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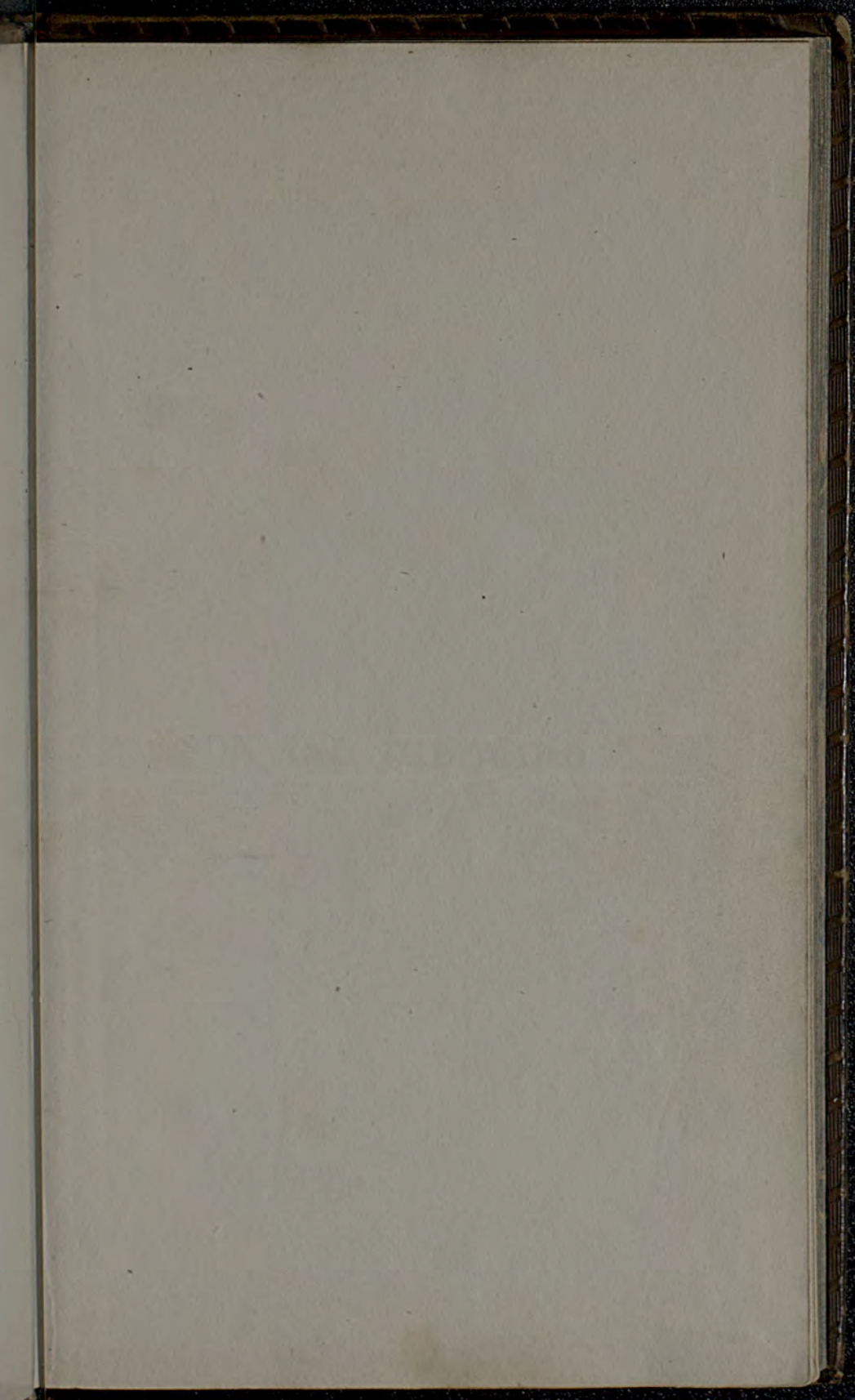
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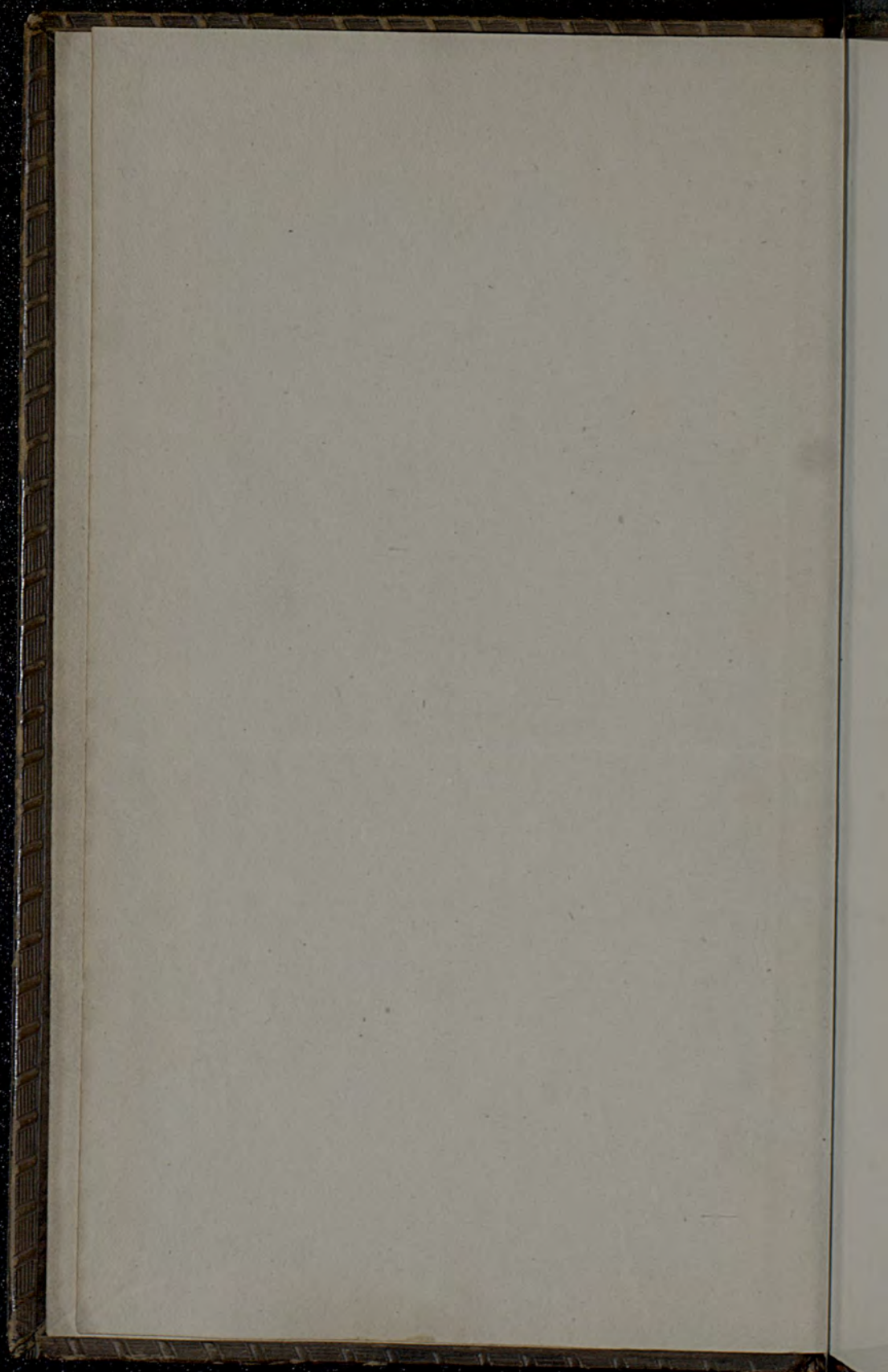


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THE
SON AND THE WARD.

LONDON:

J. MOYES, TOOK'S COURT, CHANCERY LANE.

THE
SON AND THE WARD;

OR,
SELFISHNESS CORRECTED :

A TALE FOR YOUTH.

BY MARIANNE PARROTT.

The happiness of human kind
Consists in rectitude of mind,
A will subdued to reason's sway,
And passions practised to obey
An open and a generous heart,
Refined from selfishness and art.—WILKIE.

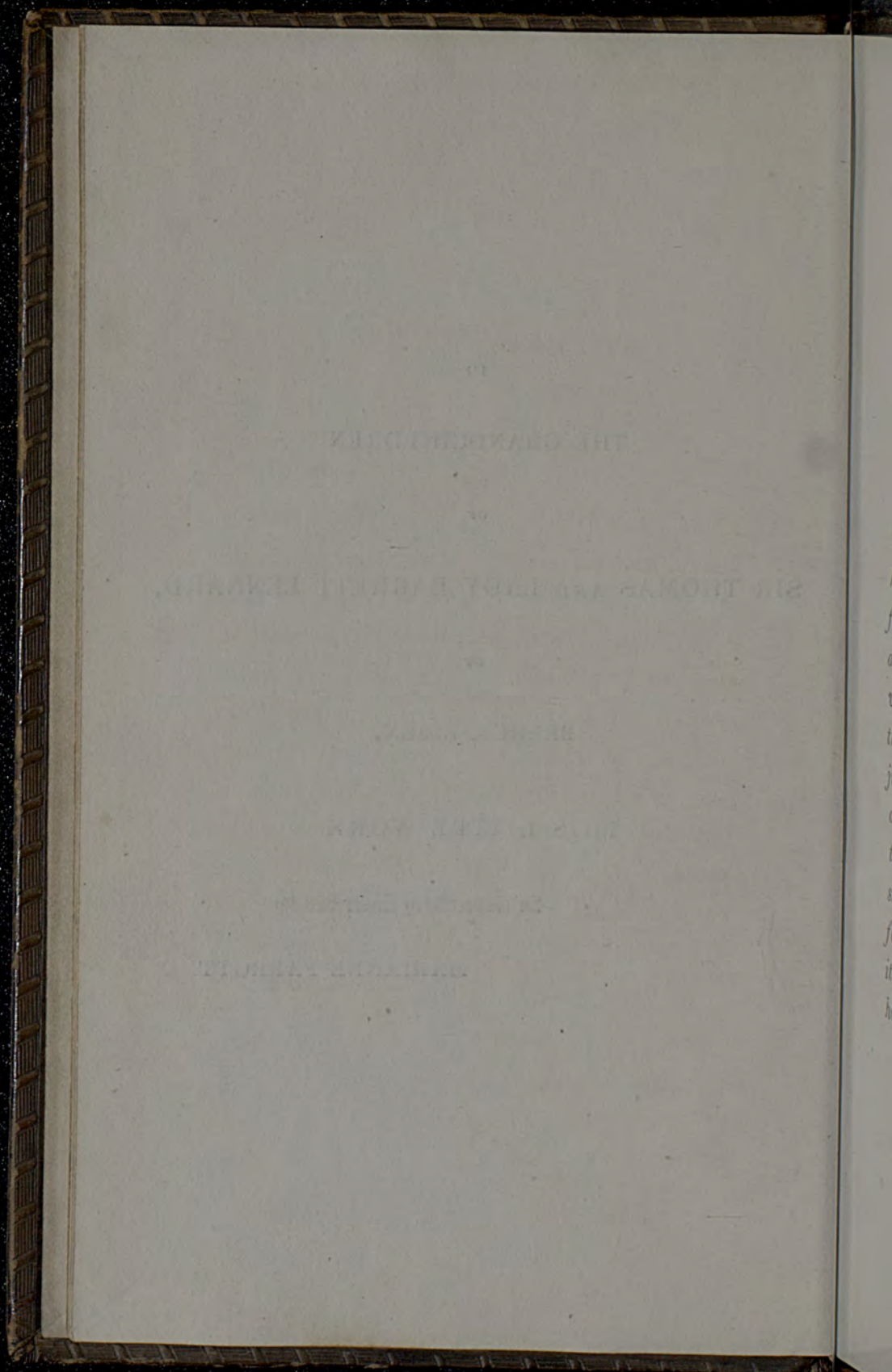
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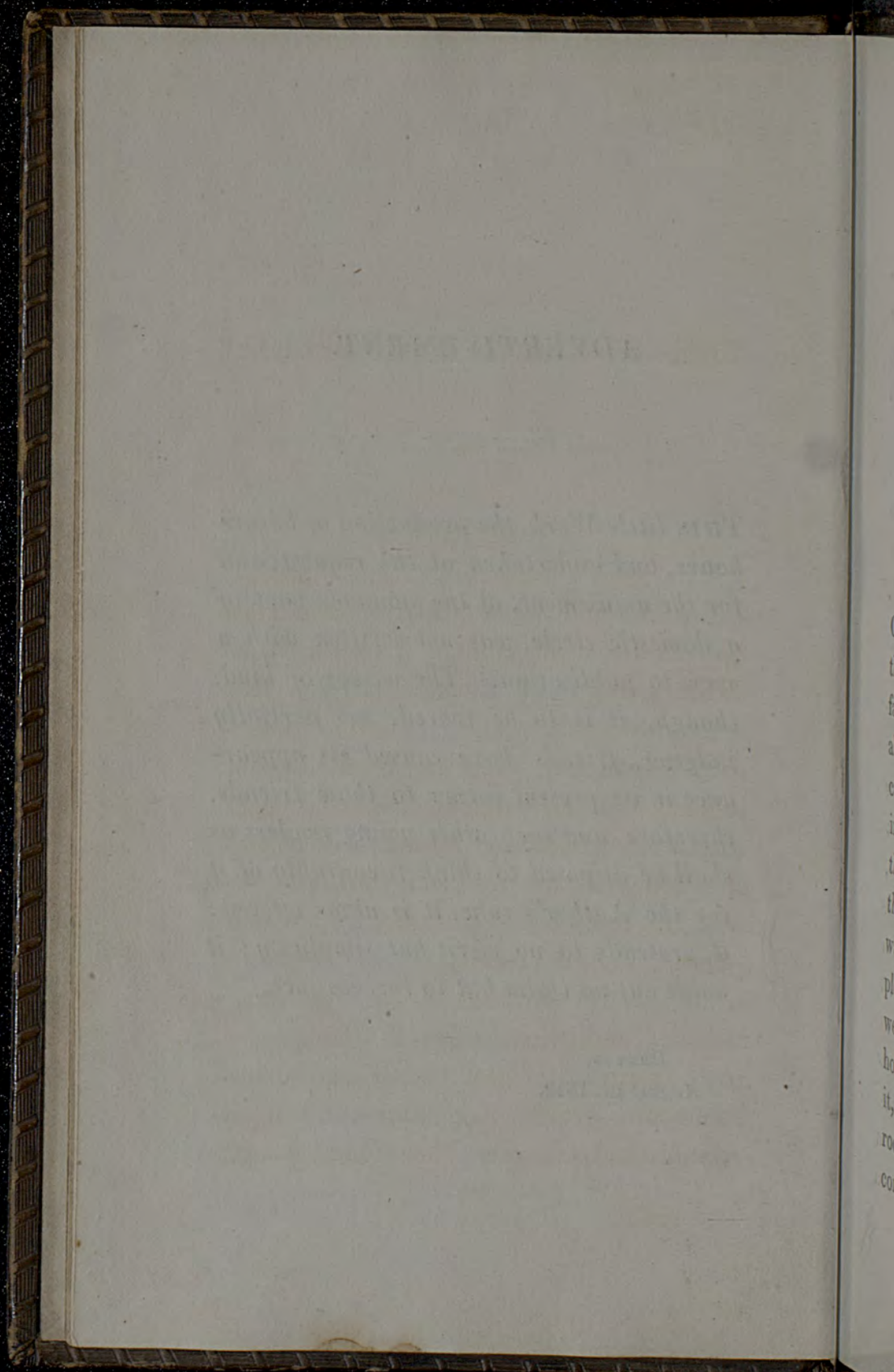
TO
THE GRANDCHILDREN
OF
SIR THOMAS AND LADY BARRETT LENNARD,
OF
BELHUS, ESSEX,
THIS LITTLE WORK
Is respectfully Inscribed by
MARIANNE PARROTT.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS little Work, the production of leisure hours, and undertaken at the request, and for the amusement, of the younger part of a domestic circle, was not written with a view to publication. The wishes of kind, though, it is to be feared, too partially judging, friends, have caused its appearance in its present form: to those friends, therefore, and such other young readers as shall be disposed to think favourably of it for the Author's sake, it is alone offered: it pretends to no merit but simplicity; it holds out no claim but to forbearance.

BRETTS,
August 15, 1829.



THE SON AND THE WARD.

CHAPTER I.

CHARLES and AMELIA MELWORTH were the children of affluent parents: their father had in early life amassed considerable property by a strict attention to mercantile concerns,—an attention so strict, indeed, that he had even denied himself those recreations and indulgences usually the concomitants of a rising fortune. He was, in the world's phraseology, a complete “man of business:” his mornings were wholly devoted to the counting-house; and when, after the fatigues of it, he retired at a late hour to his drawing-room, the society of an amiable and accomplished wife was often found insuffi-

cient to abstract him from his calculations of the expected profit of some new speculation,—or the useless, though not therefore less poignant, regrets occasioned by former, but generally trifling losses.

Such unceasing devotion to the acquisition of riches failed not to influence his character, producing feelings totally unfavourable to domestic comfort; and, in truth,

“ That last, best bliss
Of Paradise, that has survived the fall,”

might have been banished for ever from the fire-side of Mr. Melworth, had not Fortune, in one of her most fickle moods, introduced to his notice, and won for him the regard, of a being possessed of tastes and temper so unlike his own, that it could not but be a matter of surprise to their mutual friends how two persons so entirely dissimilar could be found treading in the same circle. Charles Melworth was proud, selfish, and overbearing, in

proportion as Ellen Grey was generous, affable, and candid ; with a spirit sensitive of, and capable of resenting, intentional insult, yet so softened by humility, that it was with difficulty provoked, and most easily appeased. Misfortune (for she had been an orphan nearly from her birth, and exposed to all the distressing circumstances invariably connected with the early loss of parents,) had not subdued the natural vivacity of her disposition ; she was unaffectedly pious, and warmly benevolent. Nor did a spirit of resignation shine the least conspicuous amidst her many amiable qualities ; yet her's was not that passiveness of feeling which bends under the weight of affliction or disappointment, merely from the belief that regret or exertion would be alike unavailing ; but that principle of action, which, while yielding implicitly to the dispensations of an all-wise Disposer, from a thorough conviction of their rectitude, knows how to seek advice and

consolation where they are alone to be found, and which often urges its possessor to struggle, where it would be perilous to sink. Therefore it was that, when, after her union with Mr. Melworth, she found she had mistaken his character, and that it was in many respects so faulty, she suffered not the discovery, painful as it could not fail to be, to alienate her affections, or materially to influence her conduct.

At the period when our narrative commences they had been married many years; and Mr. Melworth, at fifty-five, beginning to weary of his hitherto favourite pursuits, his lady, who had ever disliked the constant dissipation of a town life, prevailed on him to break up their establishment in Montague Square, and retire to an estate he had lately purchased in a beautiful part of Berkshire: he was the more easily persuaded to this change, from having at length resigned the long-cherished intention,

that his only surviving son should succeed him in his mercantile engagements. The future destination of this young gentleman, now just entering his eleventh year, had been the subject of frequent and serious discussion between his parents. Though born to the possession of fortune amply sufficient to procure for him all the conveniences and luxuries of life, it was by no means the wish of either Mr. or Mrs. Melworth that their son should be brought up to a life of idleness; they were, however, actuated by different motives in this, as in almost every other determination of their lives. The former, as we have already hinted, considered the accumulation of property as the great and all-engrossing object of life; he had, therefore, looked forward with some impatience to the time when his little Charles should become old enough to be initiated by himself in all the mysteries of commerce, and the proper application of pounds, shillings, and pence: the cultivation

of his mind, and the formation of his morals, he contemplated as secondary objects, which might be effected during his hours of relaxation, and under the auspices of her whom, to do him justice, he deemed so eminently qualified to impart instruction and instil propriety. Mrs. Melworth, on the contrary, had early learned the insufficiency of money to purchase happiness; and while she sincerely thanked her Almighty Father for having placed her children apparently above the reach of want, she earnestly prayed that they might be taught to regard their riches only as a sacred deposit, given them for the purpose of more widely diffusing assistance to the needy, and encouragement to the industrious.

Having herself received a superior and highly finished education, and been introduced, at the house of an uncle (where she had passed her minority), to the most polished society, she trembled lest her beloved children should be deprived of

those advantages of which she so fully appreciated the value, and which their condition in life seemed to demand: she had therefore firmly, though for a long time in vain, opposed her husband's intention of withdrawing Charles at a very early age from the care of the gentleman at whose academy he had recently been placed, and fixing him at once to the confinement and monotony of a counting-house. Nor is it likely that the avarice of the money-getting merchant would have eventually given way to the anxiety of the tender mother, had not a sudden change in the mercantile prospects of the country, and some recent unlucky speculations of his own, reminded Mr. Melworth, that though much might be gained, there was also much to risk, and, possibly, to lose: this weighty consideration, rather than any finer feeling, induced him to yield to the solicitations of his wife; and it was finally agreed, that, after spending a short time with his

parents at their new residence, a school should be sought for Charles in its neighbourhood, where he might be prepared for the University, with a view to his following any profession that inclination or circumstances might hereafter render desirable.

CHAPTER II.

THE determination expressed at the close of the former chapter was highly satisfactory to the young hero who was the subject of it, as well as to his sister Amelia, just fifteen months his junior. Resident from their birth in the metropolis, the idea of a country life was associated in their young minds with every thing delightful: they had, indeed, more than once accompanied their mother in her occasional summer visits to a friend in Sussex; but for the last two years these migrations had entirely ceased, and their daily walk within the enclosure of the square afforded them the only opportunity they now possessed of engaging in those out-of-door diversions ever so attractive to children. It is true, the lengthened advertisement in "The Times," which recommended to the notice

of parents the preparatory establishment of the Rev. Mr. Clarke, mentioned, among its many advantages, that of its being situated out of the limits of the metropolis; yet the crowded buildings, paved and gas-lighted streets, and smoky atmosphere, fully demonstrated that Kensington was at least not exempted from the disagreeables of London.

The following conversation, which took place between the children on the morning previous to their departure, and while they were assisting a servant who was packing up their toys in a room, the furniture of which plainly indicated that it had been set apart for their amusement, will give some idea of the nature of their anticipations, and, at the same time, afford a slight insight into their respective characters, here more particularly dwelt upon, as being a period of their lives when the young plant sends forth buds for futurity.

“ I do not see the necessity of sending

that rocking-horse into the country," said Charles, looking at a large wooden animal which filled one corner of the apartment. "Papa says, when I am at the Grove I shall have a handsome pony of my own; and when I can gallop round the park and fields, I do assure you I shall not feel much disposed to act the jockey in the play-room."

"But you forget, Charles, that I cannot gallop with you," said his sister, to whom the rocking-horse often afforded much diversion.

"O but you must, though!" returned he; "you will but want courage to mount the first time, and then, take my word for it, you will soon think as I do."

The timid little girl was not, however, so easily persuaded; and she thought of her inanimate favourite being left behind with a tearful eye.

"Do you think our play-room at the Grove will be as large as this?" at length she asked.

“O certainly! much larger,” replied her brother. “You know mamma has always wished us to have more space for exercise in bad weather; and I am sure she will select one for us more suitable than this disagreeable little hole.”

“O dear! Charles, how can you call it disagreeable? think how happy we have often been in it; and don’t you remember how your friend William Stanley admired it, and how sorry he was his mamma could not spare one like it for him and his sisters?”

“Well, I do not mean that it is exactly disagreeable, only that I dare say we shall have a much better one in the country. I wonder, Amelia, what colour my pony will be; if it is black, I will christen it Mungo.” Amelia did not know what colour the pony would be, so she was silent, and busied herself with the nurse, who was carefully packing the contents of her doll’s house.

“Baker,” exclaimed Charles, “do

come and help me to tie up my new kite."

"Not just now, master Charles; I have been waiting on you all the morning, and I must attend to your sister a little, or her toys will not be ready for the carrier."

"But my kite is of much more consequence than that foolish doll's house," said the young gentleman, petulantly. Baker, however, thought otherwise, and she quietly pursued her employment.

"I hope to-morrow will be a fine day," cried Charles, after a pause, "that we may have the barouche open. I should like to catch the first glimpse of the house. I wonder if there is a very large garden. I shall ask the gardener to let me have one of my own."

"And do you think he will let me have one, too?" anxiously inquired Amelia, her eyes glistening with pleasure at the thought.

"I don't know," replied her brother;

“ perhaps he will not be able to spare ground for us both ; and if not, remember I am the eldest, and shall be served first.”

“ Who is that talking of being first served ?” asked Mrs. Melworth, who, just then entering the apartment, had overheard the last speech : “ I hope not my own Charles, anticipating enjoyment from an indulgence in which his younger and only sister is not to share : he surely cannot be so unmanly.” Her son hung down his head, abashed ; and Mrs. Melworth, taking Amelia’s hand, continued : “ I have ordered the carriage, and came to invite you both to accompany me in some farewell visits ; but as Charles is to have a source of pleasure in the country from which his sister is to be excluded, it is but fair she should have an additional one whilst in town :” so saying, she drew her daughter from the room.

In vain the gentle and forgiving Amelia implored her mamma to permit Charles

to join them; Mrs. Melworth was firm. She had observed with pain, that his, in many respects amiable, character was tarnished by excessive selfishness; and she omitted no opportunity of testifying her disapprobation of a quality at once so unpleasing and so inimical to his future peace.

CHAPTER III.

THE so anxiously expected morning at length arrived, and shone forth bright as even Charles could wish. The travelling carriage at the door, the hall filled with corded trunks, and servants hurrying to and fro in all directions,—indicated to the passer-by that the house was about to be deserted. As Amelia was running up stairs, for the twentieth time, to take “one more peep” at that room in which she and her brother had passed so many happy hours, she was delighted to meet two men bringing down the rocking-horse, and followed by Charles, who was giving directions that it should be moved with care, and placed among some furniture left for removal. Young as she was, Amelia fully understood the motive which prompted him to this act of kind-

ness; and she accepted the atonement for his selfishness of the day before with a grateful smile.

Just as they were about to start, a circumstance occurred which obliged Mr. Melworth to remain a few days longer in town; but as a postponement of their departure would have interfered with his wife's plans, it was arranged that she with her children should pursue their journey, and that he should take up his abode at the house of a friend till able to join them in Berkshire.

For the first few miles, Mrs. Melworth felt little inclination to converse. She was leaving behind her many dear and valued friends—friends, in the enjoyment of whose society she had passed her younger days; and she was going to a neighbourhood where she was unknown, with new acquaintances to make—new friendships to form: but she was about, too, to engage in a mode of life she preferred, which she hoped would extend

her sphere of usefulness, and from which she flattered herself her children would derive alike benefit and improvement. Their lively remarks and animated prattle, therefore, soon roused her from her reverie; and she exerted herself to join in a conversation which she well knew was likely to become the medium of instruction.

"I wonder how Rover will like his new home," said Charles, stroking a handsome Blenheim spaniel which was reposing at its ease on the seat of the carriage.

"There is little doubt of Rover's approbation of it," replied his mother: "his attachment to us is, I believe, so sincere, that where we are he will be contented to dwell."

"I do love dogs," said Amelia; "they are so grateful and affectionate."

"Their fidelity to their possessor, my dear Amelia, is indeed striking, and might afford a useful lesson to many beings endued with reason, who would, though,

feel highly indignant at receiving it from so insignificant a source."

"Are there not anecdotes related of dogs who have travelled far in pursuit of their masters?"

"Many; and some of them well authenticated. The cat, on the contrary, is accused of attaching itself rather to the domestic hearth than the domestic circle. It is often characterised as perfidious and ungrateful; but though this charge against the race sometimes appears to be well founded, I am rather inclined to favour the opinion, that cats are not altogether incapable of affection."

"Have I not read, mamma," said Charles, "that the cat was somewhere worshipped as a god?"

"Yes: in Egypt it was formerly the object of extraordinary veneration. Among the Mahometans, too, it is a particular favourite; while for dogs, on the contrary, they have a marked aversion."

“How strange,” said Amelia, “to worship senseless animals!”

“And not less lamentable than strange, my dear girl. Happily for us, however, we live in an age when these absurd and impious customs are gradually giving way to the revealed religion of the Bible; and it behoves us, and all who possess the means, to lend our little aid towards the attainment of this most desirable end. Remind me, Charles,” continued Mrs. Melworth, after a pause, “remind me, at some leisure moment, to refer with you to Mavor’s Elements of Natural History, for his opinion of those animals whose merits we have been discussing.”

“Thank you, mamma: I will be sure not to forget it.”

Other subjects succeeded, while each mile that brought them nearer the termination of their journey increased the spirits of the young people; and as often as a distant spire or wreath of smoke an-

nounced to them that they were approaching a village, the eager inquiry of "Is this Elmsdale? is this the place?" was repeated to an old man-servant on the box, who, having lived with them from their birth, and being fondly attached to them, was permitted to point out to their notice those objects which his previous acquaintance with the road rendered familiar.

At length the joyful sound of "This is Elmsdale," was heard, as the carriage rattled into the village. In a moment both brother and sister were on their feet; and whenever a house a little more respectable than the humble cottages of which the street was chiefly composed presented itself, succeeded the question, "Is this the Grove?" But the Grove happened to be yet half a mile distant; so their mamma recommended them to sit quietly, and observe the neighbourhood in which they were probably destined to pass much of their future time.

It was amusing to see the poor, yet neat, inhabitants of the cottages popping their heads out of their doors to catch a passing peep at the "great people" who were come to live at the Grove; and it would doubtless have been still more so, could they have penetrated the little groups which, ten minutes after the equipage had disappeared, had formed on different spots to pass their opinion on the subject of their arrival.

"This, then, is Elmsdale Grove!" exclaimed Charles, as they turned into the park, and wound along a neatly gravelled road, at the termination of which stood a large white building, presenting at once an appearance of elegance and comfort. "This, then, is my future residence!" mentally ejaculated Mrs. Melworth, as she ascended the flight of steps which led into the hall. Nor did she forget to add a prayer, that it might be an abode of peace and happiness to her and her family.

CHAPTER IV.

ELMSDALE GROVE, or, as it was more commonly denominated, "the Grove," was formerly the patrimonial residence of the Barons Elmsdale,—a title which had first become contemptible, and then extinct. Its last possessor, a man of weak mind and corrupt principles, had been obliged to fly his native country; and this part of his property coming to the hammer, was purchased by a retired tradesman, who, having saved an immense fortune, and feeling ashamed of the means by which he had acquired it, hoped, by purchasing a nobleman's estate, and, as he termed it, cutting a dash, to obliterate the memory of his unusually mean origin. As the first step towards this, he set about modernising the ancient structure; and, under the influence of his

long purse and bad taste, it soon lost every trace of its antiquity.

No sooner, however, was his work of pride concluded, than he wearied of the character for which, by birth and education, he was alike unfitted; and the Grove, again offered for sale, attracted the notice of Mr. Melworth, then meditating a removal to the country. The purchase was soon concluded; and the humble inhabitants of Elmsdale saw with pleasure their long almost-deserted manor-house on the point of being occupied by a family of whom servants and dependants, those usually correct reporters, spoke most highly.

For several days the children found full employment in making themselves acquainted with the house and grounds, and arranging their toys in their own play-room, which Charles had the pleasure of finding any thing but a disagreeable little hole. All was new—all delightful; and they now only wanted the

presence of their papa to complete their happiness.

On the fourth morning after their arrival, Mrs. Melworth received letters from town, informing her that some little time must yet elapse ere her husband would be able to join them, and that he should then be accompanied by the orphan son of the friend whose sudden death had been the cause of his unexpected detention, and to whom he was appointed guardian. "You had better, therefore," wrote Mr. Melworth, "make Charles and Amelia acquainted with the leading circumstances in the history of this unfortunate boy; with whose manners and appearance, by the by, I am much pleased. He seems to possess that openness and decision of character which you, my dear Ellen, would say gives fair promise of after excellence. I mean him to remain at the Grove till some school can be fixed on suited to his present means and future prospects."

Mrs. Melworth lost no time in informing her children of the addition about to be made to their party; and at the same time expressed her conviction that it would be unnecessary, when she should have related to them his history, to engage their kind offices towards alleviating the sorrow he could not but feel at the loss of a parent when first testifying towards him that affection which they would find had been so long alienated from him. As she omitted in her recital many points essential to our narrative, we shall not confine ourselves to her words.

Augustus Harcourt, the father of this youth, and Mr. Melworth were natives of the same town. An acquaintance of more than ordinary intimacy subsisting between their parents, they were, almost from their birth, inseparable companions; and though there failed not to arise between them those occasional disputes natural to their age, they were upon the

whole most excellently matched. A residence of some years at the same school more firmly cemented their friendship; but at the expiration of that time their so frequent intercourse was destined to cease. Harcourt was removed to Cambridge, while his companion received a summons to London to devote himself to commerce. Some years elapsed before they again passed any time together; and then the careful and speculating Melworth was surprised to observe a striking change in the character of his friend. He had always been generous; he was now extravagant: his vivacity had degenerated into volubility, and his social qualities had given place to a taste for low company. He had travelled much, and his manners had thereby acquired a polish which only served to render his unamiable qualities the more to be lamented. His parents had been long dead, and had left him in the possession of a genteel but not affluent fortune. Much of it,

however, he had already wasted ; and having devoted himself to no profession, those who were still attached to him trembled for his future fate.

In this state of his affairs he came to stay a few weeks at the house of Mr. Melworth, then just married. In his society and that of his amiable wife, he passed many happy days ; and Mr. Melworth, who, in his lively sallies and agreeable conversation, as well as the occasional generosity of his sentiments, recognised his former friend, encouraged an intimacy which served to draw him from less innocent pursuits. Here it was that he became acquainted with and attached to a young relative of Mrs. Melworth's, amiable as herself ; and their mutual friends making no objections to an alliance which promised complete reformation to the one, and consequent happiness to both, she resigned to him her hand, and with it a fortune of ten thousand pounds.

For two years they lived in almost perfect felicity; but, alas! so uncertain is bliss when not founded on the hope of a better world, that, in one short week, he beheld all his joys blighted and his wife a corpse, leaving him one only son, but six months old. His distress may be imagined; we will not attempt its description;—but it produced an effect entirely the reverse of that which generally follows such an event. He conceived an unaccountable but most inveterate dislike to the presence of his motherless babe, which before had been but too dear; and early expressed his unalterable resolution to send it from him. It was in vain Mr. Melworth remonstrated with him on the cruelty of his intention; it was equally in vain that his lady, in the true spirit of friendship, offered to take the child under her protection till it should be old enough to be removed to school. Mr. Harcourt was deaf to persuasion: a respectable nurse was there-

fore found, at a distance from London; and under her humble roof the young Augustus passed the first seven years of his life, his father seeing him but seldom, and never evincing towards him any other feeling than that of sorrowful indifference. His own conduct in the mean time had not improved: he sought refuge from memory in that society from which first his friendship for the Melworths, and then his attachment to his wife, had effectually weaned him; and his fortune soon fell a sacrifice to constant dissipation.

When his son had attained his eighth year, he had him removed to a school in the neighbourhood of his nurse's cottage; and there he continued till hastily summoned to the death-bed of that parent who now, too late, felt the folly and injustice of his conduct; and as the only reparation he could make his injured boy, he sent for Mr. Melworth, and conjured him, by their former intimacy, to take

him and his almost ruined fortune under his care. The messenger, as we have seen, arrived just as the family were leaving town; and Mr. Melworth, accepting the charge, was still detained, in order to make some arrangements for his ward's future benefit.

CHAPTER V.

"Who's inclined for a walk?" asked Mrs. Melworth, as she entered the play-room on the morning of the day on which she expected her husband and his young charge; "I am anxious to commence an acquaintance with some of our poor neighbours; and as the weather is so fine, I think this will be a good opportunity."

"I am, mamma, I am," exclaimed both children at once; and in a few minutes they were equipped, and on their way to Elmsdale, accompanied by Rover, who was quite reconciled to his change of abode. It was the middle of August,—the harvest was far advanced; and as they walked across the corn-fields which intersected their path to the village, Charles and Amelia were delighted with the novelty of the scene.

"O dear, mamma! what can all those

people be doing? see what a number there are of them, and they are all stooping down."

"They are called gleaners, Amelia, and are the poorer women and children of the village, whom it is customary for the farmers to permit to pick up those scattered ears of corn which the labourers have not been able to collect."

"And of what use is it to them, mamma?"

"Why, my love, they obtain leave to thresh it in some of the neighbouring barns, and then have it ground into flour; those who are industrious, often gather up sufficient to provide bread for their families during the winter months, when the price of that necessary article is sometimes so high."

"It is to these persons, mamma, is it not," said Charles, "that Thomson alludes, in his Lavinia, when he says,

'The gleaners spread around, and here and there,
Spike after spike, their scanty harvest pick?'"

“ Yes; and, for the credit of your memory, I hope you can continue the quotation,” replied Mrs. Melworth.

“ I think I can, mamma;” and he repeated very distinctly the following lines :

“ Be not too narrow, husbandmen, but fling
From the full sheaf, with charitable stealth,
The liberal handful. Think, O ! grateful, think
How good the God of harvest is to you,
Who pours abundance o’er your flowing fields,
While these unhappy partners of your kind
Wide hover round you, like the fowls of heaven,
And ask their humble dole. The various turns
Of fortune ponder ; that your sons may want,
What now, with hard reluctance, faint you give.”

“ I am much pleased, Charles,” said his mamma, as he finished, “ that you have retained, and taken the opportunity of applying, those beautiful lines. As you grow older, you will derive much amusement from the perusal of the elegant poem from which this affecting little tale is an extract; and I shall be surprised if it does not also increase your taste for a country life.”

“O! nothing can do that, I am sure,” said Charles, “I do so love the country. Do you not think, mamma, there is a resemblance between the history of Lavinia and that of Ruth, which you were reading to us the other evening from the Bible?”

“Certainly, a most striking one,” replied his mother; “and I have no doubt Thomson had the beautiful narrative of the sacred historian in his mind when he composed it.”

“May I learn Lavinia, mamma?” asked Amelia.

“Yes, my love, if, when you have read it, you do not find it too difficult.”

“I should like to be a farmer,” said Charles, as he stood gazing on the happy countenances of the labourers, now rendered still more joyous by the approach of a master whom they sincerely respected.

“Agriculture, my dear boy,” returned Mrs. Melworth, “is, indeed, a pursuit

every way worthy of the character of an English gentleman, and one to which some of our greatest and best men have not disdained to devote themselves. It is related of our late most excellent sovereign, George the Third, that he sought a relaxation from the cares and perplexities ever the attendants of a crown, in the enjoyment of rural pleasures and agricultural improvements at Windsor." As Mrs. Melworth spoke, they entered the village, and observing a respectable-looking woman standing at the door of a cottage, she approached her, and, apologising for the intrusion, introduced herself as mistress of the Grove. "I am anxious," she continued, "to discover in what way I can be of service to those of my neighbours who may stand in need of that assistance which I possess alike the means and inclination to bestow: as you are probably well acquainted with the poor of the village, you will oblige me by giving your advice."

“ You are very kind, my lady,” said the woman, dropping a courtesy ; “ Heaven knows ’tis many a long day since the voice of charity has been heard from the Grove ; never since Lady Elmsdale, God bless her ! was obliged to leave the country.”

“ Did Lady Elmsdale, then, accompany her husband on his travels ?” asked Mrs. Melworth.

“ Ay, sure did she, poor lady !” replied the woman, “ and wo was the day for Elmsdale. The last family, my lady, didn’t take much heed of us poor folks ; they had overmuch pride for that.”

“ Perhaps, from their short residence in the country, they were not made acquainted with proper objects for their benevolence,” said Mrs. Melworth, who disliked encouraging reports to the prejudice of others.

“ It is very kind of you, my lady, to make allowances for them,” rejoined the woman ; “ but people do say they were once almost as low as we are.”

"I know nothing of Mr. Worsley's former situation," said Mrs. Melworth; "but you have not yet told me in what way you think I can be serviceable."

"Why, sure, my lady, there's poor Jenny Turner has just lost her husband, and she's got four young children to maintain. As honest a man was poor Turner as any in Elmsdale; but he'd a long illness, my lady, and his widow will have but a sorry winter of it: 'tis hard to pay the doctor's bill, and lose the patient."

"Is Mrs. Turner's residence far from hence?" asked the lady.

"No; 'tis just hard by. If your ladyship pleases, I'll step with you: poor Jenny's a tidy body, so she'll be no ways flurried."

Accordingly they proceeded down a narrow lane, where were two or three neat, but very humble, cottages; at the door of one of these the party stopped, and Mrs. Wilson, (our first acquaint-

ance), lifting the latch, admitted them into an apartment almost destitute of furniture; but the little there was, arranged with such extreme neatness and propriety, as immediately to prepossess Mrs. Melworth in favour of its owner. Three very young children were pursuing their sports before the door; the presence of the strangers, however, checked their mirth, and they stood still, with an air half bashful, half inquisitive, gazing on the little Melworths, who, as their mamma entered into conversation with the widow, returned towards them; and Charles, addressing a boy who appeared to be the eldest, said:

“ You are a son of Mrs. Turner’s, I suppose?”

“ Yes, sir; mother has four of us,” said the boy, taking courage.

“ And are you the eldest?” inquired Charles.

“ No, sir; Phil is older than I, he is gone out to work.”

"And how old are you?"

"Seven years, sir, come next Whitsuntide."

"You look very pale; are you not well?" said Amelia, in a tone of sweetness.

"Yes, miss, I'm very well, thank you, only I'm rather hungry."

"Hungry! why then do you not get something to eat?" asked Charles, hastily.

"Mother hasn't got any breakfast for us to-day, sir," said the boy, with great simplicity; "but we shall have a good supper when Phil comes home."

"Not eaten to-day!" exclaimed both children at once. Charles's hand was in his pocket, and his purse in his hand; but the sudden thought, "I may want it for myself," checked the generous impulse.

"O no! but I don't mind it, because I am young, and do nothing but play; but 'tis very hard for mother, who's obliged to work."

This noble and affectionate sentiment again impelled Charles's hand to his pocket; and this time it was not withdrawn without the purse: taking from it half-a-crown, he slipped it into the boy's hand, desiring him to go and buy some breakfast. The lad stood for several moments, gazing first at the money, then at the donor: that a youth, apparently but little older than himself, should be possessed of, and allowed to give away, what appeared to him so large a sum, seemed incredible: but when at length convinced that it was now actually his own, he uttered a cry of joy, and rushing into the cottage, threw himself into his mother's arms, exclaiming, "See, mother, what the young gentleman has given me!" and then, for the first time observing Mrs. Melworth, he stood abashed and speechless.

"But, my dear William," said his mother, "this lady has already given us so much, indeed you must not take the young gentleman's money." The boy's

countenance fell, as he was about to return it; but Mrs. Melworth interfered. "I claim no right," she said, "to limit my son's charity; he is permitted to dispose of his pocket-money as he pleases, and happy am I to find he knows how to make so good a use of it."

"Heaven for ever bless you, my lady!" said Mrs. Turner, "you have made my poor children rich indeed."

"Do not omit sending them to the Grove," interrupted Mrs. Melworth, "that we may find some new frocks for those pretty little girls."

One of them, a flaxen-haired child, of about four years old, had in the meantime plucked a beautiful rose from a bush which stood before the cottage; and now approaching Amelia, with her face half averted, she held it out.

"I thank you, you dear little thing," said Amelia, taking it from her, and at the same time imprinting a kiss on her rosy cheek. "You must come to the Grove,

and I will gather a nosegay for you in return."

Mrs. Melworth having now finished her conversation with the widow, and repeated a promise of seeing her often, wished her a good morning; and bowing at the same time to Mrs. Wilson, whom she also engaged to visit again, took the hands of her children; and, as the morning was far advanced, proceeded homewards. As they reached the park, a post-chaise was seen entering it from the London road; they therefore quickened their pace, that they might meet it as it drew up at the door; and in a few minutes Charles and Amelia were in their father's arms; while Mrs. Melworth, extending the hand of welcome to her young friend, led him forward to introduce him to his future companions.

The appearance of Augustus Harcourt was strikingly prepossessing: he was just fourteen, but tall of his age, and remarkably well formed; his countenance

was handsome; and though there was an air of timidity in his first address, it soon disappeared before the voice of kindness. He was of course habited in deep mourning, and there was a degree of pensiveness about him that instantly won the sympathy of the affectionate young Melworths; and they sought to dissipate it by so many acts of delicate attention, that in one hour he felt more at home than he had ever done before.

CHAPTER VI.

THE morning after his arrival, Mr. Melworth, at an early hour, proposed to the boys a visit to the stables. "We may, perhaps," said he, looking at Charles, "offend poor Dennis, by not paying proper respect to his part of the establishment;" so saying, he led the way to the court-yard, where the faithful old servant was anxiously awaiting his master's summons. "Come, Dennis," said Mr. Melworth, "have you any thing likely to afford pleasure to these young gentlemen?"

"Why yes, sir, I think master Charles will have no objection to see what I can shew him;" and opening a door, he presented to their view a little pony, of extraordinary beauty, which stood proudly pawing the ground, as if aware of the

notice it was about to excite. For some moments Charles was too delighted to speak; at length he exclaimed, "O dear! papa, what a beautiful animal! and is this to be my own, quite my own?"

"Why, Charles, I have certainly purchased it for your service," said his father, "nor do I know any one likely to dispute with you the possession of it; but I am sure you will be pleased to see it used either by your friend, or sister, when Amelia shall have acquired courage to mount it."

"Yes, papa, they shall ride it sometimes; but they must not have it when I want it for myself, you know."

"The exercise of your very limited generosity, Charles, will, fortunately, not be required of you," said Mr. Melworth, who was not blind to that defect in his son, which had, nevertheless, formed a principal feature in his own early character; and then, turning to Augustus,

who had stood a silent, though by no means an envious, spectator of his friend's good fortune, he took him by the arm, and, opening another door, exhibited a second pony, little inferior in point of beauty to the other. "Here, my dear boy," he said, "Mrs. Melworth has commissioned me to request your acceptance of this pledge of future friendship; and I flatter myself *you* will not refuse my poor little Amelia the use of it, even should her wishes sometimes interfere with your own preconcerted plans of amusement;" and darting a stern look at his son, Mr. Melworth withdrew to the house.

Charles was thunderstruck; he had never before met with so severe a rebuke from his father, who was generally but too lenient to the errors of this darling boy; but his fears for his future amability had lately been awakened by the representations of his wife, who, though equally fond, was less blamably in-

dulgent. Augustus, on the other hand, was little less surprised: that he who had ever been an alien from his father's house, and a stranger to his affection, should so early receive from others those marks of kindness which his own parent had withheld, almost surpassed belief; and he inwardly resolved that Mrs. Melworth and her family should ever be the objects of his first regard: he therefore approached the weeping, and now penitent Charles, and, extending his hand, said,

“Come, Charles, my boy, cheer up, your father will soon forget his anger; and, as a first step towards appeasing it, let us—if, after trying our ponies, we find them steady—invite Amelia to accompany us round the park.” Charles assented; and with the assistance of Dennis they were soon mounted.

Augustus, from having always resided in the country, had acquired an ease and grace in the management of his pony in

which Charles, from contrary circumstances, was quite deficient; and as envy is ever the companion of selfishness, it is more than probable that he would have indulged it on the present occasion, had not his father's reproof banished for a time both feelings from his heart. He now, therefore, set about imitating the more skilful horsemanship of his friend; and so successfully, that before they were summoned to the house, he had visibly improved.

As they entered the breakfast-parlour, in which Mr. and Mrs. Melworth were awaiting them, Augustus approached the latter, and, in few but very expressive words, thanked her for the valuable present he had just received.

"You are more than welcome, my dear boy," she answered; but Charles experienced not from either of his parents his usual share of notice, and he felt serious and dispirited.

"Amelia, will you take a ride on my

new pony this morning?" at length he asked,—for it had been settled between them that Charles should give the invitation.

"O Charles! I dare not," replied the timid little girl; "I have only been looking at you from the window, and I was so frightened."

"But, indeed, there is no danger," said Augustus; "we will one of us walk beside you, while the other holds the bridle."

"Yes; do try, Amelia," said her mamma; "for I am sure Dennis will be at hand to prevent accident, even were you not so well protected by your two beaus."

Thus urged, Amelia at length consented; and after having twice made the tour of the park, returned to her mamma, the boys declaring she had already become quite courageous.

CHAPTER VII.

IT was by no means the intention of Mrs. Melworth to commence an intimacy with all those whom curiosity, or in some instances, perhaps, a less excusable motive, impelled to pay their respects in the drawing-room, or leave their cards at the door of "the rich London merchant;" yet etiquette demanded that she should return their visits, even though observation should afterwards induce her to relinquish their acquaintance. For this purpose she one morning ordered her carriage, and, accompanied by Amelia, drove to Stapleton Abbey, the seat of Sir Henry Stapleton, whose wife and daughters had called at the Grove very soon after the arrival of its new inhabitants. Mrs. Melworth, however, had been from home, and it was from report

only that she had formed an opinion of Lady Stapleton; she was, therefore, much pleased to find, that report, though, in the present instance, highly favourable, had not done more than justice. Half an hour passed in her society convinced her that she possessed a finely cultivated mind, joined to the most fascinating manners: her ladyship, on the other hand, was equally charmed with her new friend; and they mutually rejoiced, that the short distance between their residences would admit of their frequent intercourse.

Sir Henry Stapleton possessed much weight in his neighbourhood; he was of an ancient family, and, perhaps, the only striking defect in his character, was excessive pride of ancestry. It is due to him, however, to add, that it was a pride which led him to emulate the noble deeds and private excellences of those who had gone before; and as few men had formerly better served their country, so there

were few now of more use to their fellow-creatures, of whatever rank. His lady was an admirable seconder of all his schemes, whether of public utility or private benevolence. They had two daughters, beautiful and attractive little girls, of seven and ten years of age; but all their fondest hopes were centred in their eldest son, the heir of their honours and perpetuator of their name. To him, perhaps, they were too partial; certain it is, he was not so amiable as the son of such parents ought to have been; but Sir Henry and Lady Stapleton were, unfortunately, blind to his defects; and there are, besides, always found those willing to palliate the faults of the rich and powerful. If, therefore, complaints sometimes reached these adoring parents, from those who had been injured or insulted by their self-willed boy, there was sure to be some interested dependent, or servile visitor, at hand, to insinuate excuses, or plead provocation.

The young Henry had thus become the terror of his neighbours; and nothing but the respect every where felt for his parents could have shielded him from the active resentment of those whom, sometimes in sport, sometimes in malice, he had annoyed. He was just fifteen, and his naturally good abilities were improving by an excellent education. While Mrs. Melworth was yet with her ladyship, Sir Henry entered the room, and, in the language of a gentleman, expressed the pleasure they anticipated from her acquaintance and that of her husband, to whom he had been casually introduced a few days before.

In the course of conversation, Mrs. Melworth chanced to mention that they were seeking a suitable school for Charles in the vicinity of Elmsdale, when Sir Henry took occasion to recommend that of Dr. Peirce, where his own son had been for the last three years; and so highly did he speak of the Doctor, both

as a clergyman and a man, that Mrs. Melworth resolved to consult with her husband on the subject, though the distance from the Grove being fifteen miles, appeared at first an insuperable objection to this affectionate mother.

After paying several other visits, from some of which she derived pleasure, and from others a contrary feeling, Mrs. Melworth and her daughter returned to the Grove; and when the children had taken leave for the night, the former related to her husband the result of her conversation with Sir Henry Stapleton; and it was agreed between them that he should take an opportunity of calling on the Doctor, and if all appeared favourable as represented, arrange with him for the reception of Charles after the Christmas holydays.

“And shall you not at the same time mention Augustus?” asked Mrs. Melworth.

“Certainly not,” replied her husband;

"a school every way adapted for Charles Melworth, and the heir of Sir Henry Stapleton, would yet be highly inconsistent with the circumstances of the orphan son of a ruined man."

"Do you think so, Charles?"

"Do you *not* think so, Ellen?"

"No; I must confess myself of a contrary opinion," said the lady mildly.

"On what, then, do you ground your opinion?" asked her husband.

"Simply on the importance of a superior education and well-chosen society for a boy who has his way to make in the world."

"But what has that to do with Augustus, whose means are inadequate to the attainment of either?" said the purse-proud merchant.

"Perhaps they are, but ——"

"But what, Ellen?"

"I was only thinking," said Mrs. Melworth, "that Harcourt was your earliest, though, alas! your imprudent friend."

“ And have I not always sought to prove that I remembered him as such ? ”

“ Hitherto you certainly have ; nor have I any reason to fear that you will now forget it.”

“ Do you then mean to intimate that I should charge myself with the expense of completing Augustus’s education ? Would this be justice to Charles ? ”

“ Not injustice, certainly. Charles has, happily, more than enough ; nor do I mean that you should incur the whole expense, but only make up the deficiency in what you have already set apart for this purpose.”

“ And yet, Ellen, education only served to render his father’s errors more apparent and less excusable.”

“ That, I allow, is too true,” returned Mrs. Melworth ; “ but it would, indeed, be the height of injustice to deny these advantages to the son, merely because the father failed to make a good use of them. Besides,” she continued, after

a pause, "I foresee great benefit to our own dear boy from an uninterrupted intercourse with Augustus: the firm principles and excellent qualities I every day discover in this youth, convince me that his example and advice will be of essential service to Charles, when removed from the influence of parental anxiety; and I doubt not but his attachment to us will lead him to watch over him with the care of an elder brother."

"Well, I will think of it—I will think of it," said Mr. Melworth, as he rose to retire.

CHAPTER VIII.

"MAMMA," said Charles, who, with his friend had just returned from a ride, and entered the room in which Mrs. Melworth and her daughter usually pursued their morning avocations, "will not this be a good time for us to read Mavor's account of dogs?"

"Indeed, Charles, I think it will," said his mother, rising, and reaching a book from the book-case. "Amelia has completed her lessons so much to my satisfaction, that I was just wishing for some new source of amusement for her; and I know of none more likely to please than that you have proposed." The trio accordingly drew round Mrs. Melworth's work-table, who thus continued. "The study of natural history, my dear children, is one of the most rational, as well as the

most interesting, that can engage your attention; nor is there, I believe, any other more calculated to direct our thoughts from 'Nature up to Nature's God:'—and when we contemplate the utility, sagacity, and in many instances the docility and affection, of what is emphatically termed the brute creation, it ought surely to make us the more anxious to improve that superior attribute of reason with which we have been gifted, doubtless to answer wiser and better purposes.

“ In allusion to our favourite domestic animals, Mavor says, ‘ The dog is at once the most intelligent and the most friendly to man of all quadrupeds: independently of the beauty of its form, its vivacity, force, docility, and swiftness, it is possessed of all those complacent qualities which are most likely to conciliate the affection of man. Having been long domesticated, and thus become familiar with human society, it scarcely retains a

symptom of its savage state; and seems to have no higher ambition than that of pleasing and being serviceable. The dog is not only faithful and attached to his master beyond example in other animals, but is even his friend, and enters into all his feelings, predilections, and animosities: he is the companion of his vacant hour, the promoter of his pastime, the defender of his property, and his unalterable adherent both in prosperous and adverse fortune.

“ ‘ The original wild dog is now utterly unknown in the Old World, but in America there are numbers, which, though first introduced by Europeans, have now become savage; and these shew what the animal would be were it not reclaimed by man. They hunt in packs, attack every creature they are likely to master, and thus give a loose to their appetite for rapine and cruelty. They are easily tamed, however; and by kind-

ness soon become sensible of attachment and submission; a proof that the dog was originally designed to be a friend, not an enemy to man—to assist, not injure and molest him.’”

“O, mamma!” said Charles, as Mrs. Melworth finished reading, “how dreadful it must be to encounter a pack of these savage creatures!”

“Indeed it must, Charles; and here is another proof of the advantages of education, and the blame attachable to those who fail to make a good use of them,—since even brute animals become less engaging when deprived of them!”

“Is not the mastiff dog particularly savage?” asked Augustus.

“Yes, my love; and Britain was formerly so celebrated for a fine breed of them, that the Roman emperors maintained certain officers in the island to train them for their public combats.”

“In Goldsmith’s Geography, mamma,”

said Amelia, "there is a picture of dogs drawing persons in sledges over the snow."

"You allude to the dogs of Kamtschatka," replied her mother, "four or five of which are yoked to a sledge capable of containing two persons, who are thus conveyed over the snow with astonishing rapidity."

"How useful they must be!" said Charles.

"Yes, my love; and they are, moreover, so faithful, that though they are all turned loose to provide for themselves during the summer, they invariably return to their respective masters as the winter sets in."

"How extraordinary!" cried Augustus; "as if they felt that from man alone they could find subsistence during that severe season."

"The dogs of Kamtschatka, however," continued Mrs. Melworth, "have been trained from their birth to habits of

obedience; their sagacity is therefore less surprising than that of others, which have not received so good an education. I remember once hearing a gentleman, whose veracity I could not doubt, relate an anecdote of an English dog, which, from any less unquestionable source, would almost have surpassed my belief, since it proved not only their sense of injury, but their power of imparting it to each other."

"You do not surely mean that dogs have a language, mamma?" asked Amelia, in a tone of surprise.

"My story will convince you, Amelia, that if they have not a regular language, they have at least a mode of conveying their sentiments to one another, which answers the same purpose."

"Will you relate it, mamma?"

"With pleasure, my love; and that it may the more interest you, I will endeavour to recall Mr. M.'s own words.

" 'In my youth,' he said, 'I resided

with my father, who was an opulent farmer at —, near Warwick, at the distance of a hundred miles from London. It was customary for those in our vicinity who had cattle to send to the London markets, to drive them to a certain spot, a few miles on the road, where the salesman who was to dispose of them received them from their owners, and took charge of them for the rest of the journey. On one of these occasions I rode to the spot, accompanied by a favourite dog, whose claims to my regard, however, rested rather on his fidelity than on his beauty. By some chance he got separated from me; and, meeting with the salesman whom he was accustomed, in his occasional visits to my family, to see, he followed him towards London. On their arrival at the Angel at Islington, where my friend generally stopped, he had the dog tied up with his horse, to be left till he returned from London the following day. When he came back, to his great dismay, the

animal was gone. His inquiries among the servants of the inn were for a long time fruitless. At length, however, by alternate bribes and threats, he elicited from one of them, that the poor dog had been violently assailed by one of its own species, who claimed a prior right to the possession of the stable, and that, having been, after a severe struggle, completely vanquished by its more powerful antagonist, it had retired from the yard much discomfited. Despairing, therefore, of seeing it again, my friend returned into Warwickshire; and so much was he grieved at our loss, that he rode round several miles, though the day was far advanced, to inform us of it. But a pleasurable surprise awaited him. Our faithful friend had arrived about two hours before, looking hungry, fatigued, and dirty. The next morning, however, it had again disappeared, and was this time accompanied in its flight by the yard-dog, a larger and much more powerful

animal. They were gone several days, and then returned, both of them much in the same state as above described. When our friend again called at the Angel, he was informed, that, a few days after his last visit, the two dogs had entered the yard together, and falling on the former assailant, had torn it in pieces.'''*

"O, mamma, how I should have loved that sensible animal!" said Amelia.

"And yet, my love, setting aside its sagacity, our poor Rover every day exhibits more amiable qualities than this four-footed hero; for, surely, indulging a spirit of revenge is not pleasing even in a dog."

"But it was so strongly provoked, mamma," argued Charles.

"True, my dear boy; and yet the forgiveness of injuries is a duty the breach of which, though perhaps pardonable in a dog, is certainly inexcusable in a Chris-

* A fact.

tian. In animals of the cat kind," continued Mrs. Melworth, resuming her volume, "are included some of the most formidable of the creation: the lion, the tiger, the leopard, and the lynx, belong to this family, and are said to be neither susceptible of friendship for each other nor of attachment to man. 'In Egypt,' says Mavor, quoting an ancient author, 'when the household cat dies a natural death, all the people of the family shave their eye-brows in testimony of sorrow: the animal is also embalmed, and nobly interred.'"

"Of what country is the cat a native?" asked Augustus.

"Both of the Old and New World," replied Mrs. Melworth. "The wild cat is seldom seen in England, but is common to the other countries of Europe."

"We have but few wild beasts in England, have we, mamma?" asked Charles.

"Very few, now," returned his mother;

“but in the reign of Edgar, this island was so infested with wolves, that the king, in order to extirpate them, changed the tribute which the Welsh had been used to pay in money into so many wolves’ heads, to be delivered annually.”

“And the plan was successful, I believe?” said Augustus.

“Entirely so; and wolves have never been seen in England since.”

At this moment Mr. Melworth entered the room; and the children, after thanking their mamma for the pleasure she had afforded them, withdrew to the garden.

CHAPTER IX.

CHRISTMAS approached,—that period of universal mirth and festivity, that sacred season when all ranks of society join together, as it were, in celebrating the praises of Him who came to seek and to save. Few circumstances are more impressive than the observance of Christmas in our country. The religious rites, the social customs, the public charities—all seem calculated to promote peace and good-will amongst men. It is delightful to witness our great and opulent families retiring from the dissipation and turmoil of the metropolis to their country seats, there to mingle with their more humble brethren in the public ordinances of that God who is no respecter of persons, and thence diffusing assistance to the necessitous, and good cheer to all.

It having been finally determined that, after the vacation, Charles and Augustus should remove to Hardwicke, the residence of Dr. Peirce, Mrs. Melworth was desirous that their last few weeks at home should be productive of more than usual pleasure: she therefore proposed that a young party should be invited to spend their Christmas at the Grove. Her husband making no objection, the young Stapletons, William Stanley (Charles's London friend), and several others, whose names are not essential to our narrative, arrived there a day or two before Christmas-day; on the morning of which, after attending Divine service, the children belonging to Elmsdale charity school assembled in the servants' hall to partake of a dinner, which had been provided for them at the express desire of Charles and Amelia.

On this occasion the humble little visitors were waited on by their young patrons: no servants were admitted except to place

on the tables the abundance of good fare with which they were loaded. Mr. and Mrs. Melworth carved; and all found ample employment, with the exception of Henry Stapleton, who stood leaning against a corner of the apartment, now sneering at the happy countenances before him, now indulging in a loud laugh at the expense of some awkward but well-meaning child. At length, having uttered an ill-natured and most ungentlemanlike remark on a little girl, whose mode of eating did not suit his fastidious taste, his eldest sister, ashamed of his behaviour, forming as it did so striking a contrast to that of the rest of the party, approached him, and, in a low voice, said, "You surely, Henry, cannot be aware of the pleasure there is in attending to these grateful little dears, or you would not be so unfeeling."

"You may find pleasure in such an employment, Julia," he replied; "but I own I can see neither amusement nor

propriety in a baronet's son waiting on such a pack of dirty little brats."

Mrs. Melworth was too much engaged to hear this injurious remark, or she would probably have requested the "baronet's son" to leave the room. As it was, she saw enough to make her almost regret that she had so early chosen him a companion for her son. She reconciled herself, however, with the hope that Augustus's superior example would counteract the effects of the baneful one of this new friend.

After dinner, a frock and a bonnet were given to each of the girls, and a great-coat to the boys. These also were distributed by the children; and Amelia particularly distinguished her first favourite, the flaxen-haired Emma Turner. When they were about to depart, she took from her bosom a nosegay newly gathered from the green-house, and, drawing it through the band of the little girl,

said, "There, Emma, I promised you a winter nosegay, you know."

An evening or two afterwards, some more children, in addition to those already staying at the Grove, were invited to a dance. Indeed, the whole week was devoted to a succession of pleasurable parties; and when, at the end of it, the young people dispersed, they did it with tearful eyes and heavy hearts.

"O, mamma!" said Amelia, as the last carriage drove from the door, "we have been so happy! and I do long for next Christmas, when you say we shall have the same party again."

"Gently, Amelia, gently," said her mother: "you forget how much there is to be done before next Christmas. I have not promised this indulgence to the thoughtless and giddy little girl who shall have wished away or wasted the precious hours that can never be recalled; but to her who shall so have improved

the last twelvemonth as to give fair promise for the next."

"Indeed, mamma, I will try to improve," said the corrected Amelia.

"I know you will, my love; and therefore it was I ventured to give a promise which I had little fear of being compelled to break. But we have been such sad rakes of late, Amelia, that you look quite pallid. I think a walk will be of service to you this fine morning; so call Baker, and she shall accompany you to Dame Wilson's, with the warm shawl I promised her."

The little girl skipped away, delighted with the commission; and Mrs. Melworth having letters to write, retired to her room.

CHAPTER X.

THE most eventful day in the hitherto placid life of our friend Charles at length arrived, when he was to mingle in society with a number of boys, many of them, in age, rank, and acquirements, his superiors. He who had ever been almost the idol of his family,—he, too, alas! whose guiding principle was a love of self,—was about to be exposed to the deprivations, confinement, and frequent mortifications, of a large school. It is true, as formerly mentioned, he had been, for a short time before they left London, at a preparatory establishment; but it was in the immediate neighbourhood of his home, whither he went at least once a week, and most of the boys who composed it were his juniors: it admitted, therefore, of no comparison with that to which he was

now going. Charles felt all this, and he entered the breakfast-parlour with a very serious countenance. Nor was Augustus much more inclined to be cheerful; but he remembered that, owing as he did so much to the kindness, not to say charity, of his friends, it was at least due to them to appear contented; and his attempts were perhaps more painful than the other's unsuppressed regret.

"Come, Charles," said his mother, "do not look so disconsolate: a very few months will, I hope, restore you to us; and think," she added, glancing at the tearful Amelia, "how we shall all be improved!"

Charles drew his hand across his eyes, but replied not. Mrs. Melworth, therefore, who restrained her own feelings that she might keep up the spirits of her young party, continued: "I should not wonder if by that time, and with the assistance of Dennis, Amelia is become quite a skilful horsewoman."

“ I hope she will, mamma,” said Charles.

At this moment Mr. Melworth's voice was heard from the bottom of the stairs : “ Come, boys, the chaise is ready : don't keep me waiting.”

“ Farewell, my dear boys,” said Mrs. Melworth, as they rose to obey the summons ; “ let me hear you are good, and you will be sure to be happy.”

So saying, and fondly embracing them both, she turned to the window, where she was soon joined by the now sobbing Amelia, who fancied she saw them winding along the park for some moments after the carriage was no longer visible.

The reception Mr. Melworth and his young companions met with from Dr. Peirce was exactly such as his acquaintance with him had led the former to anticipate. There was in it much of kindness, mingled with an unusual degree of reserve. The appearance of the Doctor was venerable : his manners had the

polish of the gentleman, mingled with the habitual sternness of the schoolmaster. He soon proposed to the young gentlemen an introduction to the school-room, which Mr. Melworth received as a delicate intimation that he was detaining him from more important duties, and took his leave.

"We are not yet quite all assembled," said the Doctor, as he led the boys through a winding passage; "but I believe you will find your friend Stapleton in the school-room."

As he spoke he opened a door, and discovered upwards of eighty boys busily engaged in their respective studies. "Mr. Stapleton," he loudly called, "I beg you will make your friends here acquainted with their future companions." Ere he had hardly finished the sentence, the Doctor was gone.

Every eye was now turned towards the door, as Henry advanced to the strangers. It was soon, therefore, observed that there

was a striking difference in his reception of them; and a report was quickly circulated through the school, which led the son of the wealthy Mr. Melworth to be caressed and sought after, while his more humble friend was despised, neglected, and almost shunned.

With Dr. Peirce, however, the case was different. He early discovered, with the penetration of a man long accustomed to study the characters of youth, that the ward possessed even more amiable qualities than the son; and though he was ever anxious to avoid all display of partiality, yet he could not help evincing towards Augustus those feelings which, amongst so many boys, exposed him from some to the charge of favouritism. It is in a large school as it is in the world, a favourite is always disliked; and this, added to the report above alluded to, soon made Augustus's residence at Hardwicke any thing but desirable.

But from none did he receive such

marks of alternate neglect and insult as from young Stapleton. This youth had conceived an aversion to him during his visit at the Grove, when the humane Augustus had taken the liberty of reproaching him for an act of barbarity committed on a dumb animal; and as he was of long standing in the school, and possessed much influence, he had now ample means of revenging the "affront," as he termed it.

All these mortifications, however, Augustus bore with the coolness of a hero; but that which more distressed him was the growing intimacy between Charles and Stapleton. Many were the scrapes into which, during the first half-year, the former was led by his ill-chosen friend, and many, too, those from which he was extricated by the prudence and foresight of Augustus.

The Doctor was unusually strict in exacting an observance of his rules. Every thing, both in his family and his study,

was conducted with the greatest regularity, and there were few crimes that he was less disposed to pardon than a breach of any one of them. Frequently, therefore, would Charles have incurred his displeasure, had not the counsels, and, in many instances, the active interference, of this faithful friend shielded him from it; but sorry are we to be obliged to add, that he did not manifest towards him that gratitude which such anxious solicitude demanded.

CHAPTER XI.

“Do you not think, mamma,” said Amelia, as she stood pensively leaning against her mother’s chair, a few days after the departure of her brother and his friend,—“do you not think it is dreadfully dull since the boys went away?”

“Doubtless, Amelia, you find a great change from the loss of your companions; but it is a change that promises to be so much for their benefit, that I am sure, when you reflect, you will cease to regret it.”

“Certainly, mamma; and yet I should not like to go to school.”

“Fortunately, Amelia, there exists no necessity for your doing so, or I flatter myself you would reconcile yourself to any thing your friends should recommend.”

“It is very kind of you to teach me, mamma.”

“I have much pleasure in being able to do so, my love; but recollect, Amelia, if you were not very good and tractable, I should be obliged to send you from me.”

“Then I am sure I will try to continue good,” said the little girl. “Do you know,” she continued, after a pause, during which she had been looking over a little book of national characters in costume, “that when Baker and I were walking, the other morning, we met a number of people with faces almost as dark and ugly as these,” (pointing to a picture), “and one of them, a very old woman, wanted to tell my fortune. Baker said they were gipsies; now will you explain to me what country people gipsies are?”

“They are a tribe of persons, my love, who came originally from Egypt, whence they derive their name; and who have

hitherto resisted all attempts to introduce amongst them any degree of civilisation. They are entirely ignorant of the comforts resulting from a fixed place of abode,—so they rove about in hordes, having no habitation but tents, which they carry with them, and fix for a time on any spot, as convenience or inclination prompts them.”

“How singular! But they must be very miserable,” said Amelia.

“On the contrary, my dear girl, if we may judge from their appearance, they are quite the reverse: unacquainted with luxuries, they desire them not; and seem to have no ambition beyond their humble state.”

“Are they industrious, mamma?”

“By no means; they dislike all laborious employments, and had rather suffer hunger than exert themselves to procure food: there are many, indeed, in Hungary, and other countries, who follow

trades ; but they always choose some one that requires little work, and allows them much time to follow unlawful courses."

"Do you mean that they are wicked?" asked Amelia.

"Much cannot be expected from the morals of those who are brought up from their cradle in a state of almost savage wildness; they are said to be extremely dishonest."

"I do not like the Egyptians, mamma," said Amelia.

"But you must not judge of their national character, my love, from that of the gipsies, who are merely a distinct tribe,—original natives of that country, it is true, but who are now scattered almost all over the world."

"But did you not once tell us that the Egyptians worship cats?"

"Formerly they did so, Amelia," said Mrs. Melworth; "but there are now various religions in Egypt, as in most

other countries: many of its inhabitants are Christians, and some of their rites resemble those of the church of Rome."

"It never rains in Egypt, does it?" asked Amelia.

"Very seldom, my love, in the inland parts of the country; but that bounteous Providence who never withholds a blessing but he sends another in its place, has remedied this inconvenience, by causing its principal river, the Nile, annually to overflow; and to this, Egypt is indebted for its fertility and happiness, for without it, it would be one of the most barren regions in the world."

"You will, I fear, think me very troublesome," said Amelia, "but I have quite forgotten the name of the country where you said, those faithful animals were found which draw the sledges over the snow."

"I can never think you troublesome," said her mother, "while you manifest a desire to increase your stock of know-

ledge; and improvement cannot be attained without inquiry. They are natives of Kamtschatka, a remote country, situated to the north-east of Asia; and the inhabitants of which are so excessively ignorant, that they can scarcely count ten, for in doing so they are obliged to have recourse to their fingers for assistance."

"Poor creatures!" said Amelia, "how unfortunate they are!"

"The Laplanders," continued Mrs. Melworth, "also make use of sledges; but theirs are drawn by reindeer, a very useful animal,—one, indeed, which supplies its master with most of the necessities, and many of the luxuries, of life. It has been reduced to a state of complete domestication and servitude, and lives entirely on moss: while, therefore, his fields are clothed with this, the Laplander envies neither the fertility nor verdure of our more southern landscape. Indeed, these hardy sons of the north

afford an example worthy of the imitation of those of the more polished regions. Possessed of fewer of the indulgences of life, they are more happy and contented with their lot than perhaps any other people; they are, however, very superstitious. Their mode of guiding their reindeer is curious; it is by means of a cord fastened slightly round the horns; and when they set out on a journey, they whisper in its ear whither they are going, foolishly supposing that it hears and obeys them."

As Mrs. Melworth finished speaking, Lady Stapleton's carriage was seen to stop at the door.

"I am come to request a favour," said her ladyship, as she entered the room.

"In what way can I oblige you, my dear madam?" asked Mrs. Melworth.

"By allowing me to run away with your little girl for a few days," returned the lady. "Julia and Anne derived so much pleasure from their visit to the

Grove, that they are impatient to do the honours of Stapleton Abbey to Miss Melworth; and I now only want your consent to indulge them."

"What says my Amelia?" asked Mrs. Melworth, of her daughter. The little girl's eye now turned to her mamma, now to her young friends, who each catching hold of a hand, seemed preparing to carry her off. "The fact is," she resumed, "my silly little girl has never before ventured from the shadow of her mother's wing; but I am sure so much of gratification will be connected with a visit to you, that she cannot now object to do so:" thus saying, she rung for Baker; and in half an hour, Amelia, with a tear and a smile struggling on her cheek, was seated in Lady Stapleton's carriage.

CHAPTER XII.

TIME flew swiftly, and even before Amelia could have believed it possible, the day arrived on which her companions returned from Hardwicke for their first vacation. Joyous, as may be supposed, was the greeting on all sides : even Rover, by the loudest demonstrations of pleasure, proved how glad he was to see them. With the surprising instinct natural to his species, he had recognised his friends long before the carriage which contained them stopped at the door ; and was the first to meet them, with a glad bark of welcome : then hastening back to the drawing-room, as if to warn Mrs. Melworth and Amelia of their approach, he seized the latter by the frock, and dragged her forward with such violence, that had she not been on her guard, he would have

precipitated her down the stairs ; but the affectionate girl needed no such impetus : her pleasure was equal, though her mode of expressing it was less boisterous than that of her dumb friend.

The brother and sister were mutually delighted at the improvement in each other's appearance ; while their fond parents flattered themselves that it extended still farther, and that their children were progressively advancing towards excellence. Nor was Augustus overlooked in this moment of happiness : his fine form, improved as it was by half-a-year's absence ; his easy, yet frank, address ; and his noble and unaffected expressions of gratitude, both to them and Dr. Peirce, for their care of his education, convinced Mr. and Mrs. Melworth that their bounty was not extended to an unworthy object.

It was midsummer ; the Grove and its vicinity were in high beauty, and the boys, released from the confinement of

school, enjoyed it doubly: the ponies were in constant requisition; and Amelia, who, as her mamma had predicted, had become a courageous horsewoman, was their frequent companion. Nor did Charles forget more than once to visit his village friends, amongst whom William Turner, his first acquaintance, had ever continued his greatest favourite: from his half-year's pocket-money he had saved a small sum, which he now, with his mamma's permission, appropriated to this youth. It was sufficient, with a trifling addition from Augustus, whose more limited funds were yet ever open to the calls of charity, to provide him a complete new suit of clothes; which came very opportunely, as Mrs. Melworth had just procured his admission into the Elmsdale free-school.

"Augustus," said Mr. Melworth, as they sat enjoying the evening air on the lawn before the house, a few days previous to their return to school, "I wish

to have your opinion with regard to the choice of a future profession; not that I at present consider you by any means old enough to devote yourself to one, but merely that you may, while you have the benefit of Dr. Peirce's instruction, pay particular attention to those studies most essential to your future pursuits."

"Indeed, sir, I have but little right to give an opinion on the subject," said Augustus modestly; "owing every thing to your kindness, I hope I should feel disposed to follow any one you might recommend; and if attention would ensure success, I flatter myself I should attain it."

"But, my dear boy," returned his guardian, "I am very anxious that you should consult your own wishes. I made you acquainted the other morning with the extent of your fortune, which you will be aware is very insufficient for the completion of such an education as shall enable you to follow a profession; but

Mrs. Melworth and myself have felt it due to our friendship for your lamented parents, to charge ourselves with that expense; and having done so, we wish not to limit our generosity: you are therefore at liberty to make choice of any one you think you should prefer, and I will take care you are suitably prepared for it."

To this rather pompous address, Augustus replied by oft-reiterated thanks; and concluded by saying, "That if it met with his friends' approbation, he had always wished to study for the church."

"I highly approve of your choice, Augustus," said Mr. Melworth, hastily; "and shall, probably, be enabled to forward your interest, even after I shall have perfected your education." The wealthy merchant never omitted an opportunity of reminding the objects of his bounty how much they were indebted to him; but his lady here interposed a question.

“ I hope, my dear Augustus, you have well considered the vast importance of the situation you are desirous of hereafter filling, that of a Christian clergyman.” Augustus did not immediately reply. “ From my observation of your character,” she therefore continued, “ I am convinced you would not willingly undertake an office for which you were in any way unfitted; it behoves you, therefore, deeply, very deeply, to consult your own heart and principles, before you enter on this most solemn of all engagements: the length of time that will elapse ere you are of an age to enter the church, will afford you ample opportunity for serious reflection.”

“ I am ashamed to confess, my dear madam,” said Augustus, “ I have not thought of this quite so fully as I ought to have done; but your excellent advice shall not be thrown away; for I will not only try to discover if I am worthy of the

sacred office, but each day endeavour to render myself so."

"You will do well, Augustus; for a clergyman who lives in opposition to the principles of religion and virtue which he inculcates from the pulpit, is at once the most degraded and most sinful of human characters. It is dreadful to think of the awful responsibility that man incurs, who has the immortal souls of thousands committed to his charge, and proves himself unworthy of the trust: it is, I repeat, dreadful to contemplate, even in idea, the last moments of such a character; to imagine him on the point of appearing before his Maker, to render an account of his stewardship, to answer to the Searcher of hearts for having preached virtue, and, by his conduct in the world, set an example of vice: for have we not daily proof, that example is even more powerful than precept; and where are we to look for it, if not in the appointed

minister of God, if not in him who is sent

‘T’ allure to brighter worlds, and lead the way?’”*

“You have an excellent model before you in Dr. Peirce,” observed Mr. Melworth, “and I advise you to study it.”

“Dr. Peirce is, indeed, an amiable man,” said his lady, “and appears to be universally respected.”

“He is most deservedly so, I assure you,” returned Augustus; “for I should think there are few men more truly benevolent.”

“When you return to Hardwicke,” said his guardian, “I shall inform him of your wishes; and I have no doubt he will give you the best advice.”

* Let not this somewhat awful picture alarm the youthful candidate for holy orders; but let him rather reflect, that if the duties he will incur are numerous and imperative, they will also be found easy of performance; and that their fulfilment carries with it the promise of an exceeding great reward.

“And what says my own Charles?” asked Mrs. Melworth of her son, who had sat silent during this conversation; “what profession will he prefer?”

“O, mamma! I should like to be a sailor.”

“A sailor!” exclaimed both his parents, in a tone of surprise.

“A sailor!” echoed Amelia, with almost a shudder.

“Yes, mamma; Stapleton’s cousin, Reuben, is a sailor, and he says he is such a fine noble fellow: there is nothing I should like to be so well as a sailor.”

“What, Charles, could you consent to leave us all for a great length of time, and perhaps for ever?”

“O! I did not think of that, mamma; no, I should not like that much; and yet——”

“And yet what, Charles?”

“If it were not for that, I should like to be a sailor,” said Charles.

“ Do not think of it, Charles ; it never, never must be,” said his mother.

“ Really, Ellen,” said Mr. Melworth, “ although for the first moment I certainly thought as you do, yet, on consideration, I do not see much objection to it, if he continues in the mind : it is a noble profession, and one in which you will recollect we are likely to have great interest.”

“ Charles, let me conjure you not to think of it ; I never can give my consent ; I never can expose our poor boy to the perils of the deep.”

“ My dear Ellen, such a remark is unworthy of you,” said her husband. “ Where, then, is your oft-expressed belief in the omnipresence, as well as omnipotence of God ? How often have I ——”

“ You have, and I acknowledge it,” interrupted Mrs. Melworth ; “ I know it well ; and I know, too, that the stroke which might in mercy be commanded to

spare him in the tempest or the battle, might find him in the drawing-room; but"—and she paused. "No," she at length resumed; "I could not, even to give my country a hero, I could not part with my only son."

"Well, Charles," said Mr. Melworth, feeling for his wife's agitation, "there is no hurry for us to determine this point; so you must take another half year to consider of it."

In a few days the boys returned to school; and Amelia resumed the studies which their visit had interrupted.

CHAPTER XIII.

It now becomes necessary to our story that we pass over three years in the lives of our young friends at the Grove, the whole of which the boys, with the exception of their regular vacations, had passed at Hardwicke. Time, however, had not flown over their heads without leaving some traces of its progress. Under the able tuition of Dr. Peirce, their education was in a state of great forwardness; and Mr. and Mrs. Melworth had the gratification of hearing him declare, that Augustus promised to become in every respect an ornament to the sacred profession he had chosen. Of Charles, on the contrary, truth obliges us to speak less favourably; and sorry we are to present him to our readers, at fifteen years of age, a much less engaging

character than we have hitherto seen him.

The pernicious example of Henry Stapleton, though slow, had been too sure in its effects. From the commencement of their acquaintance they had been almost inseparable companions: for some time, however, Augustus retained sufficient hold on the affections of his friend, to counteract the baneful consequences of this new intimacy; but Stapleton feared, while he detested, the noble boy, whose influence had withdrawn Charles from many a disgraceful scheme, and whose prudence had even frustrated some of his own most deep-laid plans of mischief. He omitted, therefore, no opportunity of ridiculing him; and the fickle and too easily persuaded Charles began to question whether Augustus might not be the cowardly and deceitful boy that Stapleton represented him: the latter followed up so successfully the advantage thus gained, that in a short time Charles ceased

to associate with, and almost to speak to, his father's ward.

Far from resenting the marks of neglect, and even insult, which he was constantly receiving from these youths, Augustus watched over Charles with the unwearying care of an affectionate and elder brother; and so powerful is the influence of virtue over vice, that long after his smile was unnoticed, his look of seriousness could, in a moment of better feeling, bring him from the side of his less correct companion to his own; and then he never failed to conjure him, for the sake of his parents, his sister, and himself, to turn a deaf ear to counsels which would ultimately lead him to incur their displeasure, the anger of Dr. Peirce, and the reproaches of his own conscience.

In the meantime, the selfishness which had manifested itself in his childhood, far from being eradicated, had "grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength." During his short visits

to the Grove, there had been so little to call forth the display of such a feeling, that his fond mother had hoped it no longer existed in his heart; and though Dr. Peirce had more than once noticed and corrected it, yet it was in the play-ground, rather than the school-room, that it was observable.

At the period when we resume our narrative, Stapleton and Augustus had entered on the last half-year of their residence at Hardwicke; for after the next vacation, the latter was to remove to Cambridge. Charles had recently been more than ever estranged from him, and was constantly engaged with Henry in some mischievous exploit.

One fine morning, as the boys were amusing themselves in some fields adjoining the play-ground, where they were permitted to exercise, Augustus approached his friend.

"Charles," he said, "I am going to sketch those views of the church which

the Doctor has expressed such a wish for: will you come and give me the benefit of your taste in the selection of a situation proper to take them from?"

"I cannot come now," replied Charles; "I have promised Stapleton to help him stuff the woodpecker the gardener killed for him yesterday;" and he walked away.

Augustus sighed; he remembered the time when Charles would have preferred drawing with him to stuffing birds with another: but regret was now unavailing; so he chose his station, and was soon busied with his sketch. The seat he had selected was behind an old oak-tree, which concealed him from the rest of the boys: he had not long occupied it, when he heard voices approaching; and as they drew near, was surprised to recognise that of Charles, who, unaware that he was overheard, said:

"Indeed, you had better let Harcourt into this plot."

His companion, who, as it may be guessed, was Henry Stapleton, replied :

“ That will I not, though : a poor chicken-hearted fellow like him would be a nice one to confide a plot to. Why he would be frightened to death for fear of discovery ; and so, making a virtue of his cowardice, betray us to the Doctor, and claim his good opinion as a reward. No, no ; if you’ve any thing to say to Master Harcourt, I take leave of you for ever.”

“ And yet my mother often warned me never to engage in a frolic of which Augustus would disapprove,” said Charles.

“ Your mother is like all mothers ——”
The rest of this sentence was, fortunately, unheard by Augustus, whose heart beat high at the bare anticipation of what might follow : he had, however, heard enough to convince him that Charles was about to enter into a plot of a more heinous nature than any he had yet joined in ; and he could not help thinking

that his wish to have him informed of it arose from a desire to do away with it: he was too uneasy, therefore, to pursue his employment; and, rising, he walked towards the play-ground. On his way he met the two boys, engaged in earnest conversation: the opportunity was irresistible; and as he came up with them, he stopped.

“ Charles,” he said, “ I have just heard, by chance, yet from your own lips, that you are engaged in a plot: the very word is unworthy of you,—unworthy of you as Dr. Peirce’s pupil, still more unworthy of you as Mrs. Melworth’s son; let me conjure you, therefore, to withdraw from it ere it is too late; and, take my word for it,” he added, seeing Charles look very grave, “ you will have reason to thank me for this interference.”

“ It is an interference that was unasked, and is therefore impertinent, sir,” exclaimed Henry, observing his companion stand irresolute.

“To you, Mr. Stapleton,” returned Augustus, “I did not address myself: where correction has so often failed to reform, advice would be thrown away.”

The proud blood of the Stapletons mounted to the cheek of their unworthy representative, as he replied to this speech.

“The regulations of Dr. Peirce’s school prevent my chastising your insolence as it deserves,” he said.

“We may hereafter meet where those preventives no longer exist,” replied Augustus coolly.

“There is small chance of you and I moving in the same sphere hereafter,” said Henry.

“Were station in society always the reward of merit, I should heartily hope we might not,” retorted Augustus, reddening in turn.

“Pray, Augustus, do not be so warm,” said Charles, interposing, — for he was ashamed to remain longer silent. “You

are not answerable for my conduct; and, surely, I am now old enough to judge for myself."

This ungrateful speech affected Augustus more than the pride and passion of the future baronet; and feeling that now he was indeed not answerable for consequences, he turned abruptly away, and resumed his occupation.

There was in Dr. Peirce's school an usher, of the name of Dampier, a young man of respectable family, superior education, and most amiable character. He had originally been destined to follow the profession of his father, that of the law: misfortune, however, had obliged him to relinquish the intention; and his parents dying within a short time of each other, he had gladly taken the situation he now held, and devoted himself to the duties of it with such earnestness and attention, that he had completely won the confidence and esteem of his employer, and the affection of the well-disposed part of

his pupils. But he was of a meek disposition; and his manners were so retiring, that he had ever been an object of ridicule to the less worthy among the number. He was left with an only sister, like himself teacher in a school: to her he was known to be doatingly attached, and was ever speaking of her with such strong expressions of affection, that the malicious Stapleton had, in derision, given him the nick-name of "Sister Betsy." She was in delicate health; and the young man had lately been more than usually anxious about her.

The mighty plot which was to be the source of so much amusement to Henry and his associates, was this. A letter was to be written, purporting to come from the lady of the school where his sister was, informing him that she had been taken suddenly and alarmingly ill; and that, unable to accommodate her in the house, she had had her removed to a lodging in the neighbourhood, where she

was attended by a nurse; but as her funds were represented as very low, he was urged to hasten to her, if he wished to save her from want. This letter was to be sent to the London post, through the medium of a servant,—one of those who are too often found in large schools, willing to assist the plans, however mischievous, of those boys who are well provided with pocket-money.

The fun of the frolic (to the disgrace of its projectors be it spoken) was to consist in the agony of the unfortunate young man's mind, during a journey of fifty miles, to succour a beloved and (as he was to suppose) dying sister; and the expense, to which it was known his limited means were totally inadequate.

The remonstrance of Augustus was not without its effect on the mind of Charles, though at the time he had treated it with so much contempt. It led him to ask himself what would his parents—what would his gentle Amelia—say to the un-

feeling scheme in which he was engaged? The answer of his conscience determined him instantly to frustrate its intention. He had not, however, resolution boldly to avow his share in it, and nobly ask pardon of the injured usher. Regardless of the feelings of others, as his participation in it proved him to be, he was yet particularly careful of his own. The dread of personal punishment, therefore, and, above all, of Stapleton's resentment and ridicule, triumphed over his sense of right, and he betrayed his friends without exculpating himself. He wrote an anonymous letter, which he contrived to slip into Dampier's desk, informing him of that which he would receive in a few days, and acknowledging it to be a shameful attempt to wound his feelings and ridicule his affection.

When Charles made this secret avowal, he little supposed the hitherto meek and (as he had considered him) cowardly usher would take active measures to dis-

cover the authors of it. What, then, was his consternation, as well as that of all concerned, when the morning arrived, and the young man had read the letter, to see him walk, with a firm step and composed countenance, to Dr. Peirce's table, and, in an audible voice, request a quarter of an hour's conversation with him in his library. He instantly arose, and for some time they were closeted together. When they returned to the school-room, the Doctor held an open letter in his hand.

"Mr. Stapleton!" he exclaimed, in a voice of thunder. Henry approached, with a countenance which he vainly attempted to render calm: the Doctor pushed pen, ink, and paper, towards him. "Instantly make me out a list of your companions in this most infamous transaction. Henry would have spoken. "Not a word," said the Doctor, "but do as I command you."

Even in this moment of dreaded punishment, the malice of Henry Stapleton for-

sook him not, and he placed the name of Augustus Harcourt at the head of the list. When Dr. Peirce took the paper he started, and, in a suppressed tone, said, "I did not expect this." When he had finished reading, he spoke aloud: "Mr. Harcourt, I confess myself astonished to find your name on this paper: an acquaintance of four years had led me to give you credit for better feelings."

Augustus came forward, looking with unfeigned surprise. "You must have mistaken the name, sir," he said.

"No, Mr. Harcourt, your worthy leader has written it too plainly," said the Doctor, in a contemptuous tone.

"Mr. Stapleton," appealed Augustus, "you can clear me from this charge."

"I have made out my list correctly, sir," said the hardened youth.

"Then may you be forgiven this falsehood, as I hope to be able to forgive you!" returned Augustus firmly. "Dr. Peirce," he continued, turning to him,

"I am innocent—most innocent of this charge. The proof, however, seems strong against me, and those who alone are able to remove suspicion do not seem disposed to speak in my favour; I therefore submit to any punishment you may think proper to inflict." As he spoke, he looked reproachfully at Charles.

"I am sure he is not guilty," said Dampier, interposing; "for he has ever been the kindest of friends to me. I am sure his noble heart is incapable of such an act of cruelty."

"You do me but justice, Mr. Dampier; indeed, you do me but justice. I would have died rather than have ——"

"I believe you, Harcourt," interrupted the Doctor, "I believe you; not so much, though, from your present assurances as from your past conduct, and," he added, looking sternly at Henry, "the character of your accuser. As Mr. Dampier wishes it, you are at liberty to resume your studies. For you, gentlemen," he continued, turning

to the party which a monitor had by his desire assembled round him, "retire to your respective chambers, and there reflect on your disgraceful conduct till you hear farther from me."

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN Charles entered his apartment he seated himself at a table, and burying his face in his hands, was for some time lost in thought. The forms of his home flitted before his eyes, and more than once he almost fancied he heard his mother's gentle voice reproaching him with cowardice and cruelty. He reviewed the last four years of his life, and blushed to remember that he was a much less amiable character than when he came to Hardwicke; he thought of the advice that his fond mother had given him on the eve of his departure; how she had warned him to shun evil associates and pernicious counsels; how she had entreated him to check every selfish propensity, and take Augustus for his model — that very Augustus whom, half an

hour before, he had stood by and heard unjustly accused, even when one word from his lips might have exculpated him. What an ungrateful return for the anxiety he had manifested to withdraw him from the plot for which he was now suffering confinement! He compared his own conduct with that of his friend, and trembled at the comparison. The reproachful look with which Augustus had regarded him, as he stood before Dr. Peirce, seemed to haunt him: it was more in sorrow than in anger, but it spoke volumes; and he asked himself what influence could have induced him to withstand it? Conscience whispered a most unworthy one—the fear of personal ridicule: and from whom? from one who had led him into this and every other disgraceful scrape; from one through whose advice he had incurred or merited the displeasure of his parents, his tutor, his friend, and himself. The humiliating thought overcame him; and he resolved instantly to hasten to Augustus,

acknowledge his ingratitude, and solicit forgiveness. He laid his hand on the lock of the door, forgetting he was a prisoner: it resisted his attempt to open it; but the next moment it was unlocked from the outside, and his evil genius, in the form of Henry Stapleton, appeared.

"Well, Melworth, my boy! how are you?" he exclaimed, as he entered. "Why, what a doleful countenance is this! Here am I, come through all sorts of perils to laugh with you at our adventure, and find you looking for all the world like a general after an unsuccessful battle. Why, what a doughty hero are you! I gave you credit for more pluck."

"Indeed, Stapleton," said Charles, "I begin to think we have been very wrong in this affair. How could you accuse Harcourt?"

"O! what's the poor fellow afraid mamma will scold her deary for misusing her pretty paragon?" said Henry, in a tone of mockery,

“For shame, Henry, to speak so disrespectfully of my mother: she is one of the best of women, and shall not be insulted even by you.”

“Well, then, his mamma shall be the best of mammas,—that is, if he’s a good boy and follows my advice, which is, to set Harcourt and Dampier at defiance.”

“No, Stapleton; I have acted most ungratefully by Augustus, and will acknowledge it even to himself.”

“Will you so?” said Henry, in a doubtful tone; “then must I be off, and consider the best way to extricate myself. Mind! do not blame me for consequences.” And he was going.

“Stop, Henry: what are you going to do?” asked Charles.

“What? why to send for the Doctor, and, under the mask of confession, declare to him that you and Harcourt were the formers of this plot, and that poor innocent I was dragged into it sorely against my inclination.”

"You cannot be so unjust, Henry!"

"Not if you are tractable; but if you throw off your allegiance, I am surely at liberty to make my own terms."

"What would you have me do?" asked the irresolute Charles.

"Refrain from speaking to Harcourt for at least three months to come. I know it was he who betrayed us, and I hoped to be revenged on him; but the old Doctor is so easily persuaded."

Charles knew Augustus had not betrayed them, but he dared not say so. At this moment a footstep was heard.

"I must fly back to my room," said Stapleton, "or I shall be discovered. Mind, Melworth, you are pledged not to speak to old Purity for the next three months."

Ere Charles could answer, he was gone. He tried to resume the train of thought Stapleton's entrance had interrupted; but he found it was not only interrupted—it was changed. How did he know that

Harcourt had not betrayed them? His own letter in Dampier's desk might have escaped notice. Moreover, he now recollected he had mentioned no names. How, then, came the Doctor to fix on Stapleton as the leader? It was evident some one must have told him that. (Charles forgot that Henry's character was so well understood in the school, that wherever there was mischief, he was looked to as the head.) Besides, how could he be certain that Harcourt was not in the plot? it might have been confided to him without his knowledge. Stapleton said it was; and why was he not to be believed? True, Augustus had denied it; and he never knew him utter an untruth: but then, we are none of us infallible; and though he did not like to see Augustus punished, yet it was much better than being punished himself. With this shallow and selfish reasoning did Charles endeavour to stifle the reproaches of his

conscience, till summoned to Dr. Peirce's presence.

The sentence pronounced against the youths was severe, but not more so than their crime deserved. The Doctor was an excellent judge how far he might venture with the rod of correction; and when he had sufficiently exercised it, he could, with inimitable skill, drop it from his hand, and, appealing to their feelings with the affection of a father, and the simplicity of a real Christian, he would often effect more lasting benefit to the hearts of his pupils than by the most rigid personal discipline.

On the present occasion he represented to them, in striking colours, the enormity of their conduct in thus conspiring to destroy, even for a time, the peace of mind of a young man who, far from having injured them, was ever the promoter of their happiness and improvement; and who, from his situation among

them, ought to be an object of their respect.

He particularly addressed himself to those who were brothers, blaming them for having aimed the shafts of their ridicule at a virtue which gave more lustre to Mr. Dampier's character than would the possession of a diadem; for he envied not, he said, the feelings of that man who could calmly hear of a sister's sufferings, or turn a deaf ear to a sister's woes. He concluded by recommending them instantly to offer an apology to their insulted usher, and to endeavour, by their future behaviour, to obliterate the memory of their present fault; adding, that any repetition of one so flagrant should not be followed by severe chastisement alone, but by instant and public expulsion.

It was with a most ungracious countenance that the proud heir of Stapleton Abbey approached the humble usher of Hardwicke. "By order of Dr. Peirce,

sir," he said, "I come to offer an apology for the frolic of which he and you seem to think so seriously."

"And for Dr. Peirce's sake, sir, I accept it," said Dampier, somewhat haughtily, resentment for a moment triumphing over his more amiable feelings; but, instantly correcting himself, he held out his hand, and added, "Mr. Stapleton, let it be no more thought of between us." The proffered hand was sulkily refused, and Henry retired to meditate some more wary, but not less effectual, means of annoying the objects of his dislike.

CHAPTER XV.

THE sentiments of the young gentlemen who formed the society at Hardwicke had undergone a complete revolution since the first introduction of Augustus and Charles amongst them; for there were few, of the worthy part of them at least, who did not now prefer the poor yet generous and amiable ward and protégé of Mr. Melworth, to his wealthy but fickle and selfish son. Augustus was the friend of all who stood in need of assistance, of whatever kind. Had a little boy a lesson which he did not understand, and consequently could not learn, Harcourt was always at hand to explain away the difficulty; had an elder one a cause, or fancied cause, of complaint against a school-fellow, he was appealed to, and would quickly adjust all differences; or

had any incurred the displeasure of Dr. Peirce, he would reason with them on their error, and then solicit, and generally obtain, for them his forgiveness. Thus, his departure was looked forward to with feelings widely different from those which greeted his arrival.

It was a subject of heartfelt satisfaction to this amiable youth that Henry Stapleton was to leave school at the same time as himself; for he fondly hoped that Charles, left to the guidance of his own heart and principles, would soon regain the forfeited esteem of Dr. Peirce and his school-fellows. Augustus had, alas! yet to learn how far the wasting influence of selfishness had blighted, if not destroyed, those amiable qualities in the mind of Charles which he looked forward to for working this most desirable reformation; or he would have known, that a lesson more severe than any he had yet received could alone effect it.

During the last three months all had

gone on smoothly; for though Henry omitted no opportunity of privately annoying Dampier and Harcourt, yet he dared not now do it openly. Charles, meanwhile, rigidly observed the tacit promise he had given to avoid companionship with Augustus; for his invidious friend had lately, as an additional motive for his doing so, given it as his opinion, that it was an act of great injustice on the part of Mr. and Mrs. Melworth towards their son, to charge themselves with the education and future settlement of this young upstart, whom he represented as likely to become his rival, not only in the affection, but (what Henry considered of far greater importance) the future disposal of the property of his parents.

This idea, artfully insinuated, had now taken full possession of the mind of Charles, and changed the indifference he had long felt for Augustus into absolute dislike; while the latter, tired of making

overtures which were constantly rejected, now seldom sought his society.

A few weeks previous to the vacation, and while our heroes were thus disposed towards each other, Dr. Peirce was summoned to town on particular business—a most unusual circumstance with him: he was, however, to be absent only two days; and, as was customary on similar occasions, the boys were, on the second, to be indulged with a holyday.

Accordingly, early in the morning different groups were formed, to consult how they should make the most of this day of leisure; and various as the characters of ninety boys were the modes of amusement chosen, as most likely to be productive of pleasure. Charles and Stapleton paired off as usual, and were seen parading the play-ground with looks of more than common importance; while Augustus, who generally employed a holyday in increasing his acquaintance with a favourite author, or copying from

Dr. Peirce's valuable collection of prints, went towards the library for the latter purpose. Ere he reached it, the two boys crossed his path; and he perceived so much of mystery in their countenances, as convinced him there was some new scheme in agitation between them: he therefore changed his plan, and taking a book, returned to the play-ground, where, while he was apparently deeply intent on his volume, he narrowly watched the movements of the friends.

The dinner-bell, however, found them separately occupied; and after they had partaken of the meal, Augustus, supposing his suspicions unfounded, ascended to the library to pursue his original intention. As he entered the room, the window of which looked towards the play-ground, he saw Charles and Henry approach each other, and, after a few minutes' conversation, cautiously open a door which led from it into the road, and the next moment they had disap-

peared. As this was in direct opposition to the rules of the school, Augustus again trembled for the thoughtless and inconsiderate Charles. He waited some moments, hoping they would return; at length, seeing that they did not, his prudence yielded to his anxiety; and, hastening through the forbidden door, he walked towards the town. Scarcely had he reached it, when he perceived the two boys, each mounted on a beautiful and high-spirited horse. Struck with terror, yet unwilling to be considered a spy on their actions, he retreated into a shop while they trotted gaily by. In a state of indescribable agitation did Augustus continue for three hours, walking up and down before the door through which they must re-enter. He rejoiced that their absence was evidently unobserved by all but himself; and he yet hoped they would arrive before the Doctor, who was hourly expected.

At length the church clock struck

seven, when he again ventured into the road, and walked on some moments, till a cloud of dust, accompanied by the sound of horses' feet, announced their approach. He turned round, hoping to regain the play-ground before they came up with him: finding it, however, unlikely that he should be able to do so, as they were riding very quickly, he tried to avoid notice by concealing himself behind a hedge. Just as they reached the spot near which he was standing, the horse Stapleton rode took fright at something in the path, and plunging forward, threw him with violence to the ground. Charles, alarmed, drew up, and Augustus rushed from his hiding-place to the assistance of his unfortunate school-fellow: the former no sooner saw him, than he exclaimed:

“For God's sake, Harcourt, take care of poor Stapleton, for I must take care of myself!” and, spurring his horse, he set off at full speed.

Augustus looked as though a thunderbolt had fallen at his feet, yet hardly did he believe the evidence of his senses. He had long known Charles to be selfish, fickle, and calculating; but he could not have believed him cold-hearted and cruel, as he had just proved himself. He thought of Mrs. Melworth and Amelia, whose kind and feeling hearts would have prompted them to rush through danger, and even to death itself, to the assistance of a suffering or unfortunate fellow-creature; and he looked after Charles, flying from the calls of humanity and the groans of his chosen friend and companion in disobedience, till his heart sickened; and he was compelled to lean against a tree for support.

An expression of intense agony from Stapleton roused him from his reverie; and, with desperate resolution, he shook off the feeling of horror which had reduced him almost to a state of insensibility, and kneeling beside the now

fainting Henry, he attempted to raise him in his arms: finding his strength, however, insufficient for this purpose, he gently drew him from the middle of the road; and, rushing with the speed of lightning to the house, called the servants to his aid. The sufferer was speedily laid upon a bed, and Dr. Peirce's physician summoned to attend him, who pronounced his leg to be broken, and his body otherwise much bruised.

In the midst of this scene of confusion and terror, the Doctor returned; and great as was his consternation, his anger was not less severe. He instantly ordered every door to be locked, and no one admitted without his knowledge; hoping by that means to discover Stapleton's companion, who, he supposed, must still be absent; for Augustus, when questioned on the subject, had confessed there was another, though he nobly declined betraying who it was. When he returned to the school-room, he was

surprised to see Charles walking about with an air of assumed unconcern; nor was he among the number of those who crowded round him, with inquiries after Stapleton. The ushers were desired to call over the names; when, to the astonishment of the Doctor, every boy was present. Perplexed and grieved, he therefore dismissed them for the night; and retired to his library to inform Sir Henry and Lady Stapleton of their son's accident.

CHAPTER XVI.

AT an early hour the following morning Dr. Peirce entered the study, his looks bearing witness to the anxiety of his mind.

In answer to an inquiry of Dampier's after the suffering Stapleton, he informed him that his state was such as to preclude alike removal or conversation; and that as it would probably be many weeks before he could be questioned on the subject of the late catastrophe, and as the holydays were so near at hand, he was resolved to take instant measures to discover who had accompanied him, in order that a public example might be made of so flagrant an offender: he therefore requested, as a personal favour, and to prevent suspicion resting on the innocent, that if any one was privy to

the circumstance, they would instantly confess it; and though they could not avoid censure, they should escape chastisement." All were silent, and the Doctor resumed. "For the unhappy and guilty Stapleton, he is already sufficiently punished: and may his dreadful accident be a warning to those whom he has so often led astray!" As he spoke, he looked steadfastly at Charles, whose eye sunk beneath his searching glance. "Mr. Melworth," he suddenly asked, "were you out with Mr. Stapleton yesterday?"

For one moment Charles resolved on boldly answering—yes; but then came as usual the dread of personal punishment—punishment, too, which he knew was to be so public and so disgraceful; and with a voice as firm as he could render it, he uttered—"No." Augustus started.

"Then, Mr. Harcourt, it rests with you," said the Doctor, "to clear up this

mystery; and sorry I am to add, much suspicion is attachable to yourself. You were the only person observed to be absent from the play-ground; you were the first to give the alarm; and you alone were with Mr. Stapleton when he was brought in. From your own confession, you saw him fall; and yet you decline informing me what led you to the spot, in defiance of the rules of my school; or who the person was, who you say rode quickly away as you approached. Remember, sir," added the Doctor, sternly, "this is the second time, within a few months, that I have had strong cause to doubt the propriety of your conduct."

"I acknowledge it, sir," said Augustus firmly, "and I regret it; but I again repeat I was not Mr. Stapleton's companion yesterday, nor have I ever been on terms of intimacy with him."

"Then who was, sir?"

“Indeed, I cannot answer your question,” replied the youth.

“Then are you guilty of shameful obstinacy, or premeditated falsehood !” said the Doctor, angrily ; and he left the room.

All eyes now settled on Augustus, with the exception of those of the guilty Charles : he would not for worlds have encountered the glance of his injured friend.

“Augustus,” said Dampier, “let me entreat you not to let a false, a foolish idea of honour or of friendship, influence you to conceal this offender. Remember the consequences to yourself ; and remember, too, that he who has not honour to come forward and save you from disgrace in this emergency, is unworthy of your friendship.”

“Mr. Dampier, urge me not,” replied Augustus ; “my resolution is taken,—and though my present pride and future hopes be blighted by my silence, I will not

betray what another must have such powerful reasons to conceal."

In a few hours Dr. Peirce returned.

"I have been making inquiries in the town, Mr. Harcourt," he said, "and have elicited sufficient, still more to convince me, that in denying your share in the events of yesterday, you are only adding duplicity to disobedience. I understand, from several persons who witnessed it, that a horse, without a rider, galloped towards the inn, and in less than a minute was followed by another, ridden at full speed by a young gentleman, who left it at the gate, and, without delivering it to any one, returned quickly towards the spot where the accident happened: this, doubtless, was you, ere you gave the alarm." Augustus looked up, but did not speak. "What can induce you thus to persevere in denying the fact, I own perplexes me, unless it is the recollection, that in an attempt to deceive me you have before

been too successful. Believe not, however, that I am again to be duped, or that the regret I feel at being compelled thus publicly to punish a youth of whom I had hoped better things, will overcome my sense of justice. A prompt and candid confession may yet mitigate the severity of the sentence I must otherwise pronounce against you ; and in promising thus much, I am actuated rather by the memory of what you were during the first four years of our acquaintance, than what you have been for the last five months : have you any thing to say ?”

“ Only to repeat once more, Dr. Peirce, that I am entirely guiltless of the charge alleged against me. I feel, however, that I cannot now convince you of this ; and I feel, too, that though I must ever regret not being able to do so, I shall never have cause to reproach myself for my silence.”

“ Your conduct, sir, is most extraordinary,” returned the Doctor. “ I

know not what to make of you ; but I must not suffer your falsehood or your firmness, be it which it may, to affect my decision. I therefore once more, and very earnestly, request, that if any one present has just cause to question its rectitude, they will inform me of it." Several whispers were exchanged, but no one spoke aloud ; and the Doctor resumed : " With deep regret, Mr. Harcourt, but with strong conviction of the justice of the sentence, I thus publicly expel you the school ; and sincerely hope," he added, looking round, " that your fate may be a warning to your companions, against a breach of rules which I will not have broken ; and the violation of which, in the present instance, has been followed by such disastrous consequences."

Augustus looked imploringly at Charles, who, with a face of scarlet, rose from his seat, and advanced a few steps forward ; but then intruded the thought of self, a

sense of shame, and, above all, the remembrance of how infinitely more dear Augustus would become to his parents, should they discover his present noble forbearance towards their son: these considerations, added to the certainty that his disgrace would effectually banish him from their presence and affection, again triumphed, and he re-seated himself.

This movement of Charles's was remarked by all but Dr. Pierce, who was too much engaged to notice it; and various were the opinions to which it gave rise. To Dampier, and many others who knew their respective characters, it brought conviction, that Augustus was, indeed, about to suffer in the cause of friendship; and they deplored, though they could not prevent it. Others saw, or thought they saw, in it a proof of deep feeling and sincere commiseration for the fate of his companion. How erroneous their judgment, Charles and Augustus alone knew.

“To-morrow morning, Mr. Harcourt,” said the Doctor, “a post-chaise will be at the door to convey you to your friends, to whom it is my painful duty this night to write an account of your disgrace.”

Perhaps there are few persons who meet with less sympathy in their hour of trouble than a favourite discarded. It has ever been so in the world—it was so at Hardwicke. For that Augustus was a favourite with Dr. Peirce, we have not attempted to conceal; and we have said, too, that he was equally so with the greater part of his school-fellows; but when the smiles and preference of a superior are withdrawn, popularity with the multitude soon follows. When therefore the Doctor, accompanied by Dampier, had left the study, he found himself in a most awkward situation. He was standing alone, in the middle of the room, in the posture in which he had received his sentence. A silence, almost solemn, pervaded the apartment, con-

trasted strongly with the loud sounds of mirth which usually followed the disappearance of the masters. None approached to offer consolation, or even to express regret. Deeply feeling the unkindness of this neglect from those whom he had so often solaced under similar trials, and scarcely knowing what he did, he reached a book, and, seating himself at a table, tried to direct his attention to it. This he found was impossible; and in a few moments he had unconsciously permitted the volume to fall from his hands.

The boys, meanwhile, formed themselves into groups, and were heard discussing the late events; while a very little one, who had been anxiously watching the dejected Augustus, cautiously approached him, and, in an undertone, said, "Do not look so sorrowful, Harcourt; I dare say you have not told a story. Melworth says he thinks his father and mother will send you away

from them; if they do, my papa and mamma are very rich, and I will ask them to let you come and live with us."

And then, gathering courage from the warmth of his feelings, he turned towards his companions, and, raising his voice, added: "You all pretended to like poor Harcourt when you wanted him to help you with your lessons, or get you out of scrapes; and now none of you notice him, because the Doctor's in a passion with him; but he's the best boy in the school for all that." Augustus's heart was full; but as he took the hand that was extended to him, he struggled to speak. "You are a generous little fellow, Ashtown, and I thank you; for you have proved, just as I was thinking myself deserted, that I have yet one friend."

Roused by the spirited speech of this little hero, which, as addressed to no one individually, failed to give the offence it might otherwise have done,

several of the boys surrounded Charles, and, in a tone of reproof, expressed their surprise at his taking no notice of one whom he ought, from circumstances, to regard as a brother: he therefore approached Augustus, and, in accents which he meant to be conciliating, but which were in fact tremulous and irresolute, asked, "if he could do any thing for him?"

"You can do nothing for me now," returned the youth; and, turning from him, he retired to a restless pillow.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN Mr. Dampier was released from his evening duties in the school-room, he took his hat, and walked to the Dolphin Inn. On inquiring for the landlord, he was informed he had been absent since the day before; but that his return was immediately expected. At ten o'clock, therefore, this faithful friend of Augustus Harcourt was again at the inn; and this time its proprietor was visible. "May I ask, Mr. Wiggins," said Dampier, as the landlord entered the room into which he had been shewn, "if two horses were hired from your stables yesterday morning by some young gentlemen from Dr. Peirce's school?"

"Really, sir, I believe I might accommodate some such persons in the

course of yesterday," replied Wiggins, in a consequential tone.

"And will you be kind enough to inform me who they were?" asked Dampier.

"Indeed, sir, I do not know that I am at liberty to mention names. I make a point of never betraying the secrets of my customers."

"Then you were aware secrecy was necessary, sir," said Dampier. "You must excuse my saying I think you very blameable in permitting youths, whom you knew to be under Dr. Peirce's care, to mount those spirited animals without his knowledge."

"And pray may I ask who you are, who presume to question my right to do as I like with my own horses?" exclaimed the pompous host of the Dolphin, observing the shabbiness of Dampier's outward appearance. "I hope I know myself too well, to deny any favour, in my power to

grant, to the son and heir of Sir Henry Stapleton." And then, finding he had in his passion betrayed what he felt he ought to have concealed, he stopped confused.

"As the representative of Dr. Peirce, I certainly do question your right to place the lives of his pupils in danger," said Dampier; "but this is not my present business: we are but too well acquainted with Mr. Stapleton's share in this affair. I am here with the hope of removing the punishment inflicted for this offence from the person who, I feel convinced, is suffering it unjustly. By seconding me in this attempt, you will repair, in a small degree, the mischief of which your imprudence has been the first cause."

"Well, sir, I'm sure if I can do a part towards removing suspicion from Mr. Stapleton, and fixing it on some less worthy person, I shall be most happy to say any thing you may require," said the

accommodating landlord, in a more civil tone, and entirely misunderstanding Dampier's speech.

"You seem to be unaware, sir," returned the usher, "that Mr. Stapleton has already received a punishment beyond your art or mine to remove; he is now lying with a broken leg, the sad effect of his yesterday's frolic."

"Hey!—what!—did I hear you right, sir?" exclaimed the landlord. "Did you say that the son and heir of Sir Henry Stapleton had broken his leg by falling from one of my horses? Why, his father will never come near my house again! and he's one of my best customers! And my horse, too, perhaps that is spoiled; and then good bye to seventy guineas! O, I shall be ruined! I shall be ruined!" And, in a state of agitation almost amounting to agony, poor Mr. Wiggins rushed out to ascertain the fate of the animal. In a few minutes he returned, pronouncing the

horse, fortunately, uninjured; but declaring that the loss of Sir Henry's custom could never be repaired.

As soon as Dampier could recall his attention, he resumed the discourse. "But it is the name of Mr. Stapleton's companion I wish to learn; and as an act of justice to his parents, who are now mourning by their suffering son, you ought to make me acquainted with it."

"Ay, that would I willingly," replied the man, half distracted at hearing that the Stapletons were at Hardwicke, and their horses and servants not at the Dolphin. "But, indeed, I do not know it; I only remember he often came here with Mr. Stapleton, but I never heard his name."

"The young gentlemen have been in the constant habit of visiting you, then, it seems," said Dampier: "you must, I should think, be acquainted with his person."

"That I am well," replied the land-

lord. "Leave John Wiggins alone for remembering the face of a customer."

"Then you would recognise him if you were to see him," asked Dampier.

Wiggins answered in the affirmative; and the young man having now found the means of winning him to his purpose, engaged him to come to Hardwicke the following morning, early enough to see Augustus put into the chaise: when, if he was guiltless of the charge imputed to him, he was to come forward and declare him so; and if not, retire without exciting notice. Having secured Mr. Wiggins's attendance by a promise to recommend his house, Dampier returned to the school.

Not very enviable were the midnight reveries of Charles Melworth. He had escaped detection and avoided punishment. He saw him whom he had been taught to regard as a rival, in a fair way of being removed from his path; for he felt convinced his father and mother

would no longer continue their countenance and affection to one who had received and merited so disgraceful a sentence as expulsion from school. He had no fear of future discovery; for he was quite sure that Augustus, having been so firm in hitherto concealing his guilt, would not hereafter betray him, and thus be the means of lowering him in the good opinion of his parents. Nor had he any dread of Stapleton: his dislike to Harcourt he knew to be so deeply rooted, that he would glory in a mistake which had produced effects so unfavourable to him; and yet, with all his selfish feelings gratified, we repeat—Charles Melworth was miserable; and he sometimes thought he would have given worlds to have changed places with that very Augustus who was about to be thus unjustly disgraced. Now did he deeply experience the truth of what his excellent mother had so often told him, that a wounded conscience was almost beyond

endurance. He dreaded the return of day-light; and thought he could never again encounter the searching glance of Dr. Peirce, or listen to the sorrowful tones of Augustus. He fell asleep; but his dreams were not less painful than his waking thoughts. He fancied he beheld his friend forced into the carriage which was to convey him for ever from Hardwicke; he saw his countenance pallid with emotion, and heard him utter a groan of anguish; when suddenly the form of his mother appeared, and, dragging him forward, she declared him to be guilty; then embracing Augustus, she seemed to lead him away in triumph. He awoke in an agony; and with an aching head and beating heart approached the bedside of the still slumbering Harcourt: he put forth his hand to rouse him; but a tremulous shiver came over him, and with a hasty step he returned to his room.

Augustus, meantime, had been me-

ditating on his blighted prospects with feelings but little more placid. The respect, amounting almost to veneration, which he had ever felt for Dr. Peirce, had led him to set a high price on his good opinion; and he had ardently hoped to leave Hardwicke ranking very high in his estimation. For Mr. and Mrs. Melworth, too, he had an affection almost boundless; and he had longed to testify how grateful he was for all their kindness to him, a destitute orphan. He had looked forward, with an impatience little short of enthusiastic, to the time when he should be allowed to engage in his profession under their auspices. How anxious had he been to become an ornament to it, and thus do credit to their patronage! In the space of a few short hours he had seen all these bright visions dispelled: he was about to be sent away disgraced to these beloved friends, to be regarded by them as guilty of unpardonable disobedience, and, what was

much worse, hardened duplicity. How then could he longer exist on their bounty, even were they disposed (which it was hardly likely they would be) to continue it to him? He felt he could not accept of benefits of which he was considered unworthy, and yet he firmly resolved never to undeceive them; for to be the cause of a breach between Charles and his parents was not to be thought of. There seemed, therefore, no chance of extricating himself from his unhappy situation; yet, though his spirits were disturbed, his conscience was at rest; and when Charles approached him, he had been for some time sleeping soundly.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"POOR Harcourt! here comes the chaise," said one of the young gentlemen, leaning forward from the school-room window to speak to a companion. Augustus heard the sound: he had been closeted for some time with Dr. Peirce, who had been vainly urging him to confess the truth, if it was not already discovered. Firmly, yet respectfully, refusing, but still maintaining his own innocence, the Doctor became angry; and was at that moment accusing him of ingratitude and perfidy.

Dampier, meanwhile, seeing the carriage at the door, became impatient for the appearance of Wiggins; and, half fearing lest the customer-loving inn-keeper should have discovered that it was the son of the wealthy and powerful Mr.

Melworth, of Elmsdale Grove, that he was about publicly to expose, he hurried out, to secure his presence by fresh promises, founded on Dr. Peirce's influence with the Stapletons, when he fortunately perceived him coming towards the school: he only waited, therefore, till he had concealed himself within view of what was passing there.

"Come, Mr. Harcourt," said the Doctor, in a tone where deep feeling struggled with necessary firmness; "come, let me have no delay: as I am compelled to dismiss you thus disgracefully, I beg the ceremony may not be protracted." Augustus had lingered, to take leave of some of his companions.

"I am ready, sir," he said dejectedly. "Adieu, Mr. Dampier, I shall ever remember your kindness. Farewell, Charles, we shall perhaps not meet at midsummer; but you will hear I am still your friend."

Charles dared not answer; his voice

would have betrayed his guilt: he trembled so that he could hardly stand; and to hide his confusion, he turned quickly away.

Augustus hastened to the door. The Doctor, who was already there, extended his hand. "I grieve that we part thus, Mr. Harcourt," he said.

"It grieves me too, sir," replied the youth, springing into the chaise, as if to conceal his emotion.

At this moment Wiggins approached, and bowing respectfully to the Doctor, said:

"Here seems to be some mistake, sir; that is not the young gentleman who rode out with Mr. Stapleton the other morning."

"Is it not, sir?" said the Doctor sternly; "then may I ask who it was?"

"I cannot tell you by name, sir," replied Wiggins; "but I think if I were to see your gentlemen all together, I could point him out."

“Dampier,” said the Doctor, “be so good as to order every boy to the school-room immediately; and, Mr. Harcourt, return there till this matter is looked to. How much trouble and anxiety would your being less obstinate have prevented yourself and me!” With a feeling different from grief, yet barely allied to joy, did the kind-hearted Augustus Harcourt re-enter the room which he thought he had quitted for ever. In a few minutes he was followed by the Doctor and Wiggins.

It was not yet known what had occasioned the sudden change in the movements of the party; but when the inn-keeper entered the school-room, Charles felt that all farther concealment was at an end, and he stood awaiting with desperate firmness the fate which he saw hung over him. Wiggins, with a look of importance, passed his eyes from one to the other of the boys, as the Doctor requested him to point out the offender;

at length, fixing them on Charles, he exclaimed :

“ That’s him ! that’s the young gentleman, sir, that came to my stable ! and I mounted him myself, just before I went out.”

“ Impossible !” said the Doctor, “ you cannot mean it.”

“ It is true ! it is true !” exclaimed Charles, with almost a scream ; and sinking into a seat, he seemed overcome with shame.

“ Then I must believe it,” said the Doctor, yet in a tone half incredulous. “ I should have suspected any thing but this : that you, Mr. Melworth, could have suffered your father’s ward, your own adopted brother, to be accused, degraded, and expelled, for a fault of which you knew yourself only to be guilty ! I could not have believed my house had harboured a heart at once so depraved and so relentless ! And yet I had forgotten,” he added, after a pause, “ I

have always found you selfish and irresolute; and I should have known selfishness is ever the precursor of crime."

"Indeed, indeed, he has not been so blameable as you imagine," interposed Augustus. "I was aware of their absence, and ought to have informed some one of it, and then this dreadful accident might have been prevented."

"Silence, Mr. Harcourt," said the Doctor; "not a word in his defence: he has proved himself unworthy of your slightest notice. Silence, I repeat; and hear the sentence, which he has doubly merited, removed from yourself to this ungrateful friend. I shall hasten to write a letter to his parents, far different indeed from that of which you were to have been the bearer." As he spoke, he was leaving the room.

"O! do not go; do not, pray do not expel him!" said Augustus, throwing himself before the Doctor. "Indeed he has been misled, ill advised: he was the

best of boys till ——” And then remembering he had no right to accuse the absent, he paused.

“ You are a generous, noble fellow, Harcourt,” said the Doctor; “ and such as I always thought you. I know not how I must atone to you for having suffered myself to be thus easily deceived.”

“ There needs no atonement, sir,” returned Augustus. “ Appearances, proofs, were all against me; but, O! that you would pardon my poor friend; I am sure he heartily repents his folly.”

“ Augustus, intercede not for me,” said Charles, coming forward. “ I am unworthy of your kindness; I do not deserve your friendship. I have given my parents cause to blush for their only son. Dr. Peirce, I merit the severest punishment you can inflict upon me, and I will try to submit to it with courage;” and he would have moved towards the door.

“ O, he need not go!” said Augustus,

again interposing: "I implore you, Dr. Peirce, to pardon him. Let not his father and mother know of this terrible affair, and I would be answerable with my life for his future conduct."

A murmur of admiration ran through the school. Wiggins stared with astonishment, and the delighted Dampier seemed almost ready to clap his hands.

"Mr. Melworth, I deeply pity you," said the Doctor. But Charles was not just then so pitiable an object as those who witnessed his disgrace might have imagined; for it was probably in this moment of deep humiliation, awakened feeling, and renovated virtue, that the demon of selfishness for ever took flight from his heart.

"No, Augustus!" he exclaimed; "I will not be so overdone in generosity. I will myself tell my father and mother the whole of this business; and, believe me, I will do you justice. I have this day learned a lesson I shall never forget.

I will tell them, that to your example they will owe all they may hereafter find of virtue in the heart of their son. Dr. Peirce, I await your pleasure."

"There, do you not see he is noble? has he not proved himself generous?" appealed Augustus. "Pray, pray, pardon him, for my sake; for the sake of his parents, pardon him."

"Harcourt, you have vanquished me," said the Doctor, deeply affected; "and you alone could have done it. Mr. Melworth, mark my words. To the influence of this amiable youth you owe your present pardon. Let me conjure you to cherish his friendship, take his example for your model, and, believe me, it will lead you right. Make self ever a secondary consideration; and in order that you may do so in greater things, practice self-denial in the every-day occurrences of life. As a first step towards amendment, I would earnestly recommend you to persevere in your intention of making

your friends acquainted with the circumstances which have lately occasioned us all so much distress. You owe this to yourself, but, above all, you owe it to your noble friend."

"I intend it, Dr. Peirce; believe me, I intend it: nor shall I sleep in peace till this indispensable duty is performed." And those who witnessed the evident contrition of Charles gave him full credit for the sincerity of his promise.

"You may discharge that chaise, William," said the Doctor, as a servant entered the room. A loud shout of triumph was heard from the school-room window as the carriage drove from the door; and for the future it became a matter of emulation amongst the boys who should rank highest in the estimation of Augustus Harcourt.

"Perhaps, sir," said Wiggins, approaching Dr. Peirce cap in hand, "you will speak a word or two for me to Sir Henry Stapleton. I am afraid I shall

have incurred his displeasure by having obliged his son; but, indeed, sir, I had no thoughts of an accident; and Mr. Stapleton is such a nice young gentleman, one could refuse him nothing."

"Say, rather, Mr. Wiggins, that Mr. Stapleton had proved so excellent a customer," replied the Doctor, in a contemptuous tone. "I fancy Sir Henry will be but little disposed to give his future patronage to one who has thus imprudently assisted the too late discovered follies of his son. In consideration, however, of the act of justice you have just performed, I will certainly be the bearer of your apology; but in future, Mr. Wiggins, you will do well to remember, that he who, for the sake of gain, ministers to the caprices and vices of giddy and inconsiderate youths, is not only equally culpable with themselves, but must ever be looked upon as answerable for consequences."

"Certainly, sir; and for the future I

will never accommodate any gentleman from your house without a written order from yourself."

"Which you will very seldom be troubled with," said the Doctor, as the bowing inn-keeper retired.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE postman who left Hardwicke that evening was the bearer of the following letter :—

CHARLES MELWORTH TO HIS MOTHER.

“ Never before, my dearest mother, did your unhappy Charles dread the task of addressing you ; but then, never before had he such a tale of degradation to unfold ; and yet could you and my father at this moment look to the bottom of my heart, and see the sincerity with which I have repented, and do repent my crime, you would, I am sure, pity, even while you condemned and blushed for, your son. But the grief you will feel at perusing this letter will be nothing to that you would now have experienced, had it not been for the noble

and unmerited interference of our generous Augustus, who, as you will presently discover, I am most unworthy to call my friend."

The repetition of circumstances with which the reader is already acquainted would be both tedious and unnecessary: suffice it, therefore, to say, that Charles went on to give a candid and most impartial account of the occurrences of the last few months, omitting nothing that could do justice to Augustus, and expose the selfishness and ingratitude of his own conduct; acknowledging with shame the influence Henry Stapleton had acquired over him, and how he could, at any time, by alternate ridicule and threats, win him to his purpose; and candidly portraying the struggles of his conscience while witnessing Harcourt's unmerited punishment, and his frequent determinations to remove it by a confession, finally triumphed over by his darling vice, and the dread of Augustus's

increased favour with his parents. He thus concluded :

“ After this humiliating recital, I am afraid my dear parents will hardly own their son, contrasted as his conduct must ever be with that of his more amiable friend ; but, indeed, mamma, I already feel myself an altered character ; and though I know it will be long before I can hope to attain his excellence, yet, believe me, if I receive your forgiveness for my past faults, you shall have but little cause to complain of me in future. I begin to hope I am no longer selfish ; for I feel that I could at this moment bear any disgrace or punishment, to save Augustus from it. I intend, by Dr. Peirce’s recommendation, to deny myself every indulgence, that I may never again be led into error by that now hated vice. I shall be very miserable till I hear from you, for I know your letter will strengthen me in every virtuous resolution ; and I trust it will also be the medium of your

forgiveness, until I have received which I cannot forgive myself. I almost dread the holydays, lest you should, for the first time, feel no pleasure at seeing me; but I must trust to your oft-experienced kindness, and Augustus' and Amelia's intercession. I am quite ashamed that the latter should hear of my guilt—she who is so gentle and affectionate, so considerate for the feelings of others, so careless of her own; but it is due to Augustus that every one should be made acquainted with it, and it shall not, for my sake, be concealed from her. Sir Henry and Lady Stapleton are here, watching by their unfortunate son: they inquired for me this morning, but I dared not see them,—in fact I have lately discovered that the guilty can look no one in the face. Augustus does not know of my writing, for he would not hear of this exposure being made; but my heart already seems lighter, since I have confessed its wickedness to those

who I feel will not be impartial, though duty should make them severe, judges of their hitherto unworthy, but now truly penitent son,

“CHARLES MELWORTH.”

“*Hardwicke,*

“*May 30, 18—*”

“That was, indeed, a fortunate hour in which I consented to send Augustus to school with Charles,” said Mr. Melworth, as, with a serious countenance, he folded up his son’s letter.

MRS. MELWORTH IN REPLY.

“You were right, my dear Charles, in supposing that your letter would be a source of great uneasiness to your father and myself: never before have we had so serious a one. It was a blight, indeed, when we were so anxiously, so impatiently looking forward to the holydays, to hear that you had been near returning to us disgraced for ever; for you have not now to learn that a public expulsion from

school is a blot on the character of a youth that time can never efface.* Let the remembrance that you have once merited it dwell for ever on your mind: it is true it will be a humiliating thought; but humility is essential to excellence, and cannot therefore be purchased at a price too dear. I must confess myself disappointed in you, Charles: I had hoped that, your father having placed you under the care of Dr. Peirce, of course with a full conviction of his fitness for the trust, you would have felt yourself bound to obey him most implicitly, both as the representative of your parents, and as the kind and ever watchful promoter of your own best interests. I am, therefore, disappointed that the counsels of an unworthy boy, however persuasive, should have had power to lead you from the paths of propriety and—must I add it?—of virtue. Let me entreat you, my dear boy, to shun evil society, in however exalted a

sphere it may invite you to join it; and remember, too, that rank, far from being a screen to vice, renders it less excusable and more conspicuous. But of Mr. Stapleton's defalcation from virtue we have no right to speak; it forms, alas! no excuse for yours. Tremble, for the future, at the slightest inclination to disobedience, for you know not how far it may carry you: when, for the gratification of an hour, you quitted your school, you knew you were acting in opposition to regulations the excellency of which you had no right to doubt; but you little thought how the adventure would terminate, or to what it would lead. We have, indeed, reason to bless God that you were spared the fate of your unhappy companion, who, for the remainder of his life, may have cause to repent this frolic: but reflect, Charles, how much of guilt you have yourself incurred,—duplicity, falsehood, ingratitude, and selfishness—that leading crime of

all—that crime so unworthy of you as a man and a Christian—so opposed to the leading principles of your religion, which commands you to do unto others as you would they should do unto you, and to love your neighbour as yourself. Daily experience proves, my Charles, that we are helpless creatures, dependent on each other for the most trifling comforts of life, and on one superior, one beneficent Being for all we have. Why, then, should we to-day allow a love of self to intervene and prevent our benefiting those of whose assistance we may to-morrow ourselves stand in need? I have seen this vice growing in you from childhood, and, as you well know, have often reasoned with you on its consequences; but I had too fondly hoped it was eradicated: how painfully have you undeceived me! Of your falsehood I shall barely speak, for it is a vice that invariably carries with it its own punishment: he who, having been once

publicly convicted of an untruth, repeats the crime, must be hardened indeed; and such I would yet hope is not my son. How truly has the poet said,

‘ O what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive !’

Into how many errors did your first deviation from truth lead you ! You denied to Dr. Peirce your participation in Mr. Stapleton’s fatal act of disobedience, and then a false feeling of shame kept you silent while your friend was accused of and punished for your fault. O Charles ! what do you not owe that friend ? I have not yet mentioned him, for words are powerless to do him justice. It is not so much his having borne your guilt, for of that I could have believed him capable ; but his noble, and I am convinced unfeigned, desire to keep the circumstance secret from us, that surprised me. It so clearly proved that it was not an ostentatious love of praise that

influenced him. I am pleased with the candour of your letter; for he who sees and frankly acknowledges his error, is already far advanced towards amendment; but it is to a higher power than mine you must look for the strengthening of your virtuous resolutions,—to Him who never yet despised the sighing of a contrite heart,—to Him, remember, my dear boy, to whom you are accountable for the slightest deviation from the paths of rectitude and propriety. You have, indeed, not a severe judge in your sister Amelia: she has already tried to form a hundred excuses for your fault; but your conscience will tell you they are dictated rather by her affection for you, than by her sense of right.

“ From your father and myself I may, in conclusion, say—fear not; for though a tear must mingle with the smile with which we have hitherto always greeted the arrival of our boy, yet are our hearts open to the returning penitent; and we

firmly and fondly hope that his future conduct will not only wipe away all tears from the eyes, but gladden and give pride to the hearts of his now sorrowing, yet truly affectionate parents,

“CHARLES AND ELLEN MELWORTH.”

“*Elmsdale Grove,*

“*June 2, 18—*”

“You owe much to Mr. Dampier, in return for the injury you intended him: we wish you to invite him to the Grove, when your father may probably find a means of serving him.”

CHAPTER XX.

It was with very mingled feelings that Mr. and Mrs. Melworth, walking on the lawn before their house, awaited the arrival of the travellers who were hourly expected from Hardwicke; and it was with varying emotions of pleasure and pain that they embraced them. The lady, in simple but most expressive terms, thanked Augustus for the change he had effected in the character of her son, of whose improved conduct Dr. Peirce had spoken in language of the highest praise; while her husband, warmly seconding her, declared that all he had done, or even ever could do for him, would be trifling indeed, compared with this most important service.

The affectionate youth disclaimed all merit, assuring them that it was the natural excellence of Charles's heart,

when left to the exercise of its own impulses, that had worked the change; adding, that the late kindness of his behaviour to himself would have more than repaid him for any thing he could have suffered. Nor did Charles find much cause to shrink from the meeting he had so greatly dreaded; while Amelia, grown into an elegant and accomplished girl, endeavoured, by an assumption of spirits foreign to her character, to dissipate all unpleasant remembrances.

A very few days served to convince the anxious parents that the account they had received of the amendment in the disposition of their son was not incorrect. They perceived with pleasure that he had become perfectly indifferent to his own comfort and convenience, when placed in opposition to that of others; and they had almost hourly proof of his attention to the doctrine of self-denial.

Soon after his return, he paid a visit to Stapleton, who, though able to be removed to the Abbey, was yet confined to

his apartment. With uncommon energy did Charles try to convince him of the folly and impropriety of their past conduct, and most ingenuously did he confess the additional guilt he had himself incurred: but Henry had, alas! risen from the bed of suffering neither wiser nor better than he had lain down. His adoring, but ill-judging parents, agonised at the near prospect of losing one to whom so much importance was attached, had sought only to recover him from the effects of his accident; forgetting that the hour of pain is the hour of penitence, and that, by a wise and judicious improvement of it, they might have given birth to feelings in the heart of their son which would have carried him with credit through a life of usefulness, and stretched him, without terror, upon a bed of death. No such change, however, had been effected in the hardened heart of Henry Stapleton; and even while yet hovering, as it were, between time and eternity, he so unfeelingly ridiculed what

he termed Charles's new-fangled notions, that the latter determined to avoid, as far as the intimacy between their families would allow, all future intercourse with one whom he now considered so depraved; and as he left the house, he blushed scarlet at the recollection of how often the shallow arguments of this worthless youth had triumphed over the earnest solicitations of his better friend.

In the course of a few weeks, Dampier, accompanied by his sister, arrived at the Grove, from the host and hostess of which they received a kind and welcome reception; and so much did his amiable character and gentlemanlike deportment win upon their esteem, that, after consulting with Dr. Peirce, who was particularly anxious to benefit his young friend, Mr. Melworth commenced an inquiry amongst his acquaintance for a situation suitable to his former attainments; and so strongly did he recommend him, that an intimate friend of his own, high in the law, agreed to take him into his office, with a view

of perfecting him in his profession. The grateful Dampier thus raised to a station for which by birth and education he was eminently qualified, soon lost that timidity of address, the natural consequence of his secluded life, which had so often exposed him to the ridicule of Henry Stapleton, and became not only a favourite in, but an ornament to, the society in which he was for the future called upon to move. An uninterrupted friendship was ever after kept up between him and the adopted brothers of the Grove, both of whom became sincerely attached to him; and looking upon Mr. and Mrs. Melworth as the sources of his improved fortune, he felt for them a respect and affection amounting almost to adoration.

The conclusion of the holydays, meanwhile, was a signal for the separation of our heroes. Augustus was entered at Cambridge, while his friend resumed his studies at Hardwicke; and so ardently did he devote himself to the acquisition

of every elegant and desirable branch of knowledge, and so earnestly seek to destroy every remaining principle of evil in his heart, that when, after two years, he joined his friend at the University, Dr. Peirce proudly declared that he had had the happiness of sending there two young men, than whom he was convinced none, among the many, would rank higher for accomplishments of mind, elegance of manners, and excellencies of heart and conduct. A short time after Charles's removal to Cambridge, a circumstance occurred which induced Mr. and Mrs. Melworth themselves to journey thither, anxious as they were to be the heralds of good tidings to their beloved ward.

An aged and distant relative, who had been long estranged from the late Mr. Harcourt in consequence of his imprudences, having heard, through a casual acquaintance, a very high, though well-merited character of the young Augustus, had written to his guardian, re-

questing that his next month of leisure might be passed under his roof, in order that he might himself judge of his fitness to succeed him in a fortune and estate to which none had a greater right, provided he was as worthy as described. Mr. Melworth's answer, as may be supposed, did not detract from the merits of Augustus; and the old gentleman having been taken suddenly ill before his plan could be put in execution, had made his will in favour of his orphan relative; and dying soon after, Augustus found himself, on the arrival of his friends at Cambridge, possessed of a fortune of 5,000*l.* a year.

This sudden and unexpected acquisition of property neither turned the head nor corrupted the heart of Augustus Harcourt. Himself for many years the child of misfortune, he rejoiced in the means thus afforded him of ministering to the necessities of others. His right hand of charity was ever open to the widow and the orphan; and while his gratitude to the Melworths for their early care of him

knew no bounds, nor ever suffered diminution, he may be pardoned if he felt a pride at being placed, in point of fortune, more on an equality with his friend and his friend's sister.

Neither, in his hour of prosperity, did he forget the generous little fellow who, alone, amongst ninety boys, had the courage boldly to stand forth, his almost infant champion, when suffering unjust disgrace at Hardwicke. In declaring his parents to be rich, Edward Ashtown had spoken what he believed to be the truth; for the expensive style in which they lived had succeeded in deceiving many, much more likely to suspect the real state of the case than their youthful son: the half-year, however, following that in which he had so generously offered an asylum to Augustus fatally undeceived him.

When told that he must leave the magnificent house in which he was born, and resign the comforts and indulgences to which he had always been accustomed,

he repined not; but when he found that he was never more to return to Hardwicke or to Dr. Peirce, the studious and talented boy burst into a flood of tears; and it was long, very long, before his parents could restore him to any thing like composure. For nearly two years he had lived in poverty and seclusion, endeavouring to overcome the difficulties which presented themselves, as, with intense application, he sought to resume the studies which the clear explanations of his various masters had formerly rendered so comparatively easy. His father possessing neither time nor talent to instruct him, and the remote situation to which they had retired shutting out the hope of assistance from those who are often found willing to direct the inquiries of the youthful candidate for knowledge, it was to his own exertions alone, and ardent desire for improvement, that he owed the gradual progress he was making; when Augustus Harcourt, who had heard of his little friend's altered prospects,

with a pang of regret, which his own dependent state had failed to produce in his bosom, sought out the retreat of his parents; and, with expressions of sincere regard, informed the delighted Edward that he was once more to return to Hardwicke and his respected tutor, and that he should make his education and future settlement the object of his unceasing care.

To Henry Stapleton, at this favourable period of our narrative, it is painful to revert; but an interest in the welfare of our young readers obliges us. His father prematurely dying, left him, at nineteen, with a fortune almost princely; when his over-indulgent mother too late discovered that she had wasted her affection on a most unworthy son. With an education but half perfected, and manners eminently unpolished, he succeeded to his title, and became master of the Abbey; while Lady Stapleton, unwilling that her daughters should remain within the influence of such unfavourable society as

that which he now constantly introduced there, retired with them to London. Left entirely to himself, and, by his fortune, allowed the indulgence of every vicious propensity, this degraded young man soon became the detestation of his neighbourhood, and the disgrace of his ancient, and hitherto respectable, family; shewing, by the contrast which he formed with his former companions at the Grove, (who had long discontinued any acquaintance with him), the ill effects of early vice unchecked by the mild yet powerful influence of parental discipline, and evil dispositions unimproved by the well-directed application of moral precepts and religious instruction.

THE END.

