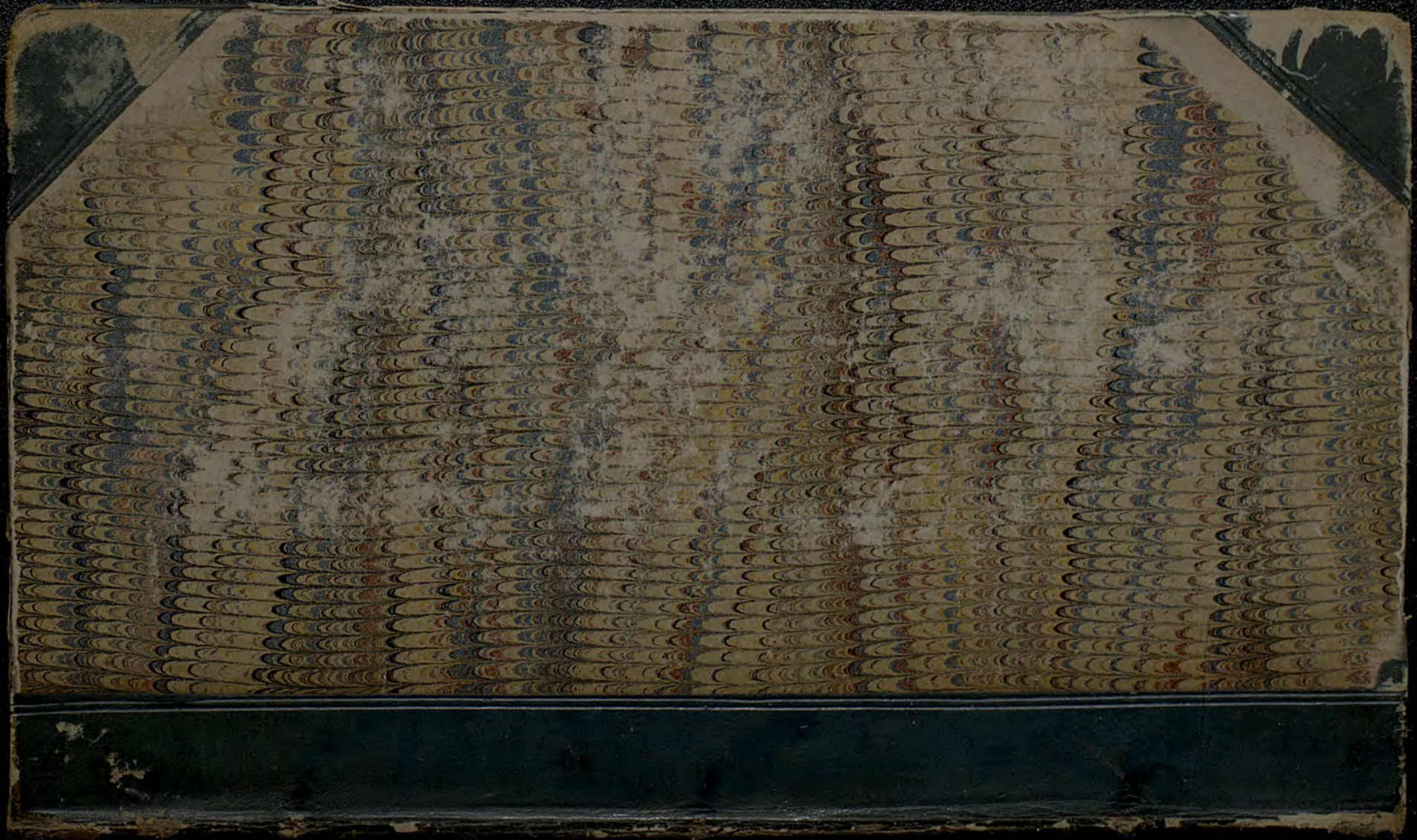

Miss Simpkins
Devizes Castle Grounds

OAKDALE COTTAGE;

OR,

THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS.

AN ORIGINAL TALE,

DEDICATED TO

THE YOUNG LADIES OF HER OWN ESTABLISHMENT,

BY

HARRIOT REBECCA KING.

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DEDICATION.

My beloved Pupils,

In dedicating the following Tale to you, I am actuated by that affectionate solicitude for your happiness, which, I trust you have not now to learn, has ever been the governing principle of my conduct towards you. You already know what is the only basis on which that happiness can be founded: it is not, therefore, so much my design, in these pages, to lay anew the foundations of morality and religion, as it is to impress on your minds the many conversations which we have held together on those subjects.

If you honour my little book with the same gratifying attention which has so often delighted my heart in our moments of social intercourse, I am satisfied. And, if it will give you pleasure to learn that you have in any way contributed to my comfort, be assured that the contemplation of your expanding merit has often solaced me under the pressure of both mental and bodily suffering.

With every good wish, I am,

My beloved Pupils,

Ever most affectionately yours,

H. R. KING.

Fulham. 1828.

PREFACE.

THE author is well aware that her pages have no claim to novelty either of incident or sentiment. Her chief aim has been to preserve the simplicity of nature throughout, and to bring no example before her young readers but such as will be found capable of being understood and copied by all.

It is with unfeigned diffidence that she appears before the public at large; but the kind support which, on a former occasion, she experienced, through the private exertions of her powerful and excellent friends, encourages her to hope

for indulgence and consideration; and she ventures to intimate, that, should this performance meet with approbation, it is her intention immediately to continue the same characters in a sequel.

Fulham;
December 3, 1828.

OAKDALE COTTAGE.

CHAPTER I.

A bright fire was blazing in the comfortable sitting room of Oakdale Cottage, and the footman was closing the last shutter, when Arabella Danvers, a lovely little girl of ten years old, exclaimed, as she retreated from the window, "Are you certain, my dear mamma, that this is really and indeed the shortest day in the whole year?" Mrs. Danvers smiled, as she replied in the affirmative.

"Well," resumed the child, "to me, it has appeared *very very* tedious. How long do you think it will be now, before Edward and Henry arrive?"

At this instant the notes of a distant horn

were heard, and soon after a carriage drove rapidly up the gravel. Arabella and her sisters were already in the hall, and Mrs. Danvers had reached the door of the apartment, when her impatient boys met her embrace. The affectionate mother folded them to her heart; but the words of welcome died upon her lips, and her agitated feelings found relief in tears.

It was to her a moment of intense interest, of mingled happiness and anguish; but she had early learned to control her own sensibilities; and when the first struggle had subsided, she was enabled to contemplate the happy group before her, with a serene countenance and a grateful heart.

Mrs. Danvers was the only child of amiable but unfortunate parents, and had become an orphan before she attained her seventeenth year. The child of adversity, she had yet been nurtured with the utmost tenderness, and had received, from her lamented mother, a judicious and finished education.

When she lost this last surviving parent, she was reluctantly received into the family of her paternal aunt, who, with a mind too proud to see her niece dependent on her own exertions for support, possessed a heart too narrow to appreciate her merit, and too insensible to feel her sorrows. In vain did the afflicted girl request permission to seek such a situation as her education had qualified her to fill; she was told that Lady Nuneham could never acknowledge her brother's daughter as a private governess, and that if she chose to follow her own inclinations in this respect, she would alienate herself entirely from the future protection of her family.

Young and inexperienced as Emma Harrington then was, she saw the imprudence of thus casting herself, as it were, "upon the world's wide stage," and resolved, for a time at least, to relinquish the independent hopes she had formed.

Lady Nuneham had no daughter, and her dissipated course of life left her little leisure

for domestic society. She had been thought a very pretty woman, and was unwilling, as yet, to give up her claims to admiration. These she well knew would be disputed by general opinion, should she bring her beautiful niece into public ; and therefore Emma was only known in the very narrow circle of private visitants. The solitude thus imposed on her was every way advantageous. The precepts of her beloved mother were her constant themes of meditation and her undeviating rules of practice. She eagerly improved the opportunities which a good library afforded of storing her mind with useful knowledge ; while, at the same time, she did not neglect the more ornamental acquisitions necessary to the success of her wishes, which still secretly pointed to the path of honourable exertion.

Lady Nuneham had two sons: Sir Robert, (then abroad,) and Henry, who was at Oxford studying for the church. The health of the latter had ever been delicate ; and he on that account spent the first vacation

which followed his cousin's reception at the park, in travelling. Emma had, therefore, been a resident with her aunt nearly twelve-months, when Henry arrived for the Christmas recess. She dreaded this addition to the family, imagining it but too probable that the sons resembled their mother in disposition, and she retired early on the evening he was expected, in order to postpone the unwished-for introduction. What then were her emotions, when, entering the breakfast room the next morning, she beheld a young man in whose countenance she retraced every feature of her own lamented father, while the same benevolent kindness which had distinguished him, seemed renewed in the voice and manner of the gentleman before her!

The cousins had never met before; for, though Mr. Harrington had always kept up the appearance of cordiality with his sister, and had sometimes visited at Nuneham Park, yet he was too well aware of her imperious disposition, to wish that his wife

and daughter should be subjected to its influence, and therefore had never pressed their intimacy with the family.

Lady Nuneham had not approved her brother's marriage; and his subsequent pecuniary misfortunes had mortified her pride and rendered her indifferent about him, so long as his poverty was not an open reproach to her. That this would ever be the case she did not fear; for Mr. and Mrs. Harrington had learned to bend their wishes to their fortune; and, so long as they lived, their united exertions were successful in providing honourably for themselves and daughter.

Henry Nuneham had known and loved his uncle; he was aware how much himself resembled him in person, and he was therefore at no loss to account for Emma's excessive agitation at their meeting. It was later than usual when Lady Nuneham made her appearance, and her niece had sufficiently overcome the violence of her emotion to exchange the compliments of the morning with composure. Henry observed with pain the very

cold and repulsive demeanour of his mother towards Emma; nor could he avoid feeling that his own reception was not so affectionate as he had flattered himself he might expect.

Lady Nuneham indeed had never regarded her sons with equal tenderness; Sir Robert possessed all the little love which she could spare from herself, while Henry was considered as rather an encumbrance on the family estate, and was treated either with indifference or absolute unkindness.

It was soon evident to the anxious eye of Emma, that Henry's health, which had been partially restored by his Summer excursion, was again on the decline; and, with the affectionate earnestness of a sister, she conjured him to have immediate advice. He smiled at her entreaty, and assured her that he was as well as usual. "It is true," said he, "that I have a slight cold, but it will go off in a few days without medical assistance." Alas! the fears of his cousin were but too prophetic. This slight cold, so

lightly regarded in its first approaches, settled on the lungs of its victim; and, three weeks after his return home, his life was pronounced to be in imminent danger.

In this period of suffering, no kind maternal hand smoothed his pillow, nor administered to his wants. Lady Nuneham either could not, or would not believe the physician's report; nor did she deem it necessary to give up any of her numerous engagements to attend the sick bed of her son. Here, however, one ministering angel did attend; one affectionate nurse continually presided. Emma Harrington watched over the brother of her affections, with a sister's tenderness and a mother's care. Aware of his own danger, and perfectly resigned to the event, the amiable young man expressed a wish to see his friend Edward Danvers, and Emma wrote express, requesting his attendance.

Mr. Danvers was four years Henry's senior. He had already taken orders; and, fully sensible of the sacred dignity of his profession, his every thought and action was

governed by the precepts of Christianity. Henry both loved and reverenced him ; nor was his regard unreturned. Danvers duly appreciated the character of his young friend, and delighted to assist him in those studies, which were to qualify him also to become a minister of the gospel. He lost not a moment in obeying Miss Harrington's summons, and reached Nuneham Park much earlier than the invalid expected.

The meeting was almost overpowering to both ; Henry was evidently much exhausted; but, collecting his remaining strength, he requested his friend and Emma to join him in the last solemn offices of religion. This comfortable duty performed, he requested to see his mother. The distress of Emma at this request assured him of what he had before only feared. " My mother is gone out this evening," said he faintly, " is it not so ?" Emma could not reply, but she tenderly pressed the hand which was extended towards her. A passing expression of anguish crossed the brow of the sufferer, but a smile

of ineffable tenderness and compassion succeeded, as he said "Emma, to you and Danvers, next to God, I commend my mother and my brother. Tell them it is my dying prayer that we may meet again." He paused a moment and then added, "Danvers, you have one sister, let Emma be to you as another." He feebly pressed their united hands between his own, raised them to his lips, and gently breathed his last sigh.

His afflicted friends continued to gaze on the placid countenance before them, as if uncertain that it had indeed ceased to be the living index of the soul. At length Danvers softly removed the hand of Emma from the now stiffened grasp that held it, and the next instant received her fainting form in his own arms. She had watched four successive days and nights in her cousin's room; and had, during that time, only been refreshed by short and broken intervals of repose. Fatigue and sorrow had now completely subdued her strength, and Danvers, as he gazed upon his lovely burthen, almost

feared that she, too, was gone for ever. He, however, hastened to remove her from the scene of death, and had reached a couch in the drawing-room when Lady Nuneham entered.

Her ladyship stood petrified with astonishment. "Mr. Danvers," she at length exclaimed, "I am glad to see you; but what is all this disturbance about? Is Henry worse?" "He is—dead, madam," said Danvers, almost inarticulately, and shocked beyond expression at the tone of indifference in which the question was asked. Even Lady Nuneham's habitual apathy was moved by this reply. It was, indeed, totally unexpected; for, though she had on the morning of that day, been compelled to believe the existence of danger, yet, she persuaded herself that it was only in a remote degree, and certainly not so immediate as to warrant her declining all engagements for the evening. "Tomorrow," said she to her attendant, "he may be better; at all events,

it will then be time enough for me to stay at home."

The morrow, however, dawned not for Henry. But it found his wretched mother writhing under the rod of avenging conscience, and groaning beneath a stroke which, though human strength had not the power to avert, yet human tenderness might certainly have softened.

Mr. Danvers did not leave Nuneham Park until after the funeral of his lamented friend; and, when he did leave it, 'twas with a determination to return and rescue the amiable Emma from her painful state of dependence.

His father had left him in possession of a moderate competency, and he had the promise of a very valuable living in Berkshire. Fortune was to him, therefore, perfectly indifferent, and he was impatient to present his orphan sister with so valuable a friend and companion as he felt assured Emma Harrington would prove to her. It is needless

to say that Lady Nuneham did not oppose the marriage of her niece; who, at the age of nineteen, became the happy bride of the Rev. Edward Danvers.

Never was the hope of felicity more fully realised than in this union. Congeniality of sentiment, of character, and of pursuit, endeared them to each other; their fortune was equal to their wishes, and an increasing family promised to perpetuate their virtues.

Mrs. Danvers had presented her husband with five children, the eldest of whom was entering his fifteenth year, when Mr. Danvers was called from home to take possession of an estate in Ireland, bequeathed to him by a distant relation. Mrs. Danvers would have accompanied him, but the illness of her sister-in-law, who was still unmarried, and resided with them, induced her to forego the intention.

With much anxiety the whole family awaited the return of one so truly dear; but the appointed day arrived, and he came not.

Another, and another succeeded, and then followed the dreadful intelligence that the packet in which he sailed from Dublin had foundered in the channel, and every soul on board perished.

Though Mrs. Danvers felt this terrible trial as a woman, she sustained it as a Christian, and exerted herself to calm the anguish of her children. In this melancholy task she was aided by the sister of her lamented husband; and, in a few months, she was able to arrange the future establishment of herself and family.

Prudence as well as choice dictated a retired situation, and Oakdale Cottage, with a few acres of land, was purchased as their place of residence.

Mr. Danvers had added to his original patrimony by an economy which had always strenuously opposed any idle display of luxury, while it never refused to obey the dictates of benevolence; he had thus secured a small competency for each of his children, which the recently acquired estate in Ireland

augmented to a comfortable income for the whole family.

It was not until twelve months after the death of her husband, that Mrs. Danvers could prevail with herself to separate her beloved children. At the expiration of that time, Edward and Henry were placed with an old and valued friend of their father, resident in Yorkshire, while the three girls continued their studies under the superintendence of their mother and aunt at the cottage.

Another year had now passed away, and Mrs. Danvers wrote for her sons to spend their holidays at home. They arrived on the 21st of December, as we have already seen; but we must take another Chapter for the more particular introduction of them, and their sisters, to the reader.

CHAPTER II.

Edward Danvers had completed his sixteenth year, and Henry was entering his thirteenth, at the time our narrative commences.

Edward, though always cheerful, was yet sedate and meditative. Under less judicious treatment, he might have become a visionary enthusiast; but, happily for him, his ideas had expanded beneath the guardian shadow of paternal watchfulness. His father had been to him a companion as well as counsellor; and, accustomed to converse freely with him on every subject which might occupy his thoughts, Edward's judgment had early attained a correctness, and his principles a stability, which gave him a decided advantage over many of his young acquaintance. This superiority did not, however, restrain

him from joining with ease and kindness in their recreations and amusements; his manners were always gentle, and his heart disposed to aid in the happiness of others; but solitary communion with himself and his own thoughts, was, next to the society of his mother and sisters, his best and dearest enjoyment. From his father he inherited a taste for poetic composition, and the cultivation of this talent, while it was not suffered to interfere with more useful studies, often occupied his leisure hours.

Henry was a lively affectionate boy, who generally acted on the impulse of the moment, without allowing himself time to reflect on the propriety of his decisions. He certainly always intended to do right, but it often happened that he did wrong, merely from habitual thoughtlessness; and, when such a result occurred, no repentance could be more sincere, while it lasted, than Henry's. Often did Edward reason and his mother reprove, and Henry loved both, and frequently resolved, for their sakes, to check

his favorite propensity for what he termed "fun;" but, on the very next temptation, his good resolutions would perhaps vanish, and he had to begin the work of reformation anew.

Emma, the eldest girl, now nearly fifteen, was the very counterpart of her mother, both in person and mind; delicacy of constitution rendered her often an invalid, and had given to her countenance a pensive and peculiarly interesting expression. Like Edward, she was of studious habits, and her manners were distinguished by a retiring diffidence, equally removed from the folly of affectation and the forwardness of conceit.

Arabella and Louisa were twins. They were both lively and amiable children, and bore a striking resemblance to each other.

Such was the group which surrounded the fireside of Mrs. Danvers on the evening of her sons' return. Edward was seated between his mother and Emma, alternately looking at and conversing with each, while Henry occupied his favorite place on the

couch with his two younger sisters. The glow of sisterly delight communicated from the heart to the cheek of Emma, and beautifully flushed her delicate complexion, while her eyes beamed with unusual animation.

"My dear sister's health appears much improved," said Edward to his mother. "How delighted, how grateful, I feel for this happy meeting! But where is my aunt?"

"She is on a visit to her afflicted friend, Miss Mandeville," said Mrs. Danvers, "but she will return the day after tomorrow."

"I am impatient to see her," resumed Edward, "our Christmas party would be incomplete in her absence."

"Oh!" exclaimed Henry, starting from the couch, "a Christmas party, Edward! will mamma treat us with a Christmas party? that will be delightful, indeed! Jack Headington, whose father used to live in London, says, they always had such fun on Christmas-day!"

Edward looked very serious as he replied:

"On Christmas-day, Henry, I hope we shall have only a family party, and I doubt not that you will spend it quite as happily as Jack Headington used to do. Another time we will talk more on this subject; but now, only tell me, do you not feel very comfortable here, with Arabella and Louisa, although there is no 'fun,' as you say, going forward?"

Henry's ingenuous countenance acknowledged the justice of his brother's observation, as, returning to the couch, he threw an arm round the waist of each sister, and exclaimed, "Give me but such an *armful* of *comfort* as this, and I think I could relinquish *fun* for ever."

The whole party smiled at this eccentric speech, and Mrs. Danvers resumed the conversation with her eldest son and daughter; secretly resolving, however, at a proper opportunity, to renew with Henry the subject which Edward had just waved. Emma was eager to learn every particular connected with the comfort or improvement of Edward,

and expressed a hope that, during his stay, her own studies would be assisted by him.

"I know," said she, "that I can impart nothing to you in return; but, I do flatter myself, that our tastes are somewhat similar, and I have looked forward to this vacation as to a kind of mental harvest, when I might hope to reap both pleasure and advantage from the society and conversation of my dear brother."

Emma's voice faltered, and her brother with much emotion replied, "I, too, have anticipated this period as one of rational and heartfelt pleasure; and, believe me, Emma, I cannot know a higher gratification than at this moment, when I am permitted again to resume my place in the dear circle of home."

Mrs. Danvers inquired for Mr. Langley, the worthy preceptor of her sons.

"He is quite well," replied Edward, "and I have reason to hope that we shall see him before the vacation is over. Miss Langley is now in London under the care of Dr.

A——, an eminent oculist; her mother is with her, and Mr. Langley will join them almost immediately. Hopes are entertained that the poor girl will recover her sight; and, should those hopes be realised, they will all visit Berkshire before their return."

"How long has Miss Langley been blind?" asked Emma.

"More than twelve months," replied Edward, "she was a most promising girl, and elegantly accomplished; this afflictive dispensation followed the measles, when she was little more than fourteen."

"Is she very melancholy?" asked Emma.

"Not generally so," said her brother, "she possesses that true fortitude which sanctifies affliction, and I have heard her say that, since her eyes have been closed on the pageantry of this world, her hopes have more freely expanded on the prospects of another."

"Undoubtedly," said Mrs. Danvers, "Providence tempers its most severe decrees with mercy; and, in the instance before us,

it is evident, that God has made up in mental superiority, what he has thought proper to withdraw in the endowments of sense. Miss Langley, even in her state of comparative helplessness, must be a source both of comfort and exultation to her worthy parents."

"But," asked Emma, "is she entirely shut out from all amusement and employment?"

"No," said Edward, "she is very fond of netting and similar employments; in music she is quite a proficient, and I have often wept to hear the melting tones of her voice, as it accompanied the harp, with words of her own composition, and adapted to her own peculiar situation;

'The blind old man of Scio's rocky isle,'

with all his loftiness of thought and expression, has often been thrown aside, when the pathetic minstrelsy of Adelaide Langley met my ear."

"Oh!" said Emma, "how it would gratify me to receive her here and administer to her wishes. Do you think, Edward, that

she would honour me with her friendship?"

"I do not doubt it, my dear sister," he replied, "your mind is akin to that of Adelaide. I have often named you to her; and, if it please Heaven to restore her sight, I anticipate much felicity in presenting you to each other. Mrs. Langley, too, is deserving the regard of my dear mother, and Mr. Langley's many virtues will be found to strengthen the claim, which, as the friend of our lamented father, he already holds on our affections."

"I trust," said Mrs. Danvers anxiously, "that Henry is equally sensible with yourself, my dear boy, of the regard due to this worthy man."

"Henry, my dear mother, is always respectfully attentive to Mr. and Mrs. Langley; and, I believe, he would lay down his life for Adelaide."

Henry looked up with a delighted smile. "Yes, Edward," he enthusiastically exclaimed, "I do, indeed, almost adore Miss

Langley! she is so kind, so gentle, and," added he, bursting into tears, "so very, very much afflicted."

Adelaide did assuredly possess a sister's place in the affections of both her father's pupils. She was an only child, the loss of sight rendered her averse to general society, and the only young people with whom she had ever enjoyed a particular intimacy, had left the neighbourhood a few months previous to Edward and Henry's reception into Mr. Langley's family. The presence of these brothers had considerably lightened her affliction. With the one she could at all times enjoy an interchange of reason and sentiment; and from the other, she could command an inexhaustible store of amusing chat and anecdote. Her sweet and cheerful temper accommodated itself to the disposition of each, and occasioned esteem and admiration to blend with the compassionate interest which both felt for her peculiar misfortune.

The party at Oakdale Cottage continued

their interesting conversation, until the languid eyes of the travellers warned them to seek repose.

Fervently grateful were the orisons which Mrs. Danvers that night offered to Heaven. She had looked forward to the return of her sons, with many contending emotions. Should they be restored to her improved in general knowledge, would they still retain those simple principles of duty which their beloved father had so strongly inculcated, and which were so entirely essential to their best interests? This was a question which had often suggested itself to her thoughts, and it was now most happily solved.

Edward appeared the living representative of his lamented father, whose memory he fondly cherished, and whose example he sedulously followed. How dear to the heart of the widowed mother was this resemblance of her first-born boy! How did she gaze on his features, and dwell on the tones of his voice! and with what delight did she contemplate the affectionate deference of her

younger children, as they received his caresses, or listened to his remarks!

In Henry she hailed the same affectionate, ingenuous disposition, which had been his characteristic from the cradle, but it was now blended with a politeness hitherto foreign to his manners. His conversation, too, was occasionally sensible and improving, though the love of *fun* still predominated rather more than she wished. The most favorable auguries, however, might be drawn from the manner in which he had received Edward's admonition during the early part of the evening, and Mrs. Danvers rejoiced in the belief that both her sons were equally worthy of her approbation.

Emma was not less delighted with the society of her brothers; but her thoughts were chiefly occupied by the interesting Adelaide Langley, and she closed her devotions with a fervent prayer for her recovery.

The next morning rose with a clouded aspect, and, before breakfast was over, the

rain descended in torrents; and, as Henry observed, "pattered most dismally against the windows." Thus circumstanced, the young people cheerfully accommodated themselves to the necessity of remaining within, and Edward retired to write to Mr. Langley.

Mrs. Danvers and her daughters took their work, and Henry offered to read to them. His mother smiled as she accepted his polite proposal, for she did not think it probable that her volatile Henry would long continue such an employment. But she was mistaken in her conjecture, and much pleased with his attention to the subject she had chosen for him, which was a manuscript essay on self-control.

"This is my aunt's production, is it not?" said he, as he concluded.

"Yes," said Mrs. Danvers, "it was written for the instruction of Arabella and Louisa."

"And Henry too, I presume;" said he with a smile, which Emma significantly returned.

"Ah, well!" he resumed, "it is not the first kindness I have received from the same dear hand, and I intend to requite her affection by forsaking all my faults, if I can."

"And do you doubt that you can do so, my dear boy?" said his mother.

"Sometimes I do," replied Henry, "and Jack Headington, who is three years older than I am, says that 'tis of no use for me to try to be steady, because 'tis against my natural disposition."

"Who is this Jack Headington?" asked Emma.

"Why, he is the nephew of Captain Henbury, who resides very near Mr. Langley, at Wilbury."

"And does Captain Henbury hold the same opinion?" inquired Mrs. Danvers.

"I never heard him say so; indeed I know he often lectures Jack, who really is much more unmanageable than ever I was."

"Do you suppose that your brother and Mr. Langley think you unable to amend your faults?"

"No; they tell me it is very possible, if I set about it in earnest; and, indeed, I am determined to do so, if you will all promise to assist me."

"That we will willingly do, my dear boy," said Mrs. Danvers, "but you must seek higher assistance than ours, to bless your endeavours, or they can never be successful. You have been early instructed in the nature and duty of prayer; but this, though the first, is not the only step necessary to advance your improvement. You must carefully avoid all society which would lead you astray, and resolutely refuse your assent to any arguments which would persuade you that, because perfection is unattainable to man, it is useless for him to attempt reform. Will you remember this, Henry?"

"Indeed I will," replied the attentive boy; "it is what Edward and Mr. Langley both tell me; but I am too, too easily tempted from my duty; and, ah, mamma! nobody knows what I suffer, when I remember my faults, and consider how very different I am

from my brother, and how very unworthy to be the child of such parents!"

"It is a salutary suffering, my beloved son," said Mrs. Danvers, much affected; "a suffering that will, if you neglect not the sacred warning, insure your everlasting felicity. Yes, I feel that both my dear boys are worthy of their lamented father; with his name, they possess his virtues, and they are even now a crown of glory and rejoicing to their widowed mother."

Henry threw his arms around his mother's neck, and wept upon her bosom. At this moment Edward entered with a portfolio of his brother's drawings, which called forth the admiration and approval of the whole party; and Henry's eyes again beamed with animation, as he explained the subjects to his younger sisters, and dwelt on the pleasure he experienced in prosecuting this delightful study.

In these and similar occupations, passed the first day of the Christmas Holidays; and, when evening arrived, Arabella no

longer doubted, that this was "really, and indeed, one of the shortest days in the whole year."

CHAPTER III.

The next day brought an addition to the family party, in the person of Miss Danvers. She was received by the young people with every expression of joy; and, by their mother, with the most affectionate welcome.

Miss Danvers was ten years younger than her late brother; consequently, her age did not now exceed thirty. It was, perhaps, rather too early to place her on the old maid's list; yet this, it seemed probable, would be her destination. Her affections were early fixed on a most exemplary object, whose premature death had tinged her

earthly prospects with melancholy, and inclined her wishes towards celibacy.

In the circle of her brother's family, she found that affectionate sympathy, which was all her heart now desired; and here she also found ample room for the exercise of all those kindly feelings of domestic attachment, which nature has peculiarly implanted in the female breast. Her absence from Oakdale Cottage had exceeded three months; and it would be difficult to say who, of its little society, experienced the highest happiness in her return.

The first inquiries had passed, and the evening circle again formed round the fire, when Edward observed, "I think I remember Miss Mandeville's features, although I have not seen her since Arabella and Louisa were christened."

"Miss Mandeville is *my* godmamma," exclaimed little Louisa, "is she not, my dear aunt?"

"Certainly she is, my love," replied Miss Danvers; "we both answered for you and

Arabella at the font; consequently, you are equally the god-children of both, though Arabella is named after me, and yourself after Miss Mandeville."

"And who is my godpapa?" asked the child.

Miss Danvers looked tearfully towards her sister, who replied, "Your godpapa, Louisa, is now in Heaven; he was Miss Mandeville's brother."

The child became silent and thoughtful; she did not know that Captain Mandeville would have been her uncle had he lived; but she saw the agitation of her beloved aunt, and sat anxiously watching her countenance.

Miss Danvers quickly resumed her usual serenity, and, turning to her nephew, said, "My friend is much changed since the period you mention, Edward; you would not now recognise her debilitated frame, worn down as it is by a long course of suffering; but you would be charmed with her conversation and interested by her appearance. Her health has been better for the last two

months than it had been for years before, but she is still a recluse. I often wished for you to enliven our solitude, though it was certainly rather unreasonable to suppose that, at your age, you could find pleasure in the society of two old maids."

"My aunt only does me justice by the supposition, that I can at all times enjoy her society;" said Edward, gallantly bowing, "and Miss Mandeville, as her friend, has an undoubted claim to my regard. Indeed," added he, with a smile, "such old maids, as you are pleased to term them, never fail to interest my heart; and Mrs. Langley often rallies me on my attentions to a maiden lady, a cousin of hers, who often visits at the vicarage."

"You mean Miss Randolph," said Henry. "Oh, mamma!" he continued, "Edward has introduced her story in one of his own poetical sketches.—Do favor us with it, brother?"

All joined in this request, and Edward read the following Poem:

THE EVENING HOUR.

There is an hour to contemplation given,
When she inspires young hearts with thoughts of Heaven;
When the wrapt spirit seeks its native sphere,
Spurning the bonds which would confine it here;
Leaves the low thraldom of its present state,
And soars, on higher themes to meditate.

And such an hour is this—so calm, so still,
That even guilt might lose the thought of ill,
And, kneeling, suppliant to the throne above,
Invoke the mercy of redeeming love;
While, stealing gently through the good man's breast,
Glides the sweet hope of an eternal rest,
And earth, and earthly things, before him pass
Like the dim shadows from a darkened glass.

For me, I'd not exchange the silent bliss
Which lulls my passions in an hour like this,
For all the treasured heaps of fortune's store,
And all the purchased pleasures wealth can pour.

I love to stand upon the rocky steep
Whose summit overhangs th' expansive deep,
And mark the evening sun's declining ray
Smile on the ruined battlement's decay;

While rising, as it were, from ocean's breast,
In all the pride of conscious beauty drest,
Eager the well remembered port to hail,
Glides into sight the homeward bearing sail.
Onward she comes, majestically grand,
Her sailors cheering as they near the strand,
And wildly many a bosom throbs on shore,
As bursts th' announcing gun's repeated roar.
Meanwhile, the setting orb's resplendent beam
Throws on the farthest sea a ling'ring gleam;
The sparkling waters seem its disk to lave,
And fancy sees it swallowed by the wave.

The evening gun has fired; the bugle call
Sounds from the distant batt'ry's terraced wall.
Slowly I turn my steps in thoughtful mood,
And seek the homeward path along the wood,
Musing on distant friends, and days long past,
Too brightly flushed with happiness to last.
In strains now sweetly faint, now loud and clear,
The bird of ev'ning breaks upon mine ear;
And as she sings, the syren seems to tell
Of love once warm, and still remembered well.

There is a hallowed charm, a nameless power,
That sways the mind in twilight's pensive hour;
Then flies the tender thought to those we love,
Then they are present, then they round us move;
Then, in the throbbing breast, revives again
The bliss of meeting, and the parting pain.

E'en the lone heart, by years of sorrow chilled,
Feels, at this hour, its whisp'ring sadness stilled,
And dwells serenely on the pictured face,
Which still presents the smiles of youthful grace,
Glowing as they were wont. That eye's dark fire
Was formed no transient passion to inspire;
And she remembers well the happy days
When its bright beams met hers in tender gaze:
Well, too, she recollects the joyous blush
Whose vivid tinge that manly cheek would flush,
If suddenly they met. But, all is o'er;
When last they parted, 'twas to meet no more.
He lives—but not to her. Absence hath changed
His first affection, and his heart estranged.
Long hath she ceased to murmur; but, not yet,
Can she the cherished hopes of youth forget;
And never at the altar doth she bend,
But fervently for him her prayers ascend,
That heav'nly guidance may his ways direct,
Assist his counsels, and his path protect.

No fiction this, by dreaming Fancy penn'd,
Truth gives the outline, facts the subject lend;
Few words suffice, where these alone preside—
Matilda should have been Sir Herbert's bride;
To him her guileless vows were early given,
Approved on earth, and registered in Heaven;
One nurse had cherished both, one home they knew,
They'd shared each other's sports and studies too;

For Herbert was an orphan, early left
On the wide world, of kindred ties bereft,
His dying father in his latest pray'r
Bequeath'd the babe to Randolph's friendly care.

And Randolph faithfully discharged the trust;
Affectionate, and uniformly just:
Herbert revered him as a parent mild;
And, as a sister, loved his only child.

Maturer years maturer wishes brought;
He won the smile, he won the heart he sought;
Then had their vows been at the altar sealed,
But war's stern mandate called him to the field.
She armed him for the battle—and, he went,—
How many a fervent prayer on high was sent
For that young warrior's weal! How many a night
Did that fair maiden, by the moon's pale light,
Start from a restless couch and troubled sleep,
Press to her lips his portrait, gaze, and weep,
Dwell on past hours, try their lost joys to sum,
And look with fearful glance towards years to come;
Then, sinking on her pillow, strive in vain
A momentary pause of rest to gain.

Weeks, months passed on—and joyful tidings came,
Herbert was foremost in the ranks of fame.
This publicly was said,—his private pen
Dwelt not on martial deeds nor martial men;
Affection's language it expressed alone,
And told Matilda he was still her own;

Blessed assurance! how it soothed her soul,
And raised her spirits from regret's control!—
Again he wrote. But oh! the style was changed;
'Twas formal, cold,—was Herbert then estranged?—
Alas! he was. That letter proved the last,
An agonizing space of silence passed;
And poor Matilda learned that foreign charms,
Had lured the youth for ever from her arms.

The rose of health has faded from her cheek,
Her dark blue eyes with saddened lustre speak;
No more, the liveliest of the lively throng,
She speeds the hours with dance, and lute, and song.
Yet, in the deep expression of her glance,
Lives there a spell that might the soul entrance.
Hers is a sadness calm and dignified,
Which none may lightly question, none deride;
And not a sullen, stern, and selfish grief,
That seeks nor resignation, nor relief;—
She has a smile for joy, a tear for woe;
And, round the hearth, where social feelings glow,
Her cheerful converse even yet conveys
A warmth like that which graced her happier days.

Returning from the ocean's winding shore,
The pathway leads me by Matilda's door;
I see her form, her ev'ning anthem hear,
It soothes my feelings, but commands a tear;
And, thence pursuing still my lonely way,
Mem'ry retains the soft seraphic lay,

And Contemplation, chastened in its course,
Speeds from creation, to creation's source.

Oh! such an hour is worth a thousand years
Of all the bliss which mortal life endears.
Then mortal joys in their true shape are seen,
As kind illusions which but intervene
To cheer the darkness and beguile the way,
Till the light dawns of an eternal day.

Oh! may my soul that glorious dawning hail,
When all the ties that bind her here shall fail!
Clothed in the robe of her Redeemer's love,
May she find entrance to the realms above!
Her errors pardoned, and her crimes forgiven,
And all she prized on earth, restored in Heaven.

CHAPTER IV.

It is not our intention to detail minutely the events of each day as it passed, at Oakdale Cottage, during the Christmas holidays. The chief design of this little book is to preserve some of the conversations in which Mrs. Danvers and her family delighted to indulge; and which may perhaps be found to interest, as well as instruct, many of our young readers.

The morning of Christmas-day presented an atmosphere unusually clear for the season, and the family enjoyed a most delightful walk of nearly a mile to the village church. Edward had received the rite of confirmation within the last year, and was now about, for the first time in his mother's presence, to present himself at the Communion Table. His mind was entirely en-

grossed by the solemnity of the occasion, and his conversation naturally bore reference to his feelings.

"I have been both shocked and astonished, my dear mother," he said, "to witness the too general disregard which young people of my own age pay to the blessed sacrament. Since the late confirmation at Kingston, only two young persons of our village, besides Miss Langley and myself, availed themselves of this inestimable privilege, notwithstanding the many forcible and affectionate exhortations which Mr. Langley delivered from the pulpit."

"It is, indeed, much to be lamented," said Mrs. Danvers, "that a mistaken principle of caution on the part of many parents, is too often a difficulty in the path of those whom their spiritual guides have pronounced duly qualified to partake in the most holy mysteries of our religion. I remember the outlines of an argument on this very subject, which my own excellent mother once held with a lady whose daughter had expressed a

wish to attend the communion immediately after confirmation. This wish her parents opposed, on the ground that she was yet too young to understand or to perform the duties which it would impose on her. In vain my mother pleaded that, by the act of confirmation, she had bound herself to the performance of *all* the duties of Christianity, and that the sacrament was an appointed means of grace to assist her in the fulfilment. The prejudice which had originated in a neglect of scriptural study was not to be overcome, and the unfortunate girl, instead of being brought to the altar, while her heart yet retained the solemn impression it had received by the renewal of her baptismal vow, was terrified by the fear of unworthiness, which her misjudging parent inculcated, and thus excluded herself from the highest consolation which our nature is capable of receiving."

"And this," said Edward, while his lip quivered with emotion, "might have been my lot; for, though the path of rectitude is

open to all, and the way made plain and easy, by the word of Christ, and by the public ministry of Christian pastors, yet who shall say that his feet would not have erred, had private precept and parental watchfulness been withheld from him? For myself, I can never forget what I owe to the guardians of my own infancy, nor can words express what I felt when first the sacred elements touched my lips, and I experienced the holiness of that communion which permitted me, with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of Heaven, to laud and magnify the glorious name of my Redeemer!"

"Ever cherish such feelings, my dear Edward," said his mother, "they are an internal evidence of our high destination, and a blessed encouragement to our dearest hopes: would to God that the infatuation of worldly prejudices did not so often prevail against them!" Edward was silent, but his heart responded to his mother's prayer, as they entered the church together.

It had always been the custom of Mr. Danvers to assist the evening devotions of his family with music; and the practice was now doubly hallowed to them, by the filial recollections which it cherished. On Christmas-day he had particularly delighted in these exercises, and he had once written and composed a simple melody for the use of his children upon this occasion. On the anniversary we mention, Emma, after playing an anthem adapted for the day, selected this piece, and, accompanied by her brothers and sisters, sung the following words:

HYMN FOR CHRISTMAS-DAY.

Once more we meet,
Once more we greet,
The season with its joy;
And thoughts of love,
Below, above,
Our grateful hearts employ.

Nor mirth profane,
Nor causeless pain,
This sacred day should know;
But bliss refined,
Through ev'ry mind,
In peaceful current flow.

Let Christian zeal,
For mankind's weal,
A pure petition raise;
And piety,
With bended knee,
Ascribe to Heaven the praise.

A pause of deep feeling succeeded this little performance: at length Henry observed, "You were right, Edward, in desiring only a family party for today; and yet I could almost wish for Mr. and Mrs. Langley."

"You need not check such a wish, my dear boy," said his mother, "Mr. and Mrs. Langley would be a most welcome addition to our circle."

"I imagined," replied Henry, "that you considered it wrong to have parties on Christmas-day."

"I mean only in the general acceptation of the term," said Mrs. Danvers; "I do not consider it necessary to decline all society."

"I cannot perfectly comprehend what you mean, by the general acceptation of the term," resumed Henry.

"I am afraid," said Mrs. Danvers, "that its too general acceptation excludes all serious thought and conversation, and that they who are never content without a large party on Christmas-day, are not often found to celebrate it as the nativity of Our Saviour ought to be celebrated."

"Now," said Henry, "I perfectly understand your meaning; you would not approve of feasting, and dancing, and cards!"

"Assuredly I should not," said Mrs. Danvers, "nor can I think that you, my dear boy, would willingly join in such amusements on this day."

Henry blushed deeply as he replied, "A few weeks ago, I fear, I could have done it, for Jack Headington was always talking about their Christmas parties, and when I

told him that I thought they must be wrong, because they were so very different from my dear papa's practice, he said, it was all nonsense, and that there was no commandment against it."

"Is not the commandment of your own heart against it, my dear boy?" said his mother. "I appeal to every better feeling of your nature. Could you celebrate the birth-day of your own papa, believing, as you do, that he is now a saint in Heaven; could you, I repeat, celebrate the anniversary of his birth, in rioting and folly?"

Henry felt the full force of his mother's appeal, and sobbed aloud. She paused to recover her own voice, and then, with tremulous articulation, proceeded.

"I need not remind any of my beloved children, that they owe the most grateful veneration to the memory of their deceased father. From the first dawn of reason in their minds, he was ever on the watch to implant the principles of truth, and to eradicate the seeds of evil. In the morning, and

in the evening, and at noonday," his prayers were offered up for their everlasting welfare; and he omitted nothing that could insure their temporal comfort. Example gave weight to his precept, and every thought, word, and deed, was in perfect unison with his doctrine. But, in all this, he only performed an imperative duty, imposed on him by Providence; a duty, the neglect of which must have incurred the forfeiture of his own immortal hopes; and, in the humility of his soul, he exclaimed, "I am an unprofitable servant; I have done that which was my *duty* to do." Yet, none of you will say, that, because God's commandment both pointed out and enforced the performance of this duty, on the part of your lamented father, you are under the less obligation to respect his memory; and none of you, I am sure, would feel it in unison with your feelings to celebrate that memory in the way I have already mentioned. Were it even possible for you to do so, the world would be loud in its censure,

clamorous in its condemnation. I seek not then, my children, for the authority of any particular commandment of Scripture, to enforce the due observance of this day. At all times, I would rather appeal to the principles of affection, than of fear, in matters of religion; and I am persuaded that you will not need other arguments to bias your conduct. You will remember, that, great as are the benefits which you derive from that excellent parent who is now for a time taken from you, they are as nothing to the sacrifice which your Saviour has made for you. No merit of man, no command of God, induced this sacrifice. Freely He came, freely He offered himself for all. He shrunk not from shame and insult, from suffering and death; and, from that height of glory to which he is now exalted, he still looks down upon us with the eyes of mercy and compassion, willing to forgive our infirmities, to assist our prayers, and to intercede for us with the Father. Let us then be always ready to offer Him the free

and cheerful sacrifice of the heart, carefully avoiding all unseasonable gloom, and all unprofitable and profane mirth; and let us keep his Holy Day as a day sacred to the best affections of our nature. You, my Henry, I trust, now perfectly understand the grounds on which I object to such parties as your young acquaintance alluded to. That they are much too frequent, I am well aware. But, entirely setting aside other and more forcible arguments, they must surely be condemned on the principle of inconsistency. No man, in his right senses, would, year after year, give a jovial entertainment in honour of a fellow-man whose life had been sacrificed for him. Such a proceeding, to say the least of it, would be abhorrent to all the usages of society. And surely it is much more than *equally* inconsistent, so to celebrate the incarnation of a God who offered himself a willing sacrifice for his creatures. I do not, as I before said, consider it necessary to decline all society on this day. On the contrary, the

interchange of hospitality and the communion of christian fellowship are most peculiarly appropriate to this season; and I shall always be happy to see our circle enlarged by the presence of those friends whose hearts can, in unison with our own, feel the full value of the blessings which we commemorate."

"Mr. and Mrs. Langley may surely be included in that number," said Edward; "and I join in Henry's wish that they were here. Their opinions on this subject entirely coincide with your own, my dear mother; and, like yourself, Mr. Langley aims at touching the heart, while he convinces the reason. He says, 'Let the affections be first secured, and the judgment will assuredly follow.'"

"Daily experience confirms the truth of his maxim," said Mrs. Danvers. "Let a child be taught to read her Bible as a matter of privilege, aud she will delight in the study; but set it before her as a task, and

she will lay it aside with indifference, as soon as that task is finished."

"I remember," said Miss Danvers, "that, when I was sent to school, after my poor mother's death, I was much surprised to see one of the young ladies learning a portion of Scripture as a punishment. I had been till then taught to consider my Bible as my most precious study; and a circumstance so very different, made a deep impression on my mind."

"It is a most lamentable error in judgment," said Mrs. Danvers, "but I fear that it has too general influence, even at the present period; and really it is not so much a matter of surprise as of regret, that so many young people wholly neglect their Bibles after they leave school, when it is considered that they have been accustomed to view them as instruments of punishment, and are liable to meet some memento of early delinquency every time they open the book."

"But how is it possible that any young ladies can consider it a punishment to study the Scriptures?" said Emma.

"They are taught to consider it such, my dear sister," said Edward, "and it is a lesson they too easily learn."

"I cannot comprehend it," said she; "there is no privation I should feel more than the want of my Bible."

"That is precisely what poor Adelaide says," replied Edward.

"Oh," said Emma, "how I should delight to supply that loss, by reading to her!"

"I know you would," said Edward, "and you would be delighted with her remarks too; I have often derived improvement from them. They breathe peace and consolation under every trial. Such, too, is the general style of the melodies she composes. Here is one which I took down the other evening, as she sang it extempore. You know the air; pray favor us with it."

Emma instantly complied, and sang the

following words, to the air of "The Sicilian Mariner's Hymn."

Though our path below
Lead through scenes of woe,
Yet, oh! why should we despair?
Let the sacrifice
Of our prayers rise
To Heaven, and plead for mercy there.

The great God above
Oft afflicts in love,
Oft, in love, doth sorrow send;
And tho' we repine,
His decrees divine
Still our highest hopes transcend.

Glory be to thee,
God of Majesty!
Lord, and Father evermore!
We bless thine only Son
For our redemption,
And the Holy Ghost adore.

CHAPTER V.

To Mrs. Danvers the offices of benevolence and charity were most delightful duties; and, while her hand relieved the necessities of poverty, the persuasive accents of her voice instructed the immortal soul in the way to eternal happiness. It was to her a sweet and sacred employment to visit the house of mourning, and to pour balm on the wounded spirit. In these visits she was often accompanied by her daughter, whom she sometimes left to read to such of the sick as desired it.

It was a few days after Christmas-day that Emma had accompanied her mother on one of these benevolent errands, and had remained an extra half-hour at the request of an aged invalid. The shades of evening were advancing, and she was proceeding quickly on her way homeward, when she

perceived a travelling carriage approaching at a rapid rate. The evening was so extremely gloomy that she could but imperfectly distinguish the forms of the travellers as they passed her; but, almost immediately afterwards, the postillion stopped at a point where the road branched off in three directions, and inquired which he must take. A gentleman let down the glass, and replied; but Emma was too distant to hear what he said. The direction post was wanting, and the travellers appeared at a loss. At this moment Emma came up, and the gentleman, with a benevolent smile, immediately addressed her. "Can you oblige me, young lady, by pointing out the way to Oakdale Cottage?"

"Certainly, sir," said Emma, with some surprise; "I am going thither."

The gentleman looked earnestly, and even affectionately, in her countenance, and seemed about to speak, when Edward appeared, and, eagerly approaching the carriage, exclaimed,

"My dear sir! what a delightful surprise! Where are Mrs. and Miss Langley?"

"They are here;" said the gentleman, putting down the steps. "Come, get in, and introduce them to your sister, for my heart already acknowledges this young lady as the daughter of my friend."

"You are not mistaken," said Edward, handing her in, "and I am most happy to present my sister Emma to my friends Mr. Mrs. and Miss Langley."

Mr. and Mrs. Langley received her with affection, and Adelaide extended her hand. Edward united it with that of Emma, and said, "The union of minds is already complete; may God bless this introduction as the prelude to lasting friendship."

"Amen!" said Mr. Langley, with much emotion, as he looked on the tearful countenance of Emma, and beheld the sightless orbs of his own daughter raised to heaven.

Mutual inquiries now passed, and Edward learned that the operation which Miss Langley had intended to undergo, was postponed by

the severe illness of Dr. A——; who, it was feared, would not be able to resume his practice for two or three weeks. Mr. Langley had, therefore, determined on spending the intervening time at Oakdale Cottage. The surprise of the family on his arrival, was only equalled by their delight.

It was many years since Mrs. Danvers had seen Mr. Langley, but he was the valued friend of her deceased husband, (with whom he had regularly corresponded until the time of the latter's death,) and the meeting was extremely trying to the feelings of both. Mrs. Langley was an entire stranger; Mrs. Danvers, however, was well aware of her merit, and the introduction seemed but a renewal of former friendship.

But it was Adelaide, the amiable, the afflicted Adelaide, who excited the most lively interest in all. She was not quite sixteen; but her form was uncommonly tall and elegant, and her countenance, notwithstanding her blindness, exceedingly beautiful. Her eyes were partially shaded, but

their drooping lids and long dark lashes gave a soul-felt expression to her features; and sometimes when particularly animated or affected, she raised, as it were, her glance to Heaven, it was almost difficult to believe that the spirit of light had indeed left its throne.

Emma gazed on her with an intensity of feeling that pleased, while it subdued, the heart of Mrs. Langley.

"My poor child will be happy in the friendship of your daughter," said she to Mrs. Danvers; "and you, my dear Madam, must rejoice in the possession of such children."

"I am, indeed, most thankful to Providence," replied Mrs. Danvers, "and truly grateful also to yourself and Mr. Langley, for your parental attention to my dear boys."

"They are a most charming addition to our domestic circle," returned Mrs. Langley. —"I assure you their society has been a source of real satisfaction on many accounts, but more particularly in regard to my poor Adelaide. The tedium of her affliction has

been much lessened by their fraternal attentions; and you would be astonished to witness the general buoyancy of her spirits. The last two or three weeks have, however, been very trying to them: she has suffered much from the anxiety of suspense, she is weakened by the course of medicine she has entered on, and she has been exceedingly harassed by the noise and bustle around her. This visit, I trust, will be every way beneficial; I see she can already enjoy the lively chat of her friend Henry, and smile at the prattle of his little sisters."

"They do form an interesting group," said Miss Danvers; "and I think Mr. Langley does not look the least happy of the party."

"Mr. Langley," said his lady, "is always happy when he has a juvenile circle around him, and, at present, he does indeed appear to enjoy his situation."

Adelaide, at this instant, was seated between Edward and Emma; and Henry was on the footstool before her, discussing a

variety of subjects in his usual eccentric style. The sweet smile that played round her mouth, and formed the dimple in her cheek, proved she was an amused auditor. Her father had drawn his chair nearly opposite to her; and, with Arabella and Louisa, one on either knee, joined occasionally in the conversation; while the three eldest ladies sat together on a couch observing them.

"Well, Henry," said Mr. Langley, "you have told us a great deal about the pleasures you have enjoyed since you came home; now, pray, let us hear what mischief you have done."

"Nay, my dear Papa," said Adelaide, "Henry is not often mischievous; and I am sure that he has no recent delinquency to burthen his conscience, or he could not have entertained me so cheerfully as he has done. Am I not right, Edward?"

"Indeed you are," replied he; "Henry's conduct has been very highly satisfactory to our dear mother, and I think that he now

understands the difference between rational enjoyment and mischievous folly."

"Yes," said Henry, "I have been truly happy since I came home; and now you are with us, my dear sir, my satisfaction is complete."

"I shall, however, try if it be not capable of addition, before I leave you," said Mr. Langley: "if Mrs. Danvers will permit me, I think of introducing you to the family of my old friend Mr. Barton, who is lately come to reside at Selbury, about ten miles from hence."

"I shall be much pleased with the introduction," said Mrs. Danvers; "for I have heard him highly spoken of: he was your near neighbour, I think?"

"He was, ma'am; and a very valuable man he is; not the less so, perhaps, for having been bred in the school of adversity. He has recently been necessitated to part with his paternal estates in Yorkshire, and is now, with his family, I fear, obliged to

struggle for a subsistence. Is he not a distant relation of yours? The late Sir Robert Nuneham was your uncle, I believe?"

"By marriage, only," said Mrs. Danvers; "Lady Nuneham was my father's sister."

"Ah! I remember now," resumed Mr. Langley. "Barton, however, is descended from a first cousin of the present Sir Robert's grandfather, and is, if I mistake not, the heir-at-law to the estates."

"I have not seen Sir Robert for many years," said Mrs. Danvers; "he is the very reverse of his lamented brother; and since Lady Nuneham's death we have not visited. It was my poor cousin Henry's wish that we should continue on friendly terms; and, in compliance with his dying injunction, my dear husband held many serious conversations with Sir Robert, after his return from abroad; but neither he nor his mother could appreciate the motive, and, when she died, all intercourse between the families ceased."

"Do you think it likely that Sir Robert will ever marry?" asked Mr. Langley.

"I should have thought that family pride alone would lead him to do so," replied Mrs. Danvers; "but, I hear, he follows a dissolute life, and, from my knowledge of his disposition, I think it probable that even this consideration will not induce the sacrifice of his boasted liberty."

"I sincerely wish it may not," said Mr. Langley; "my friend Barton would appropriate such an income as it ought to be appropriated; and I hope one day to see it in his possession; though, I believe, he does not allow himself to indulge any expectation on the subject. He is bringing up a family of four sons and three daughters with the impression that they have only their own exertions to depend on. Two of the former are studying professions, but the eldest had been educated with the prospect of succeeding to the family estates, and he now assists his father in managing the farm they have taken at Selbury. I know few young men whom I esteem more than I do Albert Barton; but he, too, has had his own peculiar trials.

Before the misfortunes of his family, and while himself was yet very young, he was attached to a young lady, who appeared to appreciate his worth, and to return his affection. When he had lost the means of supporting her in the style to which she had been accustomed, he did not wish her to continue bound by a promise given under other circumstances, and could have been consoled by the belief that he retained her friendly regard. This consolation was, however, denied him; for, before he could make his honourable intention known to her family, he received from herself the bitterness of a cold dismissal, rendered still more bitter by the accusation that he had formed a design upon her fortune.

"This blow he most severely felt, but the hasty marriage of the lady to the purchaser of Barton Hall, reconciled him to the disappointment, and, I believe, he no longer remembers her with regret. He is not now more than one-and-twenty, and I hope yet

to see him rich in fortune and domestic felicity."

"The junior members of the family cannot yet have finished their education," observed Mrs. Danvers.

"The youngest boy is just thirteen years old, and there is one girl considerably younger," said Mr. Langley. "Miss Barton is nearly twenty, a most amiable and accomplished girl; she is governess to the infant daughters of Lord Newton, and is enabled to supply all her own wants, and to assist those of her mother and sisters. Her second and third brothers, George and Frederick, are both studying in London, the one as a surgeon, the other as a lawyer; William seems inclined to mercantile pursuits, but he has not yet left school; and the two youngest girls are, under the superintendence of Mrs. Barton, qualifying themselves for situations similar to that of their sister."

"Such a family," said Mrs. Danvers,

"must necessarily be the subject of constant anxiety to a parent thus circumstanced."

"Undoubtedly!" said Mr. Langley; "but Mr. Barton has much to be thankful for in the dispositions of his children: I have known them long and intimately, and ever loved them all most affectionately; since their misfortunes, however, I have learned, young as they, are to ingraft respect upon that sentiment. The ease with which they laid aside the luxuries of life; the cheerfulness with which they submitted to its privations; and the spirit of mutual sacrifice, of mutual kindness, and of mutual solicitude, which was felt and manifested by each, have endeared them all to my heart; and," continued he, looking round on the attentive circle which listened to him, "when a parent is enabled to contemplate such qualities in his children, his cares are indeed lightened, and his happiness placed beyond the reach of worldly disappointments." The expressive eye of Mrs. Danvers, as it followed the direction of her friend's, bore testimony to

the truth of his remark, and her glance conveyed to him the undoubted evidence, that thus her own anxieties were repaid, and thus her own sorrows soothed.

It was now time for the younger children to retire; but they felt so happy in their new situation, that they were reluctant to quit it. Ever accustomed, however, to be prompt in their obedience, they did not need a second command from their mother, and instantly bade Mr. Langley good night. He affectionately embraced them both, and, as they returned his salute, Arabella observed, half apprehensively, "you will not go tomorrow, will you, sir?"

"Why should I not?" said he, smiling, "I am too old to play with you."

"Oh," said Louisa, "that is not what Bella means; but we both like to sit together, as we did this evening; and, when you talk and smile with us, we think upon some one else who used to nurse us as you do."

The tearful eyes of the sweet child too plainly told who that one was; and Mr.

Langley, who had frequently, during the evening, struggled with his feelings, now with difficulty assured the little girls that he would not leave them yet.

The next day was Sunday, and was passed as became the solemnity of the sabbath, in a devout attendance on public worship, and in rational and cheerful conversation at home.

For the Monday, it was arranged that Mr. and Mrs. Langley, with Mrs. Danvers and her son, should pay a visit to Selbury Farm, leaving Adelaide, at her own request, to the care of Miss Danvers and Emma.

CHAPTER VI.

THE next morning was clear and frosty, and the young people rose early, to enjoy a run before breakfast. As they were setting off, Mr. Langley joined them, and inquired for his daughter; "Her servant tells me she is still sleeping," said Emma, "and we were anxious that she should not be disturbed."

"It is best that she should not," replied Mr. Langley, putting Emma's arm within his own; "in general, however, she is an early riser, and I often hear her harp before I leave my own dressing room. I was pleased to observe yours, in the library; should she be up before our return, she will not want amusement."

"I should," said Emma, "be sorry to leave the house with the probability of her

rising before our return; with her privation, she must doubly feel the want of society; and, if you excuse me, I would rather wait for her."

"By no means, my love; Adelaide is seldom at a loss, in solitude; indeed, I think she often prefers it, and, when she does not find me in the study before breakfast, she always agreeably fills up the time with music."

"Oh! that the lost blessing of sight could be restored to her?" said Emma: "do you think, my dear sir, that it is possible?"

"All things are possible with God," replied Mr. Langley, "but we must wait his good time!" All the father shone in his eyes as he uttered these words, and he hastened to change the conversation: "Edward," said he, pointing to Henry and the little girls who were skipping on before him, "the activity of these children quite inspires me; and I could almost become a convert to the opinion, that theirs is indeed the happiest

age."—"Do you not then entirely concur in that opinion, my dear sir?"

"Certainly, I do not; I cannot think that Providence ever intended it to be so, though the perversion of human judgment has taught too many so to call it."

"But surely, sir, if innocence constitute happiness, then must the state of childhood be the happiest."

"Before I subscribe to your opinions, Edward, allow me to ask you, why it is thought that childhood is comparatively a state of innocence?"

"I know not, sir, unless it be that our reason is then too imperfect to distinguish between good and evil, and our passions not strong enough to tempt us to sin."

"In part I admit the truth of your reply, and but in part, since it can apply only to a very limited term of man's life. The inference you would draw from it I must wholly reject, because your argument clearly tends to establish the bliss of ignorance; and, if I

suffer you to establish that point, then it necessarily follows, that ''tis folly to be wise.' "

"Nay, but, my dear sir, it is not in our choice to remain ignorant: the mind of man, as it advances towards maturity, becomes imperceptibly, and as it were involuntarily, aware of its duties."

"And does it not also become aware of its own power to fulfil them, and of the value of those rewards which will attend their fulfilment? Rely on it, my dear boy, that happiness does not, and cannot, depend on external circumstances; nor is it in any way consistent with ignorance; and that man only, who has led a life of folly and disorder, will be tempted to exclaim, at its close, that the years of his childhood were the happiest of his existence. In the course of this day I hope to shew you an illustration of my argument, in the family at Selbury. You will see them in a very different situation from that which they once occupied, and very far inferior to it in point of external

comfort; yet you will find the same serenity of temper, the same thankfulness of heart, which distinguished them in more prosperous days, and the same spirit of cheerfulness, which ever endeared their fireside to the circle of their friends."

The conversation was here interrupted by Louisa, who, with tears in her eyes, called their attention to a Robin which she had found nearly frozen under a tree. The poor little sufferer lay quite motionless, and his coal black eye was shaded by the lid which pressed heavily upon it. "Oh!" said the child, "what shall I do with it? my hands are not large enough to cover its poor little body, and they are, besides, too cold to revive it."

"Give it to me," said Mr. Langley, and he placed the bird in his bosom. "Now, tell me, Louisa, what will you do with it should it revive."

"I will feed and nurse it, until it is strong enough to sing to me."

"And then," interrupted Mr. Langley, you will let it fly away again."

"Oh no; I will put it in a nice pretty cage, and continue to take care of it."

But, do you not think it will be cruel to take away its liberty?"

Louisa looked thoughtfully on the ground for a moment, and then replied, — "Yes, I think it would be cruel, had I taken it from the fields, when it was well and happy; but, you know, sir, it was cold and dying; and, if I save its life, surely it is my own bird, and I may do what I like with it."

"But, suppose, my little Louisa, that yourself had happened just now to fall down, when you were running, and had thereby sustained a dangerous injury; I should certainly have acted towards you as you have done towards this bird; that is, I should have taken you up, and, if my own skill had not been sufficient to restore you, I should have sent for a surgeon to take the necessary steps. By the blessing of God you might

have recovered; but were I to make a claim on your service for the remainder of your life, merely because I was God's instrument to help you in this extremity, you would think me very unreasonable, should you not?"

Louisa was convinced, and readily promised to give the poor little bird its liberty as soon as she had recovered it.

As the party approached the cottage, the sound of music arrested their steps, and Mr. Langley pointed out the figure of his daughter, as she sat alone in the library. The harp was before her, a serene expression rested upon her features, and they distinctly heard her sing—

THE PRAYER OF THE BLIND.

Lord! though the glorious light of day
No more may visit me,
Vouchsafe me, still, the mental ray
That guides my soul to thee.

And, in this dark and deep abyss,
This present fearful gloom,
Let the bright hope of future bliss
My dreary thoughts illume.

For me no more, at radiant noon,
The vivid landscape glows;
For me, at night, the pensive moon
No beauteous shadow throws.

The expressive smile of love to trace,
To mark the beaming eye,
To view the form of perfect grace,
For these, I vainly sigh.

Yet these *were* mine; but, perhaps, I dared
The precious boon despise;
The gifts by many freely shared,
Too many lightly prize.

Father supreme! whose mighty hand
Can heal the deepest smart,
Grant that the trials thou has plann'd
May purify my heart.

Teach me to estimate aright
The good that still is mine,
Humbly rejoice in reason's light,
And bend my will to thine.

Soon after their morning repast, the party to Selbury set off in Mr. Langley's carriage, and Adelaide proposed a walk. "Does Miss Danvers join us?" said she to Emma, as they left the house.

"My aunt is gone to visit the school this morning," replied Emma; "only Henry and my sisters are with us."

"I do enjoy this bracing air," resumed Adelaide; "but the path is not yet familiar to my feet. Henry, let me have your arm: there, now I am doubly defended, and can walk without fear. How delightful to escape from the town! I cannot think that I should like London, even had I the power to gaze on its wonders."

"I have never been in London," said Emma, "nor have I any wish to partake in its gayeties."

"But you would like to see it, as the metropolis of your country," observed Adelaide. "A residence there, under present circumstances, would, I confess, be intolerable to me; but, if ever I recover my sight, I hope we shall inspect its public edifices and institutions together."

"God grant that we may!" said Emma, affectionately.

"This Oakdale Cottage," resumed Adelaide,

"is situated, I should, from its name, imagine, in a woodland neighbourhood; and the breeze I feel, is occasionally intercepted as if by trees: have you pretty views from hence?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Arabella, "that we have, indeed: Henry used to sketch such charming landscapes before he went into Yorkshire."

It was in vain that Henry laid his finger on his lips, in token of silence, when the little girl began to speak; she did not understand him, and Miss Langley exclaimed, in surprise, "Henry sketch landscapes! I did not know he was fond of drawing."

"Yes, he is very fond of it, indeed;" replied the child, "and mamma says he will be a clever artist another day."

"Why, Henry," said Adelaide, "how is it that I have never heard of this talent?"

"I did not speak of it," said Henry, "because" —: he hesitated, and Miss Langley completed his reply. "Because,' said she, much affected, "I could not look

at your productions. That was your motive; was it not?"

Henry owned that it was; and, he added, with enthusiastic feeling, "I knew how kindly you would interest yourself in my progress; and I knew, also, that you could not witness it. I had heard, too, that drawing was once a favorite amusement of your own; and I would die rather than voluntarily expose you to a painful recollection."

"I do believe you, Henry; and heaven knows I am grateful. Drawing not only was, as you say, but still is, a favorite amusement with me; I only differ in my mode of practice. Imagination now supplies both the pencil and the pallet; and fair are the portraits which she has sketched of you and your family. But, tell me, Henry, my father and mother surely know of your pursuit; Edward, too, must be aware of it; did you request them not to mention the circumstance?"

Henry replied in the affirmative, and

Adelaide resumed: "Well, they have faithfully observed the trust; and I must thank them, too, for their kind consideration. Can I regret an affliction which elicits so much genuine sympathy? Surely, no; I must not, will not, complain, while this external darkness is so amply compensated by the rays of blessedness which affection delights to shed around my heart. My dear papa, doubtless, well remembers how I delighted in drawing; and he cannot have forgotten that Henrietta Barton and myself once spoiled a valuable manuscript in his library, by daubing the margins with Indian ink."

"You know the Miss Bartons, then," said Emma.

"They were my earliest friends," replied Adelaide: "Henrietta, the second, though two years younger than myself, was my almost inseparable companion before I had the measles. She, too, is very fond of drawing, and I understand she is sometimes poetically disposed; but I should think her productions in that line are of a very lively,

and even satirical character. Her elder sister, Emily, writes in a more serious strain."

"Why, really," said Emma, "should these young ladies visit us, we shall boast, with Edward and yourself, quite a poetical *coterie*."

"I am not sure," said Adelaide, "that Edward would wish to be ranked in the number. He says he is not ambitious of Parnassian honours, and only trifles with the Muses when he has nothing else to do."

"Well, I believe that is the case," said Emma; "but here is my aunt coming to meet us."

Miss Danvers approached, and, taking Adelaide's hand, kindly inquired if she felt fatigued.

"Not in the least, my dear madam," replied she; "I have not enjoyed a walk so much for a long time. You have been visiting the school, Emma tells me; may I hope your examinations have been satisfactory?"

"Tolerably so," said Miss Danvers; "but

this is the first day of meeting after the Christmas holidays; consequently, there was some little relaxation of discipline, and the poor dame was very pleased with my assistance."

"This, then, is what I have heard termed a Dame's School," said Adelaide.

"Yes," replied Miss Danvers, "such a one as Shenstone paints in his 'Village Schoolmistress.' Dame Price answers well to the description; but she is now getting very infirm, and the occasional aid of myself and my niece is gratefully received. This morning I have been engaged in hearing the children recite their Christmas tasks, and we shall have the pleasure to entertain two of them at the servant's dinner hour, as a reward for their attention."

"And I am very sure they deserve it," said Henry; "I am only surprised that they can devote any of their limited holidays to these same tiresome tasks; it is the only time of the year when they can get a little

fun; and, were I in their situation, I should not be much inclined to study."

"Little as you might be inclined to it," said her aunt, "I fancy it would often prove better than fun at the conclusion. For instance, a brother of the little girl who is this day to dine at the cottage, incurred Dame Price's severe displeasure by his incorrectness; I asked how it was that his sister, who is younger, so far excelled him." "She had more time, ma'am;" said the boy. "What, you have been assisting your father, then?" said I. "Why, no, ma'am," he replied; "but I had the misfortune to hurt my eyes on Christmas-day, and so I could not see to read since, till yesterday." "Upon further inquiry, I learned that this boy, by way of a Christmas frolic, had absented himself from church, in order to manufacture a small quantity of gunpowder into fireworks, for the purpose of disturbing a congregation of dissenters, when they should assemble in the evening. After several essays, he at

length constructed something to resemble the supposed shape, of what he had heard called serpents; and, anxious to try the success of his scheme, applied a match to one of them. The explosion was instantaneous; his hands and eyes both suffered from its effects, and he is still much disfigured."

Henry made no remark on his aunt's communication, but appeared to ponder on it till they returned to the cottage.

The remainder of the day passed very comfortably until the party returned from Selbury; but, an account of their visit we must leave for the commencement of another chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

Mrs. Langley was agreeably surprised to find that Selbury farm was not more than seven, instead of ten miles distant from Oakdale. Even at this season of the year, the road was exceedingly pleasant, and the sharp frosty air was, in some degree, tempered by the clear though faint rays of the morning sun.

They had reached within a mile of their destination, when Mr. Langley exclaimed, "Here 's Barton, himself, riding across the fields;" and, in the next instant, a gentleman on horseback passed into the road before them. He glanced slightly at the carriage, and an expression of melancholy crossed his features as he hastily turned his horse towards the opposite enclosures.

"Barton, my dear friend!" exclaimed Mr. Langley; it was all he could say: his

lip quivered, and the tears stood in his eyes, as Mr. Barton warmly, but in silence, grasped his hand. It was a moment of deep feeling to both; they had ever lived in the most friendly intimacy with each other, and one of them, at least, was totally unprepared for the present meeting.

Mr. Barton, however, soon found his voice, and welcomed Mr. Langley, his lady, and friends, with his accustomed hospitality.

"I am more obliged than I can express, by this visit," said he, as he rode with them towards the house; "few men but yourself, Langley, would take the trouble to call on me now."

"I care not what trouble I take to give myself pleasure," replied Mr. Langley; "but I began to think, when you turned your horse so hastily from us a few minutes ago, that I should have the trouble of a chase after you."

Mr. Barton smiled, "I did not think," he said, "that my abruptness was so apparent; but, I confess, I did feel a little

unnerved at the sight of a carriage and liveries which brought my friend to my remembrance; while it did not suggest the probability of its really bringing himself to my house."

"You had no engagement from home, I trust, this morning."

"I had merely promised to join Albert and George, who are shooting on a distant part of the farm."

"I am glad to hear they are at home; my young friend, here, promises himself much pleasure in the introduction."

"My sons will, I am sure, be equally gratified; they were out very early, and will, doubtless, soon be in to lunch; indeed, I will send to hasten them."

"By no means; I should like to surprise them on their entrance."

Mr. Barton had, since his residence at Selbury, declined entering much into society. In the circle of his own family he found happiness, and neither his circumstances nor inclinations allowed him to go

far beyond it. Mrs. Barton's wishes perfectly coincided with his own; she was at a distance from all her own early connexions, and she could neither forget former friendships nor supply them by the formation of new ones. It is needless, then, to say, that her reception of Mrs. Langley (whom she had, for many years, ranked among her most valued friends,) was affectionate in the extreme.

Only Miss Barton was with her mother when their guests arrived. "Where are Henrietta and Fanny?" asked Mrs. Langley.

"They are walking with their brothers," said Mrs. Barton, "but I expect them every moment."

"Then you have all your boys at home, too," exclaimed Mr. Langley; "I shall be delighted to see you all together again."

"Yes," said Mrs. Barton, "but it is a pleasure we must now seldom expect. George and Frederic are, as you know, articled in town; they both came home on Saturday for a fortnight. Emily, too, will be with us

a month; but, when these Christmas holidays are over, it may be very long before we all meet again."

The fond mother sighed as she spoke, but, instantly checking her feelings, she inquired for Adelaide, and expressed her regret that she had not accompanied her parents. Mrs. Langley communicated the hopes that were entertained of her recovery, and assured Mrs. Barton that she should visit them before she left Berkshire.

"But who have we here?" exclaimed she, looking out upon the neat little lawn that fronted the house, and gazing at a child apparently about eight years old, who was running across it; "surely that healthful, active child, is not your little delicate Fanny?"

"Indeed, it is," said Mr. Barton; "and here is William in hard pursuit, while Fred follows with that laughing gipsy, Henrietta, on his arm."

The young pedestrians were too much occupied to notice the party at the window; and, in the next moment, Fanny burst

into the room, exclaiming, "Oh, mamma! mamma! save me!" She stopped on seeing Mrs. Danvers, and, with a deep blush, held down her head without venturing to look at any one else. William entered less hastily, but his eye met that of Mr. Langley, and, springing forward with all the ardour of boyish delight, he exclaimed, "My dear, dear, godpapa! how very glad I am to see you!—and dear Mrs. Langley, too," he added, advancing, with recollected politeness, but with equal affection, towards her. Fanny heard her brother's exclamation, and the confusion which conscious rudeness had impressed upon her features, gave place to an animated smile, as she, too, received the embrace of her father's friend. Frederic and Henrietta now entered, and shared in the pleasurable surprise. Frederic was soon engaged in conversation with Edward Danvers, and the sparkling black eye of Henrietta swam in tears as she inquired for the dear companion of her childhood.

"And now tell me," said Mr. Langley to

Fanny, "what was William teasing you about?"

"Nothing, sir," said the child, blushing excessively; "he never teases me."

"Oh, then, it was only a friendly race, was it?"

"Nothing more, sir," said William; "but I believe she was a little frightened; for, at the instigation of Fred, she had slily slipped a sprig of holly into my pocket, which, of course, saluted me rather roughly when it met my hand."

"And you threatened payment," interrupted Mr. Langley.

"Exactly so, sir; and now she shall have it," added he, snatching a kiss from the laughing Fanny.

It was nearly two o'clock, and neither Albert nor George had made their appearance. Mr. Barton again proposed sending for them. "This fine day may tempt them to continue their sport till dinner-time," said he; "and yet, I think, Albert said he should certainly return by two, at latest."

"And here he is, in proof of the assertion," exclaimed Mr. Langley, who was anxiously looking from the window.

Two elegant young men, in shooting dresses, approached: they appeared in earnest conversation; but, as they passed the window, both looked up, and both almost started, as they recognized their respected friend. They were soon in the room, and, after the first salutations had passed, the conversation became general.

Mrs. Danvers and her son were pleased with the whole family; but, more especially, with Albert and Emily, who united, in no common degree, the graces of sensibility with the solid acquirements of superior sense. Edward remembered his conversation with Mr. Langley, and secretly acknowledged the truth of the illustration he had promised. "Here," thought he, "is, indeed, a proof that happiness does not depend on external circumstances; Albert Barton can never have been happier, even in his most prosperous days, than he now appears to be."

Mr. Langley read the expression of his countenance, and determined to bring about a renewal of their morning's discussion.

"Your little pet, Fanny, is much grown," said he to Albert, as the child left the room, "and certainly is more lively and active than she used to be."

"Oh, she is the very soul of activity," replied Albert; "her spirits really seem inexhaustible."

"What a pity that she cannot always remain in a state of childhood!" said Mr. Langley.

"My *dear* sir!" exclaimed Albert, with a look of astonishment.

"Why, is there any thing so *very* singular in the wish?" resumed Mr. Langley, affecting an air of equal surprise. "Can she ever be happier than she is at present?"

"I should hope so, my dear sir; indeed, I am much inclined to question whether any of her present feelings can properly be dignified with the name of happiness."

"Your reasons?"

"Did I believe you really opposed to my opinion, I would, notwithstanding the high deference I feel for your more experienced judgment, give you my reasons without hesitation; but I see, by that covert smile, that you are not serious."

"You are inclined to be saucy, sir; but I had a particular motive in wishing to hear your sentiments upon this subject."

"They are, I flatter myself, in perfect unison with your own; but, if you still wish it, I can give them in writing. It is not long since that I held an argument with a young friend on this very theme, and I have since committed my thoughts to paper."

"Will you favor me with a perusal?"

Albert immediately rose and opened his desk: "You can return it at leisure," said he, presenting a small manuscript. "I wish to make a few additional remarks, for there is yet one point that I have not touched upon."

"May I ask what that is?"

"It is briefly this: a very hacknied plea in favor of the happiness of childhood, is its

innocency; and that plea is made to rest on a child's imperfect knowledge of good and evil. Now I think it a most dangerous one, since it cannot be available beyond the first two or three years of existence. After that period, the powers of reason rapidly expand, and, with them, the dictates of conscience. Consequently, it is ruinous to the best interests of children, that they should be taught to consider themselves incapable of distinguishing right from wrong."

"I agree in your observation; and, I certainly attribute it to this wretched sophistry, that we hear so many wayward children say they cannot possibly help giving way to passions, which we all know they might easily check. But, I ought to beg pardon for introducing this discussion, while I thank you, Albert, for indulging me by its continuance. I shall put your little manuscript in my pocket, and return it when I see you again."

Albert bowed, and Mr. Langley rose to depart. An invitation was given by Mrs.

Danvers, and accepted by Mr. and Mrs. Barton, that they, accompanied by some part of their family, would spend the following Thursday at Oakdale Cottage.

"What a very considerable difference, in point of age, occurs between the two youngest children of your friend!" observed Mrs. Danvers, as they rode homeward.

"Yes," said Mrs. Langley, "Mrs. Barton lost three between them: one lovely girl died when she was about Fanny's present age, and two boys fell victims to the measles at the time my poor Adelaide suffered."

"What a trial for a mother's heart!" sighed Mrs. Danvers.

"They all felt it most severely," said Mr. Langley; "it occurred at the commencement of their pecuniary embarrassments, and nothing but the consolations of religion could have strengthened them under such complicated sorrows. Albert, in particular, suffered acutely, for he had also to contend with the pangs of slighted affection; but, I never saw a conflict more nobly sustained."

"I admire Mr. Albert Barton, exceedingly," said Edward, "and am much obliged by the discussion you renewed; I did not, however, need other arguments than those you mentioned this morning, to convince me of the truth of your position; and I was more than once on the point of saying so, but I thought I saw a prohibition in your glance."

"You have then learned to interpret my looks aright. I wished to have Albert's opinion, in confirmation of my own; because, young as he is, he has had more experience of the instability of human blessings, and is therefore, perhaps, better qualified to judge of their effect upon man's permanent happiness. I cannot do better, now we are again upon the subject, than to read his manuscript." Edward bowed; and Mr. Langley read aloud the following brief—

ESSAY.

It has been said that childhood is the happiest stage of life; and, certainly, many an

argument may be found to favor the assertion; but, I can never persuade myself that the gaiety which proceeds from very thoughtlessless, can properly be styled bliss ; neither can I imagine that the sprightliness of youthful fancy is, of itself, sufficient to constitute happiness.

That childhood is more exempt than maturity from the heavier trials of life, I readily allow ; but, at the same time, I feel assured, that the sublime consciousness of expanded and still improving intellect, can, and does, most amply compensate for those keener feelings which, from its own enlarged sympathies, a generous mind must often suffer.

It is both a pleasing and a profitable task to remember the days that are gone, and to recall our own earliest ideas and enjoyments. For, who can regard the wonders of his own frame, or attempt to trace the operations of his own spirit, without feeling himself led, as it were, up to the source from which he derived them? We cannot, for a moment, contemplate the past, without being in-

structed in the future. We see that every year has added something to the improvement of our faculties; we feel that we are yet very far distant from perfection; and we believe that further supplies of knowledge will be accorded to us, if we seek them at the only fountain of true wisdom.

It is not, therefore, probable, that a good man will ever consider his childhood to have been the happiest period of his existence.

It may have been a period of ease, of contentment, nay, even of enjoyment; but he will recollect that he did not then, as he now does, feel God in the operations of his spirit, and trace him in the power of his works. He will recollect that he was content to receive the blessings of life without properly estimating the source from which they flowed, that in sickness he was impatient, and in health unmindful of the hand that sustained him.

If he examine the present state of his mind, he will indeed perceive that he has many more anxieties than he once had, because the attachments of early life have

been strengthened, and because new objects have arisen to claim his love, and new pursuits to engage his attention. But, he will also perceive, that those objects and those pursuits are as ornamental pillars in the fabric of his happiness, adding both strength and beauty to the whole structure. It is true that he is now much more accessible to pain, because he feels in his own breast every pang that may wound the hearts which are dear to him; but, he is also more capable of knowing and loving Him, who hath commanded us to "bear one another's burthens;" and he rejoices in thus obeying the divine precept.

He perceives that he is a superior being to what he once was, and he does not doubt that he shall yet be infinitely superior to what he is; he is conscious of his high privileges, and grateful for his still higher hopes; and if the cup of affliction be presented to him, he receives it as the medicine which is to give health to his soul.

The memory of such a man may, indeed,

often linger round the days of his youth; but it will be to recall the mercies by which they were distinguished, and to strengthen in his mind the conviction that a being thus wonderfully preserved throughout so many dangers, and progressively improved throughout so many changes, must be intended for an infinitely more perfect state. And, should the review give him back some long-lost venerated form, which his young heart learned to reverence, and which he still associates with his most tender recollections, his tears may flow at the remembrance; but he will be enabled to find a solace in the hope of an eternal reunion.

Even in the hour of immediate trial, when he is called upon to resign some fondly nurtured hope, or to see some cherished tie dissolved, he will not regret that the time is passed when such an affliction would have been less poignantly felt; but, rather will he rejoice, that the same expansion of mind which renders him more fully alive to the miseries of his present state, does also enable

him to look beyond it, and to behold the hand of revelation removing the veil from futurity.

For myself, I have borne many trials,—have contended with many afflictions; but I know that my real happiness has not suffered in the conflict. No human being ever passed a happier childhood than I have done. The supply of all my temporal wants, and the foundation of my eternal hopes, were delegated to the best and kindest of parents; my studies and recreations were shared by affectionate brothers and sisters, and I enjoyed with them the sunshine of prosperity.

That sun has now set—possibly for ever. Many bright hopes have been crushed, many fair expectations blighted; yet I am not unhappy. Both my revered parents, and many of my beloved companions, are still spared to me. It is true that we suffer for and with each other; but we also rejoice together in the protection of the Almighty. Every new trial weans us from the world,

and draws us nearer to each other; and I believe that every one of us can look back without regret, and forward without fear. We believe that those tender links which have already been rent from our chain of love, will be reunited by the same Hand which severed them. We are assured that they have arrived at a mansion of rest; and we are content to follow them, by whatever path Divine Wisdom may appoint.

CHAPTER VIII.

The intervening days passed cheerfully away, and Thursday morning brought Mr. and Mrs. Barton, with Albert, George, and their two eldest sisters, to the cottage.

Adelaide met them with affection and evident emotion. She pressed the hand of Mr. Barton to her lips, and extended her arms to receive his lady's embrace.

"And Emily and Henrietta, too!" said she; "do I once more hear the voices of my earliest friends?" She then warmly shook hands with Albert and George, again and again expressing her delight at the meeting.

None of the party could look on her without the most heartfelt sympathy and admiration, as she smiled away her own sorrowful thoughts, and endeavoured to forget that, though she heard, she could not behold her friends. The tears of Emily flowed profusely, and fell on Adelaide's hand.

"Precious drops!" said Adelaide, softly; "they fall as the dew of kindness upon my heart." She arose, and, taking Emma's arm, accompanied the Miss Barton's from the room.

Henrietta was not the least moved of the party; it was some minutes before she could recover her spirits sufficiently to converse; and, even when she did, her natural tone of gaiety frequently languished; and Miss Langley more than once observed, that though

the voice was Henrietta's, the sentiments were those of Emily.

Emily Barton's was an interesting countenance, and entirely expressive of the character of her mind. Her dark blue eyes beamed with sensibility and unaffected cheerfulness, and the placid smile which rested upon her features indicated that all was peace within.

Henrietta was a gipsy beauty, and appeared totally unconscious that she possessed any beauty at all. The lovely simplicity of nature shone in every look and action; her sparkling black eye seemed to dance beneath its fringed canopy; her dark hair strayed carelessly over her forehead, and partially shaded her neck; and the arch smile, which continually hovered about her lips, displayed a beautifully white and even set of teeth, and harmonized well with the joyous dimples on her cheek. Her meeting with Adelaide had given a temporary check to her spirits; but it had added to the interest of her character,

and Emma's warm heart instantly admitted the claims of the two sisters on her regard. Emily, though considerably her senior, found much pleasure in the conversation of Emma Danvers; and, as they sat together in the evening, expressed her regret that she should have so limited a time to cultivate her acquaintance.

"How soon, then, do you return to Newton Abbey?" asked Adelaide.

"I have never been resident there," said Emily, "my little pupils are under the guardianship of the Dowager Lady Newton, and we are principally at Brighton."

"Lord Newton is now abroad, I understand," said Mrs. Langley; "has he never been in England since his lady's death?"

"I believe he brought the children over immediately after that event," said Emily; "but I have never seen him; and, though his mother frequently speaks of him, she seldom mentions the name of the late Lady Newton."

"I am not surprised at that," said Mrs. Langley, "since it was her influence which

hastened her son's marriage, before he was twenty years old; and she must be well aware that he cannot have known happiness with so dissipated a being. How old are your pupils?"

"The elder is rather more than four years old, and her sister is twelve months younger; consequently, the work of education is hardly yet begun: I find them very docile, however; and I understand that both in person and disposition they greatly resemble their father."

"And when do you return to them?" again asked Adelaide.

"On Monday fortnight," replied Emily.

"Then," said Mrs. Danvers, "so much of your time being unexpired, I trust you will favor us with your company for a few days: we shall be delighted; and, on Miss Langley's account, I know you will oblige us."

This was a plea that Emily could not resist; and, much gratified by the invitation, she readily promised to stay till the following

Monday, when the whole family from Oakdale were to dine at Selbury.

"Well, George," said Mr. Langley, "you have not yet told me how you like London."

"I cannot say much in its favor, sir," replied the young man; "I meet with very few associates that I like. Indeed, Fred is almost my only companion, and we should be much at a loss without each other; for he has as little relish for general society as I have."

"I am happy to hear it," said Mr. Langley; "general society is not what it once was; there is not that ardent thirst after useful knowledge, nor those generous emulations in science, among young men, which should distinguish them. I do not, however, speak without exceptions; there are some few who, I am convinced, still venerate wisdom and reverence religion; but, alas! their number is as nothing, compared to the many whose acquirements do not rank beyond the exterior forms of politeness, or the newest frivolities of fashion. I, therefore, consider

it a most happy advantage for both, that you are so near each other."

"I had precisely this view of society," said Mr. Barton, "and for that reason was very solicitous that my boys should be together. Thank heaven! they can appreciate my motives, and are fully convinced that fraternal love is the surest basis of friendship. No conflicting interests, no differences of rank nor connexion, here intervene, to destroy the harmony or sully the purity of the sentiment. A brother is bound by the tie of nature, as well as of affection; and he will never betray the confidence, nor wound the heart, which reposes on him." Mr. Barton's eye here rested proudly on his sons, as he spoke; and, turning to Henry, he added, "You, my dear boy, are neither so old nor so sedate as your brother; your dispositions may, perhaps, vary, but your principles, I am sure, are the same; and your affection for him is, doubtless, ardent and sincere. There will be, there must be, moments when you may prefer other society

to his, when the passing amusements of the hour may be justifiably allowed to set aside other more serious thoughts and avocations. But, beware that these moments do not recur too often; beware that they do not encroach on higher pursuits; and, above all, beware that they do not withdraw your confidence from your brother. He will not restrict you from any proper indulgence; he will never refuse you his best counsel and advice; and, so long as your heart is open to him, you are safe; for you remain under the protection which heaven itself appointed for you, when it withdrew that of your lamented father. How desolate had been your situation, if, instead of cultivating the friendship of your brother, conscience had compelled you to shrink from it! and how very dreadful had been your responsibility, my dear Edward, had you, by neglecting your own highest duties, rendered yourself incapable of assisting your brother in the performance of his."

The whole of the young party appeared

deeply impressed with these remarks, and Mr. Barton, observing their increased gravity, proposed music.

Adelaide instantly took the harp, at the request of Mrs. Danvers, and, in her own peculiar style of pathos, sung, "The Harp that once through Tara's Halls." Mr. Langley then requested that Miss Barton would oblige them; and added, that he should esteem it a particular favor if she would select a composition of her own. She modestly declined this condition, on the plea that her own compositions were merely indicative of individual feeling, and entirely intended for the solace of her own thoughts. Her objections, however, were overruled; and, expressively touching the chords, she sung the following words:

Oh, the days of my youth!
Could the pencil of truth
Portray their gay colours again,
Would a sigh, or a smile,
Hail each innocent wile,
Which could sooth or enrapture me then?

Oh! it might be, my heart,
That remembrance would start,
From a picture so joyously bright,
For experience near,
With an aspect severe,
Would whisper, 'tis long past delight.

And perchance, then, a sigh
Might unconsciously fly
Back to objects half lost in the shade;
But, before me, hope's smile
Would be hailing the while
A prospect that never can fade.

Emma next gave them a little Scotch ballad, and then Mr. Langley called upon Henrietta.

"Oh! *I* am no vocalist, you well know, Mr. Langley;" said the laughing girl.

"Well then, you are an instrumentalist, at least?" returned he.

"Indeed, I am a very imperfect performer, and must beg to be excused."

"You write, however," said Adelaide, "and papa *will* excuse your playing, if you will give us a specimen of your poetic talents."

"Oh, Adelaide! Adelaide! what an alternative you propose!"

"It is one, however, from which I do not intend you shall escape, Miss Henrietta," cried Mr. Langley; "I am obliged to Adelaide for the hint, and shall greatly prefer recitation to music in this instance; so pray begin."

But Henrietta positively could not begin; the fact was, that her talent was entirely extempore, and she seldom preserved any of her effusions. This she stated to Mr. Langley, but he was inexorable.

"Better and better!" he exclaimed; "an impromptu, if you please; nothing delights me more than a good impromptu: Mrs. Barton, do second my request."

Mrs. Barton did second it; and poor Henrietta, finding that she could not escape, took up her pencil, and, turning to Mr. Langley, said, "On what subject do you wish me to write, sir?"

"Really, I have no choice," he replied, "but do write on something."

With an archness of expression that he could not entirely comprehend, the lively girl bowed, and instantly began to write.

He sat silently watching her pencil, as it glided over the paper, and was much amused to observe the glow of sprightly fancy which animated her countenance as she wrote. At the end of a few minutes, she placed the paper in his hands; and he read aloud the following—

IMPROMPTU.

And, must I write on *something*?—what a theme!
Something is often *nothing* but a dream.

Whatever dear delights our fancies warm,
Something will still be wanting to the charm;
And, when that something's added to our store,
Dissatisfied, we sigh for *something* more.
Something indeed is fancy's darling child,
Source both of sanguine hopes and terrors wild.
Is fancy sick? a thousand ills are found,
And *something* is the centre they surround.
Is she in health? she feeds on present peace,
And *something* promises a bless'd increase.

Something, thou dear incomprehensible !
Whom none can know, yet all esteem so well ;
Thou, who can'st often, in his greatest need,
Aid the poor wight who rhymes for nature's meed,
Assist me now ; for *something* is required
To aid the verse which *something's* name inspired.
Oh *something ! something !* now thy influence lend,
Or all my scribbling must to *nothing* tend.

Alas ! to *something* I appeal in vain,
For *something* answers, "better cease your strain."

"Well," said Mr. Langley, as he placed this little *jeu d'esprit* in his pocket-book, "I am extremely obliged to you, Miss Henrietta; but I did not expect when I requested you to write on something, that you would interpret the request so literally."

"What could I do, my dear sir ?" said Henrietta. "I could not write without a subject, you know; and, really, I thought the novelty of this, a sufficient recommendation."

"Oh ! pray do not apolgize. I assure you I am much amused, and from this time forth appoint you my "*Improvisatore Extraordinary.*"

"I feel excessively honoured, and will endeavour to prove worthy of the appointment," said Henrietta, bowing very low.

"Depend on it," resumed Mr. Langley, "I shall not fail to exercise your talent; but you must promise not to be too satirical."

"Yes," said Mrs. Barton, "I hope you will insist upon that point, sir; for I assure you, Henrietta is too apt to forget that wit often turns its edge against the owner."

"Yet this is a truth absolutely necessary to be remembered," said Mr. Langley; "I wish not to check the playful ebullitions of a lively fancy, when fairly called forth, as in the present instance; nor do I exclusively reprehend every degree of satire; there are cases when it may be usefully exercised, when it strikes at general follies; but, the moment it becomes personal, utility ceases, and bitter, perhaps lasting, animosity too frequently ensues."

"But surely," said Henrietta, "there can be no harm in satirizing personal follies which

are easily avoided,—affectation and conceit, for instance."

"We must first examine the motives of the satirist, and then inquire into the success of those motives, before we answer your question. If the motive be a conscientious desire to benefit the individual, by pointing out (with a view to his improvement,) the ridicule which he perhaps unconsciously incurs, then, you certainly intend no harm; and, if your intentions have been in any degree realized, you have assuredly done none. But, I believe, the result of such an inquiry would not often be of this favorable nature. Satire more commonly originates in an inclination to amuse ourselves, rather than in the desire to improve others; and it is seldom that so goading a remedy will effect a cure, when the milder applications of reason and affectionate remonstrance have failed."

Henrietta's ingenuous countenance bore testimony to the conviction of her mind, as Mr. Langley concluded; and, affectionately

thanking him, she promised to recollect what he had said.

"I know you will," replied he, "and I shall not soon forget the attention with which you have heard me. It is a kind of silent compliment which I know how to value; and, believe me, young lady, nothing is more engaging at your age than this habitual deference to the voice of instruction. Nor, is it less advantageous than engaging, since experience will always be willing to impart its treasured stores where the desire to profit by them is so apparent."

A blush of gratified feeling overspread the features of Henrietta as her kind friend ceased to speak; and, very shortly afterwards, Mr. Langley's carriage was ordered to take the family home.

CHAPTER IX.

THE next two days passed most delightfully to Adelaide and Emma, in the society of Miss Barton. The former renewed with her many a theme of early days; which, as being interesting to them, could not fail to engage Emma's attention.

The weather was so exceedingly gloomy on the Friday, that the whole party were prisoners within; but Saturday morning presented the promise of a fine day, and Mr. Langley accompanied his pupils to explore the remains of a Roman camp in the neighbourhood. The young ladies, also, were tempted to take a noon-day ramble, and set off in the hope of meeting them on their return. Miss Langley inquired if there were many agreeable families in the vicinity of Selbury.

"I am quite a stranger there," said Miss

Barton, "but I understand, from my mother, that she has few neighbours with whom she would wish to cultivate an intimacy; and, I believe, my sisters seldom leave home."

"I have never," said Adelaide, "till now, enjoyed any society but that of home, since you left Yorkshire. You know the circle of my acquaintance was always limited by the choice of my parents; and, when we lost you, I, afflicted as I am, had little desire to form new connexions."

"Then," said Emily, "you do not visit Mrs. Dourelle, my brother's once loved Julia Barrington."

"We do not," replied Adelaide; "Mrs. Dourelle is not often at Barton Hall. It is said, she is by no means happy; fortune was, doubtless, the consideration which prompted her to marry so worthless a character as Dourelle; and, I am told, she is not only disappointed in that particular, (for it appears that his estates are already heavily incumbered with gaming debts,) but

that he treats her with the most mortifying neglect, and even with cruelty."

"I am deeply grieved to hear it; for, though her behaviour to me, as well as to my brother, was calculated to destroy every particle of esteem, yet I cannot forget how very dear she once was to both. Oh, Adelaide! you know not how many slights, how many unkindnesses, we have endured. I did feel them most keenly at the first; but now it is all over, and I pity, forgive, and endeavour to forget, the desertion of some, while I find I can still repose upon the tried friendship of others."

The gentle pressure of the hand which accompanied these words, assured Adelaide that she was ranked among the number of those whose tried friendship Emily still valued. The assurance was very dear to her heart; for, though Miss Barton was four years her senior, there had ever been so much unison of thought and feeling between them, that she loved her equally with Henrietta.

"I am very young, my dear Miss Barton," said Emma, "but admit me also to your affections, as you already possess my love and my esteem."

"Be assured," said Emily, embracing her, "that you are, indeed, admitted to my affections, and that you share, with Adelaide, my warmest esteem. Yes, I cannot doubt the sincerity of your professions, since they are made in the day of adversity. You do not, as Julia did, smile because the smiles of fortune rest upon me."

"I hope your brother no longer thinks of her with regret," said Adelaide.

"I am sure he does not," said Emily; "he must congratulate himself on his escape from an union so utterly unworthy of him. Albert's mind is very superior to what Julia's has proved to be, and his generous nature would have severely felt the yoke of her inferiority. No, he cannot regret his disappointment now, though that, and other trials, did weigh most heavily upon his spirits when we left Barton. You know I

was with him at the hall some days after the other members of the family left, previous to my entering on my situation."

"I know you were," replied Adelaide, "and I remember hearing papa speak of accompanying you home on the morning you took leave of us. You encountered your brother on the way, I think?"

"I shall never forget it," said Emily; "but I believe he is, to this hour, ignorant that we saw him."

"Papa was deeply affected by the circumstance," resumed Adelaide; "and though, as you are aware, he is not often poetically inclined, he did oblige me with a sketch in blank verse, which, if you wish it, I will endeavour to recollect."

"I have a great desire to hear it," said Emily; and Adelaide recited the following

FRAGMENT.

He had just gained the summit of a hill,
Which overlooked the valley he had left;
He saw me not—but stood absorbed in thought.
I had beheld him in his prosp'rous hours,

And much I loved in him that social mirth
Which ever cheer'd the circle he adorn'd;
But, never had I seen his manly brow
With such a deep yet calm expression mark'd.
His gun was in his hand, and at his feet
His favorite dog sat wistfully and still.

It was mid-winter, and the woods were crown'd
With hoary honours—sternly beautiful—
The sun was gleaming faintly on the plain,
Which, cased in icy armour, mock'd its power.
He gazed intently—and, methought a tear
Weighed on the lashes of his speaking eye;
But, my own sight was dim, and might have erred.

"And, I must leave thee, lovely vale!" he cried,
"Well, be it so—what leave I to regret?
"The ties that bound me to thee are no more;
"Lone and deserted is the hearth I loved.
"I could not pass my life amid thy shades,
"Severed from all the bliss that hallowed them;
"The ruined hopes of fortune and of love
"Would wound more deeply did they wound me here.

"Oh, Julia! fair, but faithless!—had thine heart
"Responded to the vow thy tongue proclaim'd,
"That heart at least had pitied, though its sighs
"Had been the only offering it could make.
"But thou hast coldly spurned me—and, for why?
"Because the wealth I valued for thy sake

"Has proved unstable. Mine was faithful love;
"It would not have betrayed thy trusting heart,
"Nor urged thee to partake of poverty:
"But, it did hope to live in thy regard,
"To find that friendship which alone it sought.
"Vain hope! the glassy bosom of yon lake
"Rejoices proudly in the summer ray,
"But winter finds it locked in ice secure."

He paused, looked upward, and pursu'd his way.
Heaven prosper him, and ever guide his steps!
Affection's sigh shall hover round him,
And the tear of love hallow each prayer
Which breathes his cherished name.

Adelaide had just repeated the last line of this Fragment, when Emma exclaimed, "Here are my brothers and Mr. Langley, with another gentleman whom I do not recognise."

"It is Albert himself," said Emily, drying her eyes, and hastening to meet him.

"Mr. Albert Barton has news for you, my love," said Mr. Langley, soothingly, to his daughter, as he led her into the house

"For me!" said Adelaide, in surprise; "does it concern me in particular, papa?"

"It concerns us all, my dear girl; but, it does concern *you* in particular. Dr. A— is much better; indeed, able to travel."

"But, is he coming here?" said the poor girl, in extreme agitation.

"If you wish it, he will, my love. He thinks you will sustain the operation much better in this quiet place than in London."

"But, has Mr. Barton seen Dr. A—? and is he really able to resume his practice?"

"I have seen him, my dear Miss Langley," said Albert; "and, though he has not yet resumed his practice, he thinks, in another week, he shall be quite equal to it, and will be happy to visit you here, whenever you wish it."

"And where is he now?"

"He is staying at Selbury Rectory, for change of air. I accidentally called there yesterday, and was introduced. Of course I mentioned having seen you, and he told me he was about to send a messenger hither, when I offered to undertake the mission."

It was in vain that Adelaide endeavoured

to rally her spirits sufficiently to converse; she sat silently musing on Albert's communication, till her cheek became pale with emotion. Her friends were not less affected, but Mr. Langley, by a strong effort, subdued his own agitation, and said, "Recollect yourself, my Adelaide,—or, rather let me say, recollect the power and the goodness of your Almighty Preserver. Is his arm shortened at all, that he cannot save? Did he ever fail them that trust in him? Repose, then, your confidence upon him, my beloved child, and rest assured that he will not lay upon you more than you are able to bear."

"I will not fear it," cried Adelaide, sinking on her father's shoulder; "I will not, cannot doubt, that I shall be strengthened in this approaching hour of trial. But, oh, my father! if I should recover!"

"If you should indeed recover, Adelaide, you will be properly thankful for the blessing; and, if you should not, you will be enabled to bow, as you have hitherto done, to the will of heaven."

"And, whatever be the event," exclaimed she, with renewed fervour, "I shall have reason to say, with the psalmist, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted.'"

Mr. Albert Barton stayed to dinner, and had the pleasure to witness the improved spirits of the whole party before he returned home. Adelaide had so far conquered her nervous apprehensions as to converse calmly and even cheerfully.

"How is my dear Henrietta?" said she; "tell her that even whilst blest with Emily and Emma, I cannot help wishing for her. Since she was here on Thursday, the tones of her voice and her inspiring laugh have seemed continually to vibrate on my ear, and have renewed ideas and feelings that were almost obsolete. The landscapes which we sketched together glow as freshly in my memory as if I had but yesterday beheld them; and recollection gives me back the very look she wore the last time I saw her. It was the day before I was attacked with the measles; we had been rambling together,

with George and Frederic, through the woods, and the sun was slowly sinking behind the trees when we reached the vicarage. The tints of autumn assumed a richer hue as the last brilliant rays of light rested upon them. Henrietta was struck by the grandeur of their appearance, and stood for a few moments wrapt in silent admiration. There was a sublime expression on her countenance, as, turning to me, she said, 'Adelaide, how is it that we have never sketched this scene? If tomorrow evening emulate this in beauty, we will bring our pencils here.' I readily assented; but, alas! mine eyes have never since rested upon the features of the landscape nor the face of my friend."

"Let us hope, however, that they will again rest upon both," said Albert; "Dr. A— told me, yesterday, that he had not a doubt of success, provided you had strength of nerve sufficient to repress all excessive agitation."

"Will he see me on Monday?" asked Adelaide.

"He has promised to do so," replied Albert; "in the mean time, I am charged with his best regards, together with the assurance that you have little to apprehend and every thing to hope."

Adelaide smiled serenely, and again returned to the subject of her Selbury friends.

"I promise myself much pleasure in embracing little Fanny, and in shaking hands with Frederic and William. The latter, I think, will be a very agreeable associate for my friend Henry; do you not think so, Edward?"

"Certainly," said Edward; "his lively disposition will assimilate well with that of my brother, and I even think he may rival Jack Headington."

"Jack's a good-natured fellow, though," cried Henry; "and, with all his faults, I cannot help liking him."

"Neither are you required to do so," said Mr. Langley; "I admit that he has many good qualities, but he labours under sad defects of education. I have often cautioned

you against too great an intimacy, but I never wished you to dislike him; and I am a little surprised that you have never once mentioned his name in my hearing since I have been with you."

Henry blushed as he related to Mr. Langley the purport of his mother's conversation with him on Christmas-day. "I was shocked," he added, "to discover how near Headington's influence had been subversive of better principles; and I determined from that hour to forget him, or at least never to associate with him again so freely as I had done."

"You were right to form such a determination," said Mr. Langley; "but I trust he will, in future, be more worthy of your regard. I received a letter from his uncle this morning, which gives a melancholy yet gratifying account of him." Henry looked enquiringly at Mr. Langley, who continued,—"The first part of Captain Henbury's letter relates to business; but I will read you an extract from the conclusion; he here says,"

"Though the generally thoughtless con-

duct of my unfortunate nephew cannot have recommended him to your esteem, I am certain, my dear sir, that you will compassionate his situation, when I say, that he is at this time languishing on the bed of sickness, and suffering from a broken bone and severe bruises. You know how often he has been cautioned against the undistinguishing love of amusement which seems almost inherent in his nature, and which he has persuaded himself cannot be controuled. It appears that a few evenings since, when I was more than usually indisposed for society, he engaged a lad of the village to assist him in a sparrow-taking expedition; and, having been very successful, they formed the design of depositing their living trophies in my old housekeeper's room. In order to do so, it was necessary to procure a ladder, and, by this means, to gain the window. Jack had completed his scheme, and was triumphantly descending, when the ladder slipped, and he fell from a terrific height on the stones below; he is now confined to his

bed with a broken arm, besides being otherwise dreadfully bruised.

The housekeeper is exceedingly ill from the fright she sustained when, on entering her room for bandages and applications to relieve him, she was saluted by the noise and fluttering of about two dozen sparrows.

This, and the previous alarm occasioned by my nephew's fall, so completely overpowered the poor creature's nerves, that, for two days, she was delirious. Afflicting, however, as these circumstances have been to me, I have reason to hope that they will, in the end, produce the happiest consequences on the sufferer himself. He appears fully convinced of the folly, as well as the cruelty, of his conduct, (for I have thought it best to acquaint him with the effect of his scheme on my poor servant,) and, I am happy to observe, that he feels more for his victim than for himself. 'I, my dear uncle,' he says, 'deserve my sufferings; but poor Sarai is an innocent victim, and, if it please God that I should recover, I must, in some way,

prove that I am sorry for my cruelty to her. I find, now, that I am even more wicked than Henry Danvers said I was; and yet I have tried to make him as bad as myself. Oh! that I could see, and assure him, that I am sorry for my pernicious counsel.'"

Henry shed the tear of sympathy for his unfortunate companion, as Mr. Langley folded up the letter, and replaced it in his pocketbook. "Poor Jack!" said he, "you will, indeed, be even more dull than you anticipated."

"And what is the cause?" replied Mr. Langley: "his own wilfulness, in believing that he could not resist any mischievous inclination that entered his mind."

CHAPTER X.

When Adelaide awoke on the Sunday morning, she felt the same nervous depression from which she had suffered so much at one period of the preceding day; and, in order to allay the tumult of her mind, she arose early, and requested her maid to lead her into the library.

It was the almost undeviating practice of Mr. Langley to meet her there, and to employ the half hour before breakfast in reading. On this morning, a slight indisposition kept him in bed; but his daughter, expecting he would soon enter, dismissed her attendant, and, pursuing the train of her feelings, sung the following hymn:—

Father! thy chast'ning rod I feel,
In mercy stay thine hand;
My faint and wounded spirit heal,
And bid my hopes expand.

A weary sojourner below,
I lift my thoughts to thee;
Thou only canst my sorrows know,
Thou only comfort me.

My ev'ry grief, my ev'ry fear,
To thee is fully known,
And ev'ry sigh I utter here,
Is heard before thy throne.

Whatever be thy righteous will,
Whate'er thy just decree,
My God and Saviour! grant me still
A refuge sure in thee.

If brighter hopes, and hours of ease,
Would lure my thoughts from Heaven,
In mercy—mercy—let not these
To me be ever given.

But, lead me as thou seest best,
However rough the way;
Let but the hope of heav'nly rest
Illume my darkened day.

Adelaide fancied that she heard some one softly enter the room at the commencement of her second stanza, but, imagining it to be her father, she continued the strain. A tear fell on her pale cheek as she concluded; but,

hastily brushing it away, she extended her hand, and a placid smile stole over her features, as she said, "My father, is it you? now you will read to me."

"It is not your father, my dear Miss Langley," said Edward, pressing the offered hand to his lips; "he has not yet left his dressing-room; but, if you will allow me to supply his place, I shall be most happy to read to you."

"Do, my kind friend," said Adelaide; "for, indeed, my feeble spirits stand in need of scriptural support; and I can depend on your selection."

Edward sat down by her, and read two or three passages of Scripture, which he considered peculiarly appropriate and consoling; and, as he closed the book, he had the happiness to observe her lovely countenance clothed in its accustomed serenity.

"I am inexpressibly obliged by this attention," said she, "and much benefited by it. Oh, Edward! were it not for such supports as these, how could I sustain the

bitterness of my affliction? Yet, a very short time, and the trial will have been made, whether I look again upon my friends in this life, or behold them no more until we meet in glory. That I shall then behold them I cannot doubt, since my Saviour hath said in the Gospel you have just read to me: 'Father, I will also that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.' Yes, this darkness will assuredly pass away, and those whom I love unseen on earth, I shall recognise in heaven."

"And, I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us," said Mr. Langley, as he entered, and affectionately embraced his daughter. Then, turning to Edward, he added, as his eye glanced toward the bible which lay before him, "And thou, amiable young man! who canst thus delight in easing the burthen of the afflicted, the blessing of a grateful father be upon thee."

The other members of the family shortly after made their appearance; and, when breakfast was over, they all attended public worship. The parish church of Oakdale was a simple, but by no means inelegant, structure. It stood on rather an elevated situation, and the little tower which contained its *three bells* rose above the venerable yew trees around it. Within, every thing was in unison with the sanctity of the place. The white-washed roof, and neatly painted pews, seemed to indicate that decency, without ostentation, should wait upon the public worship of God. A very few monumental tablets ornamented the walls; and here and there garlands of white paper, cut in the rudest style of simplicity, (according to an ancient custom now almost obsolete,) were suspended in honor of the virgin dead. The decalogue, printed in gilt letters over the communion table, and an appropriate inscription from the Psalms, on the middle pannel of the singing gallery, composed its only other decorations.

By far the greater part of the congregation were people who moved in the humblest walks of life; some had never passed the precincts of their own village, and all were entire strangers to the luxuries and vices of the metropolis. Miss Barton appeared much impressed by the whole scene; and, after their return, spoke of the purity of devotion which it was calculated to inspire. "I shall never," said she, "forget my sensations the first time I entered a country church after we left Barton. Pure as is the air of Brighton, Lady Newton imagined, towards the close of the summer, that a little change would be beneficial to the children, and we accordingly went to Leamington for a short time. In one of our rambles in the neighbourhood, I was particularly struck with the appearance of a village, which, in some degree, resembled our own dear parish of Barton. On the following Sunday I attended public worship there, and the similitude struck me still more forcibly. I was affected even to tears, and, when I re-

turned home, could not forbear making it the subject of a little poetic sketch expressive of my feelings."

"Have you a copy that you can oblige me with?" said Mr. Langley.

"I think you will find the rough original in this pocketbook," said Emily, taking one from her reticule, and turning over the leaves, "Yes, there it is." Mr. Langley read aloud the lines she pointed out, entitled—

SKETCH OF A VILLAGE CHURCH.

It is a rude and venerable pile;
So humble, that the eye of scorn might smile;
Yet, its simplicity so dignified,
That it might even awe the heart of pride.
I saw it on the sabbath—when its walls,
Though they boast not of carved and gilded stalls,
(Where fashion's votaries, with careless air,
Lounge in cold state that mocks the soul of prayer,)
Were yet adorn'd by forms of polished grace
And native worth, that well became the place.

What look could rest upon that placid eye,
Which seem'd to trace the path of pray'r on high,

What ear receive the accents of that voice,
Which bade the Christian in his course rejoice,
Nor feel each wild, each lawless wish repress'd,
Each pleasure chasten'd, and each care at rest?
And who, that ever felt the sacred ties
Which bind our best and purest sympathies,
That ever owned a parent's tender name,
Or venerated filial duty's claim,
Could, with an unmov'd heart and listless sight,
Gaze on the group, where all these claims unite?
In *him*, the characters most sweetly blend
Of pastor, spouse, companion, father, friend;
In *her* benignant countenance, we trace
The mother's tenderness, the matron's grace;
While gentle forms of hope and promise fair,
Around them, nature's sweetest favors share.

Nor, can the heart instructed from above
To own the bond of universal love,
And feel a fellowship with all on earth,
Unheeded pass the pray'r of humble worth.
Oh! when I see the sons of labour bend,
With looks where awe and deep devotion blend,
Before the footstool of the God of heaven,
Then to my soul a sacred light seems given;
The fervency, the bliss of praise I know,
My languid hopes revive, my faint thoughts glow.

Such was the rapt'rous, such the soothing mood,
Which thy calm worship, Lillington, renewed,

But with it came the thought of days long past,
Days by no sorrow dimm'd, no fear o'ercast:
Mem'ry restor'd the humble house of pray'r,
Adorned, embellished, by a father's care;
The choir he formed, the altar he revered,
The poor he fed, the peasantry he cheer'd,
These, all, were present to my throbbing breast,
My fainting spirit felt subdued, opprest;
But faith was ready comfort to impart,
And hush'd the murmur, e'er it reach'd my heart.

Perchance, my feet may ne'er again invade,
Oh, humble Lillington! thy quiet shade;
But, often present, ever dear to me,
Thy pastor and thy people still shall be;
And, when again I breathe the city's air,
And mingle with the busy myriads there,
My heart will fondly turn to scenes like thine,
And vainly wish thy destiny were mine.

"I agree in your sentiments, Miss Barton," said Mrs. Danvers; "but, do you know the family of the clergyman?"

"By conjecture, only," said Emily; "I have never even heard his name, and, perhaps, have taken an unwarrantable liberty in this description. But my feelings were excited even to enthusiasm by the magic of

recollection, and I wrote entirely from the impulse of the heart."

"I have a great favor to ask of you, Miss Barton," said Henry, "if I were assured you would not think me too bold."

"Do not fear it," said she; "I shall be most happy to oblige you in any way that I can."

"Why, then, I particularly wish to bear in mind the impressive discourse we heard at church this morning; it seemed so peculiarly addressed to thoughtless beings like myself, that I could not help being very attentive, and earnestly did I wish that poor Headington could hear it also. Now, I have made a few notes from memory of the particular passages that I most wish to retain; but I fear they are rather unconnected, and I did intend asking Edward to arrange them for me. But, while Mr. Langley was reading your poetry, I thought how much I should be delighted if you would undertake the task; and, as the language of the sermon

itself was in many parts very beautifully sublime, I imagine it will not be difficult for you to paraphrase them for me. This is what I wish to ask; and if you will do it, I shall be more obliged than I can possibly express."

Ever ready to diffuse pleasure around her, Miss Barton took the notes which Henry offered, and having looked them over, said, "On one condition I will comply with your request: allow me to keep these notes, in remembrance of the harmony of taste which they prove to have this day subsisted between us, and I will willingly endeavour to paraphrase them for you. They are the same passages which most particularly arrested my own attention, and they are well worthy to be impressed on all our minds."

With a delighted smile, Henry made his acknowledgments, and Miss Barton undertook to fulfil her promise in the course of the day.

"You mentioned poor Headington, Henry," said Mr. Langley; "do you intend that he

shall share the benefit of Miss Barton's kindness?"

"Certainly, sir, if I have Miss Barton's permission. I am very anxious to see him again, and I hope you will not think me presumptuous in wishing to reason with him on the danger of leading so careless a life in future."

"Why should I think you presumptuous, my dear boy, in following the dictates of your conscience?"

"Because I am so very unfit to guide myself, and have already so frequently allowed the influence of erring opinions on my own mind."

"These considerations, Henry, ought certainly to induce the greater watchfulness over yourself; but they should, by no means, deter you from using your feeble endeavours for the good of others. In the present instance, I think you are particularly called upon to exert the interest you may possess in the heart of your friend. You acknowledge that his specious arguments have

sometimes inclined you to his opinions, and you are now fully convinced that these opinions are wrong. It is, therefore, your duty to impart this conviction to him, and, it is more than probable, that your doing so will conduce very greatly to strengthen the good impressions he may have already received from suffering and sickness. The counsels of a companion of similar age and disposition, will often be listened to, where the advice of a more experienced friend is neglected. Young people are too apt to forget this, and to think that, if they regulate their own actions by the laws of external order, it is sufficient. But, let them look into the law of the gospel, and they will find that this is not enough; that this is not to improve the talent committed to their care. It is, at best, but a negative virtue that they do no wrong; and we all know, that the unprofitable servant was condemned, not that he had literally lost his talent, but that he had neglected to use it.

"You, my young friends, who now hear me,

have all been highly favored; have all a most precious trust reposed in you. You have not only the one natural talent of unimpaired reason, but you have also the added possession of a good education, founded on the basis of religious instruction, continued on the principles and precepts of morality, and improved by useful and elegant acquirements. Of you, then, the Great Master, when he cometh, will require "his own with usury," and, if you neglect to instruct the ignorant, to reclaim the wandering, to strengthen the weak, and to confirm the irresolute, so far as your opportunities and abilities may permit, how will you answer at the final audit? I have said that you, Henry, are particularly called upon to instruct your unfortunate friend; and, I have two principal reasons for saying so: he has never known a mother's care; has never had cause to rejoice in the instruction of a father. At a very early age he was confided to the care of strangers; who, regarding him as the heir to immense property, thought it

their interest to secure his affections by unlimited indulgence; and his father, from mistaken affection, never corrected him. Having no settled principles of religion himself, he could impart none to his son, and the poor lad lived, as it were, 'without a God in the world,' till he had passed his fourteenth year, when he was left an orphan, under the guardianship of his maternal uncle. Now, you, my dear boy, have been very differently situated, and you must, I am sure, while you compassionate him, feel inexpressibly grateful for the mercies which distinguished your own childhood. Shew, then, your gratitude to heaven, by freely imparting that which you have freely received.

"Another reason why I consider you particularly called on to do so, I have already mentioned, but will now briefly repeat. As you have been the favorite companion of young Headington since his residence at Wilbury, your arguments will be more likely to have weight with him, than those of his

uncle or myself. What *we* advance, he may, perhaps, reject, as the opinions of men who, no longer feeling the elasticity of youthful spirits, cannot make proper allowances for those who do. But, when he shall find that the gay companion of his liveliest hours can cheerfully retire to communion with his God, and can find a pleasure in keeping his precepts, he will be led to inquire into the nature of that communion, and thus (if I may be allowed the expression) he may become enamoured of the beauty of holiness, and at length confess that 'her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.'"

"But, I fear," said Henry, "I greatly fear, that I have not sufficient ability to instruct him."

"If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not," replied Mr. Langley; "and, therefore, my dear boy, let no fear of this kind lead you to neglect what is so plainly your duty."

Henry bowed in grateful acknowledgment; and, in the evening, before he retired, Miss Barton put into his hands the following—

REFLECTIONS,

suggested by a discourse from the 119th Psalm, 60th verse,—"I made haste and delayed not, to keep thy commandments."

HEAR, oh, my soul! the sacred call obey,
Shake off the sleep of sin, and come away.
Say not, "There yet is time, there yet is space,
There yet is strength, to run and win the race."
Ere earth's dark confines hail tomorrow's sun,
Perchance thy strength may fail, thy race be run,
Thy labour ended, yet thy task not done.
And, should thy last account be given in,
Presenting nought but blanks and lines of sin,
What, when the balance sinks, will it avail
To place thy bare intentions in the scale?
Or, grant thy life may know a lengthened date,
Why madly trifle with eternal fate!
Now, the full light of reason shines for thee,
Points out thy chains, and aids thee to be free;
But, when her lamp is waning to a close,
And but a faint uncertain shadow throws,
Oh! dost thou think that its exhausted ray
Can lead thee from the error of thy way,
And guide thee to the presence of that light,
Which, e'en in death, shall bless the good man's sight?

Repose not on a hope so vague, so wild,
Be not thus sadly, sinfully beguil'd;
But, rather, turn thee, at the call of heaven,
Improve the grace, adore the mercy given;
Nor lightly estimate the bounteous love
Which grants thee guidance to the realms above,
By ministers of Christ, who love their lord,
And keep his precepts, while they preach his word.

CHAPTER XI.

It was a happy party that assembled round the breakfast table of Mrs. Danvers, on the Monday appointed for their visit to Selbury. The countenance of Adelaide wore one of its brightest smiles as she conversed with Henry and his sisters, on the pleasure they might expect from an introduction to Fanny and William Barton.

"Is Fanny very clever?" asked Louisa.

"She is a very good little girl," replied Miss Langley; "but she is younger than you and Arabella, and, therefore, I suppose she is not so clever. That, however, is of very little consequence; for,

if she be polite and good-humoured, she will still be a pleasant companion."

"Oh, yes," said Arabella; "my sister does not mean that we shall not like her if she should know less than we do; but, we were afraid that she was *very clever indeed,* and that we should appear ignorant before her."

"And why should you be afraid of that, my love?" asked her mother. "If your aunt and myself approve your progress, and your own conscience do not accuse you of neglect, what more can you wish for? Supposing even that Fanny should prove, as you say, *very clever indeed,* and should very much surpass you in knowledge, you cannot imagine that she will be so ill-bred as to laugh at, or despise you on that account; and, therefore, since I do not charge you with want of diligence, you have no cause to dread her superiority."

"But, mamma, surely it would be very mortifying to appear less clever than a younger child."

"To appear so, through your own carelessness and inattention, undoubtedly, would be very mortifying; but, if her superiority be the gift of God, in endowing her with superior natural abilities, then, you have no more cause for shame than you would have were her frock finer and her face more fair than yours."

"Thank you, dear mamma," said the child, "I understand you now. How very silly it was in us, Bella, to be afraid. We should have recollected that all people have not equal abilities."

"All people, certainly, have not equal abilities," resumed Mrs. Danvers; "but, you must, nevertheless, recollect, that all can improve what they possess, and that, therefore, if you neglect properly to cultivate yours, the shame you so much dread must at last rest upon you."

The little girls promised to continue diligent, and ran to put on their bonnets. Mr. Barton was looking out for them when they arrived at the farm, and the horses were soon

ordered for himself and Mr. Langley to take a ride. The young people proposed a ramble, and Henrietta eagerly stepped forward to attend Miss Langley; endeavouring, by her own cheerfulness, to rouse the drooping spirits of her friend. She was not entirely unsuccessful; but, an involuntary sigh, or a convulsed pressure of the hand, would sometimes denote that Adelaide's thoughts wandered to the proposed visit of Dr. A—. On their return to the house, they found that gentleman in conversation with Mrs. Langley. He rose on their entrance, but did not speak until Adelaide had been cautiously informed by her mother of his presence. When the momentary tremor which affected her whole frame, at this announcement, had passed away, she replied with astonishing composure to his questions, and inquired for his own health.

"I am much better, I thank you," he replied, "and shall, I trust, in a few days be perfectly recovered. I have much regretted the delay to your happiness which my illness has occasioned."

"Then your are still sanguine in your hopes," said Adelaide, tremulously.

"Certainly I am," he replied; "and, since I have seen you to-day, I have not a doubt remaining."

It was then settled that, in the course of the week, this eventful operation should be performed; and Dr. A— took his leave.

Adelaide appeared much assured by this visit; and, during the remainder of the day, she continued composed and cheerful.

Dinner was served up in a large old-fashioned oak parlour, or dining-hall, on whose ample hearth a comfortable wood-fire was blazing.

"Here, my friend," said Mr. Barton, as the cloth was being withdrawn, "you perceive no appendages of ceremony to grace our entertainment, no expensive luxuries to heighten its enjoyments. Let the cordiality of welcome, and the interchange of social feeling, atone for the absence of both. I can regret the loss of neither, while I see so many kind, so many happy faces around me; and, our old rustic dining parlour, ornamented as it

now is, with the living portraits of true friendship, is far dearer to my taste than the most splendid saloon of fashion."

"I, undoubtedly, agree with you," said Mr. Langley, "and shall long retain the recollection of this day. It is not often that I can contemplate such a groupe of young and cheerful beings around me, all pleased with themselves and with each other; my little Fanny, here, looks the very picture of health and happiness."

"Oh, yes," said the child, looking up at him, as he playfully tapped her cheek, "I *am* very happy; but, if you like to see happy parties, how I wish you had been here at Christmas."

Henry involuntarily looked up at the mention of a Christmas party; but, instantly checking himself, the eager glance of curiosity subsided into that of composed attention, as Mr. Langley asked the child, why she particularly wished he had been with them at Christmas?

"Because," replied she, with much animation, "you would have been so delighted

to see papa at the head of the table, in this very room, partaking of a Christmas supper with all his servants and labourers. I did enjoy it; they all looked so happy and so very grateful."

"And you were not at all shocked, then, to see your papa sit down with such a company of poor men?" said Mr. Langley.

Fanny looked inquiringly in his face, and then replied, "Ah! I see you are only joking; you know that I felt as if I loved him the better for it."

"Why so?" said he.

"Because," replied the child, "Albert told me that Jesus Christ also loved the poor, and that he sat at the same table with his disciples."

"And did Albert join his father?"

"Yes, he sat at the bottom of the table, and, when they had all finished supper, he talked to the old people, and sang with them."

"You had, indeed, a happy party, then, my love," said Mr. Langley, looking with benign approbation on his young friend.

"Yes," replied the child, "I think we were all very happy; and yet," added she, in a half whisper, "when Albert sang the Hallelujahs in the Christmas Anthem, the tears stood in his eyes, and in papa's, too."

The little girl was surprised to see the tears start to the eyes of Mr. Langley also, as, turning to his friend, he said, "This little prattling innocent has touched my heart." Then, in a firmer voice, he remarked, that he thought it was more usual to give Christmas *dinners* than *suppers* to the poor."

"I know it is," said Mr. Barton, "but, on Christmas-day, as I always like to dine with my own family, so I wish every labourer in my service to dine with his; and I take care that he shall not want the means of doing so comfortably. Still, however, I cannot forego the pleasure of meeting them all as members of the same Christian brotherhood, on that day of universal blessedness. It is a bond of union between man and man; which, while it softens to them the distinction of master and servant, does not render them unmindful of that distinction;

but, on the contrary, acts as an incentive to the affectionate, as well as diligent, discharge of their respective duties. In short, my friend, it is a custom so interwoven with the best feelings of my heart, that I hope to continue it as long as I live."

Henry's eyes met those of Mrs. Danvers, as Mr. Barton ceased speaking. Enthusiastic concurrence with, and admiration of, his kind host, reverence of Heaven, and gratitude to his mother, were all blended in the expression of his countenance; and that mother's heart throbbed with indescribable satisfaction, as she affectionately returned his speaking glance.

In consideration of Adelaide's blindness, which prevented her participation in more active amusements, Mrs. Barton did not propose any other methods of spending the evening than those of music and conversation. But the amiable girl remembered that there had been a time when she herself would have included dancing among the enjoyments of the season. When, therefore, she was requested to take her station at the

piano-forte, she instantly complied; and, giving her auditors an inspiriting prelude, told them to form their set for a country dance, since the party was rather too small for quadrilles, unless they could press Mr. Langley and Mr. Barton into the service. Both these gentlemen declined, as did the elder ladies, and the young people hesitated to avail themselves of Adelaide's disinterested kindness. "Surely," she exclaimed, "you will allow me to feel that I have yet the ability to assist your enjoyments, though I cannot partake in *all* of them."

This appeal was sufficient; they saw the smile of anticipated pleasure on her countenance, and Albert led Emma Danvers to the top of the room. Edward followed with Emily Barton, while Henrietta and the three little girls soon found partners in the other young gentlemen. Never, perhaps, did a more elegant ball-room boast so happy an assembly; and never, certainly, did any public performer meet with such affectionate approbation as that which now awaited Adelaide.

"How very amiable she is!" said Albert to his partner, who had expressed a fear that Miss Langley would exert herself too much.

"She is, indeed," replied Emma; "but it is a sad, sad privation for her. Oh! Mr. Barton, how very anxious she must be for the result of Thursday's trial!"

The pale cheek and tearful eye of Emma, as she gently articulated these words, bore testimony to the sympathetic feelings of her heart, and awoke a powerful interest in the mind of her auditor; nor was this interest lessened, as he led her into conversation, and gradually discovered the rich stores of intellect, which had hitherto lain concealed by the timidity of her general demeanour.

"Well, Miss Henrietta," said Mr. Langley, as he led his daughter from the piano, and seated himself by her, "Adelaide tells me, that you have been apostrophising an early Snow-drop this morning; in virtue of the appointment which you hold from me; I must request to see your production."

Henrietta protested that she had not a

copy; but Frederic instantly read, from a pencilled paper, the subjoined verses.

TO A

SOLITARY FLOWER IN A SEVERE SEASON.

THROUGH the snows of winter peeping,
Little flow'ret, welcome here!—
Flora's other children sleeping,
Thy lone charms are doubly dear.

Heedless of the season's rigour,
Unsubdued, though storms assail,
Blooming still in modest vigour,
Thee an emblem fair I hail.

Emblem of the mind unshaken,
Which from fortune's sunshine riven,
Chilled by scorn, oppressed, forsaken,
Still looks up with hope to Heaven.

"There," said Frederic, "if I had not written these myself, as Henrietta composed them, I should have said, she could produce nothing so serious; though, I must confess, I have known her tack a moral to the end of an old tale before now."

"You have some particular meaning in that speech, I am sure, Fred," said George. "I do not see how your expression can exactly apply to the subject before us."

"Probably not," replied Frederic; "but there is one present who can perhaps instruct you in the science of applications." As he spoke, he glanced slily at Henrietta, who in vain endeavoured to suppress a laugh.

"Pray let us share in your amusement," cried Mr. Langley. She referred him to Frederic, who said, that before the arrival of their friends in the morning, he was engaged in chit-chat with Henrietta, and jestingly observed, that he should not long be contented with his present course of study as a surgeon, but should perhaps aspire to the dignity of a physician. Henrietta made no other reply, than by pointing to a trite anecdote which they had been reading together in the newspaper. She then sat down to her desk, and in a few minutes put into his hands the following

OLD TALE, (POETISED AND MORALISED FOR A PARTICULAR OCCASION.)

'Tis said that once, (but when, I cannot guess,)
The famous general, Prince Charles of Hesse,

Marching through Holstein, being very tired,
Refreshment for himself and train required,
And stopped at a small town, whose humble walls
Were seldom honoured by such noble calls;
However, at the time my tale begins,
It happened that this town could boast two inns;
The one, where wealthy travellers took their wine,
Distinguished by a "Grey Ass" for its sign;
The other, used by people of less taste,
And by the figure of a "Black Cow" graced.
The Ass's fame for excellence of cheer
Had spread throughout the country, far and near;
Nor did the poor appearance of the sign
Deter the Prince from going there to dine.
The host, elated with his good success,
In having entertained the Prince of Hesse,
Grew discontented with the vulgar name
By which his tavern had attained to fame,
And learned (like other great men,) to despise
The humble friend who caused his fortune's rise.
He, therefore, as the prince prepared to go,
Approached with trembling steps; and, bowing low,
Requested he'd allow his gracious face
To be portrayed, and take the Ass's place!!!
The prince, not dreaming mischief would ensue,
Granted the favor; and, in public view
The portrait was suspended, from the door
Where honest Jack had hung for years before.
Great was the exultation of our host;
But short, alas! the triumph and the boast.

The master of "The Cow" neglected not
The chance that offered, to improve his lot;
The Cow he banished, and most gladly raised
The sign on which he'd long with envy gazed.
Experience shewed that he had wisely done:
"The Ass" drew numbers; but "The Prince" drew none.

Learn hence, ye discontented, and ye vain,
Fame is not food, nor glory always gain;
And, he who wanders from his proper sphere,
May find, too late, his honours cost him dear.

"Well," said Mr. Langley, "I hope the moral will not be lost upon you, young man. Be contented with your present pursuit, and I have no doubt you will attain to honour in it."

Frederic assured him, that he had not a wish beyond that branch of the profession which he had chosen, and that he was more indebted to Henrietta's love of frolic, on this occasion, than to any serious apprehensions which she entertained of his versatility.

Mr. Langley was perfectly satisfied; but, as he shook hands with Henrietta before his departure, smilingly repeated his former caution against too great an indulgence of satire.

CHAPTER XII.

THE eventful Thursday dawned, and the inhabitants of Oakdale Cottage anxiously expected the arrival of Dr. A ———. He came early, accompanied by a professional gentleman of acknowledged skill. Ever attentive to the feelings of those about her, Adelaide requested that none of the ladies would continue in the room; but, Miss Danvers, with a firmness of sensibility which triumphed over every selfish consideration, determined to remain with her during the hour of trial.

Every preparation being made, Adelaide requested that Mr. Langley, who had also refused to leave the apartment, would give her his hand; and, silently commending herself to the protection of Heaven, submitted to the operation. It was cautiously, but rapidly performed, and she supported herself with wonderful fortitude till the

conclusion, when she sank motionless into the arms of her father.

It is needless to dwell on the speechless gratitude with which Mr. and Mrs. Langley received Dr. A ——'s report, that the event of the operation had even exceeded his hopes; nor is it possible to describe the feelings of their daughter, when allowed once more to look on the features of her beloved parents. Many days, however, passed, before she was permitted to use her newly recovered faculties; and, even then, the utmost caution was deemed necessary.

When at length she did see those whom (as she once expressed herself to Edward,) she had loved unseen, the introduction was not less affecting to them than to her. To look on her own dear parents was indeed a joy unspeakable and overpowering; yet, still it was but the revival of images, which, during her day of darkness, had never been forgotten. But, in gazing on the features of her friends at Oakdale, there was perfect novelty as well as pleasure. The expressive countenances of Mrs. Danvers and her sister,

could not fail to interest one so well disposed, from previous affection, to admire them; but, when the junior members of the family were admitted to the apartment, her agitation was beyond controul. She wept upon the neck of Emma, and received the broken congratulations of Edward in speechless emotion; then gazed alternately on each, and endeavoured to express her sense of their uniform kindness and attention.

"But where," said she, "is the no less kind and attentive Henry? let me behold him also, and his dear little sisters."

Mr. Langley had not intended that they should be admitted at this time; but, on consideration, he thought it best that the ceremonies of introduction should be at once concluded, and therefore sent for them. They instantly obeyed the summons, and Adelaide gazed with tearful delight on the countenance of the warm-hearted boy, as he fervently kissed her hand. "My *dear* Miss Langley!" he exclaimed, "I am very, very" —glad to see you, he would have said, but

bursting into tears, he stood unable to utter another word.

"Sit down by me, Henry," said she, much affected, "and tell me which of these dear little girls I must call Louisa, and which Arabella."

Henry sat down on her footstool (where he had so often sat before, to gaze with compassion upon her countenance), and did as she desired him. She affectionately embraced both the children, and soon regained sufficient composure to converse with all.

Mr. and Mrs. Barton, and Emily, called on her in the course of the next week; and, at the end of another fortnight, she again visited Selbury. George and Frederic had before then returned to town; Emily, too, had rejoined her pupils at Brighton; but Henrietta's dark eyes shone through her tears as she embraced her friend, and the voice of Albert faltered with emotion, as he congratulated her.

Mr. Langley's present visit to Mr. Barton was not lengthened beyond a morning call. It was, however, settled, that they should see

each other again before the former left Berkshire; and it was arranged that Henrietta should accompany Miss Langley to Wilbury, for a short time, since she could prosecute her studies there as well as at home.

On the day then, previous to that which the travellers had fixed for the commencement of their journey, the families again met at Oakdale; but this meeting was one of mingled pain and pleasure, and the conversation often declined as the hour of separation drew nigh. Mrs. Danvers could not forget, that, on the morrow, she must part with her beloved sons for another long period; nor could they admit the thought of leaving home without considerable regret. Miss Danvers and Emma also shared in the general melancholy. The latter had been much indisposed for the last few days, and the paleness of afflictive thought now rested upon her interesting features, as she earnestly regarded her brothers. Edward could with difficulty restrain his tears as he addressed her. "You will write to me, my dear sister, as you used to do; and we must

endeavour to make our correspondence supply the pleasure of conversation."

Emma pressed his hand in reply, and the silent eloquence of her glance penetrated to the heart of her brother.

Albert Barton observed them both, and, anxious to restore their cheerfulness, began to speak of the satisfaction they would derive from the proposed correspondence."

"I too," said he, "anticipate much amusement from the letters of my volatile sister, and thus we shall be supplied with all the information which Wilbury can furnish, whether grave or gay. Miss Langley, too, will now be able to contribute her share in the epistolary way, and even Henry must not be forgotten."

"That indeed he must not," said his aunt; "he is my own correspondent; but I give him notice, that his future letters will be *pro bono publico,* at least, in the domestic circles of Oakdale and Selbury."

"And I, Henrietta, repeat the same notice to you," said her brother, "thus securing a reasonable portion of village gossip for the

general entertainment; and, I hope, that you, Miss Emma, will gain permission sometimes to throw in a little dash of sentiment from the pens of Miss Langley and Edward."

Emma smiled, and easily gained the desired permission from her friend and brother.

"Well, then," said Mr. Barton, "we shall still converse, it seems, though so far apart; and it will not surely be difficult to find some degree of solace for the absence of our friends, while we can hold their sentiments in our hands, and trace their portraits in our hearts."

"And," observed Mr. Langley, as he impressively laid his hand on the head of his daughter, "however much we may regret our approaching separation, let none of us forget to thank the Almighty for the many blessings which have cheered, and for the transcendent mercies which have distinguished, our Christmas Holidays."

THE END.

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