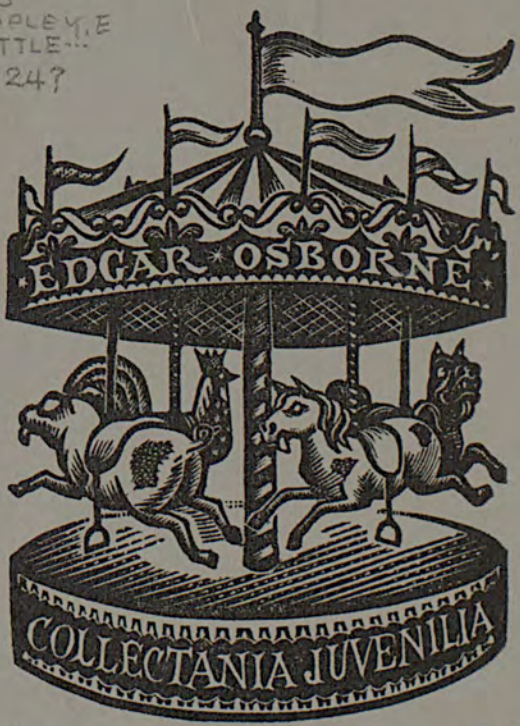

Presented to

By

Frontispiece: The Little Cowslip-Gatherers.

— but what delighted Nancy most of all was, that when her father and mother could spare her, especially on a Sunday evening, Betsey would bring her little bible to Mrs Slade's and read a few chapters aloud.

see page 70.

London: William Darton, 58, Holborn Hill, 1mo. 1st. 1824.

THE LITTLE

COWSLIP-GATHERERS;

OR,

WHAT A PENNY WILL DO.

BY

ESTHER HEWLETT.

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THE

LITTLE COWSLIP-GATHERERS.

In the spring of the year, when the hedges begin to put forth green buds, and the meadows are gay with flowers, industrious poor people in the country look around them and think what they can collect and turn to advantage.—Some gather hop-tops and water-cresses for the markets, some collect meadow-sweet and other medicinal herbs for the doctors, and some get cowslips for making wine. As the year advances, they are employed in gleaning the ears of corn that fall from the husbandman's sheaf—this they get ground at the mill and make it into bread for the family;—the scatterings of the pea harvest and the falling acorns furnish valuable food for the animals in which a great part of the cottagers' wealth consists. Then follow the late ripe wild fruits, hips and haws, which are used in medicine; and sloes and elder berries in making wine. While the busy hands of the industrious cottager are employed in

gathering in these various stores of nature, the pious and well-regulated mind will be occupied in grateful and improving reflections. How wonderfully are the Divine power and goodness displayed in producing this beautiful and beneficial succession; in providing for the wants of every living thing! How wise are the arrangements of Providence in connecting its liberal supplies with activity on the part of man! How many sources of enjoyment and of advantage do the works of nature present, which industry diligently reaps and gratefully enjoys—while indolence passes them by with insensible indifference or ungrateful scorn, and suffers life to wear away in discontented penury!

It happened that two little girls were gathering Cowslips in a shady lane, when they heard a carriage coming, and ran to open the gate. The gentlefolks in the carriage threw each of them a penny, and a small book, perhaps of equal value. As they picked them up, Nancy sighed to think that she could not read the book. On the first page was a picture of a little boy sitting

Little Nancy very much wished that she knew the meaning of this picture. "Ah!" thought she, "if my poor mother knew as much as that lady seems to know, how gladly she would teach me!"

see page 5.

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on his mother's lap and listening to her instructions, and the mother seemed to be directing the child's attention to the fireplace near which they were seated.* Little Nancy very much wished that she knew the meaning of this picture. "Ah!" thought she, "if my poor mother knew as much as that lady seems to know, how gladly she would teach me! Well, she is a kind, good mother to me; she teaches me to fear God and be honest, industrious, and civil. I must endeavour to mind all she says, and be dutiful and kind to her—and who knows but some time or other I may learn what will be a comfort to both of us?" Her little heart bounded with joy at the thought: she carefully tied the penny in a corner of her handkerchief, laid her book safe at the bottom of her basket, and returned to gathering her cowslips.

"I sha'n't get any more Cowslips now," said her companion.

* Alluding to the well-known fact that the mother of Doctor Doddridge made him acquainted with scripture history at a very early age, by means of Dutch tiles in the chimney-place.

"Why not?" asked Nancy.

Patty. "I am hot and tired; besides, I want to go to the shop at the foot of the hill, and spend my penny. Won't you come with me?"

Nancy. "Oh, no. Mother bade me bring home this basket full, and I have not half filled it yet."

Patty. "Oh, you won't fill that great basket to-day. I think the Cowslips are almost over; and I shall tell mother so. It is of no use toiling about for any more."

Nancy. "We have not nearly cleared this lane yet, and I know there are plenty more a field or two below—let us work hard and carry home one basket full at least."

Patty. "I tell you I can't stay. I am so hungry I must have a cake with my penny. You might as well come with me. If you will, perhaps I may come back with you and work a little longer."

Nancy. "No Patty, indeed I can't. It will be a loss of time, and tire me as much to go to the bottom of the hill and back again, as to get a quart of Cowslips. Besides, I can't spare my penny to spend on

cakes: I want something else of more consequence."

Patty. "Ah, so do I, ever-so-many things; but what will a penny do? Well, if you won't go, I shall—so good bye."

As Patty turned away, Nancy observed that she had left her book on the grass, and called after her—but Patty said, "It is of no use to me. I can't read it."

Nancy. "But perhaps you may some time or other."

Patty. "No—I dare say not. Mother can't afford to put me to school, and I don't care much about it—people do quite as well without much book-learning." So Patty ran off and left the little book to Nancy, who put it up very carefully with her own, and earnestly hoped she might one day be able to read both. Patty's penny was soon spent and forgotten; she played in the streets till dusk, and then got blamed because she had brought home scarcely any cowslips; but this was soon forgotten too, and she continued to go on in the same careless, idle, extravagant way. When old enough to go to service, every shilling she

gained was spent upon showy dress, while in necessary and useful things she was quite a slattern. At last she was married, and such a filthy, slovenly place as hers I never desire to see again. To be sure, she has got a smart tea-caddy, and some flowered cups and saucers, but scarcely a chair to sit on, or any thing about her that is decent and useful. Her person also is as untidy as any thing can be imagined; her handkerchief unpinned, her hair in disorder, her cap hanging in ragged strips about her face, yet ornamented with a shabby flower or a dirty bow of pink or blue ribbon. Such is the young *woman*, who, when a child, despised learning, disliked application, made light of little things, disdained economy, and could not resist the temptations of a childish appetite.

The progress of little Nancy will, we trust, be more interesting and gratifying. This diligent little girl persevered in her employment until she had gained cowslips enough not only to fill her basket, but a good handful besides, which she tied up in her apron, and tripped cheerfully home. It

was now six o'clock; and as she had been at work ever since morning, and had only eaten a bit of dry bread which her mother gave her when she left home, she felt very hungry indeed. As she passed the shop, she was almost induced to spend her penny; but then she considered, that a pennyworth of gingerbread would very soon be eaten, and afford her very little real pleasure; but that, if she had the resolution to save it, it might be put to some much better use; so she conquered herself, and passed courageously on. When she reached the cottage, her mother had just returned from ironing at a gentleman's house. "Well, Nancy," said Mrs. Slade, as she emptied the basket, "you have had a good day's work, and so have I. What a nice parcel of cowslips to be sure! Just enough to make up the six pecks that Madam Finch ordered! If you are not too tired, we will go and carry them home directly, while they look nice and fresh." "No, mother," replied Nancy, "I am not much tired, but I am very hungry. May I have a bit of bread before we go?" "Ah! sure, child; you deserve it too. And

see, what I have brought you, by way of a treat. It was little master's birth-day, and he would have me bring home a slice of pudding. And I have something besides, but we must not stop to look at it now, or it will be too late to carry home the cowslips." Nancy very thankfully ate the pudding, and was delighted to feel her penny safe in the corner of her handkerchief, instead of having to reflect on its being spent in waste. Yet let not my young readers suppose that she was of a miserly, covetous disposition, and kept her money for the pleasure of keeping it: nothing can be farther from the truth. She was a kind and generous, as well as an industrious and careful child; and when she rejoiced in having saved her penny from a childish and selfish indulgence, it was in the idea that it was saved for a better purpose.

The cowslips, which had been three days gathering, were carried home in three different baskets. It is the custom to measure them as soon as they are stripped from the stalks, but in a little time, as they become dry, they lose much of their bulk.

Mrs. Slade was always very particular in giving good measure of whatever she sold; for though she was very poor, she was very honest, and though no great scholar, she knew that "a false weight (or scanty measure) is an abomination to the Lord." Some better scholars than she was, seem to have this yet to learn. When they got to Mrs. Finch's, the maid was desired to measure the cowslips. She was going hastily to throw them together, when Mrs. Slade civilly begged her to measure them separately; "for," said she, "though they were all good measure when we put them up, and these that have just been picked you will find good measure now, those we picked last night, I should think have lost a quart in measure by this time, and those we picked on Monday, best part of two quarts." The young woman found it exactly so, and paid Mrs. Slade the money for which she had agreed, namely, eight shillings for six pecks, at one shilling and fourpence a peck. As they left Mrs. Finch's door, Mrs. Slade said to her daughter, "Now, Nancy, I am happier than I have been for some time past; but I am not quite happy."

"How is that, mother?" asked the little girl: "Can I do any thing for you?"

Mother. "No, child: it is because I can't do any thing for you, that I am sorry. You have worked very hard, and gathered these cowslips almost all yourself—and I did want to have bought you a pair of shoes with part of the money."

Nancy. "I had rather you bought something for yourself, mother. I was thinking how nice a blanket would be against winter. Perhaps it might keep you from having the rheumatism so bad."

Mother. "Bless you, my dear child; but I must take this money, and two shillings that I have got besides, to the landlord. The rent never ran so long past the quarter: but, because I was so ill, and could not work, he was kind enough to excuse me a little while, and I promised to bring him the first money that ever I took. And now, two shillings of Mrs. Evans, for two days' work, and these eight for the cowslips, will just make it up. To be sure it will leave us without a penny in the house; but we won't distrust God Almighty's goodness, which

has always given us 'day by day our daily bread.' We had better call in and pay the money to-night, for fear we should be tempted to do any thing else with it."

Nancy now thought of her penny with double pleasure, and resolved, as soon as she reached home, to give it her mother towards buying bread for the next day; but before she had time to mention her intention, they reached the house of the landlord. "Ah!" thought she, "Patty said, 'What will a penny do?' Why, it will help to make mother comfortable, and that is more than twenty cakes." The honest widow discharged her little debt with heartfelt apologies for having delayed it so long, and the kind landlord desired she would not distress herself about it. "For," said he, "I know your principle, Mrs. Slade, and your poor husband's before you; and I am sure you would as soon think of setting fire to the house, as of keeping back the rent when you had it in your power to pay it. I know, too, you don't put it out of your own power by idleness and extravagance, as many do, and if at any time you are prevented by

illness from paying, that's what you can't help, and God forbid that I should be hard with you." He then asked Mrs. Slade to take a draught of beer, which she declined, saying she had been ironing at Mrs. Evans's, and had had plenty of every thing. "Well, then," said he, "little maid," (putting two-pence into Nancy's hand,) "you must take this to buy a cake; and mind, that at any time when your mother works hard, and has *not* 'plenty of every thing,' you step down and fetch her a mug of beer, or any thing else she needs." Perhaps, many a person has come into the possession of a plentiful estate without feeling half the gratitude, either to God or man, that glowed in the breasts of the honest widow and her little girl.

The moment they reached home, Nancy ran and got her other penny, and, putting the three together into her mother's hand, said, "See, mother! we are not left without a penny in the house now! Take it, dear mother, and let us buy some bread for to-morrow with it." "No, no, Nancy," replied her mother, "put the money into

your box; we shall not want it to-morrow; for see what a nice plateful of victuals Mrs. Evans has given me—enough to serve us all day; and if the morning is dry, we will go out together, and see for a few more cowslips, while the season lasts: we might chance to sell them in the market on Saturday. But I have got something else to shew you, for this has been a day of benefits." Mrs. Slade opened the dresser-drawer and took out an old stuff skirt, which had been given her to mend for her little girl. "And see," said she, "when it is made tidy, what a nice skirt it will be! We can do it up to-morrow, after we come from cowslipping. But it is getting dark, and we must go to bed."

"But, mother, just let me show you one thing more." Nancy then brought out the two little books, and expressed her earnest hope that she should some day be able to read them. During the little delay which this occasioned, some one knocked at the cottage door. It was a message from Mr. Sims, Mrs. Slade's landlord, to desire her to come the next day, and begin cleaning a

house near him, for a family who were expected to come into it the beginning of the next week. The poor woman almost cried with joy and gratitude. "See, Nancy," said she, when the person was gone, "how Providence sends us both work and food. It has so lain upon my mind ever since my illness, 'If I should never get up enough to pay my rent?' When that came, I could not help reflecting that it *was all we had*, and what should we do for to-morrow? And now, how well are we provided for! It just makes out what I heard the minister say, that 'The Lord feeds the young ravens which cry unto him, and relieves the fatherless and the widow.' I thought it was a beautiful expression, and it seemed as if he took it out of the Bible."

"I dare say, Mother, he did; and, perhaps, the time may come when we may have a Bible, and know how to read it for ourselves. I am very glad that you have got a fresh place. What a good thing it was that Mr. Sims knew you were honest and cleanly and hard-working! Or else, he could not have recommended you."

"No, to be sure. A good character is like a little fortune to a poor person, and 'honesty is the best policy.' I did not care to have Mr. Sims's money in the house a night after I had received it; and it is very likely that my having called there made him remember me when he was asked to recommend some one. So let us always be encouraged to do the thing that is right, and put our trust in God, and then all will be sure to turn out well."

Humbly committing themselves to the protecting care of that God who has been pleased to declare in his word, that he "has respect unto the lowly," and whose past mercies encouraged their confidence, the virtuous tenants of the simple cot retired to a repose more tranquil and refreshing than often visits the great in their stately mansions and on their downy beds.

When the lark soared upward, as if to pierce the skies with his lively song, and ten thousand dew-drops glistened on the lowly herbage, little Nancy was busy in the garden. Her mother had desired her to take the first opportunity of weeding the

onion bed, and Nancy had acquired a habit of doing whatever she was desired, without saying much about it, and especially without waiting to be spoken to twice. Though Nancy Slade was a poor child, who had never even learned to read, this was a trait in her character that it certainly would be no disparagement to any young lady, however highly born, and gaily dressed, and elegantly accomplished, to imitate. The reluctant, ungracious manner in which some young persons comply with the requests of their parents, or even suffer them to pass wholly neglected, would lead one to suppose that they must be extremely ignorant; and yet, upon farther acquaintance, we find such young persons very ready to display their knowledge of French and Italian, of music and fancy-work. The truth appears to be, that they think themselves of too much consequence to be dictated to, and that it is a mark of spirit and politeness to spurn authority, and acknowledge no will but their own. But give me leave to think that little Nancy Slade, always ready to obey her mother's commands with alacrity, to

meet her wishes, to deny herself in order to oblige a companion or to assist a neighbour, was better taught, and understood as well as practised more of the true principles of politeness.

The onions weeded, the flowers tied up, the bed made, and the cottage tidily swept, it was time for Nancy and her mother to go to their respective employments. A portion of the provisions brought home the night before was put up for the little girl's supply, and her mother felt truly grateful that it was a *sufficient* supply; for sometimes her heart had ached, when dealing out her little store, to think that it was a very scanty allowance for a growing girl. Ah! when I have seen young people in the higher classes of society allowed to pamper a whimsical appetite, grown sickly with indulgence; when I have seen them snatch at every varied delicacy, and then, turning disgusted from them all, leave the costly fragments in wanton waste, the thought has often crossed my mind, what a feast would that afford to some child of poverty, who has been compelled to labour hard and feel

the sharp cravings of unsupplied hunger! To how many hungry children would the price of these expensive luxuries have furnished a plentiful meal! And had these children of affluence been accustomed to a plainer fare, how many artificial wants and real miseries had they escaped!

No little Miss in a crowded ball-room ever tripped more lightly, or felt more cheerful at heart, or exhibited on her countenance more real bloom of health and vivacity, than little Nancy when she took up her cowslip basket, and hied forth to her humble labour, eating, as she went, her morning repast, for which early rising, industry and content gave her a hearty relish. Nancy made haste to collect a large quantity of the flowers, and when the heat of noon came on, she sought a shady place where she sat and stripped them from the stalks. While doing this, her little busy mind was planning various schemes for acquiring the fondest wish of her heart—a knowledge of reading. "Fourpence a week," thought she, "is the lowest price of schooling, and mother never will be able to afford that. Besides, she cannot

spare me to be in school all day long. I must try and earn something every day. I ought to do it to help mother, who has been so good to me, and besides,—if she was to die—(I can't bear to think of it, but she is very often poorly, and such a thing might be), then what would become of me if I could not work to support myself? Certainly I must keep to work, and if ever I learn to read, it must be of an evening, when work is done; and I must reckon it play—the play that I am sure I should like better than any other." Then she thought of several neighbours' children who were sent to school—one or two of whom she knew thought it a hardship, and made any excuse to stay away. Nancy sighed and wished that she had such an opportunity: but she checked herself, for she knew that she ought not to envy or despise others. However, young people in higher life may here gather an instructive hint. If ever thoughts so silly as these should cross their minds—"What a confinement school is! What wearisome things lessons are! My parents wish me to learn such or such a thing, but it is dull and tedi-

ous, and I don't see much use in it,"—let me advise you, my young friends, to pause a moment and consider in what view these things, which you dislike, would be looked upon by a young person athirst for knowledge, but destitute of the regular means of acquiring it—and *you* perhaps will return to your learning with new relish and a desire of improvement.—At last the thought struck Nancy, that one little girl whom she knew, a steady, diligent, and well-behaved child, might be induced, for a small reward, to assist her in mounting the first step of the ladder of learning.—"I have three-pence," said she, "and mother said, it was justly my own. If mother gets work to do out, and if we sell these cowslips, I do think the three-pence might be spared; and if Betsey Moore would but teach me a little at first, I could go on by myself afterwards."

Perhaps most of my young readers are familiar with the stories of Analaschar the glass-man, and of the milk-maid, who, in the reveries of their future greatness, so far forgot themselves as to destroy their pre-

sent possessions from which all the splendid future was to have arisen. This is no uncommon error. Young persons (indeed I am afraid not young persons only) indulge themselves in musing on some anticipated good, and meanwhile neglect the exertions which alone are likely to procure it: this was not the case with little Nancy. The more eagerly she anticipated the pleasure of learning to read, the more diligently she pressed on in her labour; and so nimbly did her little fingers move, that, before it was time to give over work, she had again filled her basket and her apron. She then hastened home; and as her mother was not yet returned from work, she employed herself in watering the garden and getting ready the tubs, as she knew her mother intended to do her little wash in the morning, and then sat down to mend the skirt that had been given her. It was rather late when Mrs. Slade returned, and she was very tired, as she had been at very hard work, scouring a house which had lain empty for several months: so Nancy thought she would not talk to her about her pro-

jects that night, but they sat down directly to supper on what she brought home. When she was a little rested and refreshed, "Well, Nancy," said her mother, "I believe I have got you a customer for your cowslips. What luck have you had to-day?" "About a peck and a half, mother, I should think. I worked as hard as ever I could, for the season will not last many days longer."

"The gentlefolks where I have been to-day, asked me whether I had any family; and when I told them about you, and what you were doing, the lady said she should much like to make a little cask of Cowslip wine. But she would like the cowslips not to be gathered till next week, that she may be a little settled in her house before she sets about making it."

"But, mother, before next week all the Cowslips will be over, especially if there should come rain. But don't you remember hearing Madam Finch's maid say that they were to be spread out for a month or six weeks to be thoroughly dry, before they were put into the cask?"

"Yes, to be sure I do, now you say so;

and I dare say that is the proper way of doing it — but I had quite forgotten it. Well, I will tell them so to-morrow; and we can keep them up stairs on a clean cloth upon the top of the chest, till such time as it suits them to make it. They want four pecks, and the money we get for them shall certainly be your own to buy you a pair of shoes and an apron. You want them bad enough, and you have fairly earned them; and I bless God I am earning too, and likely to earn. I go there to-morrow and Saturday, and next week I am to have their washing home to do. What a comfort it is to have health and employment!"

The next morning they got up very early to do their own washing before it was time to begin the day's work abroad. As they stood at the tub, Nancy proposed to her mother her wish of asking Betsey Moore to give her a little instruction. Mrs. Slade readily entered into her little girl's wishes, but feared she would not make much progress under so young a teacher. "However," said she, "I can't be against your trying, for Betsey is a good girl, and if you

don't learn any thing else from her, I am sure you will learn no harm; and you can't spend your pence in a better way than in trying."

Stimulated by hope, little Nancy hastened on to the accomplishment of her favourite object—but she hastened in the right way, for she persevered in diligent attention to her regular duties, came home with a good harvest of cowslips, got the linen folded, and then indulged herself in calling on her companion with her proposal. I rather suspect there are some young people who would have reversed this order of things, who would have gone first on the business that concerned their own gratification, and have thought there would be plenty of time afterwards to attend to other things which their parents had desired them to do, or which they had to attend to every day. Permit me to observe, that such a course of conduct is very improper; for it will almost always be found, that the most important things are thus entirely neglected, and that none are attended to with advantage. The young reader it is hoped will pardon the digression and receive the friendly hint.

Little Nancy attended to all things in their proper order, and all were well and successfully done. Betsey willingly engaged to become her teacher every evening, for the reward of one penny a week. "I would have taught you for nothing, with all my heart," said she, "but I really very much want to earn a penny; for as my health is so bad that I cannot do stirring work, and needle-work brings in such very small pay, I have not thought it right to take any of the little I earn for my own pleasure; though I have a very great desire for what a penny a week will enable me to afford." And what, young reader, do you suppose was this good little girl's earnest wish? It was to supply her aged parents with a large-printed Bible. She owned it in confidence to Nancy, and it was agreed that the work of instruction should begin on the following Monday. Nancy had brought the two little books to shew to her friend, and was much delighted to hear her read fluently in one of them. Betsey gave it, however, as her opinion, that these books would not do for Nancy to begin learning in, but that she ought to

have one with the alphabet and words of two or three letters. She had seen such books at the bookseller's shop, and believed they were to be bought for a penny or two-pence each. "So I have heard mother say," thought Nancy, as she went home, "that one expense brings on another. To be sure, I cannot learn to read without a book; and yet if I spend half my money to buy one, how little shall I have left to pay for my learning!" She was much puzzled at this difficulty, and set herself to consider how she could contrive to remedy it. She was not one of those children who, directly they feel or fancy any want, run and tease their mother, begging for a penny. "No," thought Nancy, "mother works very hard for all she earns, and if just now she does get rather more than usual, that is no reason why I should intrude upon her for it. We must endeavour to lay by a little. By and bye Midsummer will come, and then the rent will be to pay again, and winter will come, when there will be no cowslip-ping, nor hay-making, nor harvesting, and then, too, we shall want firing and candles.

We must save now to serve us then." So she pondered over all her own small resources. Her mother had given her one little slip of ground in the garden, for her own. She had every Saturday to carry her mother's flowers to market; and though her own were rather backward, having been newly planted, she hoped she might make up a tolerable nosegay, and sell it for the price of the book.

The next day was Saturday, and she knew she should have to go to market, and help iron the clothes and clean the house. She had exerted herself to the utmost in her cowslip gathering, and when they were measured on Friday night, she was not a little pleased to find that only six quarts more were wanted to make up the four pecks. Again they were very early at their work; and Mrs. Slade having done the most particular part of the ironing, left her little girl to finish the rough things and gather the flowers for market. She first gathered those belonging to her mother, and made them up into four very handsome nosegays, for which she was to get twopence each. She then

made the best she could of her own little stock. She had some sweet-briar and southernwood, and double warriors, and polyanthus, and daffodils, but she had only enough for one nosegay; and when she had tied it up, and compared it with those of her mother, she found it did not look nearly so handsome, and that she could not in conscience think of asking more than a penny for it. Nancy sighed, and said, "I wish I could get twopence for it." But in a moment corrected herself; for she thought, "It is worth only a penny, and why should I wrong my neighbour, by wishing to sell it for more than it is worth? Mother's nosegays have got tulips, and hyacinths, and auriculas, and lilies of the valley—they are worth double what mine is." Then she thought for a moment, "If I were to take one flower from each of these nosegays, and add it to my own, how much it would improve it, and scarcely be missed from them! If mother were at home, I dare say she would willingly give it me. Shall I?" "No," replied her conscience, "it would be wrong to take even a flower that is not your own,

and as wrong to defraud your mother as any other person. In robbing these nosegays you would be injuring either your mother or the person who buys them; and though they may never know it, the eye of God sees all your actions and all your thoughts, and you will feel in your own mind a sense of having done amiss. Sell what is justly your own; and if it does not succeed in procuring what you wish, bear the disappointment, and wait patiently till you can find an opportunity of honestly fulfilling your desires."

This was good advice; and when children have been taught the difference between right and wrong, conscience always thus advises. But, if this faithful monitor is not listened to; if the young transgressor turns away from the friendly suggestion, and crosses the boundary of equity in ever so small a degree, conscience becomes more and more silent, and every step in vice less difficult; till at last, perhaps, a degree of fraud and artifice is attained, which at first would have filled the mind with horror. Therefore let young people betimes accus-

tom themselves to give heed to the first intimation of conscience. Little Nancy did so. She tied up her nosegay without adding a single sprig that was not justly her own; and, placing them carefully in her basket, tripped off to the market. In going thither, she had to pass by a bookseller's shop, and in the window were placed, in tempting rows, delightful little picture-books of all descriptions. Nancy ventured to go in and ask the price of one. It was sixpence! She sighed,—and another—fourpence! She sighed again. "Pray, Sir," she asked, "are there no books cheaper than these that will do to begin learning out of?" "Oh yes," replied the bookseller, "we have some as low as twopence;"—and he put one into her hand. "I have not got twopence, Sir," said Nancy, and was laying the book down. "You don't please to want a nosegay, Sir, do you?" continued she, and opened her basket. A lady who happened to be in the shop, observed that they were very good flowers, and asked the price. "These, ma'am, are twopence each, and this one" (rather mournfully) "a penny." The lady

took two of the best, and paid her fourpence, and the bookseller took the other two. Her own remained in the basket. "Now, little maid," said he, "you can take your choice of the books."

"No, Sir, I thank you, but I cannot."

"I thought you seemed very desirous of having one, only had not the money to pay for it."

"*This* money, Sir, is not my own—it is my mother's."

"Then you did not, as I understood you at first, ask me to buy your flowers in order that you might buy my book?"

"I was in hopes, Sir, that you might have liked this penny one, which is my own, and I hoped, Sir, that you might have had a book you could sell for one penny."

"Then your hopes shall not be disappointed; you shall certainly have a book, for you were an honest little girl not to bring up the price of your flowers to the price of the book. Here, give me the nosegay, and take your choice among these at twopence."

"I cannot choose, Sir, for I do not know

how to read. Will you please to give me one that is proper to learn out of?" The kind bookseller selected the best, and put it into her hand. She made a low curtsey, and said, "I humbly thank you, Sir, and I will be sure to bring you another nosegay next Saturday, if I do not come to town before." Her little feet scarcely touched the ground for joy, while she went into the market, purchased the few things her mother had desired her, conveyed them home, put her new treasure safe in the dresser-drawer, and then skipped away to her cowslipping, which she had accomplished early in the afternoon. When her mother came home in the evening, she found the cowslips picked, the house cleaned, and Nancy sitting in the arbour finishing her skirt. Dutiful, diligent little girl! She had not yet learned to read, but she had learned to practise the command, "Honour thy father and thy mother, that it may be well with thee." And mark, my young reader, how evidently the blessing of God rests upon dutiful children; how awfully far it flies from the ungrateful and disobedient!

During the following week, Nancy assisted her mother in washing and getting up the linen for her new employers; and in this she was so handy and careful, that the days her mother was out she ventured to trust her with ironing most of the plainer things. What a pleasure it is to be useful, and to earn the bread one eats! I fear there are many persons older than Nancy Slade, who, if they had no more food than they earn, would very soon be starved; and who, for any use they are of in the world, might leave it without being missed. Now this cannot be right. We read in Scripture, that the great Leviathan was made to *play* in the waters; but the least child is, in one grand respect, more noble than the largest leviathan—he has a reasonable soul; and we may be sure that God never made a reasonable creature and sent him into the world merely to play, to eat the bread of idleness, or to live for his own gratification, without regard to the benefit of others. It is by no means necessary, nor would it be proper, that *every* young person should engage in the same employments as little Nancy; but

the highest need not feel themselves above being stimulated by her example to diligence in self-improvement, and in exertions of one kind or other for the comfort and benefit of those around them.

Each evening, when work was done, Nancy ran across the common to her little teacher, and made such progress under her instructions, that before the first week was ended, she perfectly knew the alphabet. "Well," said she, "Patty thought little of a penny, but see *what a penny will do!* I got my book for *a penny*, and I have learnt my A, B, C, for *a penny;* and that, I have heard, is the beginning of learning, to the greatest scholars. I hope I shall never be inclined to waste a penny! But I must not forget that I owe the kind gentleman another nosegay, and I hope it will be better than the last."

As soon as Nancy had left the bookseller's shop, the lady who had bought her nosegays inquired whose little girl she was; but no one in the shop knew her. "Well," said the lady, "you will see her again, as she is to bring you some more flowers next

Saturday." The bookseller said, he had no idea of her coming again; he did not expect any more flowers in return for the book; it was as good a nosegay as most people sold for twopence. "If I am not very much mistaken in my opinion of that little girl's honesty," said the lady, "she will be sure, according to her word, to pay you another visit. You must allow me to leave a little parcel here for her." She then looked out a very useful spelling-book, with many pretty reading lessons, and other instructive matters. For this she paid eighteen-pence; and when the shopman had put it in a piece of paper, she wrote upon it, "For an honest little girl." "There," said she, "if the little girl calls according to her appointment, be so good as to give her this; and if she has any nosegays to spare, desire her to bring me a couple. If she should not come, I can take the book myself next time I call here."

On Saturday morning, when collecting her mother's flowers for the market, Nancy did not forget her own for her friend, the bookseller; and she was much pleased in having to add to it some bluebells and a

white narcissus, which had come into blossom since last week, and which greatly enlivened and improved her nosegay. "Well, little girl," said the bookseller, as she presented him with the nosegay, "you have brought me some very pretty and very fragrant flowers—and how does the learning go on? You are not yet quite scholar enough to read the direction of this parcel, are you?"

"No, Sir; I only know just the letters."

"Then I must read it to you. It is 'For an honest little girl.' I am sure I shall not be mistaken in delivering it to you. The lady who left it for you, desires you to take her some flowers; she lives in the next street, at the red brick-house with bow windows. Go to her, my child; and may you, through life, continue to deserve and to obtain friends by your integrity."

The lady received Nancy very kindly, and asked her several questions concerning her mother, and where she went to school: all of which were replied to with modest propriety. "You appear, little girl," said the lady, "to know the value of a penny,

and how to turn it to a good account. Should you like to earn a penny twice a-week, regularly ?"

"Yes, ma'am, very much—if it is for any thing I can do without wronging mother."

"It is," returned the lady, "to carry a little bundle every Saturday, about a mile out of the town, and to fetch another every Monday morning."

"Oh yes, ma'am, I could do that very well, because I can get up an hour earlier than mother wants me at any time; and if I have got it to reckon on, it is only contriving a little the more, you know, ma'am." The lady smiled, and said, "Very well, I see you know how to manage business; an early riser, and a good contriver, may accomplish more than twenty drones."

"Please, ma'am," asked Nancy, "which way out of the town does it lie ?"

"Just across Birch Green," returned the lady: "I have a little niece at nurse there, for the benefit of the country air. And as its clothes are sent every week, I wish to engage some one to take them regularly; for it does not always suit me to send my

own servant, and the market people are not to be depended on. I think I could depend on you."

Nancy. "Yes, ma'am, I think you might. I would take the greatest care. But, ma'am, I don't think it would be fair that I should have the penny on a Saturday."

Lady. "Why not, my dear?"

Nancy. "Because, ma'am, I live just before you come to Birch Green: and as I have to come to market every Saturday, it would be no trouble to take the bundle and step across the Common with it. On a Monday, I must come on purpose."

Lady. "It is quite fair that the advantage should be your own; and I am glad that you can gain the penny without farther trespassing on your time, of which you already begin to know the value."

Having paid her for the two nosegays she took, the lady desired her to call as she came back from market, and the bundle should be ready. She called accordingly; but when the lady offered her the penny, she said she had rather not take it till she had earned it. "If you please, ma'am,"

said she, "I had rather have it on Monday, when I bring the other bundle safe." Nancy soon began to cast in her mind what would be the best use to employ her new acquisition upon. She hoped for several weeks to come to be able to gather a penny nosegay; therefore she would not want it to pay her little school-mistress. She was not long in determining to lay it out upon a blanket for her mother. She asked the price of one at a draper's shop, and was told it was six shillings. As she went along, she counted with her fingers the number of pence in six shillings, which she found to be seventy-two, then how many weeks should she be earning that sum, at two-pence a week. She reckoned again and found it thirty-six. "Thirty-six weeks! I am afraid that will bring it into the cold weather. Let me see —it is now the tenth of May." With rather more difficulty she made out that thirty-six weeks from the tenth of May, would bring the seventeenth of January. It was a long time to look forward to; but she was not disheartened. She wished, indeed, that it could have been accomplished rather earlier,

in the hope that it might save her poor mother a fit of the rheumatism. "However," thought she, "let me press on as much as I can; perhaps something else may arise as unexpected as this, which may help me to the blanket sooner than I expect: and if there should not, it will be sure to be acceptable, come when it will."

Will the young reader be pleased to stop a moment and observe, that a persevering spirit is generally a sign of greatness of character and success in enterprise? I have known some children fond of laying very splendid schemes and telling us what great things might be achieved at a very small labour and expense, but their performances have generally fallen very far short of their promises and expectations; for this obvious reason, they had estimated their results far too high and their means too low. Such children, if they paint a picture, lay on one colour before another is dry, and so produce a mere confused blot. If they put seeds into the ground, in a day or two they dig the ground to see whether they are coming up, and so destroy the

little germ. If they are allowed to keep animals, they soon become weary of the attention required, and not only are their calculated profits lost, but, what is far worse, the poor creatures are left to pine in want and misery. Nancy never calculated on the attainment of her wishes but by her own persevering industry, and she never shrunk from the exertion required.

When Nancy took the bundle as she was directed, she found Mrs. Wilkins, the nurse, standing at the door with her own child in her arms, talking to a neighbour; the little sickly Londoner was within doors, laid in the cradle, and Nancy thought she heard it fret—but she did not venture to ask any questions. Having given Mrs. Wilkins the bundle, she hastened home to her mother, who, she knew, would be wanting her to help carry the basket of linen to their new customer. Mrs. Morgan (for that was her name) asked Mrs. Slade if she understood knitting, and could undertake to do some socks for her children. Mrs. Slade was very glad of the task; for, like every notable woman, she not only understood knitting herself, but had taught it to her

daughter, when very young. The knitting was always handy to take up at dusk or at any other leisure moment; and an odd penny had often put a ball of worsted into the bag, instead of being spent on cakes or lollypops. Thus Mrs. Slade and her daughter, though they were poor and often hard set, and had they had to go to the shop for their stockings, must often have been ragged and destitute, by this simple art of industry and frugality, kept themselves tidy and decent, besides possessing the power, when opportunity offered, of earning an honest penny that way. It is a pity but all little girls (and boys too, until they are of an age for more active employment) were accustomed to this useful art; it would be a means of preserving them from idleness, weariness, and mischief, and while the children of the poor enjoyed the honest satisfaction of thus providing for their personal comfort and decent appearance, those whose own wants are more abundantly supplied, might combine the pleasures of benevolence with those of industry, and devote their early labours to the comfort of destitute infancy and age. A well-instructed child, whether its station

in life be that of affluence or poverty, is taught to improve every moment, and to avoid the useless expenditure of every penny.

" For Satan finds some mischief still,
For idle hands to do ;"

and little do those parents, who indulge their children in habits of idleness and dissipation, think what a harvest of vice and misery they are sowing for their future life.

" Knitting is such a hard-earned penny," said a foolish mother to Mrs. Slade, when she saw her teaching little Nancy, " I never think it worth while to teach it my children." " 'Tis worth learning, however," replied Mrs. Slade, " if it only keeps her from sitting idle, and teaches her to move her fingers nimbly. If she loves work, she may earn a penny more quickly by and bye." It was by early attention to the formation of habits that Mrs. Slade had the happiness of seeing her little girl, at eleven years old, the industrious, considerate, useful character here described.

As it was now a leisure time in out-of-doors' employments, Nancy was able to get on briskly with her knitting. The price

usually paid for knitting, is equal to the cost of the worsted, and Nancy had set herself a task, to earn, if possible, two shillings in the course of the week. She was determined, however, not to weigh her work till the end of the week; for she well knew, that much time is often lost by little girls who, in their over eagerness to accomplish a great deal, or rather to indulge their vanity by seeing and talking of what they have accomplished, are continually measuring and counting their work. Nancy went quietly on. As she finished each pair of socks, she fastened them together and laid them by carefully. On the Friday evening she had finished one sock of the fifth pair, and was very desirous of accomplishing the other on Saturday morning. But as she had to go to market and clean the house, it seemed hardly practicable. Her mother had been out at work for the last two days; and as she came home very tired, Nancy did not think it right to disturb her very early in the morning. Being afraid of not awaking as early as she wished, she asked Betsey Moore's brother, who went out very early

to harrowing, to give a gentle tap at the cottage door as he passed. Nancy was so obliging a little girl herself, that every one who knew her was pleased with an opportunity of obliging her also. Richard Moore readily promised to comply with her request, and as he passed by his sister's door, she called to him to be sure and not forget it. As Nancy's mind was set upon her work, she was easily awakened. She heard the first tap, and got up very gently, without disturbing her mother, then seating herself quietly by the bed-side, began her work, which she had brought up overnight. It was nearly six o'clock when Mrs. Slade awoke, and as Nancy had been at work almost three hours, she had more than half finished her sock. But, intent as she was upon finishing her task, she knew that it was now time to attend to other business; so she cheerfully laid aside her work, and went down to light the fire and sweep up the cottage. Her mother soon joined her, and they went out together to collect the produce of their little garden for the market. Having taken a survey, it was agreed

that a quart or two of gooseberries might be gathered, the onion bed thinned, and a few cabbages cut. As the winter had been very severe, vegetables in general had been cut off, or were very backward; but Mrs. Slade's garden lying to the south-west, and being sheltered from the bleak winds by the cottage on the north side, and by the farmer's great barn on the east, she this year fared better than most of her neighbours, and had vegetables for the market when they brought a good price. Several fresh flowers also were blown, and Nancy had the pleasure of gathering from her own little bed a very handsome two-penny nosegay.

"You must have the largest basket for market to-day, Nancy," said Mrs. Slade, her eyes glistening with grateful pleasure; "and I really think, if you have good speed in selling all you take, you will be able to bring home what we want from the town, without waiting for Mrs. Morgan's money. If that is the case, you may finish your sock before we carry home the linen. I don't so much mind for an hour, except when we have to go to the shop after-

wards, with the money we take for the washing."

As soon as they had breakfasted, Nancy set off to the market, while her mother finished the ironing. She called first on Mrs. Herbert, who had desired her regularly to bring two nosegays. There she was also so fortunate as to dispose of part of her other commodities, the lady desiring her to bring word what the market price was as she came back; "and whatever," said she, "you sell for in the market, I will pay you the same price. I know I can depend on you for dealing fairly." The remainder of her cargo was soon disposed of in the market. Nancy returned to Mrs. Herbert with an exact account of the prices she had obtained, and not only received the same from that lady, but was also desired to call every Saturday with whatever she might have to offer. Nancy was able to estimate the value of having a regular customer for her goods, because she knew the value of her time. She did not, as many do, make the market day a day for sauntering and idling about, forgetting, or not considering,

that if a day, or half a day, be spent on that for which an hour would have been sufficient, the time thus lost makes a grievous deduction from the profits of their merchandise. Nancy, on the contrary, always considered it a great object to dispose of her goods as quickly as she could, at a reasonable price, and make all possible haste back to her other employments. Her cleanliness, civility, and fair dealing, soon attracted notice. Every one who knew her found they could depend on the articles she sold being as fresh and as good as she said they were, and on her being scrupulously honest in point of number, weight, or measure; so she soon disposed of her goods, generally at the best price, in the market, and was often returning home before many dealers had taken a handsell; indeed, before many an indolent slattern had even entered the market.

Having executed her little commissions in the town, and carried the bundle to Birch Green, Nancy returned to her knitting, and accomplished it by the time her mother had done ironing. Then, for the first time, she

took the five pair together in her hand, to judge of their weight, and asked her mother's opinion whether they would come to two shillings. Mrs. Slade rather thought they would, but desired the little girl not to set her mind too much upon it. "For," said she, "I am sure you have done as much as was possible, and you ought not to be disappointed or displeased with yourself, even though it should not amount to quite as much as you would desire." As Mrs. Morgan kept a grocery shop, Nancy asked her to be kind enough to weigh the socks herself.

Mrs. Morgan asked her how much she supposed they would weigh.

"I hope, ma'am," returned Nancy, "I should think, ma'am, about six ounces. I suppose it is fourpenny worsted?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Morgan, "I gave fourpence an ounce for the worsted, and I see you have knit it very nicely and smooth. Have you any worsted left?"

"Left, ma'am!" replied Nancy with surprise, "I have not used quite half of it yet."

In the mean time Mrs. Morgan reached down the scales, put in the socks, and then weights amounting to six ounces. Nancy looked with trembling expectation. Down, down came her work! Another ounce was added, and it proved to be just the weight of her performance.

"Seven ounces!" said Nancy with joy. "Is it really possible?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Morgan, "it is right enough. You say you have not used quite half the worsted, and it is very plain you have not wasted any. Here are seven ounces, honest weight, and I bought but a pound to begin with."

"Well," said Mrs. Slade, "I thought in my own mind it was better than six ounces; yet I did not care to say so for fear you should be disappointed if it turned out otherwise. But I quite made up my mind that whatever it came to more than the two shillings should be your own, for your learning, or whatever else you have a mind to. You have worked hard to earn it, and you richly deserve it."

Mrs. Morgan counted out two shillings

and fourpence, besides the money for the washing. At her mother's desire, Nancy thankfully took up the fourpence, and, to her no small delight, found that after receiving Mrs. Herbert's two-pence, and paying her little schoolmistress, her treasure amounted to a shilling! Though she could neither read nor write, by the help of her memory and her fingers, she thus made out her account:

"The gentlefolks in the coach
gave me ..... One Penny.
Mr. Sims gave me ..... Two Pence.
I received for carrying the
child's bundle last week, Two Pence.
And for this week ..... Two Pence.
Left from my flowers after
paying Betsey..... One Penny.
The money above two shil-
lings for the socks .....Four Pence."

She then proved the correctness of her arithmetic in the most satisfactory manner, by actually counting the pence, and finding that they amounted to A SHILLING! "Ah!" thought she with honest satisfaction, "what will a penny do? Why, every one of these

pence gave me pleasure in earning, and twelve of them put together make a shilling; and a shilling goes a great way towards buying mother a comfortable blanket! I don't despair of getting it now, before the cold weather comes on; but mother little thinks what I am saving it for. No; nor shall she know a word about it till she feels the comfort of it on her bed. Dear Mother! how kind she is to me! Some mothers don't teach their children to work, and some who do, spend all they earn upon what does them no good; but *my* mother is always contriving for my real good, and I ought to do all in my power to make her happy."

Thus was the lowly cottage of the widow and her daughter the abode of industry, peace, and contentment. And as the blessing of Heaven is generally seen to smile upon the endeavours of honest industry, so it was in this case. During the busy summer months, while their earnings were considerable, Mrs. Slade and her daughter were enabled to furnish themselves with many needful comforts to pay their rent at Mid-

summer, and to lay by a few shillings in store for the approaching winter. Yet let it not be supposed that they were exempt from trials. Trials are the lot of all in this imperfect world. The lofty palace of the mightiest prince cannot screen him from the approach of sorrows and vexations; nor the lowliest cottage escape the general stroke. It is sometimes the lot of virtue to excite envy and misrepresentation. This, to a generous mind, is a great trial; yet it often proves also a salutary one: and, however unjustly it may be inflicted by men, is sent in mercy and wisdom from the hand of God, and overruled for the real good of those who are exercised by it. Even those to whom the practice of virtue is habitual, are in danger of being ensnared into improper feelings of pride and self-complacency, or of setting their affections too much on even virtuous enjoyments. To such characters, trials are sent to humble and improve them. And they are often seen not only to produce moral benefit, but, on the whole, to advance those worldly interests which they seemed at first threatening to injure or destroy.

Mrs. Slade was as peaceable and inoffensive as she was honest and industrious. There certainly was not a person in the parish whom she had injured, and there were very few to whom she had not done a good turn, some time or other; for she always made it a rule to do good to all to the utmost of her power. Being a poor widow, she had not much to bestow; but for a night's watching, or tidying a room, or tending an infant, she was always at the service of a sick neighbour; nor was Nancy behind in any little act of kindness she could perform. Being so fully employed, the widow and her daughter had as little time as they had inclination for idle gossipping at a neighbour's house, or in their own; consequently they had but few acquaintances. Yet they had many *friends*, and it might reasonably have been concluded no *enemies*. This was, however, not exactly the case. There is no place quite free from ill-disposed persons, who, either from selfishness or from malice, prove themselves bad neighbours, and who in general choose to inflict injuries on those who least of all deserve them. It was the lot of poor Mrs. Slade

to prove this. She had two things of which she was, perhaps, rather too fond—her garden and her good name, and in both of these she was wounded. In the widow's garden grew a flourishing tree of white-heart cherries, and another of jenneting apples. Both were loaded with fruit. From the very first appearance of the blossoms, these trees had been watched with peculiar delight both by Mrs. Slade and her daughter; and scarcely a day had passed, however busy, without a peep at their progress. The fruit was now nearly ripe. Nancy, the Saturday before, when she took Mrs. Herbert some currants for preserving, had received an order for some of the fruit, and the remainder was to be sold in the market. On the Saturday morning, when having risen very early in order to get the fruit gathered and packed, what were the surprise and disappointment of the poor woman and her little girl, to find that the trees had already been cleared! And not only so, but many branches had been broken and injured, and the flower-beds trampled down. Nancy looked ready to sink with grief and astonishment, and her mother could not refrain from shedding

tears; but tears could neither remedy the loss nor trace the author of the mischief. Mrs. Slade, therefore, stepped into the farmer's to mention the circumstance and ask his advice; while Nancy set about doing what she could to repair the mischief, by smoothing the beds and tying up such of the flowers as might recover. Those that were entirely broken off, she collected together for her nosegays. The farmer's family, it seemed, had been disturbed by the barking of their great yard-dog, and the premises had been searched; but, as all was then quiet, and no signs appeared of any person having been there, the family again retired to rest, little suspecting that the friendly animal had given the alarm on account of the cruel depredation committed on the property of their honest neighbour. "Lack-aday!" said the farmer, "how could I be so foolish as to go to bed again, and fancy that Towzer barked for nothing? Poor Towzer! if he had but been loose, the dastardly thieves had never got off with a whole skin—and serve them right too, for robbing the fatherless and widow."

"Oh! Sir," said Mrs. Slade, "I am sure

I feel very thankful that Towzer was not loose. Who knows but he might have taken away the life of a man? And I'm sure that would have troubled me more than ten times the loss of my fruit."

"Well, you are a good woman to take it so easily; and to be sure, 'tis as a Christian ought to take it. But if any thing could set up my blood, it would be to see honest poverty oppressed. Well, Nance, we can't make the fruit grow again, can we? But, however, we must try what can be done to make up the loss of it. Before you go to market, you shall call and see what mistress can spare out of our garden, that you may not be altogether disappointed. And as for the mean rascals who have injured you, I shall keep a sharp look out; and if I can catch them, I will soon make them know what it is to trample upon a poor, honest widow."

The farmer's wife had thinned her apricot trees the day before; and having more than she wanted for tarts for her own family, she readily gave the remainder to Nancy, as well as a bundle or two of asparagus, and

some radishes, which, altogether, produced as much money as the fruit would have done. The kind farmer also, having observed in Mrs. Slade's little garden room for two more fruit trees, marked out a fine young apple-tree and an Orleans plum, just come into bearing in his own orchard, and ordered them to be removed to the widow's garden in the proper season. So the poor woman and her little girl were, on the whole, no losers. All search after the offenders, however, was for the present vain. This, Mrs. Slade did not much regret; for she could not bear the idea of any one being punished on her account, and she hoped they might never be guilty of such a crime again. When Nancy fetched the linen the Monday after, she saw one of Mrs. Wilkins's children with a fine jenneting apple in its hand, and another making chains of cherry stones, and it did, for a moment, put her in mind of what they had lost; but then she very justly considered, that apples and cherries became ripe at the same time in other gardens as well as in theirs: she was too honest herself readily to indulge a

suspicion of any other person having acted dishonestly by her; so she took no notice to any person of what she had seen. Indeed, it made no impression on her own mind, and was soon forgotten.

Nancy Slade was very fond of infants; and as she generally found little Emily, the London baby, lying in the cradle though not asleep, she often asked leave to take her out and nurse her while Mrs. Wilkins looked up the linen. By degrees Emily became very fond of her little nurse, and would crow for joy, and hold out her arms directly she saw her enter the house. But she would generally cry when Nancy offered to replace her in the cradle, or to give her to Mrs. Wilkins, and shake her hand to her and say, "Bye, bye!"

"There," said Mrs. Wilkins, "fretting again! There never was such a little pining, peevish thing in the world! I have not a bit of peace of my life with her. Fret, fret, whine, whine, all day long, and all night too! My own child is not half the trouble to me."

The tears started into Nancy's eye, and

she said, "Poor little thing! perhaps she is not well."

"No," replied Mrs. Wilkins, "I don't suppose she is, or else they would not have sent her away to be nursed in the country. She is not long for this world, I'll answer for it."

"Poor little lamb!" said Nancy, and the tears flowed faster down her cheek.

"Oh, don't make such a fuss about it," returned the unfeeling woman: "why, you are as foolish as the child itself. It is not going to die yet awhile that I know of; and if it does, it cannot go at a better time."

"But did you not," asked Nancy, recollecting what Mrs. Wilkins had before said, "bid me tell Madam that the child was quite well?"

"Yes, to be sure I did—and don't you go to tell her any otherwise, or I shall have her coming up here with a doctor or some nonsense, to see what is the matter. The child is as well as it ever is, or is likely to be. It is a weakly child, that's all I mean to say."

Nancy was several times silenced in this

manner. She supposed that Mrs. Wilkins understood the management of children, and would do her duty by it; but yet she could not help fancying that, with greater tenderness and attention, the sufferings of the poor child might be alleviated, if not its health restored. She wished that Mrs. Herbert, who frequently visited it, might discover its indisposition, and adopt some means for its relief. Then she felt angry with herself for admitting such suspicions; and, unless she was particularly questioned, thought it would be wrong to say any thing which might convey a reflection on Mrs. Wilkins's care and tenderness.

When the weather permitted, Mrs. Herbert regularly visited the little one every Monday afternoon, on which occasions the nurse took care to make it very nice and clean; and, as on those days it generally got more nursing than all the week besides, it looked better and more contented than usual. Besides, Mrs. Herbert, knowing it was always considered a delicate child, did not expect to see it look very thriving and sprightly. As she had no family of her own,

she the more readily admitted the explanations given her by the nurse respecting its pale looks being occasioned by teething or some other circumstance incident to children in general. The nurse also uniformly gave the flattering assurance, that, on the whole, the child was certainly better than when it first came into the country, and that when it had cut a tooth or two, its looks would mend apace. Mrs. Herbert was, therefore, tolerably satisfied, and wrote accordingly to her sister, who often sent down one present or another to encourage the nurse in her attentions to the dear little one whose life was so earnestly desired. Mrs. Wilkins too desired the child to live for the sake of the pay and the presents. But though she was very fair spoken in the presence of its friends, she had neither principle nor tenderness to induce her to do her duty by it when out of their sight. It was often left for hours together in the cradle, pining for want of air and exercise, while its unworthy nurse was gossipping with her neighbours, or, at best, nursing her own child. This being strong and healthy, and several months

older than poor little Emily, was much more able to shift for itself, and certainly ought not to have engrossed all her attention from her little tender charge, for the care of which she was so liberally rewarded.

As Nancy Slade was the only person who fondled and gave her a little lively nursing, it was no wonder that Emily was so fond of her. But the more Mrs. Wilkins perceived this fondness, the more jealous she became of Nancy, and spiteful against her. The truth is, she was guilty of many things which she feared Nancy might observe, and which, if mentioned to Mrs. Herbert, would destroy her good opinion, and cause the removal of the child. But no one was less disposed than Nancy to be either suspicious or a mischief-maker; only Mrs. Wilkins's conscience made her afraid, and she was wicked enough to take every sly opportunity of endeavouring to injure the character of Nancy and her mother, and to prejudice their friends against them. In more than one instance, she had nearly prevailed; but in a little time truth came out; and while the integrity of the widow and her daughter

was fully cleared, their malicious enemy was covered with confusion.

Soon after the robbery of Mrs. Slade's garden, it happened that the dairy-maid at the farm-house was taken ill. She had been in the habit of taking the butter, eggs, and poultry to market; and when market-day came, Mrs. Godfrey, the farmer's wife, was considering whom she could send in her place. "I don't know whom you can send," said the farmer, "more trusty and careful than little Nance Slade."

"I think," replied Mrs. Godfrey, "she is too young to be trusted. She is a very good little girl to be sure; but it is not to be expected that such a child should know the value of things. She would be sure to be imposed upon."

"For my part," said the farmer, "I would rather trust her than half the old women in the parish. She is so steady and thoughtful, and so civil and honest too, that all the gentry come flocking round her, and soon buy what she has to dispose of; and then, away she goes about her business, never stopping to stare about, or chatter with any

body. I have observed her many a time when she did not see me, and have always been struck with her behaviour. To be sure, she has not been used to this kind of marketting; but if you explain to her a little what things are worth, depend upon it you will not find her stupid or careless. Besides, I can have an eye over her myself, as I shall be about the market; and if you try her once, and it does not answer, it will not be of any very great consequence—only we need not send her again."

Mrs. Godfrey consented: and, after receiving many charges and instructions, Nancy was sent off in the farmer's cart. On her return, she gave so clear and satisfactory an account of her commission, as quite justified the farmer's good opinion of her, and raised her many degrees in that of his wife. Nancy remembered the kindness that these good people had shewn at the time of their misfortune, and was pleased with an opportunity of shewing her gratitude by rendering them any service in her power. She had no idea of receiving any reward, but Mrs. Godfrey gave her sixpence

and a good dinner, and also a lap-full of wind-fall apples to make a pudding; telling her, that as she found her so handy and trusty a girl, she should very likely often employ her.

The poor dairy-maid continued to grow worse, and as the doctor thought she was in a decline, she wished to go home to her friends; so another young woman was hired in her place. In the mean time, Nancy had continued to do the marketting much to Mrs. Godfrey's satisfaction, and had also, as well as her mother, been occasionally employed to pick the poultry or churn the butter. The produce of these employments furnished the cottage with many little comforts, as well as insensibly swelled up Nancy's small store, which bid fair to reach the price of the desired blanket before the cold weather set in. With feelings of humble gratitude the poor woman acknowledged the goodness of Providence to her and her child, and observed how evils are made to work together for good: for she could not help tracing their employment at the farm-house to the compassionate interest which

the farmer had felt in their circumstances at the time of the robbery. When the new servant came, Nancy of course did not expect to be any longer employed as market-woman; but Mrs. Godfrey soon found, that, though Peggy was a cleanly, hardworking, and good-tempered girl, she was both thoughtless and forgetful. In marketting, she was continually making some vexatious blunder, and never failed to forget the most important part of the errands she was told to bring home. Nancy was therefore again engaged to attend the market, and continued with great prudence and fidelity to discharge the trust reposed in her.

All this time too, Nancy had gone on diligently applying to her learning, and had made such progress as to be able to read the easy lessons in her spelling-book. Her little instructress often gratified her by reading to her some of the more difficult lessons which were yet beyond her skill: but what delighted Nancy most of all was, that when her father and mother could spare her, especially on a Sunday evening, Betsey would bring her little bible to Mrs. Slade's

and read a few chapters aloud. When listening to the wondrous and delightful story of the Blessed Redeemer's humility, meekness, kindness, and suffering for sinful man, her young heart would melt in tenderness and gratitude, and her eyes sparkle with joy and admiration. "A little while," said she, "and I shall be able to read all this myself.—Oh, what a fine thing is learning! As many shillings spent on cakes or toys would not have given me half the pleasure that I have gained by these few pence in learning to read! Surely no person in the world can be happier than I am!" Alas! little girl, very few are so happy. A good conscience and a contented mind are treasures that great riches cannot purchase.

And now the hay-making and harvest had passed and afforded to Nancy and her mother an additional supply. The rent was made up ready for Michaelmas—and Nancy's often-counted hoard at length amounted to the sum required. Now, if Nancy had loved money for the sake of possessing it, or of obtaining any selfish gratification, the accumulated sum had presented a temptation

too strong to be resisted, and had been diverted from its original purpose; but no idea of the kind ever entered her head. She would as soon have thought of hoarding pebbles as pence, but for the use to which they might be applied; and of all possible uses none presented itself to her mind as half so delightful as that of promoting her mother's comfort. Grateful, affectionate little girl, and happy mother! Early didst thou begin, according to thy humble ability, to train up thy child in the way she should go, and early hast thou the unspeakable pleasure of seeing her pursue it. May the blessing of Heaven be upon her, to fulfil the encouraging promise, "When she is old she will not depart from it"!

The day had now arrived that was to crown Nancy's dutiful wishes. Having discharged all her commissions, she took her little treasure box to the draper's shop, and emptying its contents on the counter, received the prize of her industry and self-denial—a comfortable warm blanket, which, without saying a word to any one, she aired

and placed on her mother's bed. Being market day, the shop was very full of customers when Nancy bought the blanket, but she was too intent upon her own business to look after other persons, and she did not observe that one who sat there was a woman whom she had often seen talking with Mrs. Wilkins. Nancy and her purchase, however, did not escape her notice; and in the afternoon it furnished matter for a long debate with her neighbour, how it was possible a poor child could have become honestly possessed of such a sum of money. In the course of the conversation many ill-natured and unfounded surmises were thrown out by both these women—each of which was carefully gathered up by her companion and placed among the various, abundant stores of a gossip's memory, to be brought forward when occasion offered, but duly magnified and attested as undoubted facts. Mrs. Wilkins was not long in finding an opportunity of uttering her malicious slanders against a poor girl, whose only offence had been uprightness and kindness, which put to shame her own

artifices, neglect, and want of feeling. Mrs. Wilkins sometimes dealt for her grocery at the new shop; and the Monday after Nancy's purchase, she was in there buying some tea and sugar, when Mrs. Slade passed through with a basket of linen. Mrs. Wilkins then addressed herself to Mrs. Morgan, who had come into the shop, and in a fawning manner inquired after all the family, hoping they had their health in their new habitation. Then, artfully winding round to the real object of her discourse, "What, Mrs. Slade washes for you, ma'am, does she? I am sure I did not know it. I suppose, ma'am, you have not convenience for washing at home?"

Now Mrs. Morgan, though a very well-meaning woman, had two faults, which often led her into mistake and injustice. One was, that she was apt to enter into familiar conversation with persons of whom she knew very little, or whose station and habits of life rendered them by no means suitable companions for her; and the other, that she took up hasty impressions either in favour or in prejudice of persons and

things, of which she had not taken time or means to obtain a correct judgment. She therefore became a favourite with all the gossips who frequented the shop, and they described her to each other "as a good-natured, pleasant, free-spoken woman, without a bit of pride:" but at the same time, she was sacrificing the society of the most sensible, respectable, and well-educated persons of her own class, who shrunk from an intimacy which was likely to bring their names and affairs into the possession of village tattlers, busy-bodies, and mischief-makers. If any young lady should condescend to cast her eye over these pages, it is hoped these remarks will prove an useful caution, against indulging habits of improper familiarity with persons of low education and vulgar habits. Nothing can be farther from the intention of the writer, than to recommend a haughty and scornful carriage towards servants or other persons in a humble station in life. No, let every one be treated with civility, kindness, and respect; but let not young people forsake the society of their nearest relatives and kindest

friends, to listen to the vulgar tales of the kitchen, and find there the companions of their sports and the sharers of their secrets. Such intimacies scarcely ever fail to retard improvement, to corrupt the habits, to injure the character, and very often to place the individual, through life, in a lower sphere in the scale of society than that to which her connexions and education entitled her.

To return to Mrs. Morgan. Instead of coolly repulsing the impertinent advances of her inquisitive customer, she replied to her in such a familiar way as encouraged her to proceed. "Ah!" said the ill-natured woman, "Mrs. Slade and her daughter seem to have all the luck of it. Well, I'm sure for my part I don't envy them. I have no time to go out to work or to take it in, as they do. I have a child to nurse, from London—at good pay to be sure. And so it had need, for I can scarce do any earthly thing besides attending to it. Indeed, it is through me that Nancy Slade has picked up one of her best friends; for the child's aunt sends her every week to bring its linen and

has taken a mighty fancy to her. Well, every one to her liking—but for my part I never think the better of them that make so much fuss about being more honest than their neighbours. However, I say nothing —let every body find out things for themselves—but 'tis best when one has friends not to go too far with them."

Instead of turning away with disgust from these mysterious and malevolent insinuations, Mrs. Morgan pressed for a further explanation. "For," said she, "it is a kindness, you know, to put me on my guard. I know nothing myself of Mrs. Slade's character, being but lately come into the place—only our neighbour, Mr. Sims, recommended her very strongly to me."

"Ah! well, then in course, Mr. Sims must know more of her than I do. I dare say she is a very good sort of a woman, and I don't mean to say any thing against her—it would be unneighbourly so to do—and I should not think at any rate she would go to impose on *you*. I only mean, that what with one friend and another, they seem to be feathering their nest pretty well—and it

is no harm for every body to have their eyes open. It is no longer ago than last Saturday, that Miss Nancy, to my certain knowledge, went to a shop and bought a pair of the best blankets, at sixteen shillings a piece—and I say it is fine times for poor people when it comes to that."

"I think so, indeed," replied Mrs. Morgan, and was going on to fish for farther discoveries, but other customers came in, and Mrs. Wilkins left her to her own reflections, while she went farther to scatter the seeds of malicious falsehood, to the injury of her innocent neighbour. And here let it be remarked, how much mischief may arise from what appears a *little* mis-representation. It was true, that Mrs. Slade and her daughter had found friends; but it was equally true that they had obtained them by their honesty and good conduct. It was true, that Nancy had purchased a blanket, and Mrs. Wilkins had *only* said a *pair* instead of *one* and at the price of *sixteen* shillings instead of *six*. It was true also, that Nancy was employed by Mrs. Herbert—but she obtained the commission

by her own merit;—not, as Mrs. Wilkins had represented it, by *her* recommendation. Thus, conduct the most praise-worthy, was, in the hand of malevolence, converted into a tool of mischief; and though nothing injurious was asserted, the most criminal imputations were implied. Mrs. Morgan was weak enough to suffer her mind to be so far influenced by these base insinuations, as to fancy in every part of Mrs. Slade's conduct something dishonest and artful. She, however, said nothing to her—but treated her with coolness and suspicion quite unlike her accustomed manner. Unconscious of any intended offence, Mrs. Slade was not very hasty in observing this change of conduct in her employer; or, if she noticed it at all, innocently attributed it to some cause quite unconnected with herself. However, Mrs. Morgan was so far prejudiced against her, as to be watching for any thing like a pretence for dismissing her from her employ.

On returning home, Mrs. Wilkins found Nancy come for the linen, and with much seeming kindness endeavoured to draw out

of her a confession as to her late purchase —for whom it was designed, and by what means obtained. But Nancy modestly shrunk from proclaiming her good action and courting praise; and Mrs. Wilkins, choosing to interpret her blushes into the expressions of guilt, fancied it would be but right to give Mrs. Herbert a hint of her suspicions. Accordingly when that lady came over in the afternoon, Mrs. Wilkins began by expressing her hope that she found all the baby's clothes right from time to time. "For," said she, "ma'am, 'tis a great venture, you know, to trust a poor, half-starved child, like Nancy Slade, with such valuable things as the little dear's beautiful caps and frocks. I am sure I don't wish to harbour any ill thought of her, poor thing. She may be honest enough for what I know; but really, I can't say but my heart misgave me when that second-best laced cap did not come back. I did not know what to think of it—whether you might have kept it back because little miss had rather outgrown it—or whether any thing might have happened to it in going

along. And, to be sure, what made me think the more of it, though it might in reality have nothing to do with it, a neighbour of mine saw Nance Slade go into Mr. Marriott's shop last Saturday, and buy a parcel of blankets and all manner of things, which one might wonder how she could ever get the money to pay for. However, I am sure I would not wrong the girl; I only thought, ma'am, that as I had my suspicions, it behoved me to put you on your guard—for every body knows that they are as poor as poor can be—at least they were so till very lately, and scarcely able to keep off the parish."

Mrs. Herbert very coolly replied, that it was much to the credit of the widow and her daughter, amidst all their difficulties, to have supported themselves in honest independence; and added, "As to the little girl's integrity and thoughtfulness, I have had proofs of both, too strong to be easily set aside by ill-natured surmises. The cap you speak of was returned to you last Monday week, and I have no doubt on a thorough search you will find it safe in your

own possession." At a reception so opposite to that she had received from Mrs. Morgan, Mrs. Wilkins shrunk back ashamed, and endeavoured to make good her retreat by saying, well, she would be sure and hunt thoroughly in her drawers — or it might even have slipped behind; but she really could not remember taking it out of the bundle. She recollected, also, that Nancy was often employed to do errands for Farmer Godfrey's wife, and very likely what she bought might be for her. Indeed, (for she began to be apprehensive that Mrs. Herbert might make inquiry and detect her falsehood and malice,) she could not be quite sure whether her neighbour said the things were bought at Marriott's the linen draper's — or whether she did not say at Stevens's or Bell's.

Mrs. Herbert insisted on her searching immediately for the cap in question—which, after a great deal of hesitation, she at last produced in so dirty a state as left little room to doubt that it had been worn by her own child, which, being older and stronger than little Emily, was often suffered to crawl about upon the floor.

It will be supposed that though Mrs. Herbert received no unfavourable sentiments concerning poor little Nancy, she returned home with no very exalted opinion of the woman who had thus maliciously endeavoured to traduce her. Mrs. Wilkins, however, was not altogether discouraged or diverted from her wicked purpose: she took an early opportunity of calling at the farm (as she was occasionally in the habit of doing) to beg a little milk for her sickly nursling, and there she began throwing out her dark insinuations against the innocent objects of her malice. "I tell you what, Mrs. Godfrey," said she, "I don't pretend to say any thing to their disadvantage, and I am sure I don't desire it; but it is impossible to help seeing and knowing that those people have strangely got up in the world of late. Every body knows, it is true, that you have been kind friends to them; but I don't like to see good nature imposed upon, especially in them that have been kind to me; and I am sure, Mrs. Godfrey, I think more of your kindness in letting me have a little milk for my poor dear baby, than if it was ten times

the value for myself. And so, if I saw or knew any thing to your prejudice, it would be my bounden duty to name it, even though I might give offence by so doing." "But as you have seen and known nothing," interrupted the farmer, "it becomes you to hold your peace. Wife, be so good as reach me the Bible. I think I know a verse or two there that will just set this matter straight." Mrs. Godfrey presented her husband with the Bible, which he opened, and read the three following verses of the hundred and first Psalm: "A froward heart shall depart from me; I will not know a wicked person. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house. He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight." While this was read, Mrs. Wilkins stood in silent astonishment, and then slunk away completely disgraced and mortified; nor was she ever afterwards known to beg milk for her darling at farmer Godfrey's.

Not long after this, it happened that Mrs. Morgan having got ready her wine

cask, desired that the cowslips might be brought. When they were thoroughly dried, Mrs. Slade had carefully put them into a large paper bag. On her presenting them to Mrs. Morgan, the storm broke out which had been so long harboured in her bosom. With intemperate vehemence she accused the poor woman of grossly imposing upon her, in bringing that handful of cowslips for four pecks—declaring she would never pay her for them at that rate; and concluded by saying, "Persons who are in the habit of such impositions may well afford to sleep in finer blankets than their neighbours—but it is a wonder to me if their consciences let them sleep sounder!" Amazed at these unexpected and unfounded charges, the poor woman for a moment felt tempted to reply with equal warmth; but she recollected hearing the minister say on the Sunday before, that "a soft answer turneth away wrath;" and she had also heard Betsey Moore read in the New Testament, that our blessed Saviour, "when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed

his cause to Him that judgeth righteously," — so she endeavoured to calm her spirit. A flood of tears came to her relief, and she meekly replied, that she was very sorry any thing should have arisen to excite in Mrs. Morgan's mind suspicions of her honesty; those suspicions, her conscience bore her witness in the sight of God, were totally unfounded, and if Mrs. Morgan would be so good as to state whence they arose, she had no doubt of satisfactorily proving her innocence. As to the cowslips, she assured her that, when fresh picked, they were four pecks honestly measured, and that they had reduced in drying, to the quantity she then saw. But Mrs. Morgan was too much irritated to enter calmly into the matter then; so Mrs. Slade modestly withdrew, hoping that sooner or later truth would prevail. But she went home with a heavy heart, and communicated to the little sharer of all her joys and sorrows, the distressing cloud that hung over their character and prospects. They wept together, and earnestly prayed, that it would please the great Avenger of the innocent to "bring forth

their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noonday;"—and, meanwhile, that he would enable them to bear the trial with meekness and submission.

After a while, "Mother!" said Nancy, "I have just thought of one thing that might perhaps satisfy Mrs. Morgan. You know we got cowslips for Mrs. Evans and Madam Finch; now, if theirs should not happen to be used, she might see by the measuring of them that hers had only fairly shrunk." This suggestion was approved of, and Mrs. Slade immediately called on Mrs. Evans about it; but unfortunately her cowslips were used, as she had made the wine with fresh pips. However, when she was informed of the reason of the application she expressed herself perfectly willing, in any way, to attest the honesty of one who had been several years a faithful domestic servant in her house, and ever since her marriage an occasional assistant. She desired the poor woman to make her mind quite easy, and promised to call and speak to Mrs. Morgan, not doubting but the matter would be cleared up.

And now Nancy was inclined to make a similar application to Madam Finch; but her mother feared it would be taking too great a liberty, and also that it might possibly give that lady, to whom she was but little known, an ill opinion of her. However, she readily agreed to Nancy's next proposal, which was, that they should ask the advice of her good friend Mrs. Herbert. They accordingly waited upon her, and as that lady happened to be quite alone, they were shewn into the parlour. Mrs. Herbert inquired kindly after their health and circumstances, in reply to which Mrs. Slade attempted to state the cause of her visit, but was too much agitated to proceed; so Nancy modestly related the circumstances of their distress and requested Mrs. Herbert's advice as to the best way of clearing their character. "Oh! ma'am," said Mrs. Slade, "after living in the place above forty years and always bearing a character for honesty, both in service and out of it, and having had for my husband as honest a man as ever drew breath, it does seem hard indeed to have such things laid to my charge: 'tis not only that it takes a poor body's

bread away, but it cuts me to the heart that such cruel things should ever once be thought of me! It seems to bring a reproach on my poor dear husband's name, and disgrace on my innocent child."

"Have you any idea," asked Mrs. Herbert, "on what ground the suspicion could have arisen?"

"No, ma'am. Whether Mrs. Morgan took it into her head because the cowslips had shrunk so, she having before been used to put them into the wine fresh, I can't tell; or if I have got an enemy in the place who would say a false thing for the sake of making mischief against me, I am sure it is more than I know."

"Nancy," said Mrs. Herbert, "have you bought any blankets lately?"

"Nancy blushed—and replied, "I bought one, ma'am, last Saturday was a week."

"Only one, was it? And what was the price?"

"Oh! no, ma'am, it was but one—for it came to six shillings."

"You bought it at Mr. Marriott's, did you not?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And you are sure you paid but six shillings for it?"

"Oh! yes, ma'am; I had not another farthing in the world, besides what was mother's."

"Will you tell me for whom you bought the blanket, and who gave you the money to pay for it?"

Nancy coloured, and hung down her head. "Ma'am," said her mother, "I must answer that—for 'tis what Nancy won't answer herself—she bought it for me, ma'am, and bought it out of her own pence which she has been hoarding up for weeks and weeks past. I dare say she can tell you how she came by every penny of it. She never told me a word of what she was doing, and when I got into bed, ma'am, I was really frightened to think what it could be that felt so warm and comfortable. Indeed, ma'am, Nance is a good child, whatever any body may say of her, and I do think and hope that God Almighty's blessing will be upon her, for her dutiful kindness to her poor mother."

"There is no doubt of it," replied the

benevolent lady; "and if we have the testimony of God and our own conscience as to the rectitude of our actions and intentions, we must not be too much distressed or discouraged, though they may be mistaken or misrepresented by our fellow-creatures. Nancy, do you recollect who was in the shop when you bought the blanket?"

"Mr. Marriott was there himself, ma'am, for he counted out my money; and ever so many young gentlemen were there helping to serve. Mr. Marriott bid one of them pack up the blanket for me; he told him to put two papers, because it was a rainy day: and besides them, there were some ladies buying things, and several market people."

"You do not think Mrs. Wilkins was there, do you?"

"No, ma'am, I am sure she was not; for when I went with the linen that same afternoon, Mrs. Wilkins said she must go for some errands after the children were gone to bed, for that she had been washing and had not had time to go in the morning; and she said she was vexed she had not asked Mrs. Burroughs, who lives at the

next door, to bring what she wanted, for she had been to the shop that morning to buy herself a gown."

"Well, Mrs. Slade," said Mrs. Herbert, "I think we shall find that the unpleasant suspicions which distress you so, have arisen from an action most truly creditable to your little girl, and which, I am sure, must afford you heartfelt satisfaction. There are some people in the world so malicious as to put on an action the worst construction it will bear, rather than the best; and to those who are in the habit of squandering their moments and their pence, it may well appear incredible, that the industry and self-denial of one little girl should prove sufficient to furnish her mother with so important a comfort. However, do not fear, something will yet arise to clear the innocent and confound the guilty. As to your employer, Mrs. Morgan, I think it very likely that, under the influence of some former prejudice, she may have hastily charged you falsely about the cowslips; and if she can be convinced of her error in one respect, she will most likely relinquish it readily in

the other. The most effectual way of convincing her will, I think, be by requesting Mrs. Finch to measure her cowslips, which you say were gathered about the same time. I am sure Mrs. Finch will cheerfully comply with this request, and will feel a pleasure in doing any thing which may tend to clear from unjust suspicion the character of an honest neighbour. As I have occasion to call on Mrs. Finch this morning, Nancy shall go with me and make the request."

After taking a little refreshment, which Mrs. Herbert kindly offered, the poor woman returned to her work, though with a feeling of dejection to which she was before a stranger. Nancy stayed and accompanied her kind friend to the Grove, where Mrs. Finch resided. That lady was sitting at work in the breakfast-room when Mrs. Herbert entered. After the first salutations, Mrs. Herbert hastened to the principal object of her visit. "Pray," asked she, "have you made your cowslip wine yet?" Mrs. Finch replied that she had not, but intended to have it done in the course of the week. "Then," said Mrs. Herbert, "will you

oblige me by having the cowslips measured? I am desirous of ascertaining their decrease in bulk by being dried." A servant was immediately ordered to bring in the cowslips and measure them in Mrs. Herbert's presence—when the six pecks proved to have decreased to as many quarts, just in the same proportion as those had done concerning which the dispute had arisen. Mrs. Herbert then related the circumstances which had occurred, and spoke highly of the industry, honesty, and filial affection of her little protégée. With this account the ladies appeared much interested, and inquired her name. On being informed, Miss Finch observed, that a little girl of that name had begun subscribing for a Bible, and was paying twopence a-week. Nancy was called in, and owned it was in her name that her friend Betsey Moore had brought twopence on the two last Mondays, and that was the purpose to which she was now devoting the weekly pay she was receiving of Mrs. Herbert, while her flowers enabled her to pay her little teacher, and would, she hoped, also occasionally add an extra penny to

hasten the possession of her long-desired treasure.

Miss Finch desired to know what progress Nancy had made in reading; and, reaching down a book with reading lessons out of the Bible, bade her read a few verses. It was the twenty-third Psalm, which is very easy, and many expressions of which Nancy had already picked up by hearing them read at church; on the whole, therefore, she made it out very well, and the ladies were so much pleased as to add a shilling to her Bible subscription. She was then desired to wait again a few minutes in the hall, until Mrs. Herbert was ready to give her farther directions.

It was mentioned that Mrs. Finch had two daughters with her; one of these had been married only a few months when she was left a widow, and she had lately returned to reside with her mother and sister. As her property was considerable, and her expenses were moderate, she resolved, as the best means of soothing her wounded spirit, and cheering her lonesome hours, to employ her time and her purse in doing

good to those around her. Among other plans of benevolence, she had determined on establishing both a Sunday and a Daily School for the benefit of poor children in the neighbourhood. In conducting the Sunday School, she had engaged the assistance of her sister and several young friends, and it was to be commenced on the following Sunday.

Mrs. Neville (that was the lady's name) felt much pleasure in setting down on her list Ann Slade, assured that both she and her mother, from the character she had heard of them, would thankfully receive and diligently improve this valuable opportunity of gaining instruction. But the good lady intended farther benefits still; she had been seeking about for a suitable person to conduct her daily school, but could not meet with one in every respect eligible. At length she had resolved personally to conduct the education of two girls, with a view to preparing them, in the course of time, to conduct that of others; and that, meanwhile, the present race of children might not altogether be deprived of her intended kindness,

twenty-five little girls were to be selected from the most needy and deserving families, and placed with old Dame Barlow, a good woman, who had for many years kept the village school, but was now advancing in age. Mrs. Neville, however, hoped she might be able to continue her labours until one or more successors were prepared, when it was intended she should retire upon a pension. Mrs. Neville and Miss Finch had already fixed upon Betsey Moore as one of the two: she had gained this distinction by her dutiful attention to her parents, her constant and patient industry, and her personal neatness and modesty of deportment.

It is surprising to observe how the real character of a child will discover itself, even under the greatest surrounding disadvantages. Persons of discernment can detect it even in the manner of doing the commonest things. To such persons it was very evident, that Betsey Moore was of an active, industrious turn, though her health unfitted her for any laborious employment; that she was of a contented and cheerful spirit, though, from the same cause, she was un-

able to join the lively sports of children in general; that her clothing, though of the meanest, scantiest kind, was always remarkably clean, whole, and tidily put on. "Many a patch, but never a hole," was her mother's maxim; and Betsey had very early adopted it. Though her complexion was delicately fair, and her person, on the whole, remarkably pretty, Betsey never discovered any thing like an attempt at finery, or a wish for admiration. Besides all this, it had somehow been rumoured to Mrs. Neville, that Betsey had in her leisure hours taught a little play-fellow to read, and that the large Bible for which she was now subscribing was intended as a present for her aged parents. All these things considered, where could a little girl be found more deserving of the good lady's notice, or more likely to improve it for her own advantage and that of others? It now remained to find another equally well fitted, to be her companion—one whom it was also desirable to find blessed with a greater share of health to render more able to take an active share in the labours of the intended school, and

of a cheerful, willing, accommodating disposition to sustain, without murmuring, as much larger a share as strength should allow, and occasion require.

This was the subject of conversation between Mrs. Finch and her daughters at the time of Mrs. Herbert's visit; and her testimony in favour of Nancy Slade, together with the discovery that she was already the friend and the pupil of Betsey Moore, at once directed their attention to her, as an equally fit object for their intended kindness. Mrs. Herbert observed, that Nancy was already a little woman of so much consequence, that she feared her mother could ill afford to sacrifice her services even for her ultimate good; at the same time she believed her to be too kind and too wise a parent not readily to make the effort. This difficulty, however, was entirely removed by Mrs. Neville's expressing her intention of permitting the girls to take in work, and perform it, under her direction, for their own benefit; and, moreover, that she should not only permit, but require them to make themselves as useful as possible at home.

Mrs. Herbert felt truly delighted at the advantageous prospects which opened around little Nancy, in whom she had so benevolently interested herself; but she requested her friends not to mention their kind intentions until the unpleasant suspicions which distressed the minds of Mrs. Slade and her daughter were removed. "For," said she, "under their present anxiety, they would scarcely be able to enjoy even such good news as you have to communicate. I have little doubt of very soon tracing to their source, and of entirely dissipating these painful surmises; and having done so, I will immediately send Nancy and her mother to you, and you may then make them as happy as you please." Mrs. Herbert then took her leave. As they left the Grove, Nancy asked whether it would be right for her mother or herself to call on Mrs. Morgan, and inform her of the result of the cowslip measuring at Mrs. Finch's. "No," returned Mrs. Herbert, "leave that to me. Mrs. Morgan shall be convinced and satisfied, in due time; all you have to do at present is, first to go home to your mother,

take your dinner with her, and desire her to make her mind quite easy, for all is likely to turn out as well as she can desire. Having done so, you will step across the Green, and say to Mrs. Wilkins, that I wish her to come to my house, and bring the baby this afternoon at four o'clock. If she cannot leave her own little one, you may offer to stay at her house, and take care of it; or, if she objects to your doing so, you may walk with her, and bring the child. Good bye!"

Nancy returned immediately to her mother, and endeavoured to cheer her spirits with the encouraging hope held out by their friend, and also by telling her how kindly the ladies at the Grove had spoken, and had helped her on so far in her progress towards obtaining the earnestly desired treasure. Poor Mrs. Slade endeavoured to sympathize in the cheerful feelings of her little girl, but she could not forget her own trouble. In order to divert her mind from the painful subject, Nancy begged her mother, as it was a fine afternoon, to gather in their crop of onions and carrots, while she went on

the business which Mrs. Herbert had desired. Accordingly, as soon as Nancy was gone, she got the spade and fork, and began to work. It is possible that some young persons may read this, to whom that most excellent remedy for grief, anxiety, or disappointment, has not been pointed out, or at least not adopted by them—I mean *employment*. For want of this, when some pleasing anticipation has been disappointed, some school-fellow preferred in the class, or some wished-for toy or article of dress been denied, they may have been seen sitting for hours in sullen silence, or bursting into sobs of violent passion. "Oh dear! oh dear! what shall I do?" Why really I should be inclined to answer, "Do any thing in the world that is not mischief, and employment will at least half cure your troubles."

Mrs. Slade found it so: for first she pleased herself with the idea of getting her little stores ready to house in safety when Nancy should return; then when she began digging them up, she felt pleased and grateful at the abundance of her crops; and when

gratitude began to shed its sweet and soothing influence on her heart, she almost forgot that every thing did not go on just as smoothly as she wished. So the time would, no doubt, have passed along very pleasantly, if Nancy had been gone, as was expected, three or four hours. But what was her mother's surprise, before she had been gone half an hour, to see her running hastily across the Green with the little Emily in her arms! Mrs. Slade ran out to inquire the cause of her sudden return, and Nancy, in the greatest agitation, said, "Oh! mother, let me come in,—and do see what is the matter with this dear little baby—it is not dead!—do try and save it. Oh what will dear Mrs. Herbert say? Do let me run and fetch her." Mrs. Slade perceived that the child was in a kind of convulsion fit. "Oh Nancy," said she, "have you hurt the child? Pray tell the truth, if you have."

"No, mother, indeed I have not, but——"

"But we must not talk about it. No time is to be lost. I should put it into a warm bath if it was my own child. Run in

to Mrs. Godfrey—she mostly has a large boiler of water hot—and beg her to come in herself; she is a kind, motherly woman, and perhaps will advise us what to do." While Nancy was gone, Mrs. Slade undressed the infant and gently rubbed its stomach. Mrs. Godfrey came immediately, and her servant with her, bringing a bucket of warm water. "Poor lamb," said Mrs. Godfrey, "I fear it is very bad; but a warm bath is as likely to relieve it as any thing; it is what I always did with my own, if a doctor was not just at hand." They therefore set to work and put the child into the bath. Nancy was going to run for Mrs. Herbert and a doctor; but as she was already exhausted, and, as Mrs. Slade observed, she was the only person among them whom the child would know, if it should revive, Mrs. Godfrey desired the servant to beg her master, who happened to be in the way, to take his horse and ride over for them himself. In a few minutes after being put into the bath, the child seemed to make an effort to cry—then it turned very white about the lips and appeared as if its stomach was

overloaded; so Mrs. Godfrey ventured to give it a spoonful of oil as soon as it could swallow, which in a minute or two it threw up again, and with it some black-looking stuff, and seemed much relieved. It was taken out of the bath, and laid in Mrs. Godfrey's arms wrapped up in Mrs. Slade's new blanket. The doctor arrived in a short time on horseback, and Mrs. Herbert soon followed. After examinng the child very attentively, and being informed what means had been resorted to in order to relieve it, he desired to see what it had brought off its stomach. He then gave it some medicine which he had brought with him, and desired them to continue rubbing the child and keeping it in motion so as, if possible, to prevent its going to sleep.

Mrs. Herbert was much agitated at seeing the dear little babe in so alarming a state; she, however, endeavoured to compose herself as much as she could, and asked Mr. Cummings whether there were any hopes of its recovery.

Mr. Cummings replied, that it was in a very tender and precarious state—but that

he hoped by care and attention, under the blessing of God, it might yet be restored. He wished to speak privately to Mrs. Herbert, and as there was no other room below, they walked out into the garden. "Madam," said Mr. Cummings, "I wish to be informed which of those women is the nurse of the child."

Mrs. Herbert answered, that neither of them was its nurse, nor had she had time to inquire by what means the child had come into their hands—and why its own nurse was not present.

"Is she a woman on whom you can depend?"

"I fear not: I have had serious thoughts of removing the child from under her care, and had directed that she should come to my house this very afternoon in order to my having some conversation with her."

"Then, madam, I must most seriously desire that the child may by no means be returned to her charge. I have no doubt of its present indisposition being occasioned, or at least greatly aggravated, by its having had laudanum improperly administered to it."

They now returned into the house and finding that the child continued gradually to revive, and that all present were becoming more composed, Mrs. Herbert began to inquire into circumstances.

"Madam," said Mrs. Slade, "I know no more about it than you do. Nance went, according to your orders, to desire the nurse to wait on you, and in about half an hour or so, she came running back with the child in her arms, looking ghastly pale, and twitching up its little limbs as if it was going to die. I thought, ma'am, if we ran with it to your house it might be dead before we got there; so Mrs. Godfrey was kind enough to come in and advise what she thought for the best, till you came. But, Nance, you should tell madam the first beginning of it, and if such a thing was that you had let the child fall, or any thing, let it be ever so bad, the best and only way is to speak the whole truth at once, in hopes that it may be remedied." "Mother," replied Nancy, "I told you I had not hurt the child—and I had not. When I went to Mrs. Wilkins's house I knocked, and knocked, but nobody

answered; and I thought I heard a little faint moan, so I would not come away without seeing. Then I knocked at Mrs. Burroughs's house, next door, and nobody answered there. I thought, perhaps Mrs. Wilkins had gone in there, or had left her key if she was gone any where else; but as I could find no one, I looked under the thatch where I had before seen her put the key, and there I found it. When I got in I found the baby lying in the cradle in its night-clothes—and it moaned piteously, and its little limbs and face were drawn,—then it changed and seemed to smile, and then it turned black round the mouth. I saw it was very ill, but did not know what to do for it, and as nobody was near, I ran with it as fast as I could to mother. I hope it will not die—but indeed, even if it does, I tell all the truth." Nancy had till this time suppressed her feelings and acted with a promptitude and steadiness beyond her years. She had, unbidden, made up the fire, brought down soft towels to rub the baby dry, and the blanket to wrap it in, and had kept the door shut after every one

who passed in or out, besides performing many other little services with a readiness of mind in which persons twice her age are often painfully deficient; but now the urgent call on her self-possession seemed to be over—she could no longer conquer herself, and at the close of her narrative burst into a flood of tears. Mr. Cummings then kindly addressing her, said, "Be composed, my good girl; we have no doubt of your having spoken the truth, and, I may add, that if this child should be restored, as I trust it will, you will have the unspeakable satisfaction of having been instrumental in saving its life. If after the struggles you witnessed it had been left undisturbed, and had sunk into a settled sleep, in all probability it would have awoke no more." Being still satisfied with the appearance of his little patient, Mr. Cummings took his leave, promising to call again in a few hours' time. Mrs. Godfrey also, as her services were no longer necessary, said, she should be glad to return to her family, but desired they would not hesitate to call on her for any assistance that might be wanted; and know-

ing that the accommodations of the cottage were very poor, she asked Mrs. Herbert if she would please to go in with her and take her tea at the farm-house. This offer Mrs. Herbert accepted readily, for she wished for an opportunity, not only of expressing her thanks for the kindness shewn on this occasion by the farmer and his wife, but also of asking these respectable neighbours some questions relative to Mrs. Slade and her daughter, under whose care she had thought of placing her little niece, at least for the present. This proposal the farmer's wife by all means encouraged, saying, she had no doubt whatever of their conscientious fulfilment of any charge they might undertake. She was sure the child would be managed with careful attention, tenderness, and cleanliness, and she thought it very likely, that, under such treatment, its health would rapidly improve. She also, having had a large family of her own, kindly promised occasionally to look to the child and point out any thing that might be for its benefit.

Mrs. Herbert mentioned the suspicions of the medical gentleman as to the cause of the child's illness, and observed that, even if the nurse had not been guilty of administering to it any thing dangerous for the purpose of making it sleep, she had at least been criminally negligent in leaving an infant shut up in the house by itself. It struck her also as very singular, that the child was dressed in its night-clothes, as though the nurse had left it with the intention of not returning till evening. This brought to the farmer's recollection that a little fair was held that day in a neighbouring parish, and that as he was returning from some grounds of his, he had seen the two families of Wilkins and Burroughs going full-dressed towards the scene of village gaiety: this was about an hour before the alarm of the child's illness. "I could not help noticing it," observed Mr. Godfrey, "for Mrs. Wilkins, when she saw me hung down her head, and looked so shy and foolish. I take it she had not forgotten the reception I gave to her malicious slanders of an

honester and better woman than herself." He then related the circumstance, and from what that base woman had said to herself, Mrs. Herbert also felt little doubt of her being the author, or at least the organ, of the misrepresentation to Mrs. Morgan, which had so much distressed poor Mrs. Slade and her daughter. She determined, therefore, to take the earliest opportunity of bringing the matter to an explanation; but for the present her attention was engrossed by the circumstances of the child, and the dismissal of its unfaithful nurse.

As it appeared pretty evident that Mrs. Wilkins had left home with an intention of pursuing her pleasures for some considerable time, and had, in all probability, given the poor babe such a dose as she expected would compose it to sleep for the time; unless she chanced to hear any report of the child's removal, it was not likely that she would return till evening. Mrs. Herbert, however, determined to meet her on her return, and at once discharge her from her employ. As both the time and the manner

in which they might return from a scene of intemperance and dissipation were very uncertain, it was not pleasant or prudent for a female to venture alone; therefore Mrs. Herbert requested that Mrs. Godfrey would have the kindness to accompany her, and the farmer also offered his services to protect them from any insults to which they might be exposed. After tea they again visited the child, which they found considerably better, though still very languid and drowsy. Mrs. Slade willingly undertook the care of it, through the approaching night, but hesitated at accepting Mrs. Herbert's offer of placing it permanently under her charge on the same terms as Mrs. Wilkins had hitherto undertaken it. Nancy pleaded hard that the little Emily might be permitted to remain with them, and promised faithfully to do every thing in her power by way of assisting in the care of it; and Mrs. Slade acknowledged that her principal objection arose from a fear that it might be supposed or represented, that Nancy had detected and reported Mrs. Wil-

kins's neglect of the child with an interested motive. But Mrs. Herbert assured her that she had already had suspicions of Mrs. Wilkins's unfaithfulness quite independently of the discoveries of the present day, which had been purely accidental as it respected Nancy, and which she felt herself bound to reflect upon with gratitude, as over-ruled by Providence for the preservation of the child's life. However, it was not material that it should then be decided on how long the child was to remain with her. She would at all events be willing to keep it a day or two, in the course of which something might arise to determine her mind.

Between seven and eight o'clock Mrs. Herbert and her companions went on their proposed expedition. After waiting some time, the two families returning from the fair made their appearance. The men, half intoxicated, were roaring out a vulgar song —the women looked angry and disappointed, and the poor children were fretting with weariness. Such is often the close of a day's pleasure as it is called! Mrs. Wil-

kins was alternately soothing and shaking into quietness the crying infant she held in her arms, and which Mrs. Herbert got near enough to observe was dressed in the best clothes of the little Emily. The wretched woman, on seeing the very last of all persons whom she would have wished to see, anticipated the detection of her guilt, and turned pale with consternation. On entering the house, the first object was a phial on the mantel-shelf, and she hastily approached, as if to remove or destroy it; but it had already caught Mrs. Herbert's observant eye. She pointed it out to the farmer, saying, "That must be secured and shewn to Mr. Cummings." In an instant his stout oaken stick was interposed. "Woman," said he, in a terrible voice, "you touch that phial at your peril; this instant give it up, or you shall stand the chance of being tried as a murderer." All power of resistance seemed to be taken from her—the phial was secured—and, when exhibited to Mr. Cummings, fully confirmed his suspicion, that laudanum had, on this occasion, been

given to the child, as well as strengthened the general probability that the same means had been resorted to whenever convenience, ease, or pleasure, rendered it desirable to put a troublesome infant out of the way. Mrs. Herbert severely but coolly reprimanded Mrs. Wilkins' shameful conduct in thus injuring and deserting a helpless infant committed to her care, and desired her immediately to collect its clothes, and receive the small sum due to her; for she could no longer be entrusted with a charge which she had so much abused.

Mrs. Wilkins now attempted to answer with some degree of insolence, saying she was treated unjustly in the child's being removed from her without notice—and she supposed she had to thank favourites for it, who had injured her to serve their own ends. She was soon quieted, however, by another hint from the farmer, that her conduct had been such as exposed her to punishment by the laws of her country; but that, in consideration of her numerous family, her injured employer did not intend

to take any measures of that kind against her. "I shall, however," interposed Mrs. Herbert, "feel it an incumbent duty, if I should ever hear of children being entrusted to your care, faithfully to state your character and conduct, which prove you totally unfit for so important a charge." Having said this, Mrs. Herbert quitted the house, leaving Mrs. Wilkins to her own reflections.

The next day Mrs. Herbert wrote to her sister, the mother of little Emily, an account of all that had passed, and had the satisfaction to add, that the dear little one was much better, and that the doctor considered it out of danger. In reply, Mrs. Pearce expressed her earnest desire to visit her sister and her child as soon as possible, but her health was at that time in too delicate a state to bear the journey. She therefore entreated, that Mrs. Herbert would continue her kind superintendence of the child, and wished that it should remain in the care of the worthy people who had shewn it so much tenderness and compas-

sion. In the letter was inclosed a Two Pound Note, which Mrs. Herbert was requested to lay out to the best advantage for the good little girl who had been the instrument of saving Emily's life.

It will be supposed, that Nancy was highly delighted at this noble and unexpected present. Mrs. Herbert asked her in what manner she would have it laid out, but Nancy desired to refer it back to her; saying, she was not in particular want of any thing. Now this was not because she was over-well supplied, for her little wardrobe was very scanty; but it was because she was of a humble, contented, and frugal mind, which led her to desire not great things, but to be satisfied with a moderate supply, and, by cleanliness, tidiness, and carefulness, to make every thing go as far as possible. However, Mrs. Herbert thought that a part of this money might be very properly devoted to the purchase of some useful articles of clothing. She also explained to Nancy the nature and advantages of Savings' Banks, which were just

then first introduced into the neighbourhood, and where she might with safety and interest deposit such part of her present wealth as she intended to spare, and add to it from time to time any part of her farther gains. Accordingly it was resolved to expend one pound, and lay by the other. The former fitted her out decently for her first appearance as Mrs. Neville's scholar, a call which her kind friend foresaw, though she did not; the latter lay quietly by, gathering around it many an added trifle from her own earnings—and, together with the annual interest, growing into an important sum against an important occasion, to which most young women look forward, but for which very few prepare.

As soon as Mrs. Herbert's mind was a little at rest from her anxiety about the child, she remembered her promise of endeavouring to clear Mrs. Slade's character with her too hasty employer, Mrs. Morgan; and, calling on her, expressed much regret that any circumstances should have arisen to awaken in her mind suspicions relative

to the character of a poor woman who had hitherto, through a long series of years, and through peculiar difficulties and trials, maintained it fair and unblemished. "If," said Mrs. Herbert, "I am not asking an impertinent question, it would be a great satisfaction to me to know whether your suspicions arose from your own observation, or from intimations received from other persons? I am sure you would feel as much pleasure as I should myself in acquitting the poor woman from unjust accusations; therefore I the more freely ask any question which may tend to elicit truth."

"Certainly, ma'am," replied Mrs. Morgan, "I should be very glad indeed to think as well of the poor woman as I have done. I must confess that, for my own part, I never witnessed any thing in her conduct, or in that of her child, but what was perfectly proper, except in the one instance which induced me to speak my mind; and, indeed, I had a very high opinion of them as being remarkably honest, industrious, and civil. But from some hints accidentally

thrown out by a neighbour of theirs, I have been led to suspect that there is a great deal of deception and mere outside appearance about them. She mentioned to me several things which their circumstances could by no means justify: one in particular, that of their being able to purchase a pair of blankets at two-and-thirty shillings; which, ma'am, you must allow is rather out of character for persons who professedly can but just keep themselves above the parish. But what confirmed my suspicions was, the woman's bringing me home some cowslips. I will shew them to you, ma'am. Here they are in the bag, just as she brought them to me; they barely make four quarts, though she endeavoured to persuade me that when fresh-gathered they were four pecks. Now this is a thing, ma'am, that very likely you may understand better than I do. I may be mistaken, and if so, I should wish to acknowledge my error—but it seems to me utterly impossible."

"I am very happy," replied Mrs. Herbert, "in having it in my power to set this

matter to rights. My friend Mrs. Finch purchased six pecks of cowslips when fresh-gathered; they have been laid by till the present time. I saw them measured only the day before yesterday, and found that they turn out barely six quarts; and when we consider the difference of bulk in a pound of tea when in a dry or when in a moist state, I really do not think that the difference of the cowslips is more than correspondent. If it would be any satisfaction to you to see the cowslips measured, my friend will most willingly permit you to do so."

"Oh! no, ma'am—I should not think of desiring any such thing; I am sure your word is quite sufficient. Indeed, I begin to think it was hasty and foolish of me to take up such a notion; but really, if I had never heard any thing amiss of the woman, I should never have suspected it, though she might have brought me home but a quart."

"I believe I shall have the farther satisfaction of convincing you, that the earlier suspicions you had been led to entertain

against this poor woman were also unfounded. May I ask if those unfavourable intimations were not made by a woman named Wilkins?"

"Yes, ma'am, they were—I cannot say to the contrary; but I hope no injury will arise to her in consequence of it. I believe she has a little relation of yours to nurse, and I should be very sorry to make mischief against her."

"Whatever you may have said to me, Mrs. Morgan, has not had that effect; but her own base attempts at the injury of an unoffending neighbour have justly recoiled on her own head. Exactly in the same way has she attempted to lower the character of Mrs. Slade and her daughter in my eyes, and in those of a neighbour; but though her malicious efforts in neither instance succeeded to her wishes, they have served to bring to light a most praiseworthy action of that industrious, generous, and self-denying little girl, which will not be permitted to go unrewarded. She purchased, instead of two blankets at sixteen

shillings, one at six, (I have ascertained the fact of the draper who furnished the article,) it was entirely the produce of her little extra exertions and careful savings, and it was purchased for the comfort of her often-afflicted parent. I assure you, I have seen the blanket myself, and am satisfied, by my own judgment as well as Mr. Marriott's testimony, that it is not of more than six shillings' value. I know too, that there is not another blanket in their house, excepting one so old and thread-bare as scarcely to be warmer than a sheet."

"But there shall be another before many days are past," replied Mrs. Morgan, with great agitation, "and any thing else that is in my power to do for their comfort! I am sure they richly deserve it, and from me it is no more than is due; indeed, it is out of my power to requite the injury I have done them by my foolish, hasty suspicions. Indeed, madam, I feel not only ashamed, but sincerely grieved, that I should have acted in this manner; and I hope and trust it will be a lesson to me never again to listen

to ill-natured stories of people who know every body's business better than their own. As to that Mrs. Wilkins, I will certainly give her a severe reprimand when I next see her in the shop."

"It is very probable," observed Mrs. Herbert, "that she will give you no opportunity of so doing. From circumstances which have since arisen, she will most likely conclude that her falsehood is detected and exposed, and will be inclined to give her custom to a fresh shop; or if she should not, I fear she is too far advanced in habits of malignity and falsehood to be easily sensible of shame or reproof. However, that matter I must leave to your own judgment, and am happy in having so far accomplished the object of my call, as to have removed from your mind any unfavourable impression it had received against, I believe, a very upright and deserving character."

Mrs. Morgan was as good as her word, in endeavouring to make reparation for the injury she had thoughtlessly inflicted on the poor woman. She called herself to apolo-

gize for her conduct, and brought a match for the blanket, and several other useful things, and was from that time more than ever disposed to be a warm friend to Mrs. Slade and her daughter.

This matter set at rest, Mrs. Herbert no longer wished to suppress the communication of Mrs. Neville's kind intentions towards Nancy. Accordingly, all the ladies called one fine evening at Mrs. Slade's cottage, and made the proposal. The countenances of the good woman and her daughter expressed that they were overwhelmed with gratitude; but at the same time there was a something that seemed to say, "How is it possible to spare her?" However, after a little consultation, it was happily arranged. Mrs. Neville said she should only require the attendance of the girls three hours every morning, in which time she should instruct them in reading and needlework; and that, as she would request her friends to send needlework for them to do, having received her directions, they might then take it home to finish, and bring it again for her appro-

bation when complete. In this way, if they were quick, ingenious, and industrious, they might, at least, earn as much as they could do at any of the usual employments to which girls in the country are put, and which occupy the whole of their time, as well as also acquire the capacity for obtaining a permanent livelihood in a more comfortable and respectable way.

Mrs. Slade's health had been considerably injured by going out to laborious work beyond her strength; and the care of the infant, added to what other employment she could undertake at home, and in which Nancy might still assist, would, it was thought, furnish her a sufficient maintenance, with less fatigue and inconvenience. Mrs. Herbert observed, that the improved appearance of the child sufficiently proved Mrs. Slade fully competent to the task she had so reluctantly undertaken; and if the engagement were suitable and advantageous to herself, she had no doubt of being able to recommend her to a succession in the same line.

With heartfelt gratitude to their benefactors and to that God who, in fulfilment of his gracious promises, had put it into their hearts to be thus kind to the fatherless and the widow, these worthy people accepted the generous offer that was made them, and earnestly hoped they might prove more and more deserving of the patronage they had obtained. The ladies then took their leave, having desired Nancy to meet her young companion at the Grove on the following Monday morning at nine o'clock.

The parents of Betsey Moore, whom they next visited, could feel no hesitation in accepting the offer made them; for this poor little girl, having had her hip put out in her infancy, was totally unfit for any laborious employment; and though very handy with her needle, had, in general, only been able to obtain coarse work from the shops at a very low price. They had, therefore, had many misgivings in their minds, if it should please God that they should be taken away, how poor Betsey would ever get her living. Often had they sighed for the means of

getting her instructed as a mantua-maker or straw worker—and now, to have the offer of being qualified for so respectable a line of life, and that without expense, far exceeded their warmest wishes. Betsey could only shed tears of joy and gratitude, and her parents felt far more of both than they could express.

As these visits had been paid just at the time that Nancy would have attended her little instructress, the lesson was lost for that evening; and as Betsey was anxious to get a little conversation with her friend about their new prospects, the next afternoon she obtained leave of her mother to walk over and spend an hour or two at Mrs. Slade's, instead of Nancy coming to her. When she arrived, she found Nancy hard at work in the garden. She had just taken in hand to finish the task from which her mother had been diverted by her sudden arrival with the sick baby; and though nearly a fortnight had passed since, the weather and other circumstances had prevented the work being resumed till now.

Nancy pressed on to get the beds cleared before the child should awake from its afternoon's sleep, that she might be ready to carry it out for the air. Betsey would not hinder her friend, but brought out a little stool, and sat beside her with her knitting in her hand. The beds reached across the width of the garden, except a little flower border on each side. At one corner of the carrot bed grew the apple-tree, and at the other the white-heart cherry, which in the early part of the summer had been so cruelly plundered. As Nancy dug up the carrots, she chanced to spy a small clasp knife. "Well," said she, as she picked it up, "whose can this be? It is neither mother's nor mine, I am sure—and it has lain here some time, it is become so rusty. I really should not wonder if it belonged to them that robbed the trees."

Having cleaned and examined the knife, they found rudely cut on the handle C.W.W., and they could not think of any person in the neighbourhood whose name answered to those initials, except *Charles William Wil-*

kins, Mrs. Wilkins's eldest boy. This brought to Nancy's mind what she had seen in their house at the time. "Ah!" said Betsey Moore, "we cannot be sure; but I fear it is too likely to have been he. It gives me many an hour's pain to see my poor brother Richard so intimate with him, and it grieves father and mother sadly; for they say, they are sure he is a bad boy, and one that will lead Dick into mischief. Perhaps Dick would know the knife."

"We had better," observed the kind-hearted Mrs. Slade, "say nothing about the matter. We don't know whose the knife is. It would be cruel even to suspect the poor boy of what perhaps he did not do, and the name of which might injure his character for life; besides, after what has passed with that family, I would above all things avoid whatever seemed like bearing them ill will. It is hard to tread upon the fallen."

Then Nancy recollected a passage which she had lately read in her spelling-book, and which Betsey told her was taken out of

the Testament—"Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father, which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." So Nancy entirely agreed with her mother, and wished that the knife (which was quite spoiled) should be thrown away, and no farther questions asked about it.

But Betsey earnestly begged that her brother might see the knife; "For," said she, "if once he knew that Charles Wilkins had done such an action as this, I am sure he would soon break company with him. He may not mind, as he should, what father and mother say about Charles's wildness; yet with all his faults Dick *is* an honest boy, and would not have any thing to do with a thief: but if he gets into bad company he may in time come to be as bad himself."

Mrs. Slade was prevailed on, by this

laudable motive, to let Richard Moore see the knife, which he immediately recollected to have seen in Charles's possession, and also to have heard him say, that he had lost it: and he faithfully promised to have no further connexion with one who, he was fully convinced, must be a bad boy. "Indeed," said he, "I very much fear that I am to blame in this matter; for it was in my company that he first saw the fruit. Don't you remember, Betsey, you asked me one morning to call up Nancy Slade? and that morning I met Charles. He had been snaring some rabbits, which I did not think right; but he said his father had sent him. He walked with me, and while I knocked at the door, he jumped up and looked over the high paling, and said, 'What two fine trees there are, loaded with beautiful fruit!' Perhaps I ought to have mentioned it then; but indeed I did not think he would have been such a wicked boy as to take them. But it was my fault for going with him, and I will surely try and make amends to Mrs. Slade for the

mischief he has done her."—Dick was as good as his word. When his work was done he often came in and dug up a bed, which, to do it properly, is almost too hard work for a woman; besides, it was a saving of time to Mrs. Slade and Nancy which they knew how to value. As Dick was often employed in the farmer's garden, he had gained a little skill, which was very useful to his friends, and they often smiled and said, that their crops were now so well timed and their garden so much more productive since they had his advice and assistance, that the cherries and apples were paid for ten times over; while Dick always felt thankful that, through their means, the character of an acquaintance was timely brought to light—which, had the connexion been suffered to continue, might have ruined his own for life. This he felt most sensibly when a few years afterwards, after several smaller punishments, Wilkins was sentenced to transportation for a robbery.

It now only remains to inform my young readers how the school went on. Nancy

and Betsey made rapid improvement under their kind instructress. They learnt spelling, reading, English grammar, writing, and every sort of useful needlework; besides which Nancy was employed one morning in a week in Mrs. Finch's kitchen, where she had an opportunity of learning the best methods of house cleaning, and other domestic work. For this poor Betsey's lameness disqualified her; but the girls were so much attached to each other, and influenced by such truly good dispositions and Christian principles, that there was no room to doubt but that, if according to Mrs. Neville's plan they should be connected in their future course of life, the duties for which each was best qualified would be performed with mutual good-will, and without murmurings and disputings.

Little Emily continued to thrive under her improved management, and soon became a very lovely girl. At two years of age, when she could run about and speak plainly, and had happily past the measles and hooping-cough, it was Mrs. Pearce's wish to have her home, and, in her stead, commit to the

careful nurse, the charge of an infant brother. This was a severe trial to Mrs. Slade and Nancy; but it was a trial several times repeated; for they had the charge, in succession, of seven children of the same family—a charge which they fulfilled with uniform satisfaction to their employers. Every summer Mr. and Mrs. Pearce paid a visit to Mrs. Herbert, and brought their whole family. Thus a recollection was kept up in the minds of the children of the endearing associations of nurse's cottage, and each child was charged through life to be a friend to good old nurse and her daughter. Not, however, satisfied with this indefinite security, when the youngest child (which had remained with nurse four years) was taken home, Mr. Pearce settled an annuity of twenty pounds on Mrs. Slade for her life, and of ten on her daughter after her decease, as a reward for their faithful services.

When Mrs. Neville had had her pupils under her care about three years, she found that old Dame Barlow was become quite superannuated, and resolved on trying their abilities for the office for which she was pre-

paring them. Betsey was still small of growth, and delicate in her appearance, but Nancy was a stout girl, and began to look womanly. By a steady adherence to the rules of their friend and governess, and a uniform mildness and firmness in their deportment towards the children, together with consistency and propriety of general conduct, they succeeded in establishing and maintaining an authority above their years; and, under the continued superintendence of its worthy foundress and her family, the school flourished beyond expectation. Almost every family in the village derived some benefit from the establishment. The very poorest had their children well instructed free of expense; those who could afford it, made a small remuneration in proportion to their circumstances, and even the higher classes acknowledged their obligations to Mrs. Neville's benevolence, inasmuch as her school became quite a repository for good and useful servants—a staple commodity, which in that, as well as in many other places, had become exceedingly scarce.

After a few years the school had increased

so much that Dame Barlow's cottage, where it had hitherto been conducted, was found insufficient for the accommodation of those who attended. Mrs. Slade's cottage was at this time much out of repair, and in order to second a work of general utility, Mr. Sims, the landlord, was induced to part with it at the request of Mrs. Neville, who nearly rebuilt it in a much more commodious form, adding another story for the purpose of a school-room, and also an apartment for her young governesses, who resided together in perfect harmony. When Nancy was about two-and-twenty years of age, she received an offer of marriage from the brother of her friend and partner, Richard Moore, who ever since his separation from young Wilkins, had been a steadily improving character, and was now in a station of great confidence and respectability on Farmer Godfrey's farm. After due deliberation, and obtaining the sanction of her judicious friends, Nancy gave her consent to this proposal; and as the time approached for her marriage, she drew out her little fund

from the Savings' Bank, with which she purchased a neat four-post bed, furniture, and bedding complete; a set of chairs, six silver tea-spoons, and an eight-day clock, which was a piece of furniture to which she had long aspired. Richard having also been careful, was able to contribute his share toward furnishing their habitation in a decent, respectable manner. They have now a young family coming on, and Nancy has repeatedly had occasion to acknowledge, that, though Betsey's affliction has prevented her from taking a large share of active duties, she has been uniformly ready to extend her services in every department within her power. Good old Mrs. Slade spends the peaceful evening of her days in the society of her children and grandchildren; and Nancy, when looking round on her comforts, (especially if she happens to see her old companion Patty go by in her dirty, miserable, slipshod finery,) feels her heart rise in gratitude to God, who blessed her with so good a parent. She looks back on the days of early industry and frugality as

the beginning of prosperity and comfort, and says, not with a feeling of self-exaltation, but of gratitude to God and her friends,— "See what a penny *can* do!"

THE END.

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