look grave, but————."

"Let them have some tea;" said Mr. Dalton, hastily interrupting him. The quick and almost impatient tone and gesture of their

father surprised the boys; it led them to observe that his face was agitated, and that after the irritation of the moment had passed away, his countenance wore an unusual expression of care; yet his manner was such as to check enquiry on their part. There was a general silence.

"You are tired, my dear children," said Mr. Dalton.

"No, father."

"Then let me hear your cheerful voices; it is so long since I have listened to the sound."

There was a melancholy in the tone of Mr. Dalton's voice, that seemed to forbid the cheerfulness he asked for. The boys could not think of any thing to talk about, although five minutes before their words could not flow fast enough, to tell all they wished.

"I wonder what o'clock it is?" said George almost mechanically.

"O George! your watch!" cried William.

This was indeed a fortunate subject, and one which conferred equal pleasure on all. There were no more mournful pauses; and if there existed any real or imagined cause for sorrow, it was forgotten on that evening.

On returning home after a long absence, who has not felt the happiness of laying down in one's own bed? who has not felt, more especially at that moment, the security, the peacefulness, the protection of a father's roof? and who has not, like our two young heroes, gratefully and heartily exclaimed, "Thank God, I am at home again!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE DISCLOSURE.

At the first moment of awaking, the lads supposed themselves still at school, but the next instant they became conscious that the bell which roused them from their slumbers summoned them to other occupations than those to which they had lately been accustomed. There was now no haste but that suggested by their own desires and pleasures; no cares, no fears, scarcely any hopes —all certainty, and an anticipation of the many enjoyments of home. Even a wet morning did not much damp their expectations, although a rainy day in London, on first arriving from the country, is most particularly gloomy and disagreeable, and even

more so in summer than in winter. During the latter season we expect and are prepared for bad weather; our in-door occupations and amusements are at hand, and moreover we have a cheerful fire to turn to; but in the summer our arrangements have relation to out-door recreation; our plans or our habits are opposed and disturbed; if we are not really cold, we feel, or fancy we feel, chilly; if we look into the street, the prospect but increases our discomfort; we see only a leaden-coloured sky, wet hackney-coachmen, wet umbrellas, wet mackintoshes; men and boys with slouched hats, and some few with sacks over their shoulders; women and girls with clogs and draggled petticoats: then the noises; the dull splashing sound of the various vehicles; the clicking of pattens on the pavement; the continual dropping of the rain, with the melancholy cries of the few itinerants who must perambulate the streets in order to live. These, though only a few of the signs of a

wet summer's morning in London, are not calculated to dispel the disappointment and ennui of folks fresh from the country, whose recent arrival has given them no opportunity of providing, or relishing in-door occupations.

Weather, however, has little influence upon the meeting of friends and relations, long separated and again united. It was not the rainy morning that threw a shade over the countenance of Mr. Dalton, or that, after the first greetings had passed between him and his children, rendered him silent and thoughtful. It was evident, even to his inexperienced boys, that his mind was ill at ease. Their impressions will be best shown by the following conversation, which passed between them, when they were alone, after breakfast.

"I wonder what is the matter with papa," George first observed.

"And I wonder too," added William: "he says he is quite well, and he certainly does not look *ill*, but he seems so low-spirited."

"I cannot think what is the cause," replied George—and there was a pause. "I wish I knew," he resumed; "but papa does not seem inclined to tell us."

"We have not asked him to tell us," said William.

"Asked him!" George replied; "I do not see how we can do that."

"Why not?"

"Suppose he did not choose to tell us?"

"He would say so, and we must be satisfied," said William.

"But he might not like to have it observed that he is different to what he used to be. I will ask James."

"Oh no, no!" cried William, interrupting him, "do not try to get it out of James: my father would certainly be very much displeased that we should question a servant upon a subject which only concerns himself."

"I do not exactly mean to ask James, point-blank, why my father seems low-spirited,"

said George; "but we might just enquire what has happened since we have been away; and then perhaps we should find out what we want to know."

"But why not ask my father at once?" urged William: "as I said before, if he did not choose to tell us, he could not be displeased at our enquiry; and if he were, he would have a still greater right to be angry at our asking in a round-about way. If you do not like to mention it to him, George, I shall. I always find the straightest way to a thing is the shortest and best: I am not ashamed of wishing to know what is the matter with my father, and therefore I shall ask him."

"Well, do as you like, but remember I advise you not."

At this moment Mr. Dalton entered the room: George looked silly, and feeling that he did so, turned away, and, walking to the window, tried to whistle.

William, with a slight embarrasment in his manner, looked at his father. There was a sort of wistful enquiring expression in his countenance that attracted Mr. Dalton's notice.

"Well, Will," he said, "what makes you look at me so?" and he sighed, for the look reminded him of his wife.

"Why papa," said William, and the colour mounted in his cheek as he spoke, "I see, or fancy I see, that either something is the matter with you, or something distresses you; will you tell us what it is?"

(As soon as William commenced speaking, George took up a book and began to read.)

"You are right, my dear child," replied Mr. Dalton, "I am distressed, and the more so, that the cause of my affliction is one which affects you equally with myself. Your ingenuousness has saved me the pain and difficulty of breaking a matter to you, which had better come from me than from any one

else. I was even now pondering how to begin, for I wished the bad news I have to tell should not burst suddenly upon you."

George, as soon as he found how his father received William's question, laid aside his book, and took his place by Mr. Dalton, who! without waiting for any comment from them, went on: "I have always endeavoured, my dear children, to impress on your minds, that it will be necessary for you to earn your own livelihood, by following some profession, or by entering into trade, according as your abilities and inclinations, and my means might dictate. I have never expected, nor have I desired, to leave you what is called independent; my own experience having shown me, that the father, whose sole object in life is the accumulation of wealth, rarely leaves his children capable of enjoying or using his bequests wisely. I have, however, always cherished the hope, that judicious care and industry, on my part, would place you in as

good or a better situation than I have myself enjoyed, where you might have leisure to devote some of your time to the higher gratifications of life; I mean the enjoyment of intellectual pleasures, and the power to aid and assist your fellow-creatures. I trust I have not been wanting in that care and industry; but from circumstances over which I have had no controul, these have failed in their effect; and instead of the result I have so fondly anticipated, I find, after I have honestly paid my debts, I shall be a poorer man than when I begun life."

Mr. Dalton then related at length the circumstances to which he alluded. It is necessary for the reader to know, that the dishonesty of his partner had thus reduced him. His sons affectionately expressed their sympathy with his sorrows, declaring that they were young, and ready, cheerfully and industriously, to do all in their power both for him and for themselves.

"My dear children," said Mr. Dalton, after thanking them, and applauding their good and virtuous feelings with parental tenderness, "I do not wish what I am about to say to damp your energy, or check your resolutions, but only to prepare you for the consequences of my changed situation. The world will look differently on us, and we shall find few friends, or rather, I should say, none but friends will adhere to us."

"Surely, father, there can be little evil in discovering who are our real friends," observed George.

"Little evil, but much mortification. I trust, indeed I believe, that the personal privations which you must undergo, will not be much felt by you, for I do not think you are selfish: something they will cost you, because it is only natural they should; habit will, however, soon overcome any little regrets or denials of this nature, but with your situation you must give up the feelings that

situation has created. I am a poor man, and although I retain, and will never lay aside, the claims education has bestowed on me, yet I am bound to remember that I can no longer claim the consideration which affluence demands and receives. But you have this advantage; you have not been reared in the ignorance, and its attendant evils, to which straitened means condemn the poor; and the time is come when ability and character are certain steps to fame and fortune. Your own conduct is, if possible, of more importance than heretofore; for you must now wholly earn the world's respect, since I cannot assist you in obtaining it but by example and advice."

"Is it then so very discreditable to be poor?" asked George, in a melancholy tone.

"Not discreditable at all, unless poverty is the consequence of misconduct. But you are both old enough to have observed, although you may not have reflected upon it,

that wealth has a certain degree of power and influence, which nothing but talent can compete with. Unfortunately many of those who are born in poverty have not even the advantages of the commonest education; and those who have had these advantages, have no time to increase them; they must earn their daily bread by daily toil. Thus, then, wealth gains a double power.

"Poverty and ignorance have almost been synonymous terms: the rich have time to be wise, though not always the inclination—the poor man, however desirous to learn, has neither the leisure nor the means. You, however, are not so unfortunate; and though I would by no means lead you to suppose that to be rich is to be happy, I wish you to understand, that while a competence is desirable, and almost necessary to the happiness of an educated man in this country, its attainment is at the same time a matter of difficulty.

"In some other countries an independence may be sooner and easier obtained, if indeed the exertion of constant industry, unrepining fortitude and manly courage may be called easy. Now in which, think ye, are you best fitted to succeed—a life of enterprize and activity, with privation, toil, and many other trials in the outset, but almost certain success in the end, or a quiet, monotonous, but safe existence, with a fixed salary; no risk, but no expectations?"

"The first, the first!" exclaimed both the boys.

"I anticipated such a reply, and perhaps I have scarcely stated the matter fairly. In plain terms, then, the life of an emigrant, or that of a clerk?"

The boys paused; at length William said, "I have heard different accounts of emigration; some very dreadful, others very delightful."

"The truth," said Mr. Dalton, "lies, I be-

lieve, in the medium; it is neither so terrible, nor so agreeable as it has been described. But this is certain, that the life of an emigrant (I speak of those who go out with sufficient money to purchase land, and the few things necessary to clear it, together with the means of subsistence until their own crops are raised) calls for the exercise of patient industry, self-denial, fortitude, with mental and bodily strength, and the courage which can meet resolutely, and overcome boldly every trial and every obstacle."

"To which of the colonies do you emigrate, father?" asked William, tears trembling in his eyes as he spoke.

"To New South Wales," replied Mr. Dalton.

"Why," exclaimed George, with a look of astonishment, "that is the country to which all convicts are transported!"

"True," said his father, calmly.

"I shall feel quite ashamed of going to

such a place," continued George. "People will think that we ourselves are thieves and swindlers."

"I am not surprised at your objection, although it is erroneous. We must not now consider what people will think, we have to do what is best and wisest. I have fixed upon New South Wales as my adopted country, because the agricultural experience I already possess will turn to most account in that colony. My father, as I believe you know, had an estate, which my eldest brother inherited: although educated to commerce, the early part of my life was passed on the farm, where I got together a good deal of practical knowledge: indeed, had my inclinations been consulted, I should have chosen the life of a farmer: my brother, on the contrary, disliked this occupation, and after several losses incurred by his own ignorance and the knavery of his servants, he sold the farm for little more than enough

to pay his debts, and to purchase a commission in the army. A new country offers many advantages to talent and industry, and you may eventually find situations there more suited to your capacities and tastes than agricultural pursuits."

"Still papa," said George, "I do feel a great dislike to the idea of living amongst felons."

"This you will not be called upon to do. The country has of late years assumed a different character; and although convicts are still sent thither, they form a very small portion of its population, and have a fixed situation in society there as here. The colony, when founded in 1788, was peopled by the outcasts of English society, but their descendants are an intelligent and a well-principled race, to whose good qualities, aided by numerous settlers of worth and talent, the present flourishing situation of the country is to be attributed. It would

be unjust to look back to the crimes of their forefathers as matter of reproach to an honest and manly people; and were this principle rigorously insisted on, how few even of the highest rank in the mother country could escape the taint? Many of the proud descendants of the boasted heroes and statesmen of former ages have cause to blush at the actions of some among their ancestors, who, although not *convicted* delinquents, were in truth criminals whose misdeeds were concealed under the ermine of rank, or defended by the strong arm of power. But such disguises and such aids have ceased to affect us of the present day. *Truth* is now the object of every sensible and honest mind, and while it is sought in purity and sincerity of heart, it will not be long sought in vain. But I will not wander farther from the main consideration before us. I have only been anxious to show you that henceforth the accidental advantages

attendant on wealth or situation must no longer be considered by us: all the qualities necessary to our well-being must be found in *ourselves*, and these may be comprised in few words—honesty, industry, perseverance, courage and fortitude—with that true piety which, while it confides in the protection of God, strives to merit that protection by obedience to his laws, both natural and revealed. Let us, too, learn to value and respect these virtues in others, without considering or inquiring who or what their ancestors have been. Happy are they who can transmit an unblemished name to their children! But surely those are equally to be respected who, unblessed by example, earn a title to consideration for themselves."

Here the conversation ended. Mr. Dalton regained much of his accustomed cheerfulness after having disclosed the painful intelligence of his altered circumstances to his children; and if he was more thoughtful than

heretofore, they no longer contemplated him with anxiety, but attributed his abstraction to the forecast and consideration which their approaching emigration necessarily demanded.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FIRST TRIAL.

The first cause of sorrow to the boys, after hearing of their father's losses, was their removal from the house in which they had been born, to a lodging, and the parting with all the furniture, books, prints, in short every thing which they had hitherto regarded as a part of themselves, but which Mr. Dalton now honestly and wisely relinquished, resolving at once to conform to his straitened means. No false shame interfered with his resolutions or their fulfilment: his misfortunes brought with them no disgrace, for he had done no wrong: he was unaltered; as rich as ever in all things save money, indeed richer, for he had added to

his moral worth by acting well under difficulties. As has been before observed, great sacrifices are often more easily made and supported than trifling evils. George and William Dalton, although they felt their loss, indulged in no regrets or repinings, and their quiet unostentatious cheerfulness and resignation lightened their father's cares and inspired him with confidence. They had not yet been submitted to little trials and mortifications.

Two or three days after quitting their old home George met near their former residence a schoolfellow who had left Mr. Armstrong's during the former vacation, in order to go to a public school. He was the son of a man of property, with whom George had been accustomed to consider himself on equal terms.

As he saw him approach he remembered the change in his father's circumstances, and the consequent alteration in their situa-

tion: he had yet seen none of his former friends, and did not know how to meet his old schoolfellow. Feelings of shame, awkwardness, and a sense of disgrace came over him; he had no time for reflection, and he adopted the first idea which crossed his mind, namely, to appear not to see Edward Falconer, hoping that the latter might not recognize him. Looking straight forward, as if his eyes were fixed on some distant and interesting object, he walked on, at the same time endeavouring to appear unconscious of the approach of any one he knew.

But he was not so to escape. Edward Falconer stopped point-blank before him, seizing him by both arms, as he laughingly exclaimed—"Hollo, Dalton! going to cut me, eh! but I do not intend you should; so give me your hand. How are you?"

George, putting on a startled stare of surprise, which he followed up by a forced laugh, replied to his friend's salutation by

giving him his hand, and begging pardon for not observing him.

"I am glad I met you," continued Edward. "I was on my way to your house, for I concluded you were up from Wighton. (By the way, how is Mr. Armstrong?" and without waiting for an answer, he hurried on.) "We are going to have a gipsying party on Friday, in Richmond Park, a young party of course, and we want you and William to join us. I dare say your father will send you down in his phaeton: we take those who have no carriages, and shall on our return finish the evening with a ball at our own house."

Edward was so earnest in his description of the proposed pleasure, that he did not observe George's embarrassment, who perceived, by the mention of the phaeton, that his friend was ignorant of their altered circumstances. He could not summon sufficient courage to explain this, but with much

hesitation of manner, endeavoured to excuse himself from accepting the invitation. "Thank you," he said, "for remembering us. I should have liked it exceedingly, but I do not exactly see how it can be managed."

"How it can be managed!" repeated Edward, in some surprise; "why, nothing can be easier. I am sure your father will not refuse to send you down, and your servant can put up his horses, and drive you back in the evening. Oh, nonsense; it is easy enough managed."

"Yes, certainly," again hesitated George, "very true; but I am afraid Friday will be an inconvenient day, and"—

"Why, what ails you, man?" cried Edward: "you hum and haw as if I were asking you to go back to school again. I shall not talk any more to you; I will speak to William or your father."

George was now in a still worse predica-

ment; he must explain to his friend that they had left their former residence. His unfortunate failing, and his sense of truth were always struggling together: he could not resolve to tell a positive falsehood, by saying his father and brother were out, yet he could not forbear from prevarication.

"I am not sure that you will find them in Grafton-street," he said.

Edward looked puzzled.

"We are for the present," added George, "in —— street."

"Well, let us go there, then," said Edward, who, anxious only to effect his object, did not consider why Mr. Dalton had changed his house. George's manner certainly astonished him; but he did not reflect on the cause. The comparative meanness of the house where they stopped and knocked at the door was a new source of surprise.

George observing his enquiring look, endeavoured to prevent any questions by

observing—" We are only here for a time; until our future place of residence is determined."

They entered the house, and George led the way into a small apartment, where they found William carefully packing a box, with several miscellaneous articles; such as seeds, fishing implements, a few small tools, sealing-wax, steel-pens, wire, &c. &c.

" William, my boy, how are you?" cried Edward. " What in the world are you about, eh? Why, your box looks like a little Noah's ark."

" I am getting a few things together, that I think may be useful to me when "——

Here George, anxious to prevent the conclusion of the sentence, abruptly asked for his father.

" He is just this moment gone out," replied William.

" I am sorry for that," said Edward, " for I wanted to ask him to let you join us in a

gipsying party in Richmond Park, on Friday. I have asked George, but can make nothing out of him: he seems quite an altered fellow. Here have I been proposing to him the pleasantest thing in the world, and he has nothing to do but persuade his father to let a servant rattle you down to Richmond in the phaeton; and all I can get out of him in reply is, 'I doubt it will not be convenient. I do not think it can be managed;' so I am come to hear what you have to say to it."

"Thank you, Ned," replied William, firmly, although there was disappointment in the tone of his voice, "Thank you, all the same; but I agree with George: I do not think it can be managed."

"Why not? why not?" repeated Edward impatiently; "that is what I want to know, and cannot make out."

"Have you not heard, then? has not George told you?" enquired William.

"No; I have heard nothing;" replied Edward; "and I cannot understand what you are both at."

William looked at George, who turned away.

"My father has been very unfortunate," continued William, "and is no longer able to keep a phaeton: indeed, you see we have left our old house, and are now only in lodgings." The tone in which William uttered this plain avowal, showed that his candour arose from no want of feeling, or that he was ignorant of the effect their altered condition would probably have upon the world and their friends.

Edward's countenance changed from its gay expression, to that of sorrow and sympathy. Holding out his hand to William, he said, "I am very sorry for you; I had not the least idea of this, or I should have brought you a different invitation. I am sure my father will arrange so as to give you

room in our carriage, so it need make no difference. You will forgive my thoughtlessness; I might have guessed there was something wrong, when I found you in another house, but it never entered my head that misfortune could happen to your father, any more than to my own."

"Nor did we know any thing about it ourselves, till we came from school," said William: "and although it is a very bad thing for us all, my father's character is quite uninjured. He suffers from the dishonesty of others."

"That is just what I should expect to hear," replied Edward, "and must be a great consolation to him and to you: but I hope things are not so bad as you fear, and that in time all will be right again."

"Yes," said George, speaking for the first time, "we hope so; and although my father thinks it right entirely to alter his style of

living, we are not so badly off but that we *might* make a better appearance."

"You may wish to think so yourself, George," observed his brother, "and that others should think so also; but I had rather believe, and have others believe, the truth, and then there can be no further disappointment or mortification. The fact is, my father has determined to emigrate, because he has not enough property to live here, or to maintain us, except in some dependent situation."

"He likes best to be an independent emigrant, and he is quite right," added Edward, without, however, drawing his conclusions from any previous knowledge or present reflection, but only because he always agreed with the last speaker, both from a disinclination to think for himself, and a desire to please every body. "Well, emigration is not so bad, from all I have heard: plenty of shooting, hunting, fishing, and all that sort of thing."

"Oh, I dare say we shall contrive to pass our time very agreeably," remarked George.

"Better than in England, no doubt of it," added Edward.

"When we have earned the means," observed William, drily.

"Why land is so cheap in some of those colonies, it is to be had for almost nothing," said Edward; "and of course, in those wild places, there must be plenty of all kinds of game, from the Buffalo downwards. By the way, to what part of America are you going? To Canada or the United States, or to South America?"

"Not to America at all," replied William.

"Where, then?" asked Edward; "not to Africa, surely."

"No," said William, "with a slight effort; "we are going to New South Wales."

"Why all the convicts are sent there!" Edward exclaimed, with a look and a tone of voice approaching to horror.

"I know that," replied William, calmly.

"But we have nothing to do with convicts," said George, haughtily. "I do not see, William, what occasion there is to say *where* we are going. I am sure it is nothing to boast of."

"Nor do I intend, or feel inclined to boast," replied William: "all our friends must know it, sooner or later; and as we have done nothing to be ashamed of, there is no more disgrace in going to New South Wales than to any other place; the friendship of those who think the worse of us for so doing is, in my opinion, not worth having."

"To be sure not," said Edward. "Well, whenever you go I wish you well, with all my heart. I am only sorry it should be necessary for you to go at all. However, I must be off: say you will come to us and I will manage all the rest."

"We cannot say any thing about it until

we have consulted my father," said William. "I should like it very much, particularly as it is the last time I shall ever enjoy a thing of the kind, at least in England."

"No, I hope not so," said Edward. "Send me a note as soon as you can:" then, taking a kind leave of his young friends, he departed.

"I do not think it would be at all pleasant to join this party," observed George, as soon as he was gone. "I shall not feel myself on the terms with them I used to do, and that will not be very agreeable. I wish he had never come near us."

"I am sure it was very kind of him," replied William. "If we had been in prosperity, as formerly, you would have enjoyed it, and would not like to have been left out; and now, had you heard of the party and received no invitation, you would have believed yourself omitted because you were no longer rich."

"That may be," said George, "but I should have preferred leaving England without seeing any body that I know. It is bad enough to be poor, but it is worse to be obliged to tell the people that you are so."

"It is not pleasant, certainly, George; but it only makes the matter worse to try to conceal it. We must bear it, and it is better to bear it with resolution."

"Oh," said George, sighing, "these are some of the mortifications my father spoke of."

Mr. Dalton was so much engaged the whole of the day that the boys found no opportunity of mentioning their friend's invitation. The next morning at breakfast he told them it would be necessary for him to go to Bristol to arrange some affairs which could only be settled by his personal attendance. He expressed his regret at leaving them, together with his reliance on their good conduct during his absence. The

mistress of their present residence, a respectable widow lady, had promised to provide for their comfort, and he added his desire that they would conform to her hours and habits, and endeavour to fill up their time profitably during his absence, which he expected would not be prolonged beyond a week or ten days.

Scarcely were these arrangements made, and William had mentioned his friend's invitation, when Mr. Falconer, Edward's father, was announced. He addressed Mr. Dalton with frankness and sincerity, expressing his regret at the information conveyed to him by his son on the previous day, which was quite new to him, he himself having but just returned from the Continent. He now called to offer assistance or hospitality, assuring Mr. Dalton he might command him.

"I cannot claim the rights of old friendship," he said, "but my respect for your

acknowledged worth entitles me to offer you all the assistance in my power."

Mr. Dalton expressed his thanks with plain and manly sincerity, neither shrinking from the avowal of his present situation, nor evincing any mean depression or servility. He entered at some length into his future prospects and intentions; preferring, he said, though scarcely of an age to begin life anew, to seek an honourable independence for himself and his sons, than to risk further evils by again entering into business in England on a borrowed capital. "I prefer," he said, "feeling the little that I may possess to be *my own*, and launching these lads at once into active life, where their future prospects must almost wholly depend upon their own exertions. I have not," he added, "determined upon this step hastily or unadvisedly, nor because I have not sufficient moral courage to live as a poor man in the land where I have been blessed with

affluence; my resolution is the consequence of mature consideration. Were I alone in the world, I should not at my age change my country; it is for the sake of my boys that I emigrate."

Some further conversation passed between the gentlemen; the boys, meantime, could not but observe the conduct and language of their father.

George, unknown to himself, felt its influence, and was suddenly inspired with a resolution he had seldom experienced, to fear less the opinion of others, and to be governed by his own knowledge of what was right.

"When do you sail?" asked Mr. Falconer.

"I cannot take my passage until after I return from Bristol, where I proceed immediately upon business: indeed, I go by to-night's mail."

"And what becomes of your boys during your absence?"

"They will remain here, under the care of the mistress of the house, a most excellent person, on whom I can rely, as I also hope I can upon their good conduct."

"Will you allow me the pleasure of becoming their temporary guardian? My boy will be delighted to see them; and as there is no means by which I can serve you, you will not deny me this little request?"

Mr. Dalton looked at his sons, whose countenances sufficiently showed their inclination to accept Mr. Falconer's kindness.

"If," he said, "I had the resolution to refuse you, I do not think I could muster enough determination to say no to those entreating faces."

"Oh, thank you, papa! Thank you, Mr. Falconer!" exclaimed both the boys; we are so much obliged to you, for we should have been very dull here while papa was away."

"Well, then, it is all settled," said Mr.

Falconer. "I will send the carriage for you at nine, this evening, for I conclude you will like to see your father off by the mail; so good-bye till then;" and wishing Mr. Dalton a pleasant journey, Mr. Falconer took his leave.

Before setting out, Mr. Dalton renewed his good advice to his children. "Remember," he said, "that your present situation demands no alteration in conduct, except as regards your expenditure, and this will naturally be a check upon your amusements and your general habits. You are morally the same, in education, temper, talents, and principles, and your self-respect ought to be the same: do nothing that can diminish that self-respect, and you will retain the esteem of all whose friendship is worth retaining. You are going amongst those who enjoy the indulgencies which were so lately yours, but which you can afford no longer: make no boast of self-

denial, neither allow any false shame to lead you into expences justifiable in your companions, but which in you would be imprudent, not to say dishonest; since they will entail one of two things, debt, or the most painful of all obligations, namely, pecuniary obligations. To prevent any petty mortifications or distresses, from which, while I live, I hope ever to protect you, here is a small sum for pocket-money, enough I think to save you from all such annoyances, and even to procure many rational amusements. And now, God bless you! I hope we shall soon meet again in health and happiness."

CHAPTER VIII.

MORE TRIALS.

THE drawing-room at Mr. Falconer's was a contrast to the quiet parlour of Mr. Dalton's lodgings. A large party was assembled there, whose presence did not prevent their host from receiving his young guests with warm hospitality. Mrs. Falconer was an extremely indolent woman, and her reception was marked by this defect in her character: she appeared cold, but she was, in fact, too lazy to express her really kind disposition towards her new visitors. Edward was indulged by his mother, first, because he was an only son, and next, because it was too much trouble to advise, contradict, or guide him. Her two daughters

were, for the same reasons, sent to school, and Mrs. Falconer was satisfied by the assurances of their governess, and her own friends, that her daughters would be highly accomplished, and were very amiable.

The young ladies themselves attached great importance to the word fashion, and the wealth which procured a title to its honours. They had been taught to value appearances rather than realities, and therefore seldom looked beyond the surface, either in what regarded themselves or others. They judged of persons by their condition, dress, and demeanour, having no other standard of excellence, unless indeed it were fortune. They were both older than their brother, and had, at the time of our story just, as it is called, finished their education.

From this description it will be readily imagined their reception of the Daltons was not very gracious; indeed, their coolness, together with their mother's languid manner,

convinced George that his mortifications were but begun. Benumbed by their frigidity, he took his seat at a distance from these young ladies, who, while they had the credit of being exceedingly amiable, not only omitted, on this occasion, the common civilities due to their father's guests, but contrived to make one of them, at least, extremely uncomfortable.

George's annoyance was by no means lessened on perceiving the Honourable Mr. Courton amongst Edward's party, and he bitterly repented not having staid at the lodgings, where, however dull, he would have been safe from the mortifications he now expected to endure.

William had, meantime, renewed his acquaintance with Courton, and it was some consolation to George, to perceive that his brother was well received.

Deriving courage from this, he gradually emerged from his retreat, and joined the

group. Courton, however, scarcely interrupted himself in his conversation with Edward and William, to nod to George, who was thus again disconcerted, uneasy, and awkward. He could not rally, and was exceedingly glad when the evening was over, and he was alone.

The next morning somewhat restored his self-possession. Mr. Falconer's demeanour added to his confidence, since it indicated that he acknowledged no distinction among his guests. The rest of the party took their tone from the head of the house; and even the Misses Falconer condescended to be more amiable.

In the course of the morning Edward took his friends to a riding-school, where he regularly attended for lessons. George was invited to mount, and gained much credit for his steadiness, the result of fearlessness. William, on the contrary, exhibited to much less advantage, although he strove manfully against his constitutional timidity.

The riding-master complimented George on his performance, pronouncing him to be the best horseman of the party. This approbation was particularly grateful, and he could not fail to perceive that success did not always depend upon wealth or situation. He entered Mr. Falconer's drawing-room with an air of independence and decision, much more becoming than the hesitating, uncertain demeanour of the previous evening. It had its effects upon Miss Falconer: she gradually began a conversation with him, and directed his attention to a book on the table, containing views of Italian and Swiss scenery: "I think my father said you were going to leave England," she observed.

"Yes, we are going abroad, I believe," George replied, looking very closely at the print to conceal his rising colour; then beginning to play with a little spaniel that lay on the sofa, he asked Miss Falconer if she were fond of dogs; thus warding off any

further enquiry on the dreaded subject of emigration. He soon after made his escape into the next room, to seek for a book he had left there in the morning, and sitting down in a large easy-chair, began to read.

His book, though sought as an excuse, proved so interesting that he paid no attention to what passed in the next room; he was conscious that conversation occasionally went on, and that persons alternately entered and left the room. At length there was a silence, as if the apartment were deserted: the time it lasted rendered George more sensible of its being broken, and he again became conscious of persons conversing.

A sentence, pronounced rather loud, caught his ear, and involuntarily fixed his attention. He recognised the voice of Emma Falconer.

"I think papa means to make our house a refuge for the destitute," she said.

"What has happened?" enquired her sister.

"Not contented with bringing these poor Daltons here, he has now positively invited that disagreeable boy, Sharpe, because his father died lately, and Mrs. Sharpe does not know what to do with him during the holidays, for she cannot manage him."

It was very clear that the young ladies had no idea of the vicinity of George Dalton. He must have known this, even before his own name was mentioned, and ought instantly to have taken some means of informing them of his neighbourhood. It was not to gratify any curiosity that he did not do so; but he was ashamed, even tacitly, to acknowledge that he was one of the "destitute:" the more he heard the less willing he became to own himself a listener.

"How very annoying," said Miss Falconer: "the Daltons certainly have some manners, and though it is disagreeable to

introduce folks in their circumstances to one's friends, yet they are not people to be absolutely ashamed of. But Sharpe is perfectly horrid; both poor and ill-mannered! I cannot imagine what papa is thinking of to bring such people upon us!"

"He says Mr. Sharpe was kind to him upon some occasion when he needed assistance, and that he is glad to have an opportunity of returning the obligation. I do not see the necessity myself, when the man is dead, and cannot possibly know whether obligations are remembered or forgotten."

Here the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a third person, and George began to consider how he should escape unobserved.

Before he could come to any determination, Emma Falconer entered from the other room: he pretended to be buried in his book, and seemed not to hear her.

The moment she perceived him, she ex-

claimed, rather quickly, "I did not know you were so near, Mr. George."

He started, as if for the first time conscious of her presence.

"You know the proverb," she added: "I need not repeat it."

George coloured and laughed.

Emma looked doubtingly at him, undecided whether he really heard her remarks or not. Desiring to put him still further to the test, she said, "Do you know Arthur Sharpe?"

"Sharpe, Sharpe," repeated George, as if trying to remember; "it is a very common name, and I may have met him some time or other, but I cannot now exactly recollect."

"I thought you might have known such a person," added Emma: "it is no matter; I will not detain you longer from your book, in which you were just now *so very* deeply engaged:" and she left the room.

Emma Falconer was extremely annoyed at the circumstance ; not that she much cared for having caused pain to another, but she did not like being detected in a breach of good manners, and was provoked that she could not find out whether she had really been overheard.

George, too, was annoyed, but he contrived to persuade himself that he could not help hearing what was said in another room, and that it was much better to seem not to have done so, since the parties who had been speaking must be very uncomfortable to find their conversation overheard. He had, in truth, some acquaintance with Sharpe, and although he never liked him, he had not had the resolution to shake him off. They were not schoolfellows, but had met in the holidays at the houses of mutual friends. Sharpe was a boy of little feeling, and never inclined to perceive that his company was not agreeable ; determined

upon his own gratification, he generally took care to be, or to seem, a friend of those he thought might contribute to his pleasures; and in order to secure such services he was always upon the watch how he might make himself useful: nevertheless, he was abrupt and vulgar in his manners; the coarseness of his mind and feelings were communicated to his language and demeanour.

When Sharpe entered the drawing-room at Mr. Falconer's, George kept aloof, watching the reception given him by Edward, in order to regulate his own greeting, and also to avoid Emma's observation; but he gained no advantage by this manœuvre, for Sharpe perceived him immediately on his entrance, and going straight up to him accosted him with the familiarity of old acquaintance. In vain George tried to look as if he were a stranger; Sharpe would not be shaken off; and when obliged to beg pardon for not immediately recollect-

ing him, he replied by a laugh, congratulating himself that he had a better memory.

George felt that Emma's eye was on him, and though he dreaded to meet her glance he could not resist stealing a look at her. Not knowing what else to do he joined in Sharpe's laugh. The expression of her face told him he was discovered.

William Dalton, untroubled by such sensations, addressed Sharpe as one whom he knew, but whose acquaintance he was not desirous to extend beyond general civility, for he remembered that his father had some months previously expressed a wish that whenever they met they should adopt this course towards him. It might have been perceived, by any person interested in observing them, that Sharpe did not press upon William the familiarity he had adopted towards George; he knew it was useless, and although he was not philosopher enough to discover the cause, he had always found

William's manner the same, while George's was continually varying. The latter was friendly when they were alone, or with Sharpe's chosen companions, but there were times when George was less sociable. On such occasions, Sharpe generally had recourse to a little additional familiarity on his own part. The present was just one of these occasions, for finding himself rather coldly received by the younger part of the company he was the more determined to hang himself upon George Dalton, who he was well aware dare not openly shake him off.

It is one of the great characteristics of the defect this story illustrates, that its manifestation is perpetually varying.

Moral courage depends upon that innate consciousness of right which is ever independent of and indifferent to the opinions entertained by the ignorant, the weak, or the wicked. On the contrary, a want of

moral courage proceeds from an undecided sense of rectitude and propriety, from an overweening vanity, or the desire to stand well with those who happen to be the leaders of a certain class, whether their influence proceed from virtue, talent, fashion, or wealth.

It also proceeds from the more amiable desire to please universally; and again, it arises from a vague and undefined fear of avowing error, and from a dread of being considered ignorant amongst the learned, poor amongst the rich, unfashionable amongst the fashionable. In some cases even, it leads to the assumption of vice amongst the vicious.

Thus, then, the conduct of him who is deficient in moral courage reflects that of his associates, until some unlucky chance discovers that he is playing a part. With the virtuous he is safe, for if he be virtu-

ously inclined there will be no need of acting or assuming a character. This was precisely the case with George Dalton; he meant well, but he had never the resolution to adhere to, and be governed by, his own good intentions; yet whenever any thing occurred to support him in these, he seemed to have no other fear than that of forfeiting the esteem of the good and judicious companions, who unconsciously aided and supported him.

Amongst the guests who arrived at Mr. Falconer's after the Daltons, was Miss Murray, his niece, and about eight years older than his eldest daughter. The day she arrived, an allusion was made during dinner to Mr. Armstrong, and George Dalton was applied to, to answer some matter in debate with regard to his school. Miss Murray, who sat opposite, made further enquiries, and expressed her pleasure at meeting any of her friends' pupils, adding, "I

am more especially pleased to make your acquaintance, having heard you frequently spoken of by Mr. Armstrong in terms of much gratitude and esteem."

"Gratitude and esteem!" observed Mr. Falconer, "excuse me Katherine for repeating your words, but these are terms not usually applied to a school-boy. To be sure," he added laughing, a "master ought to be grateful when his boys do not give him much trouble."

"As you do not appear to know the cause of Mr. Armstrong's gratitude to your young guest," replied Miss Murray, "perhaps he will allow me the pleasure of telling you the circumstances." She then related the particulars of little Harry's adventure with the cat, and George's timely rescue."

The watch he had received from Mr. Armstrong was mentioned, and at the universal request, was handed round for examination. All the party expressed their approbation of

his conduct, and it was evident that the anecdote had advanced him in the general opinion.

When the remarks had ceased, Mr. Falconer suddenly addressed William.

"Well, my fine fellow," he said, good humouredly, "are you as much of a hero as your brother?"

William coloured with the consciousness that he could lay no claim to praise on that score; but he did not shrink from the question, and honestly answered, "No, sir, I wish I were."

"It is not every boy who would have the courage to own as much," observed Mr. Falconer.

"Nevertheless," said Miss Murray, "I have heard you commended for a quality which is no less valuable: you are remembered by Mr. Armstrong and your schoolfellows with the respect which awaits mental courage; although I confess your reputa-

tion for personal bravery does not stand as high as that of your brother."

The smile that played in Miss Murray's countenance told William that she knew the story of the walk to Welldale and its consequences. The expression of his face showed her that she too was understood. This mutual understanding seemed tacitly to confer the privileges of longer acquaintance.

After dinner, while the lads were in the garden, awaiting the summons to the drawing-room, the conversation turned upon dress. Edward Falconer and his particular friend Courton, were very eloquent on this topic, which they seemed to have studied, and to consider a matter of deep importance. After a very learned discussion, they came to the decision that the cut of a man's coat had great influence in his effect upon society; in short, they summed up the discussion by a decree, that dress was the criterion of character and situation.

From generals they next touched upon particulars, and thence proceeded to eulogiums and animadversions upon themselves, and each other. Courton's coat was pronounced entirely correct; Edward's was capable of amendment, but George's, without a redeeming quality, old-fashioned and with evidence of wear.

"Upon my word, Dalton, you must have a better coat for Friday evening," said Courton: "you never can appear as you are now."

George looked at his coat, and with some hesitation replied, "I have not had it long, either."

"That has nothing to do with it," said Courton; "although I must say it looks like a last year's affair: it never could have been well made, and now it is decidedly shabby."

"Do you think so?" said George, in a tone of alarm.

"Oh! do not take my opinion; ask any

body; every one will tell you the same," answered Courton. "Have you not another?"

"Not here," said George, ashamed to confess that he really had no other, or rather no better.

"Well, my dear fellow, you must get it wherever it is, that is beyond a doubt. What do you say, Falconer?"

"Oh, certainly," replied Edward, agreeing as usual with the last speaker.

"Sharpe's coat is bad enough," continued Courton, "but yours is worse than his."

"You are welcome to say what you please of my coat, and of me too," said Sharpe, with his usual coarse laugh; "I care nothing about it: to those who do not know me it does not matter, and to those who know me it is all the same. I cannot afford to buy a coat just for one occasion, and if I could, I would not be such a fool. Why, Dalton, surely you are not going to be talked into buying another coat?"

"I wish I had given it a thought before I came," said George, avoiding a direct answer; "but now I hardly know what to do."

"It cannot signify," said Sharpe: "every body knows that you and I are too poor to be such dandies as these two rich chaps." Then, seeing William at a little distance with Miss Murray, he called aloud, "I say, William, are not you ashamed of wearing such a shabby coat?"

"I do not think it is shabby," replied William.

"Oh, yes it is; and they say here that you cannot wear it on Friday."

"I cannot wear any thing else, that is very certain," said William, laughing and passing on.

George could not even smile: he was mortified beyond expression; he knew of no remedy, yet he could not bring himself to confess the fact, that he had not the means of buying another coat. He fell into deep

thought; persuaded himself that it was quite necessary to have a coat, revolving in his mind every possible and impossible means of appearing in better attire; but he was not fertile in resources; he could arrive at no conclusion, yet still hoped to effect the important end.

While thus internally debating, the conversation went on amongst his companions: from dress it turned upon balls, theatricals, and other diversions, till it arrived at races, which was too fertile a subject to be touched on lightly.

"Did you ever see a race, Falconer?" asked Mr. Courton.

"Where do you think I have lived all the days of my life?" asked Edward, in reply.

"By the way," added Courton, "to-morrow is the great day at Epsom. I meant to have been there, and I do not see why I should not. What say you Falconer, will you go?"

"To be sure I will; though, on second thoughts, I suppose my dad will say no."

"And I suppose you cannot go without papa's leave," said Courton, jeeringly.

"Oh! cannot I? we shall see that!" said Edward, with a foolish laugh. "I am not quite so young but that I have once before, to say the least, played the truant."

"How are we to get there?" enquired Courton.

"Why club and pay for a britschka, to be sure," said Edward.

"The clubbing will be confined to ourselves, I suspect," said Courton, tauntingly; "for gentlemen that cannot afford to buy new coats can hardly be expected to stand the expence of Epsom."

"I will pawn my coat but I will go," said Sharpe, in his usual abrupt, coarse manner.

"I do not intend to be left behind," added George.

"Then it is all settled," said Edward. "What will William do?" he added, turning to George, who did not at first know what to answer, but at last declared they had better not mention it to him, because he did not care for such things.

"We must hire a carriage directly," said Courton, "or we shall not be able to get one. I doubt whether we are not too late as it is. Let us be off at once," and without further consideration, forth they sallied.

As they proceeded, led by Courton, who best knew the places where they were most likely to hire a carriage, Dalton took Sharpe's arm, and falling back so as to be out of hearing, said, "What will this Epsom business cost, think you?"

"Two or three sovereigns a-piece, at least; probably more, for these chaps think nothing about money, except indeed spending it."

'Aye, they are lucky fellows!" sighed George. "It is very pleasant to have money at command!"

Sharpe only replied by a grunt, whether significant of assent, or the painful reflection that he was not one who enjoyed such good fortune, was not quite certain.

"Now," continued George, "about a coat. This was certainly new six months ago, and I have not worn it much."

"On high-days and holidays," added Sharpe.

"I should now have had a new one," continued George, not attending to the interruption, "but for these misfortunes. Nevertheless it is very disagreeable to appear different to other people; it makes one look particular; and then questions are asked, and things talked of that one would prefer should not be known. I have heard of court-dresses being hired. I wonder whether one could hire a dress-coat."

"To be sure one could," said Sharpe, "but not without money to pay for it."

"That is true again," sighed George! "Now I wish I had a five-pound note, or even three sovereigns would do."

"Cannot you borrow them?" Sharpe enquired.

"I should not choose to borrow of Edward, or Courton, nor of Mr. Falconer; I do not wish them to know my difficulties."

There was a pause; they walked on several paces in silence: at length Sharpe suddenly exclaimed, "I have it! you can raise the money on that watch of yours."

"Sell my watch! no, no, I will not do that."

"I do not want you to sell it, but you can borrow five pounds upon it. A gold watch is no bad security for five pounds."

"But I do not know how to do this—where to go," said George, anxiously.

"I will settle all that for you, when you

have once made up your mind; there is not much time to lose about it."

"Well, stay a minute; I must consider: I cannot make up my mind in an instant. Five pounds! aye, that would just do—get me out of all my difficulties."

"Or you might," said Sharpe, in a low voice, "raise twice that sum. Your watch is worth at least fourteen guineas; and then you can lend me a pound or two, for I am very short; indeed, I do not quite know how I am to manage Epsom."

George made no reply: he did not relish the notion of lending money to Sharpe, yet he did not see how he could refuse under the circumstances.

At length he said, "Well, you say you will manage it all; only take care that it is a secret between you and I; for though I cannot see there is any dishonesty, nor even dishonour, in raising a necessary sum of money upon an article which is my own—

indeed not even purchased by my father—yet I cannot say I should like the thing to be known."

"Nor I either; though, as you say, it concerns no one but yourself, yet we do not want it to be talked about. People who are in no distress for money cannot understand the shifts that necessity puts one to. But how can we contrive it without their knowing it?" said Sharpe, pointing to their companions.

"I have been thinking," replied George, "I might pretend to go to our lodgings for something I have left there, and then we can settle the rest of the business."

"A capital idea," said Sharpe.

No sooner said than done. George told Edward and Courton he would take that opportunity to go home to fetch something; that they did not want his advice in hiring a carriage, and that he should be back to Mr. Falconer's about the same time as

themselves: Sharpe added, that he would walk with him, as he knew nothing about britschkas, and did not want to know; all that he cared for, was getting down to Epsom somehow or other.

Upon this the party divided; Edward Falconer and his friend made the best bargain they could for a carriage, horses, and post-lad, which was charged exorbitantly, in consequence of the immense demand for vehicles in London on the great Epsom-day. They did not take into the account that their absent friends had not the same liberal allowance as themselves. They appointed the hour and the place where the carriage should take them up on the following morning, and again retraced their steps towards home.

CHAPTER IX.

EVIL INFLUENCE.

SHARPE meantime led his companion to a part of the town with which the latter was not at all acquainted. He was at first very loquacious and confident in his power of carrying the business through in the best possible way: gradually, however, this confidence began to abate; he expressed some doubts as to the best means of proceeding—said he could not exactly recollect the place—then went up to a house, looked at it, shook his head, saying, "No, this is not it. How stupid I must be to forget! Stop, I have it. I will go to a fellow that once lived footman with us; he will do it; he lives close by."

"Stay," interrupted George, "I should not like to trust a third person, and particularly one I know nothing about."

"Oh! you need not be afraid, he is all right; and besides, if he undertakes it, we need not be known in the business, and I shall not mention your name to him."

"Well," said George, hesitatingly, "if you think——"

"I am sure of it," said Sharpe; and not waiting to hear further, he knocked at the door of a mean-looking house, opposite to which he had previously stopped, and on enquiring if James Nash lodged there, the man himself, hearing his name, made his appearance.

"Oh! master Tom, is that you? Thought I knew the voice. How are you?"

George neither liked the look of the man, nor the familiar manner in which he addressed Sharpe; although a moment's reflection would have told him that the fact of

Sharpe's seeking the aid he now required from a former servant of his father, sufficiently bespoke the nature of their acquaintance. Having requested Nash to come into the street, Sharpe told him what he wanted.

The man seemed in no way surprised at the commission, which he immediately undertook to execute. George's gold watch was given into his charge, and they accompanied him to a neighbouring street: he entered a pawnbroker's shop, they waiting a few doors off.

On his return, he put nine sovereigns into George's hand, together with the duplicate, on looking at which George perceived it was for ten sovereigns. The man, observing that his retention of a sovereign was detected, explained he had only taken the customary fee, and appealed to Sharpe as to the regularity of this proceeding, to which the latter of course gave his ready assent.

Nash next endeavoured to sound the lads on the intended employment of the money, and after many hints and guesses, he ended by observing, he supposed they were for a spree next day at Epsom.

Sharpe laughed coarsely, and said, "No, no, we know better what we are about."

With this they parted, and all the way home Sharpe dilated upon his superior cunning, asserting that Nash, knowing as he was, could not take him in. When he thought he had sufficiently impressed George with his superior address, he hinted that the latter must fulfil his part of the bargain, by lending him two sovereigns.

George gave him the money in silence: he could not subscribe to Sharpe's opinion of himself; he already began to repent, and for the first time it occurred to him, how he was to raise the money to redeem his watch. With a heavy heart he returned to Mr. Falconer's, and retired early to his

room, more miserable than he had ever felt in his life. What would he not have given to recall the last few hours, and with them the events that had occurred! He sat down, and placing his elbows on the table, hid his face in his hands, as if to shut out with the light the remembrance of his errors. Thus he remained for some minutes; then taking the money out of his pocket he laid it on the table. "A few hours ago," he said, "I thought the possession of this sum would make me perfectly happy; forgetting that my happiness must depend on the *means* by which I procured it. Oh, what a fool I have been! With this one sovereign," (he took it from his pocket, and held it in his hand,) "that my dear father gave me, I ought to have been content; it was all I had a right to: and my watch too, that I was so proud of! how shall I ever get it again? how can I obtain ten sovereigns?" He looked at the eight upon the table. "There they are! I have

not spent them; I do not owe them to any one: why should I not get back those I have lent Sharpe and redeem my watch at once? Yet even so I have not enough, for there will be interest to pay, and I should not like to borrow. Yes, I might ask William to lend me his sovereign: I know he would lend it me, to get me out of this difficulty. I wonder if he is come up to bed yet: however, I can speak to him just as well in the morning, I certainly cannot get my watch again to-night, so the morning will be time enough."

Having made this determination, George went to bed happier and more at ease. Before he had finished dressing next morning, he heard a gentle tap at his door, and on calling "Come in," Edward Falconer entered softly, and shut the door cautiously after him. In a low voice he informed him of their arrangements for the day, and named

the place where the carriage was to take them up.

"I think we had better give it up altogether," said George, in a hesitating manner.

"Give it up!" repeated Edward in astonishment; "why so? What is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing! only I think your father might not like it, and if any thing should happen, or if——."

"But where is the difference between last night and this morning?" enquired Edward.

"No difference certainly," replied George; "but upon more consideration, I think we may get into a scrape; and it would be very unpleasant if your father were really angry."

"So it would, to be sure," said Edward, "and we might certainly, as you say, get into some scrape. I have not felt quite comfortable about it myself. Well, I will go and consult Courton."

"Of course he will be for going," urged George: "he will care nothing about your father's displeasure, because he thinks himself too old to suffer by it, and he does not mind expence: now, though I do not grudge paying my share for a thing, yet money is of more consequence to me than it is to him, and I cannot exactly feel certain that I ought to afford this, although I have the money."

"It is an expensive business, no doubt," Edward remarked, in reply; "and for my own part, I have got so near the end of my allowance this quarter, that I can hardly manage it. The worst of Courton is, he is so positive, and fond of dictating, that I dare say he will insist upon our carrying it through, now we have gone so far. I wish, George, you had said all this last night, before we hired the carriage."

"You both seemed so anxious about it," George answered, "that I was afraid you

would think me mean, or that I was without any spirit, if I refused to join you."

"But do not you see," replied Edward, "I should have been of your opinion then, just the same as I am now, if you had stated it; and if we two had opposed Courton, we could have had it our own way."

"Well," said George, "it is not too late; we are not gone yet, you know; we have only to stick to our resolution, whatever Courton and Sharpe may say to the contrary."

"Oh! as for Sharpe he is nobody: I care nothing about him: go or stay, he will take care to keep his money in his pocket, if indeed he have any to keep."

Although George made no rejoinder to this comment, he could not but acknowledge its justice, and that Sharpe did indeed deserve but little consideration. Edward went on.

"I wish, Dalton, you would propose to give up; it will come better from you, because you see it is not the thing in my own house for me to do it."

"On the contrary," said George, "you are the best person to introduce the objections, since it is most important for you to avoid incurring your father's displeasure, and you must know better than I can do whether he is likely to be angry or not."

"Why that is very true, certainly: but I had rather not; you would do it best. Courton will attend to you sooner than he will to me."

"Well, as you please," replied George, and very reluctantly he followed Edward to Courton's room. On his way thither, however, he reflected that having won Edward over to his opinion he had only to be firm to carry the point, and strengthened by the conviction that he was now about to do what was strictly right, his courage rose, and when he entered the room he was quite prepared for the encounter. His natural weakness could not however be wholly overcome, and it now assumed another form: he fell into

the opposite error, and expressed his determination with a bluntness of manner more likely to provoke opposition than to convince the person he addressed. His decision, however, had the effect of keeping his coadjutor firm ; and in spite of Courton's astonishment and displeasure, which he expressed in no very courteous or conciliating terms, he was obliged to yield. He at last only stipulated, that could Mr. Falconer's consent be obtained, they should adhere to their original intentions.

The next point was to inform Sharpe of the alteration in their plan, which Edward undertook to do, without any hesitation. On consulting upon the application to his father, he was much less decisive, and endeavoured to shift the task upon each or any of his friends ; they were, however, equally unwilling with himself to undertake the office, and he at length declared his intention of first sounding Mr. Falconer, when it might easily

be discovered, whether acquiescence or refusal were most probable.

At breakfast, therefore, Edward began to feel his way, and tried to lead the conversation towards the desired end. He spoke of the weather, remarked that it was a fine day for the races; asked his father if he remembered what a glorious day they had two years ago, when they went to the Derby; declared he had never enjoyed any thing more in his life, and wondered when he should see another race."

"You are quite eloquent, Edward, on the subject," observed Miss Murray.

"A race is an exciting topic," somebody else replied; but Mr. Falconer was silent.

"When do you think of another day at Epsom, father?" asked Edward, unintentionally and unconsciously putting a direct question, the thing he had all along intended to avoid. George inwardly rejoiced that the question was at length put.

Mr. Falconer laid down a piece of ham which he was about to convey to his mouth, and looking full at his son with a shrewd expression of face, said, "I do not think any thing at all about it; nevertheless, I see you do, and I quite understand you, my fine fellow. To satisfy all your doubts, and put an end to all your hopes and surmises upon the subject of going to Epsom races to-day, which I take to be the drift of your eloquent compliments to the weather, and your eulogiums upon my liberality two years since, I now reply, that I do not intend to go, neither do I mean that you should go without me. Now this is the exact truth. You have got at my intentions in a round-about way: I should have preferred your speaking out, and coming to the point at once, as I have now done."

Edward endeavoured to set up a defence by assuring his father he never supposed he meant to go; that he only asked out of

curiosity, as perhaps he might go next year.

Mr. Falconer, however, begged him to let the subject drop, as his defence only made the matter worse.

As soon as they had breakfasted, the four youths again assembled in council, to determine upon the means of getting out of their bargain with the livery-stable keeper.

Courton declared he would not go to the man, as the excursion was given up quite against his wishes, though not altogether against his consent, and that they must get out of the scrape without his assistance.

George asserted that as he was not present when the arrangement had been made, it was quite out of the question for him to interfere.

Edward said he did not understand such things, and it was no use to send him; that although he had been present when the carriage was hired, he had not interfered, but had left every thing to Courton.

Here the latter fired up: "Not interfered!" he replied, indignantly, "why you agreed to every thing; agreed even to the fellow's proposal to charge half as much again as he ought to do."

"Oh no! no! I agreed to what you said, because I concluded you knew all about such matters, and I did not pretend to know; but I do not think—"

"That is true enough," interrupted Courton, laughing bitterly, "*you* do not think, but you get other people to do it for you."

Sharpe here joined in with his own peculiar coarse laugh: the sound silenced Courton, and reminded him that he lost his consequence when he lost his temper.

"It is very easy to laugh," said Edward, much annoyed at his friend's sarcasm, but venting his spleen upon Sharpe, whom he held in supreme contempt. "It is very easy to laugh, like a stupid idiot, much easier than to act. Laughing will not pay your

share of the expences: we shall be charged just the same as if we used the carriage: bad enough not to go at all, but worse still to pay for what we do not enjoy."

"As none of you seem inclined to stir in the matter," said Sharpe, taking no notice of the epithet just applied to him, "perhaps you will let me see what I can do."

"You cannot make it worse, that is very certain," said Courton.

Sharpe laughed again. "Well, then," he repeated, "shall I go?"

"Aye, to be sure," exclaimed all three at once, happy to shift an unpleasant business upon any one willing to undertake it. Courton could not bear to acknowledge in his own person, even to the livery-stable keeper, that he was not going to Epsom races; Edward felt ashamed and afraid to ask the man to lower his charge, as they did not use the carriage and horses; and George was equally

afraid and ashamed. Sharpe had no fears for his dignity, for he had no dignity either of mind, station, or character; he was only determined to get off the payment of all, or as much of the charge as possible, without much consideration as to the means. It so happened that an accidental circumstance favoured him. As he was unknown at the livery-stables, his appearance there was almost unnoticed, more especially as the proprietor was occupied in assuring a gentleman that he had no carriage or horses unhired, while the latter was endeavouring to persuade him to let him the britschka, to which the groom was then putting a pair of horses.

"I cannot oblige you, indeed sir," said the man; "those horses are now going to take up a party of lads, to whom I let them last night."

"Oh! if it is only for boys, they can easily find a conveyance by a coach or an

omnibus. I want to take down some ladies, whom I cannot allow to be disappointed."

"I am very sorry, sir," began the livery-stable keeper.

"I'll tell you what I will do, I will pay you double the sum you intend to charge these young fellows. It is not probable that boys can afford to pay you as well as I can, and—"

Sharpe had all this time been listening to the conversation, and watching its effect upon the letter of horses: the last appeal had evidently made an impression; this then was the right time; so walking up to the parties, he boldly asked, "Are the carriage and horses ordered last night by Mr. Courton, ready to start?"

"Yes," replied the man, in a sulky tone, angry at losing the money offered by his new customer; "the horses are now putting to."

"Are you one of the party, sir?" enquired the gentleman.

"Yes, I am sir," replied Sharpe, in the most polite tone he could command.

"You are fortunate in having the start of me. I am in great difficulty about a carriage, and hoped I could have been furnished here, but I am just too late."

"I am very happy to be able to accommodate you," said Sharpe, "for my errand here is to give up the carriage, as circumstances have prevented us from using it to-day; your taking it will be an advantage, as in such a case we shall of course have nothing to pay."

The stable-keeper's countenance became more gloomy at this remark: he muttered something about "quite contrary to usual custom; very unfair, very unlike gentlemen;" but this had no effect whatever upon Sharpe, and but little upon the new candidate for the carriage, who anxious only to get possession of it, told the stable-keeper to charge what he pleased. Sharpe staid for no further parley: the post-boy, however, made a claim

upon him, which he began to dispute; this demand the gentleman declared he would satisfy, being but too happy at the circumstance which gave him the means of getting down to Epsom.

Sharpe returned with no little satisfaction, and related his success to his companions, with much commendation of his own sagacity and good management. They were all too well delighted with the result to care much how it had been effected, and George was most especially pleased that there would be no demand upon his pocket, being more anxious than ever to redeem his watch. It was, however necessary, first to get back the two sovereigns he had lent to Sharpe, and to borrow another of his brother, in order to pay the interest and other charges, which he feared might be brought against him. He felt reluctant to make these requests, and much difficulty in knowing how to introduce the subject of his necessities to William.

Whilst he was debating the matter with himself, he heard Sharpe (who really seemed his evil genius) say to Edward, "Indeed he has, though; he ordered it last night: I went with him to the tailor's."

"I say, Dalton," cried Edward, "have you really ordered a new coat, as Sharpe says; or do you intend to appear in the shabby-genteel, cannot-afford-it style?"

This was the moment of trial: George hesitated, and yielding to his habitual failing, took a middle course, and prevaricated.

"I certainly do not mean to be shabby," he said, "although I cannot exactly say I have ordered a new coat; and as to the cannot afford it, *perhaps* I cannot."

"Oh! you know you can afford it," said Sharpe, interrupting him; "that will never do, when I saw ten sovereigns in your hand only last night."

George could not deny having the ten sovereigns, neither dared he acknowledge how they came into his possession. To procure a

coat had been one of his intentions when he pawned the watch, and what he imagined the necessity for having it was not diminished; but now Sharpe's ill-timed interference had placed him in a worse dilemma than before. Still he was firm; and proceeded at once to recover the money Sharpe had borrowed. He felt no delicacy or reluctance in taking this step; he cared little for the opinion that might be entertained or expressed by one he so utterly despised. If the fear crossed him, that Sharpe might revengefully expose the whole transaction, his alarm subsided with the belief that his coadjutor would not dare to betray his own share in the business. He followed Sharpe to his room, and began by upbraiding him both for his f lsehood and breach of confidence.

Sharpe denied that he was guilty of either. He insisted that Dalton had pawned the watch in order to buy a coat, and that the statement about the money was no breach of trust,

since he had given no hint of the means by which they were obtained. "Besides," he said, "I cannot see how the case is altered; nor why you do not want the coat now, just as much as you did last night."

"That may be," replied George, "but I have so entirely repented pawning my watch that I have determined to go at once and redeem it, more particularly since we have got so well out of the Epsom business. If I spend this money, how can I raise it again? and it will soon be discovered that my watch is gone. I did not consider this, but now that I have reflected, I should be still more culpable to persevere in my error."

Sharpe was a little surprised at George's decided manner, for he had hitherto found him wavering and undetermined.

"Have you the sum you got for the watch?" asked Sharpe, at a loss what to reply.

"No, that is the difficulty;" and he paused:

nevertheless, I think I can manage it; but to do this I must get you to return me the two sovereigns I lent you. As we do not go to Epsom you will not want them."

Sharpe looked very blank. "It will be rather inconvenient to me to do so just now," he said.

"Surely you cannot have spent them!"

"No, I have not spent them; but I want them most particularly for two or three days longer, when I shall receive some money from my mother, and can easily repay you."

"I should prefer having it at once," said George, with a resolution that surprised even himself.

"But you will not have enough even then," said Sharpe.

"Yes, I can manage the rest," George replied, his determination continuing to strengthen.

"I cannot see how," continued Sharpe, unwilling to give up the money, and indulg-

ing a hope that he could still persuade George to yield.

"Never mind how," said George, getting a little angry; "leave that to me—one of the means to extricate myself from the difficulty is to go boldly to my object: the first thing is to collect the money; therefore I will trouble you to give me the two sovereigns I lent you immediately."

"They are not in these pockets," replied Sharpe.

"As we are in your own room you can easily get them," remarked George, cooly but firmly.

There was a pause, during which the two lads looked at each other steadily and enquiringly. Sharpe had all his life been accustomed to use and submit to force, and he seemed now to expect a personal contest for the possession of the sovereigns. He remembered that George dared not openly claim the money, as then the whole story would come out; and presuming upon this,

and upon his superior age and strength, he resolved to resist the demand.

"You lent me the money," he said, "without any agreement as to the time of payment, and I shall keep it as long as it is convenient to me."

"There was no agreement, as you say, about time," retorted George, "and therefore I insist upon having it now. You say you have not spent it, it is necessary to my character that I redeem my watch, to do this I must have the money, and the money I *will* have, so you had better give it up quietly."

"Oh! if you come to that," said Sharpe, "I do not mean to be frightened into giving it up."

"You may be *forced* into it," said George, going straight up to him.

Sharpe became furious at the menacing expression of George's countenance, and resolving not to wait the attack he expected, made a blow at his face. George's personal

bravery being backed by mental resolution, he cooly parried the stroke, and after a struggle succeeded in showing Sharpe he was any thing but his inferior in strength and courage. The latter, as soon as he was made sensible of this, renewed the parley: George, however, was not to be moved, and at length Sharpe produced the money, saying, as he did so, that he considered it altogether a very dirty, mean affair.

"There is but too much truth in what you say," replied George bitterly; "and it is because I am determined to wash my hands clean of it, that I have insisted upon a restoration which could alone enable me to regain my own good opinion. It would be acting the part of a baby, now to complain that your counsels have led me away; but most heartily do I wish I had not been weak enough to follow them."

"You asked my advice and assistance," said Sharpe; "I did not intrude them upon you."

"True again," answered George, "but I mean henceforth to rely upon myself, and take the consequences."

"I wish you had come to this resolution before you persuaded me to have any thing to do with pawning gold watches," said Sharpe: "you are wonderfully careful on a sudden about your *own* reputation, while it appears of no sort of consequence what becomes of *my* character."

George was silent with astonishment at this effrontery; but conscious that argument would have no effect, he contented himself with observing that Sharpe's participation in the transaction would never be made known; he alone was privy to it, and he should consider silence a matter of honour.

Sharpe made no reply, but looked as if all this were mere words, spoken as a matter of course, but on which he placed no reliance.

Thus ended the discussion; and George

had next to undergo the pain of borrowing his brother's sovereign.

He could not resist a little circumlocution before coming to the point. After getting William into conversation, he said, "William, what do you mean to do with that sovereign? do you mean to keep it for luck, as the old women say?"

"Not exactly so, but I shall keep it till I really want it."

"Do not you want it at this particular time, then?" George eagerly enquired.

"Want it!" repeated William, "certainly I do want it: I should have said, until I see the best means of laying it out."

"Then you do not see that just now?" was the next query.

"What makes you enquire?" asked William.

"I was going to beg you to do me a favour; to oblige me: that is, I was going to say, if you have no particular use for it just now, will you lend it to me?"

"To speak plainly, George, I would rather not," replied William; "for I have a scheme in my head, which will employ a little cash, and to say the honest truth I do not see how you can repay me."

"Of course," said George, "my father will give me some more money soon." He stopped, he could not summon resolution for further deception.

William looked at him, as if expecting to *see* his brother's intentions. But, as much in doubt as ever, he said:—"I suppose you have spent all the money my father gave you, or you would not want to borrow from me. I do not enquire how, but I cannot think it has been well spent, particularly when I see you so thick with such a fellow as Sharpe, and so dreadfully afraid that Edward and his wealthy friends should suspect you of poverty. Now we *are* poor, and we cannot make ourselves appear otherwise. If you want two or three

shillings, they are quite at your service, but I do not think I should do you any good, or that it would be right towards myself, to lend you more. No one ought to lend *all* he is worth even to his brother."

George felt dreadfully humbled. William here spoke the truth, added to which every word was an unintentional reproach to himself. He became still more unwilling to speak out, and he did not know what to reply.

"I have not spent the money," he said, "and I borrow from you to get rid of an annoyance: however, I believe you are right, and I must do as well as I can."

"George," said William, earnestly, "if you have not spent your own money, and yet want mine, you must either be in debt or desire to make some expensive purchase: I really believe you have been persuaded into the intention of buying a new coat, and with this belief, and the knowledge that you have

no right to do so, I cannot lend you the money, if you are in debt."

"I am not in debt," said George proudly, "and henceforth will take care how I ask my brother to become my creditor; nothing more need be said on the matter."

"I am sorry to offend you, George; but as I told you before, I cannot, particularly while in ignorance of the circumstances, do what I believe to be wrong both towards you and myself."

George did not stay to hear more; he had assumed anger to conceal his shame. Withdrawing to the quiet of his own room, he there sat down to reflect on what had passed and what was to come. Bitter indeed were these reflections. After various plans formed and rejected, he finally determined to await his father's return, when he would take his chance about obtaining the necessary sum.

He flattered himself Mr. Dalton would give it him without enquiry, and that he

could not be surprised at the sovereign he left with him having been expended.

Although he had come to this decision, and at the same time resolved to think no more of it, but enjoy the pleasures which were before him, he could not feel at his ease. Some unseen annoyance seemed to attend him; he was in continual dread that Sharpe's indiscretion, vulgarity, or malice should draw down upon him the ridicule of his friends; what he suffered, may easily be imagined, since his dread of ridicule or contempt had already placed him in his present situation.

CHAPTER X.

BLUSTERING.

Not even the pleasures of a ramble with his young friends, a few miles into the country, could chase away George Dalton's uncomfortable recollections and anticipations. Every laugh, every smile, the cause of which was not immediately apparent, seemed raised at his expense; every ambiguous word or jest seemed levelled at him; the joyous laugh, the careless joke, verbal or practical, raised no corresponding mirth in his bosom, and he soon became quite out of humour with what he mentally styled, the "nonsense" of his companions. William, on the contrary, was in high spirits, and unusually ready to join in boisterous exercise. Nevertheless he fre-

quently betrayed his constitutional weakness, by failing in some feat of strength or daring, at the very moment when a little courage alone was necessary to perfect the attempt. If he jumped a ditch or a gate, some causeless and vague apprehension came over him to mar his intention; if there was any personal trial of strength, from the same cause, he failed to employ all his power. In short, he manifested none of that daring determination which alone can insure the accomplishment of personal enterprize. Edward's character was weak in another way: he boasted continually of his prowess, but invariably contrived that it should never be called into exercise. When a jump was to be made, he twisted his knee or his ankle in taking the spring, and then loudly expressed his regret at his bad luck. Sharpe tried at every thing, laughed unfeelingly at his own failures wherever they occurred, and they did frequently occur, not however from want

of courage, but in consequence of that vulgar, blundering, hard-headed sort of rashness which so frequently accompanies a coarse mind.

When George failed, it was because his thoughts were occupied with the fear or hope of what the lookers-on might think of him, instead of how he might best accomplish his object. Courton was, on the contrary, sufficiently proud to care very little for the opinion of others: he imagined that his superior rank exempted him from animadversion: he rarely condescended to *try*, and when he did so condescend, his self-confidence usually supported him; or if this overweening self-confidence sometimes made him fail, it also inspired him with a total disregard of the consequences of failure.

After some walking and enough exertion, they began to find out that they were rather weary, and very thirsty.

"I wonder whether there is any decent

sort of tavern near, where one could get some refreshment," said Courton.

"There is a capital place about a mile further on, where we can get any thing, every thing," replied Edward, with his usual exaggeration.

"Ale, beer, cider, porter, and ginger-pop," said Sharpe, with a particular emphasis on the last word, reminding his companions of the cry adopted by the itinerant venders of these various articles.

The imitation caused a universal laugh. Unaccustomed to be so greeted, Sharpe, presuming on his success, continued his imitations and jokes till his attempts at wit degenerated into mere vulgar folly.

"Come Sharpe," at length said Courton, "we have had quite enough of this nonsense; it will not do any longer: is that the house you spoke of, Falconer, with a sign hanging across the road? It looks rather plebeian," he continued, after Edward had answered by a

nod, "very like porter and ginger-pop indeed. No appearance of wine in that portrait of the gentleman with a clay pipe: nothing but backey and heavy-wet to be had there, I fear."

"You may get capital cigars there, I know; at least I have no doubt you may," said Edward.

"You think so!" said Courton, in an incredulous tone. "Well, we shall see. But what do you say about the wine? I must have some."

"Of course we must," rejoined Edward. "What else can we drink, eh, Dalton?"

"Oh, nothing else, certainly," echoed George, with some reluctance; for although he did not stop to reflect ere he answered, he had a slight sort of conviction that he could not afford to pay for wine, and that he ought not to drink it.

"You will join us, Will?" continued Edward.

"No, thank you," said William, in his usual simple straightforward manner.

"No, why not?" asked Courton, with an insolence not unobserved by William, who, neither wishing to submit to it nor to make it a cause of dispute, merely replied, "I prefer a glass of ale, although I do not feel obliged to give my reasons."

Any other answer would have induced Courton to carry his insolence further; his habitual contempt for poverty or inferiority of station would here have showed itself in taunting questions or in ridicule, but in spite of himself he was silent; he could not despise nor turn into ridicule the dignity of honesty and truth. William made no boast of his economy; he was as thirsty as the rest, and liked wine better than ale, and perhaps, too, he liked the supposed eclat of ordering port and sherry, nearly as much as his companions, but he knew he could not afford it; therefore he

quietly asserted his right to judge for himself. It required more nerve to endure Sharpe's sympathy and good-fellowship than to bear any taunts which could have assailed him from Courton.

"I will drink ale with you," he said, in a tone of defiance, (for he in fact addressed himself to Courton and Edward.) Port and sherry are all very well for those that can pay for them, but as you and I are not so lucky, why we must contrive to go without. Not that it is much of a loss after all. Ale is capital stuff."

William made no reply: Courton observed that it was very good stuff for those who never drank any thing better; while Edward declared that Sharpe was quite right not to order what he could not pay for.

They had now reached the tavern; the landlord met them at the door.

"Show us into a private room," said Courton, in his most important manner.

The man looked at him, and threw open a door on the right-hand side. Courton walked in.

"Pha! this room smells horridly of tobacco!"

"Phew! horrid!" echoed Edward.

"Have you any very good wine?" enquired Courton.

The landlord's face brightened.

"Yes, sir, very excellent."

"Is this your best room?"

"No, sir, there is another next the garden."

"Let us have it, then; we cannot drink our wine in this place."

"Walk this way, gentlemen: there, gentlemen, this is a very pleasant apartment! quite rural; looking into the bowling-green: that green, gentlemen, is considered the best bowling-green anywhere round town. Perhaps you would like a rubber at bowls, gentlemen."

"No! no! hang your bowls," interrupted Courton; "bring port and sherry, and cigars."

"A bottle of each, sir?"

"No; a pint of each will do?"

"Bring me a glass of ale," said William.

"And a glass of ale for me too," said Sharpe, in a loud authoritative voice. "Or stay—no, it shall be porter! bring me a bottle of your best porter."

"Yes, sir," added the landlord, hurrying away to execute the various orders.

The wine was brought, and Courton pouring out a glass of the port, tasted it, held it up to the light, and then tasted it again.

"Fairish sort of stuff for a place like this," he said.

Edward, after a due imitation of each particular gesture, assented.

"Let us see what the sherry is like," continued Courton, pouring out a glass. "Nothing particular," and he rung the bell. "Have you no better sherry?" he asked,

(lighting a cigar as he spoke,) when the landlord answered the summons.

"That wine is considered particularly fine, sir; but if you do not approve it, I shall be happy to change it, sir."

"I do not like it," observed Courton.

"It is not strong enough," added Edward.

"There I must beg to disagree," said Courton; "it is much *too* strong."

"Let me try it again," said Edward; "well, indeed I believe I am wrong; perhaps it was tasting it directly after the port: it certainly is much too strong," he added, draining the glass.

The landlord left the room with the decanter, and put into it a small quantity from the original bottle, in which he had left a part, and returning to his guests, assured them the wine he now brought would exactly suit them, being remarkably old and soft.

Courton again tasted it in most important, and mysterious silence, smacked his lips,

nodded his head at the landlord, in token of approbation, who bowed and left the room; while Edward looked important also, smacked his lips, and nodded his head, in due deference to the judgment and discretion of his prototype.

William had taken his brother aside, and endeavoured to persuade him not to be drawn into joining Courton and Edward in drinking the wine. "You know," he concluded, "you cannot afford it."

"But what can I do!" said George, peevishly; "as I did not refuse at first, they will think me very shabby to call off now."

"Because you have *said* a foolish thing, is that any reason why you should *do* a foolish thing?" urged William.

"But what can I say?" asked George.

"Say the truth, that you cannot afford the expence; and if you do not like to get out of it altogether, say you will join in one bottle."

"Well, well," said George, "I will see about it; I will do it if I can."

While the discussion about the wine was going on, George had studiously occupied himself in looking out of the window, as if unconscious of the proceedings in the room. All at once his friends remembered that he was a partner in the wine, and they asked him to taste it.

"No, not at present; I do not care much about it," was his reply.

"Not care!" repeated Courton; "that is quite extraordinary! Order port and sherry, and then not care about them!"

"Upon second thoughts, I would rather not have any," said George: "I am very warm, and walking under this hot sun has given me a head-ache. I shall be better without wine, I know."

While speaking, he turned his back to Edward and Courton, and pretended to be highly interested with some coloured prints

of dogs and horses, which decorated the walls of the room.

Edward laughed at Courton, who said nothing, though his countenance sufficiently indicated what he thought.

Edward took his cue from this expression, and said, "When we ordered the wine, we expected you would join us; it makes a difference whether two have to pay or——"

Courton stopped him. "Pray say nothing about it, Falconer; a few shillings, more or less, are of no consequence to me."

"Nor to me either, I am happy to say," added Edward.

Meanwhile William had drank his glass of beer, and Sharpe having dispatched half his bottle of porter, cast a wistful glance at the wine party, who were now endeavouring to persuade some cigars to burn. Courton gave evidence of some experience, but Edward had manifestly never tried before,

but he declared it was the worst cigar he had ever seen in his life. After many vain attempts, he rang the bell, and desired the landlord to bring him another cigar, instead of that trash, and he pointed to the floor, where he had thrown the discarded havannah, the title by which the landlord had thought fit to designate "the trash." A fresh cigar was brought, and tried with the same results. The bell was again sounded, the landlord again obeyed the summons.

"What an abominable thing it is that you have not a decent cigar in your house! This is worse than the first."

The landlord looked, and an expression of ridicule passed over his countenance, which however was immediately softened into an amiable smile, as he said, "You will excuse me, sir," and he stopped, as if to break as gently as possible the overwhelming information. "You will excuse me, sir, but you have lighted the wrong end."

Edward looked at Courton, with a faint hope that he might be in the same predicament, while the other boys laughed.

Sharpe's loud tones sounded in Edward's ears more than usually hateful.

Seeing no sympathy in Courton's contemptuous smile, he thought it best to light the *right* end of his cigar in silence, and proceeded most laboriously to enjoy the anticipated luxury. In vain. He began to feel very uncomfortable, and not the less so as he found himself the sole object of Sharpe's observation: at length, on the latter informing him that he looked perfectly green, he resigned the cause of his real misery and fancied gratification, and applied himself to the wine, but finding in it no relief from his uncomfortable sensations, he desired his tormentor to drink his share, much in the same manner as he would have turned over the remains of his dinner to a hungry cur. And indeed Sharpe's readiness

to avail himself of the permission differed but little from the eagerness of the said animal, under such circumstances.

The bill was then called for; seven shillings was the sum charged. William paid two-pence for his glass of beer, and resumed his walk with a light heart and strength refreshed. The wine-drinkers were not so fortunate: they had all drank more than was agreeable, and were not in very good humour: Edward felt sick, George sorry, and Courton stupid; while Sharpe was more noisy and brutal than ever.

Their walk homewards had neither the charm of novelty nor excitement to overcome these feelings; and they determined to take advantage of the first public conveyance, which should overtake them on its way to town. An omnibus, shortly after drove up, into which they all mounted. It contained several passengers, besides themselves, forming one party, apparently returning from

some country excursion. They alighted about ten minutes before the boys, who were set down just before they arrived at the point nearest home. On alighting the lads each offered the conductor the usual fare; this however he refused, making a double charge, evidently in the belief that youths were not likely to understand the regulations, or if they did, that they would not have firmness to resist his demand.

Courton contented himself with plainly declaring he would pay no more than the fare. Edward, in an under-tone, asserted his determination to Courton and the rest, not to be imposed upon, but he was particularly careful not to address his remarks to the conductor or the driver. William suggested, in a low voice, that they had better pay the money, they should only get into a row. George held his tongue, until he perceived that the majority were in favour of resistance; while Sharpe made an immediate attack upon the

conductor, in no very measured terms, unsparingly applying to him the terms rascal and thief. This language drew down upon him a volley of abuse, accompanied by threats. George, whose previous ill-humour was heightened by the imposition, became still more angry. Sharpe continued this war of words. William grew very much alarmed, and looked about for assistance. Edward withdrew to a distance that should protect him from being involved in any personal contest, while Courton stood by with a smile of contempt, which seemed to be excited as much by his friends as by his opponent.

The conductor at length seized Sharpe by the collar. George was about to advance to his rescue: when the driver, observing Courton's provoking ironical expression, laid a rough hand upon him also, claiming, as he did so, the payment of his fare.

This roused the spirit of the youth; he shook the man off with more strength than

had been anticipated, and the aggression would probably have been renewed with greater violence, had not William's anxious eyes perceived a policeman in the distance, whom he hailed immediately and energetically. The cause of dispute having been stated, the policeman recommended the omnibus hero to take his proper fare, assuring them his case would make against him at the office. After a good deal of grumbling, he adopted this advice; the lads paid the money, and were about to depart, when the conductor called out, that he had taken up and set down five persons; whereas but four had paid.

On looking round they indeed found that one of their number was missing ; Edward was not among them: they however perceived him approaching, as if returning from some other point.

"Hollo !" cried Sharpe, "where have you been all this time? I fancied you were at my elbow ready to back me."

"So I was, so I was," said Edward, hurriedly; "but I thought it best to run for a policeman; you have called one, I see."

"No, I did not call him," said Sharpe, "however, it is all settled: I should have liked to have given the rascal——."

"What?" asked the surly conductor.

"Come," said Courton, "we'll have no more of this: pay your fare, Falconer, and let us be off."

Edward was not sorry to obey the summons; they returned home, where the adventure was related with remarks, characteristic of the actors in the scene. Courton treated it as a very insignificant affair, although an acute observer would have discovered that he did not expect or desire his hearers so to estimate it. Edward talked as if his prowess had frightened the conductor into submission, and appealed to George to bear witness to his valour, whose acquiescence was given, though with some

reluctance. Sharpe however declared that Edward had ran away on the first appearance of a row, which the latter denied; and both now again appealed to George as arbiter between them.

Not wishing to offend Edward, he declared he could not precisely say; he had been himself too much engaged in the dispute to attend to the conduct of the others.

William was next called upon, who honestly replied, that he knew very little about it, for not liking such quarrels, he had been only anxious to find a policeman; and he supposed Edward had got out of the way with the same feelings and with the same intention as himself.

This plain statement rather disconcerted Edward, but he dexterously changed his ground, admitting he had certainly sought for a policeman, not in consequence of any alarm, but that he thought it not very creditable to get into a street-row with the

conductor of an omnibus. This argument could only be combated by Sharpe, who maintained that it mattered very little by whom he was insulted; and that he would never submit to an imposition or insult, let it come from whom it might. Here the argument closed, leaving Edward in the conviction that the ladies thought him a very spirited, and at the same time a very gentlemanly fellow. Whatever might be their opinions, his companions certainly regarded him in a totally different light. Sharpe privately observed to the other three, that Edward was a sneaking boaster; an opinion which none of the party thought it worth while either to contradict or to confirm.

William had observed his brother's depression of spirits with much regret: he saw that George had lost all his usual gaiety, and that when he talked or laughed, his mirth was forced, and that he immedi-

ately relapsed into anxious thought. William's fears were aroused by this unusual condition. Knowing his brother's character, he began to apprehend that he had gotinto some serious difficulty for want of money, and questioned himself whether he was justified in withholding the sovereign George would have borrowed. When they retired for the night, William proceeded to his brother's room, where he found him sitting in an attitude of extreme despondency, his face wearing an expression of perfect wretchedness. William's mind was made up in an instant.

"George," he said, "you do not think it right to trust me, and I will not insist upon your confidence: but I cannot bear to see you so miserable. If that sovereign (he laid it on the table) will relieve you from the distress which I am sure you suffer, there it is, you are welcome to it."

George made an effort to thank his bro-

ther, but instead of speaking he burst into tears. At length he said, "William, that sovereign will save me from degradation. I would tell you——"

"No, no, no!" cried William, "I will not hear a word. I can believe you, and I would give up every pleasure to spare you from disgrace. Good night! good night! I do not want to be thanked;" and he ran out of the room, to avoid receiving his brother's proffered gratitude.

On the following morning, when all the household were anxiously desiring sunshine and calm, they were mortified and disappointed beyond measure to behold in their stead, rain and storm. It was one of those days which sometimes occur even in the summer, and leave no hope of any amendment in the weather.

Their Richmond excursion was out of the question, and nothing was left but to send messages and notes to the families who

were to have joined them, announcing that all intention of carrying their plan into execution was given up, and hoping that the ball in the evening would make amends for present disappointment. The young ladies, consoled themselves with the reflection that they should be spared all fatigue, and consequently more ready for the pleasures of the evening.

George was delighted at the rain, which although it prevented them from going to Richmond, would not prevent him from redeeming his watch. He revolved in his mind what excuse he could frame for going out in such weather, while the rest of the party amused themselves by observing from the window the numberless calamities caused by a gusty wind and pelting showers.

The expected pleasures of the evening and the general and individual preparations, were the next topics of conversation: a dis-

cussion upon dress was inevitable ; and now George trembled, as he felt that the time approached to put his resolution to the test.

"Have you got your new coat?" was the point-blank question which first assailed him.

"No," he replied, "I have not."

"What ! has not the fellow sent it home yet?" asked Sharpe, with a malicious grin.

William looked at his brother in astonishment. "Have I," thought he, "lent my money for such a purpose? Has he been weak enough to order a new coat? No, it cannot be ! two sovereigns would not buy a coat." Still he was perplexed.

"I said I had not got it," George answered quickly, thus avoiding a direct reply.

"Oh ! but you must have it," remarked Edward: "you must send or go after it. It

is a little too bad to order a coat, and then not receive it."

George was on the point of declaring he would himself go out and enquire about it, as a capital excuse for leaving the house; but he recollected that he should thus pledge himself to wearing a new coat at night. Edward repeated his assertion, that he must go or send after it.

"I cannot very well go out in such weather as this," said George, hastily; "and I do not think any of the servants can be spared: I heard your mother say they were all so very much occupied."

"You had better get wet this morning than be ill dressed at night," observed Courton.

George muttered some excuse about weather, trouble, and the want of punctuality of his tailor; yet when the evening came, and found him attired in the condemned coat, he was himself surprised to find how little he

was disturbed by the taunts and jokes of his companions. He for the first time in his life discovered how little effect these had: his good resolves and the temptation he had withstood were his shield and buckler, against which the shafts of ridicule, hitherto so galling, now glanced off powerless and blunted. He enjoyed the pleasures of the evening almost as much as William. The gratification of the latter was embittered by no regret; he could look back without pain, while George, to be free from care, could only look forward.

The ball passed off like all other balls, with the usual admixture of pains and pleasures, mortifications and triumphs, gratifications and disappointments.

George rose next morning, resolved that nothing should deter him from fulfilling his intention to redeem the watch. On descending to the dining-room, there seemed no preparation for breakfast; indeed the evi-

dences of the last night's festivities were not entirely removed.

"Shall we not breakfast here this morning?" he enquired of one of the servants, who, with evident marks of fatigue, was putting the room in order.

"No, sir; in my mistress's morning-room; this cannot be got ready in time, although I do not suppose anybody will be down these two hours. I am quite surprised to see you up sir, so early."

This was capital news: George could redeem his watch, and return unobserved in time for breakfast. No one would know he had left the house, or if discovered, it would be supposed he had gone to walk in the park. At all events he should not have the difficulty of getting rid of, or deceiving his companions.

His hand was upon the lock of the hall-door, when it occurred to him that he did

not know the name of the street in which the pawnbroker lived, nor was he quite sure he could find the way in a part of the town with which he was so little acquainted. It became necessary, then, to apply to Sharpe, and without hesitation he proceeded to his bed-room, and rousing him from a heavy slumber, asked him to rise and accompany him. Sharpe at first absolutely refused, but at length consented, impelled by curiosity and a love for the sort of transaction, rather than from good nature.

They hurried along at a rapid pace, nor stopped till Sharpe knocked at the door of the house where Nash lodged. George laid his hand on his arm.

"We do not want that fellow again, and I will not have anything more to do with him."

"Indeed we had better leave him to settle the business: he understands about the interest, and as we know nothing of the matter we shall only get cheated."

This seemed true, and George submitted; although for the cheating he did not esteem himself particularly safe in the hands of Nash, who, on seeing them, supposed they were come on the same errand as the last, and in slang terms congratulated them on their dexterity in getting rid of their money. He was therefore a good deal astonished to learn their real object, and hinted to Sharpe that his companion seemed chicken-hearted enough.

They waited, as before, at a short distance from the shop where the watch had been pledged. In about ten minutes their agent returned, and placed George's watch in his hands, with the change out of the sovereign given him to pay the interest: he did not think it necessary to mention the half-crown he had reserved for himself, but stood in an attitude of expectation, indicating that he anticipated something for his trouble. His silence not being interpreted

aright, he hinted that it was usual in these cases to receive a fee, and Sharpe confirmed the propriety of the demand.

Whether George would have yielded to the charge it is difficult to say; most certainly he had not given any positive refusal, when he beheld a policeman lay his hand on Nash's shoulder, explaining the liberty, by informing him he was in custody on a charge of stealing a watch, brought against him by one Jones, a pawnbroker; at the same instant George and Sharpe were accosted by another policeman, on suspicion of being implicated in the same offence.

It is impossible to describe the consternation of Sharpe, or the agony of George. Nash endeavoured to explain the transaction, and George to corroborate his statement, assuring the officers and the pawnbroker, who had now joined the party, that the watch was his own,—that he had been induced to raise money upon it by pawning

it—that he had employed Nash to transact the business for him—and that, ashamed of being guilty of such an error, he had not spent any part of the sum so raised, but had taken the first opportunity to redeem his watch, and escape from the disgrace of the transaction.

Neither the policemen nor the pawnbroker would give any credit to the tale: the former declared they too well knew the suspicious character of Nash to place any confidence in the honesty of those connected with him.

Accordingly, in spite of remonstrances, entreaties, and affirmations of innocence, they were ordered to walk on: they began to move along, attended by the usual allotment of idlers and gazers, who gather together on the like occasions. George looking round on the crowd, felt more deeply the disgrace of his situation, and even fancied that all eyes were bent upon him alone, and that he

recognized some familiar looks amongst the surrounding faces. He therefore begged the policeman to convey them to the office in a coach. The officer, touched by his extreme and sincere grief, complied with his request, and the privacy of the coach was comparatively a relief to his feelings. He drew himself back into the corner in silence, and almost in despair, not knowing what conduct to adopt, or what would become of him. At one moment he determined to submit to the decree of the magistrate, whatever it might be, rather than summon any friends to his aid, and expose his disgraceful conduct. But the next instant he remembered that concealment was hopeless; that even if the circumstances of the case were not made known through the newspapers, his absence would create alarm, and enquiry would lead to discovery. Ignorant of the proceedings of a police-office, he could determine on nothing, for he had

no grounds by which to regulate his course.

Sharpe, meantime, made noisy assertions of innocence, mingled with degrading entreaties to be let off; he declared it was the first time he had ever been engaged in pawning any article, and appealed to Nash in evidence of the truth of his assertion. The police-officers evidently regarded him with suspicion, and hinted it would be most discreet to hold his tongue.

The pawnbroker, compassionating George's silent misery, enquired of him whether he had any friends he could summon as witnesses in his favour.

He replied in the affirmative; but added, he would rather not expose himself and afflict them, if he could extricate himself from his present difficulty without their aid.

The pawnbroker reminded him there was no other means of proving his identity, and

that if his story were true, and the watch really his own property, he could only be charged with imprudence: whereas, if he called no witness in his favour, he would probably be remanded until further evidence appeared against him. He added, that his detention in a common prison must be eventually known to his friends, and entail deeper disgrace than any present exposure. George with difficulty thanked his adviser, for the tears started to his eyes, and it required all his self-command to restrain himself from weeping like a girl.

At length the coach stopped. A crowd of shabby-looking people, such as are always loitering at the door of a police-office, gathered round the steps of the coach as they were let down, to satisfy the curiosity excited by the appearance of two youths, habited at least like gentlemen, in company with so ordinary a person as Nash.

Expressions of surprise and pity, mingled with coarse or insulting jokes, saluted George's ears, and seemed to aggravate his degradation: they increased his nervous apprehensions so much, that it was some relief to find he was not immediately ushered into the presence of the magistrate, but conducted into a room, where were a few persons apparently connected with the business of the office.

Shortly before he was led into the office, a bustle was heard in the lobby; the door opened, and an old man respectably attired entered, exhibiting every mark of the most poignant and agonizing sorrow. So great was his misery, that for a few minutes George forgot his own distress in contemplating the greater affliction of the sufferer. He gathered, from the conversation of the bystanders, that the old man had been compelled, in consequence of the continual and increasing robberies committed upon him by

his son, to appear against that son, as the only means of restraining his vicious conduct. George thought of his own father, and the recollection made him appear in his own eyes almost as great a culprit as the son, whose abandonment of virtue had produced the terrible effects he now witnessed. The first agony of these thoughts had not passed away, when he was summoned to the presence of the magistrate. He could not look up—he dared not encounter the eyes that he was conscious were turned upon him—his senses seemed benumbed; but he roused himself, that he might meet the difficulties in which he was placed with the necessary courage and firmness. He now for the first time heard the circumstances which led to his detention. The pawnbroker stated, that the elder prisoner had, three days previously, pawned the watch now produced, and a lady's brooch, the one for the sum of ten guineas, and the other for three; this

was the first time he had ever seen the individual. On the last evening, a gentleman, in company with an officer, had called at his shop to enquire whether certain articles had been pawned there within the last few days, as a robbery had been committed in his house, and he was now engaged in tracing the thieves. Amongst the articles he named, was a brooch, the description of which corresponded with that pawned with the watch, and he therefore showed the stranger both articles, who recognized the brooch, and added, that the watch did not belong to him, but he knew it perfectly well, since he had himself presented it to the person whose name was engraved upon it. "This gentleman gave me his address," continued the witness, handing a piece of paper to the magistrate, "that I might inform him if I obtained any clue to the discovery of the thieves. To my surprise, this very morning the man who pawned the brooch and the watch

came to redeem the watch. I made a signal to a person in the shop, who left the house in search of a policeman, followed and took the prisoner into custody, in company with these two lads, to one of whom he had, it seems, delivered the watch."

The witness having thus concluded his statement, the magistrate desired an officer to go at once to the gentleman, whose address appeared on the paper, and request his immediate attendance.

He then proceeded to interrogate Nash, who, in the most cool and imperturbable manner, gave a history of the whole transaction, as new to George as to all the rest of the audience. Unable to endure the relation of such an infamous falsehood, George boldly and flatly contradicted him, and with all the earnestness and fearlessness of truth, implored the magistrate to permit him to be heard, who, struck by the appeal, desired him to tell his story.

George then declared upon oath, that he was George Dalton, the owner of the watch, the George Dalton whose name was thereon engraved, and to whom it was given by Mr. Armstrong, the person expected, and whom he most ardently desired to see in court, as the best witness he could call. He then related, with much simplicity of language and manner, why he had desired to raise money on his watch. His old habits had well nigh mastered his candour, but he resisted the evil influence, and explained the folly, the vanity, and the weakness which had, step by step, brought him into the present disgraceful and degrading situation. This avowal evidently interested all present in his favour, and a murmur of approbation followed upon his recital.

The magistrate next enquired what share Sharpe had taken in the transaction.

George confessed that he had been introduced to Nash by Sharpe; and he was then

further asked, whether Sharpe had not first suggested to him the possibility of raising money by pawning his watch.

"Say no," whispered Sharpe; "betraying me will not help you:" but George, however reluctantly, was determined not to swerve from the truth, and replied in the affirmative.

Sharpe was next called upon to state what he knew of the circumstances: his statement differed from that given by George, inasmuch as he endeavoured to prove that he had been influenced only by good nature, and that he was now the victim of his desire to assist a friend.

"Pray," asked the magistrate, "did you receive any portion of the money raised upon the watch?"

Sharpe hesitated, and answered in the negative; upon which George was asked whether his companion had not bargained for a share.

"I lent him two sovereigns," said George, "but he returned them to me, when I explained that I was resolved to recover my watch."

At this moment Mr. Armstrong entered, and looking towards the bar, in expectation of seeing the purloiner of the articles stolen from himself, beheld, to his utter amazement, his old pupil, and involuntarily exclaimed, "George Dalton! what can have brought you here? there must be some great mistake." Then addressing the magistrate, he added, "The watch, sir, which I last night saw, and which I understand was pawned with the brooch, is the property of this young gentleman."

He was interrupted by an unrestrained expression of pleasure, which burst from the lips of almost every individual present: but poor George scarcely heard the sound; he had buried his face in his hands, unable to look at his kind friend and master.

Mr. Armstrong requested to speak to the magistrate in private, and they left the office. After a few minutes, George was sent for to attend them: Sharpe, supposing himself to be included in the summons, was about to follow his companion, when he was somewhat roughly desired to remain. In the presence of Mr. Armstrong, George repeated the statement he had already made, adding, that his father was out of town, and that he was staying with Mr. Falconer. Upon being questioned with respect to Sharpe, he explained who he was, and that he also was the guest of Mr. Falconer: and in reply to a question from the magistrate, as to the acquaintance with Nash, he said that Sharpe had declared him to have lived in his family as footman.

Upon this the magistrate expressed himself satisfied, and after bestowing some excellent advice upon George, told him he was now at liberty, and that, being innocent, he

should be spared the pain of again appearing in court: that Nash must be remanded for a week, when further evidence would most probably appear against him.

Left alone with Mr. Armstrong, George gave way to a flood of tears; his friend addressed to him neither reproaches nor advice: nothing that he could say would, he thought, be so efficacious as the impression made by his late situation. When this burst of grief had subsided, he enquired in an affectionate manner where he wished to go, as he would order a coach and accompany him wherever he pleased.

"I must consider a little," George replied, "for I have yet only been thinking of my disgrace, and how I should be released."

After two or three minutes' reflection, during which, Mr. Armstrong observed his countenance gradually changed from uncertainty to decision, he said, "I will go back to Mr. Falconer's, to whom I shall explain

every thing: my continuance there must depend upon his determining whether, after what has occurred, I am still a fitting guest in his family."

Sharpe now entered the room, and with unfeeling and boisterous vulgarity, congratulated George and himself on their liberty: then, suddenly checking himself, he took George aside, and whispered, "The sooner we get out of this place the better. As for the folks at Mr. Falconer's, they need know nothing of all this business, so no harm done there, you know. You can say, by way of excuse for our absence, that being out for a walk and meeting Mr. Armstrong, we spent the morning with him."

George interrupted him at once, saying, calmly and decidedly, "I shall tell Mr. Falconer every thing."

"Why, you surely are not going to be such a fool!" exclaimed Sharpe, in utter astonishment.

"I repeat once for all," said George, "and I desire no argument, that I shall explain every thing."

"You may explain all you like about yourself," said Sharpe, "but you have no right to expose me."

"I shall make no allusion to you, unless I am obliged by truth to do so."

"I will not go back, then," said Sharpe, abruptly and doggedly, "for I do not wish to be kicked out of the house by that proud set, and so I wish you joy of your blabbing! A fine figure you will cut! Why you got into this scrape only because you could not bear to be laughed at, or sneered at by fine people! I wonder how you will look when the Honourable Mr. Courton turns up his sublime nose at you! You always were good for nothing! afraid to do wrong, and dare not do right! I wish I had never had any thing to do with you! but I will be revenged if you betray me!" and, furious with rage and

spite, Sharpe abruptly left the room, muttering threats of vengeance.

"He speaks truly," said George, when Sharpe was gone; "I have been all that he describes, but I have time to mend."

"God grant that the determination to do so may never be weakened!" said Mr. Armstrong. "And now let us hasten to Mr. Falconer's; the hardest task has yet to be performed."

"You forget," said George, the tears trembling in his eyes, "you forget that I have to tell my father."

But these two painful duties were fulfilled at the same time. George was spared the shame of two confessions: he found his father at Mr. Falconer's. He had returned to town that morning. In explaining every thing to his father, George forgot that he had any other auditor. Mr. Dalton uttered no reproach, but the expression of his countenance spoke the severity of the pang

the misconduct of his son had inflicted upon him, and smote upon that son's conscience more than any words, however bitter, any chastisement, however severe.

The father's silent agony was the son's heaviest punishment.

Mr. Falconer good naturedly endeavoured to soften the affliction of both; he said it was a thoughtless error—a young trick—that the lesson had been severe—and would, he was certain, be never forgotten: and though it was to be wished that the event had not occurred, it would cure George of a defect which might otherwise have adhered to him through life. "For my part," he said, "I shall look upon you as one who having gone wrong, has not shrunk from an honest avowal of error; an avowal, too, which is the more estimable, that it was voluntary and might have been avoided. By the way, was not Sharpe a party in the affair? Where is he?"

"He certainly had some concern in it," said George; "yet was much less guilty than myself; but for me the affair could not have happened at all. I hope you will not take any notice of it to him. He has returned home."

"Sneaked out of the way," said Mr. Falconer: "I shall give myself no further trouble about him. I regret that I ever admitted him into my house. His mother has been with me this morning, and has complained of conduct infinitely worse than any thing I have now heard. I should therefore have forbidden him to remain here, had he returned with you."

Mr. Dalton had not yet seen William, who with his young friends was out when his father arrived.

The above explanation had been made, and George's self-possession somewhat restored, when the lads returned. The meeting between William and his father was unal-

loyed by any painful feelings, though it added another pang to George's grief. Mr. Armstrong, too, shared in the joy of the meeting.

Mr. Dalton's return happened fortunately, since it afforded a sufficient reason for his sons quitting Mr. Falconer's house; and thus George was spared the pain of acting a part, and assuming happiness when he was in fact smarting under the keenest sense of disgrace. It would have been making a useless parade of candour, and a vain pretence of sincerity, to proclaim his misdeeds; the knowledge of them was solely confined to Mr. Falconer, Mr. Dalton, and Mr. Armstrong.

In conclusion, it only need be said that Mr. Dalton's admirable qualities secured to him most of the advantages, and saved him from most of the evils of emigration. George struggled manfully, and therefore successfully, against the natural defect of his character; while the life of an emigrant forcing William

into situations which called for the exercise of personal courage, he, too, very much overcame his habitual weakness. Thus the adverse circumstances which seemed to promise the destruction of their fortunes, were, in effect, the means of making them better and happier men, though not without many trials, both moral and physical.

THE END.

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