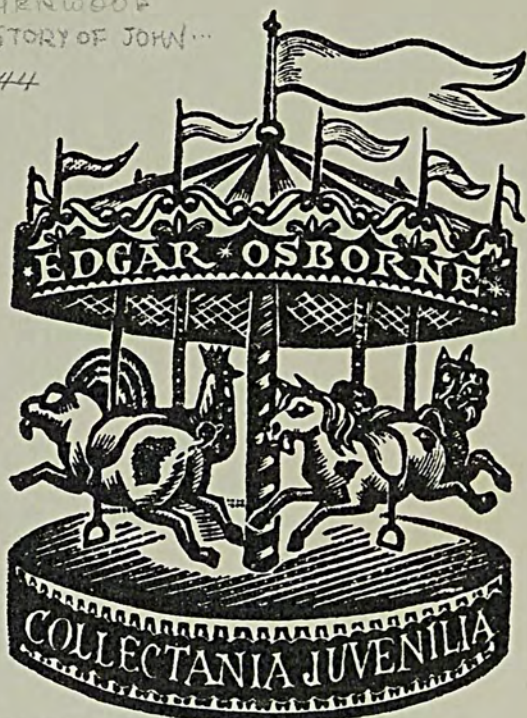
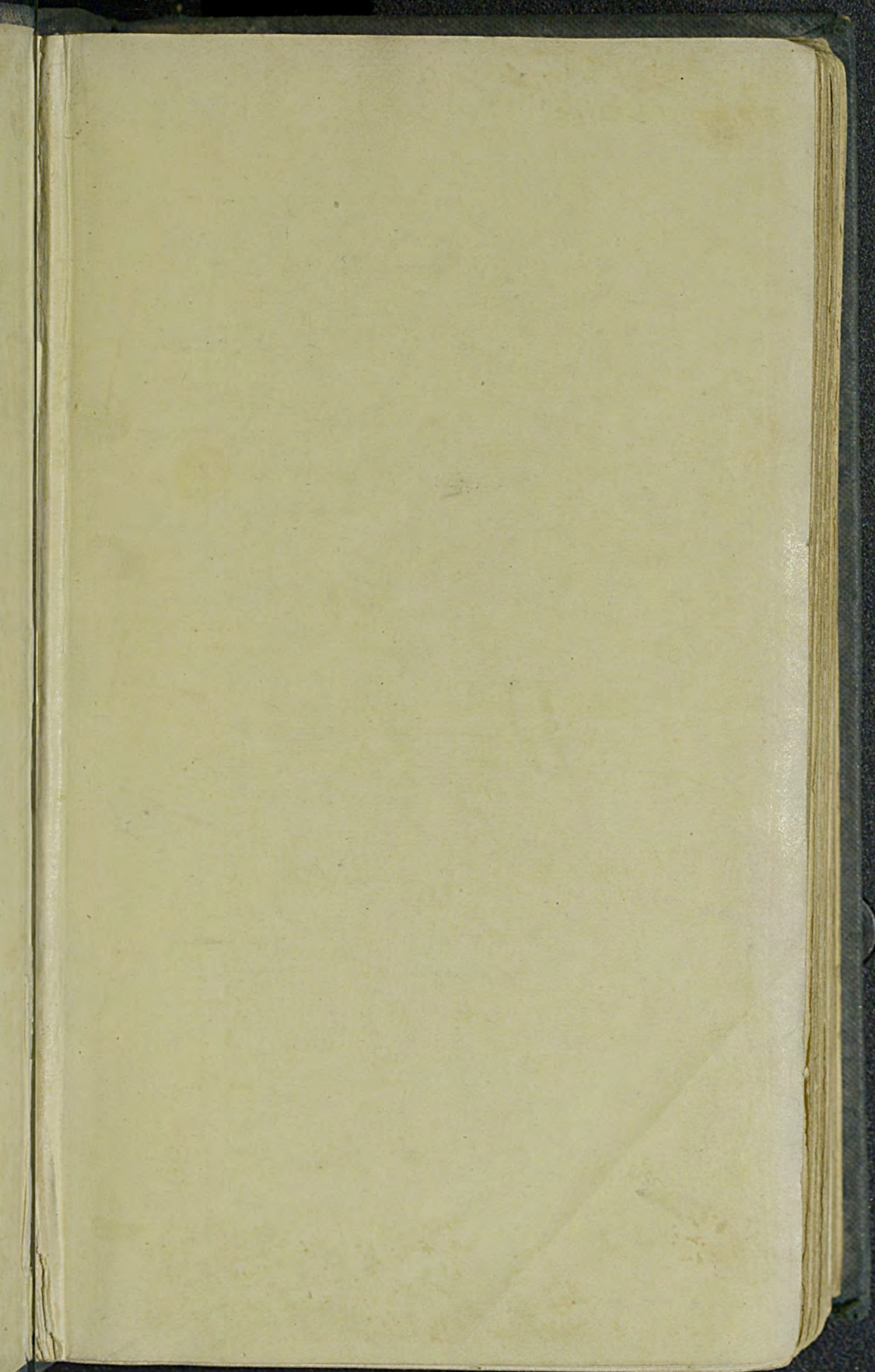
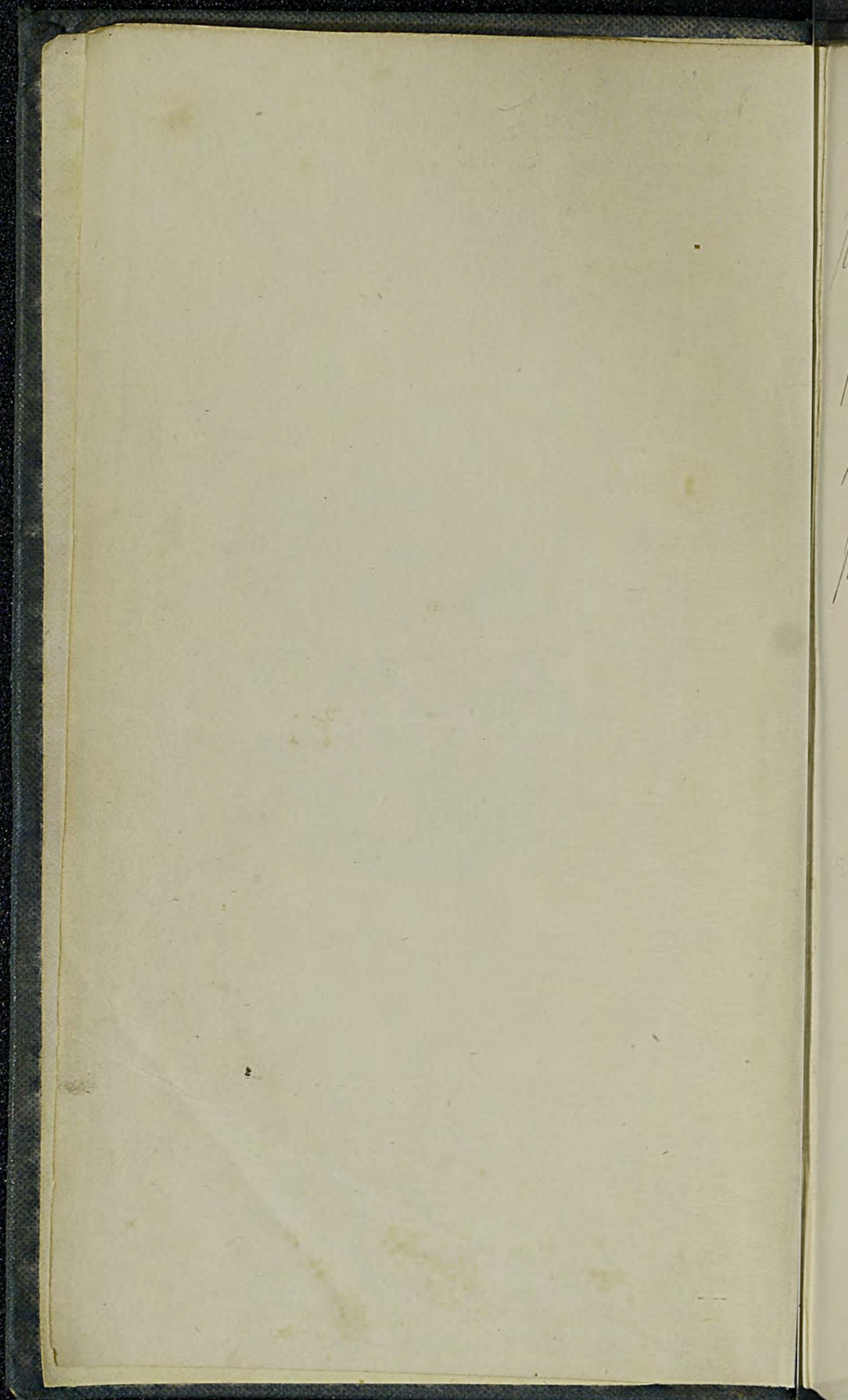


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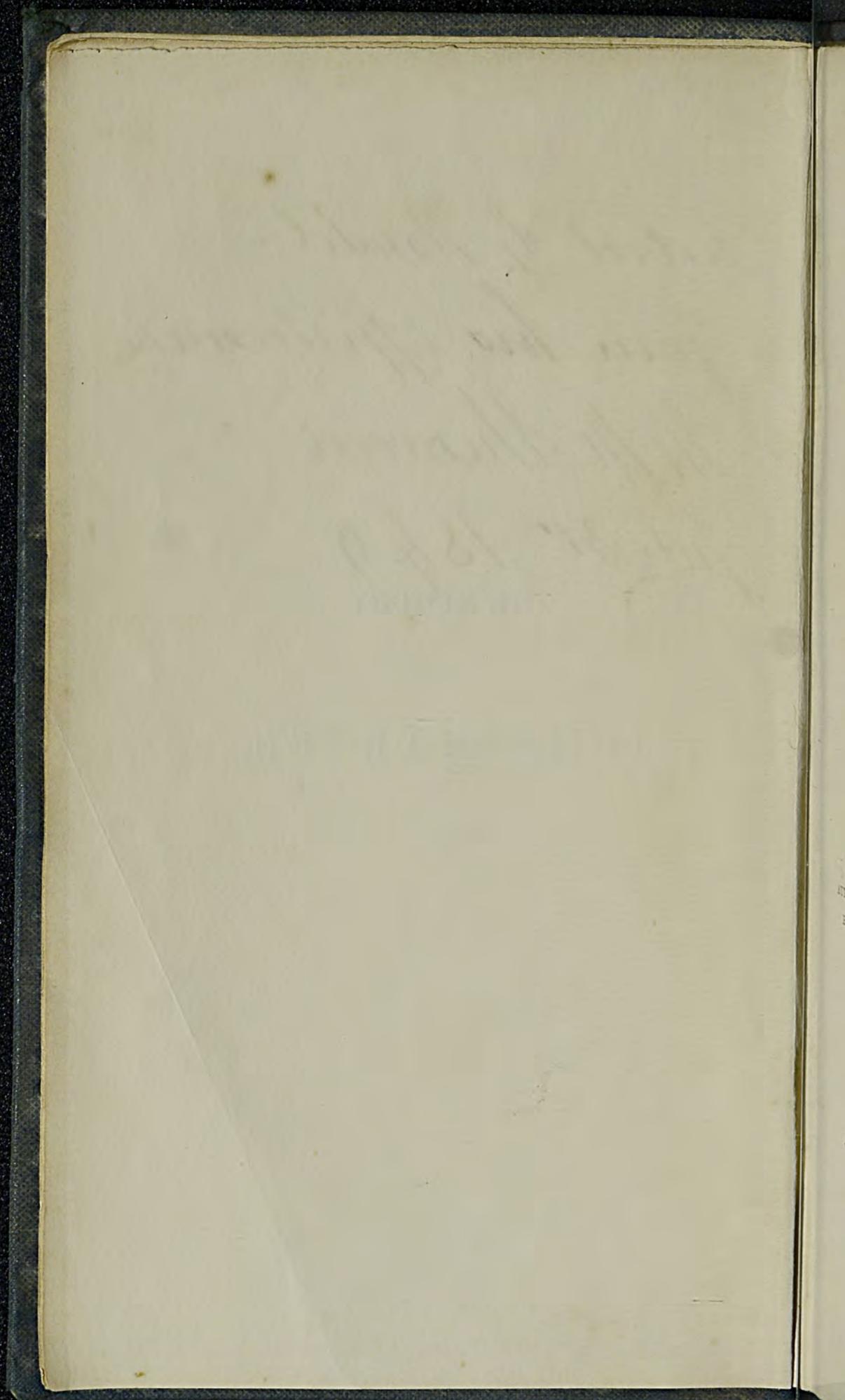


Herbert L. Bondel
from his affectionate
W M Sherwood
July 31st 1849

THE HISTORY

OF

JOHN MARTEN.



THE HISTORY
OF
JOHN MARTEN,
A SEQUEL
TO THE
LIFE OF HENRY MILNER.

BY
MRS. SHERWOOD,

AUTHOR OF THE HISTORY OF THE "FAIRCHILD FAMILY," "LITTLE
HENRY AND HIS BEARER," "ORPHANS OF NORMANDY," &c. &c.

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THE HISTORY
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JOHN MARTEN.

CHAPTER I.

THE simplest mode of opening this history, in which many of the trials and temptations of a young minister will be detailed, is to give the copy of a letter from a father, who is abroad, to his son in England; that son being John Marten, the most beloved friend of Henry Milner, and of course well known to all who are acquainted with the said Henry Milner. The letter is dated from Nice, and seems to have been written in the summer of the year after Mr. Dalben's death. Marten had passed as soon as it was in his power to do so, and he had therefore still some terms to keep after his examination before he could bid adieu to college life. Mr. Marten senior was a widower, and his son an only child, and this being mentioned, I will at once proceed

to the letter, regretting much that the worldly principles developed in it are too frequently those which influence persons similarly situated, although perhaps not often so openly expressed. The evil effects of this letter on the mind of the young man, as well as on his future career, will develop themselves in the sequel.

“MY DEAR JOHN,

“It will be no news to tell you, that your concerns occupy my mind almost continually, and that I am ever considering what is the best advice I can give you. All I have hitherto heard of your progress in the University and elsewhere, has afforded me satisfaction. The friendship formed with Henry Milner has turned out more to your advantage than I ever anticipated, independently of the many pleasures derived from it in your more youthful years. The old gentleman’s remembrance in his will was a solid benefit, and one very acceptable to me. But passing these things over, I would have you consider, dear John, that the introduction to Lord H— is the principal advantage of the friendly connexion which you have formed with Milner, and from which you may hereafter derive much assistance in your future progress through life. I need not, therefore, I trust, press the duty of preserving a friendship for young Milner, and through him of improving every opportunity of cultivating Lord H—’s acquaintance. There are, I understand, several livings in that nobleman’s gift. On all accounts, therefore, keep

as much as possible in my Lord H—'s view at present, and preserve Milner's interest alive. Coming out as that youth will do, under the patronage of Lord H—, and in high society, easy as to fortune, and pleasing as you describe him in appearance and manner, of course it cannot be expected that he will long retain that simplicity which you attribute to him. You will soon find the Henry Milner at the cottage in Worcestershire, and the Mr. Milner residing with my Lord H—, two very distinct persons, unless you contrive to keep old affections alive by constant intercourse. I must, therefore, relinquish the idea I have formed of having you with myself during the interval between the taking of your degree and your ordination; and if, in the mean time, Dr. Matthews would receive you into his family, allowing a small salary for any assistance which you might render him, many objects would be obtained at once. My resources are very mediocre, and would not then be drawn upon; you might gain further instruction under your old and deeply erudite master, and might keep up a regular intercourse with Henry Milner, and be ready to accept of any invitation from Lord H—, who is not the man to think the worse of you for any honourable exertion you might make to assist yourself. On second thoughts, I shall myself write to my old friend Matthews, and arrange all these matters. There is at length some hope of obtaining the place which I have so long been desiring, and then all things will be easy. In the mean time your ordination must be got over," &c., &c.

The advice given by the elder Marten was good, as far as it affected action, but with reference to motives, it worked on the young man's mind like wormwood infused into a cup of sparkling and pure water.

Marten was keeping his last term at Oxford when he received this letter, and he was still meditating with much dissatisfaction on the idea of a residence at Clent Green, with the liability of being classed with such a man as Perkins, and pondering at the same time on the possibility of escaping such an infliction, when Henry Milner entered his rooms. These young men generally spent their evenings together, and now Henry entered all fresh and at ease, inviting his friend to take their usual walk before tea. The smile on Henry's face was, however, instantly changed to a look of concern at the portentous aspect of Marten's brow. An open letter lying on the table leading at once to the conjecture, that this letter and the lowering look were connected, "I hope," said Henry, "that you have had no bad news, Marten; your father, I trust, is well."

The first move of Marten was to gather up the letter, for it was not of a kind to be shown or read to Henry. He tried, however, to answer carelessly, asserting that all was well, but in such a tone as made it still more evident to Henry that all was not so. Henry did not press the matter further, for he had often observed that Marten could be mysterious, and could look portentous on trifling occasions, and he had ever accustomed himself

to let the shadows have time to pass without making any remarks on the chilling effects of their transit. So he spoke of the fineness of the evening, and proposed a walk of some length, in search of some particular plant. The very air with which Marten put on his cap was indicative of irritation, and the manner in which he said—"Go on, Milner, I will follow"—was connected with the paternal injunction that he must keep up the old affections of Milner by continual intercourse.

Marten's affection for Henry had till that evening been pure and natural and unconstrained. But when he said to his friend, "Do you go first, Henry, I will follow," the worldly advice of his father received into his heart, had already begun to spread its poison; and as Henry went bounding down the stairs, his gown flying behind him, and his light hair floating in the wind created by his own quick movements, for he held his cap in his hand, his friend stood above, meditating bitterly for an instant on the boyish simplicity, as it was his humour just then to think it, of that character to which his father and common worldly prudence were suggesting the propriety of his accommodating himself.

Of course, in such a temper as this, Marten did not make himself a very pleasing companion during the former part of their walk, and Henry tried various subjects in vain, till, finding his friend still reserved, he at length spoke out, and again asked him if he had had bad news?

"No," replied Marten; "but my father has

lived abroad till he has lost his judgment, I believe, and, acting from his own head, he has taken a step which is enough to drive a man mad, even to think of."

"What is it?" asked Henry, in alarm.

"He has actually written to old Matthews," replied Marten, reddening to the very brow, "to prick me down as an assistant to Perkins and Simson, to be pen-mender and copy-writer, and fag extraordinary in the very school through which I passed, as the son of a gentleman, and the equal—I trust something more than the equal—of most gentlemen's sons there."

Henry could not avoid expressing some astonishment at this proposition of Mr. Marten senior, represented in the light which his son chose to throw upon it.

"Of course," said Marten, "you must be astonished, Milner,—of course you see things in a different light, after having spent several vacations at Lord H——'s, to what you did in your retirement in Worcestershire. The world of course must appear to you now in a different point of view, and you must see, that a man cannot do worse for his son, than to put him, on first starting in life, in a situation so beneath his expectations, as that which my sapient parent has selected for me. If he had not been so hasty—if he had consulted me before he wrote to Matthews, I should certainly have found means to extricate myself from the dilemma; but what can I do now?—All I have to hope is, that Matthews will decline my assistance. If he consults his own

comfort, I am sure he will do so, for I shall never have sufficient self-command to endure all the miseries of being usher extraordinary at Clent Green, for the next twelve or more months."

"Twelve months," repeated Henry, "and then you will be old enough to be ordained; from these deduct three months' holidays, and there remain nine, and then you will be at liberty."

"Cool enough, Milner," replied Marten; "do you think no evil to live on suet-pudding, and associate with Perkins for nine months—to bear all the pomposities of the pedagogue, and all the drynesses of old Simson for so long a time? Call you it no evil, Milner, even if this were all?—but the disgrace—the shame. How Wellings will laugh over it! He will call upon me for very malice, and bring the set with him to chorus his mirth. I have the greatest mind in the world, after I have taken my degree, to cut and run."

"No, Marten, no," said Henry; "do no such thing; let Wellings laugh if he will, surely you do not mind Wellings' laugh; you will not be despised for obeying your father by any really respectable people. Lord H——, I am quite sure, will think you ought to please your father, however disagreeable it may be to you to do so; and then Marten, you know, that happiness cannot fail to proceed from submission to the will of God, if not just at first, yet certainly in the progress of time. My uncle used always to lay this rule down as a thing that no pious person could dispute."

Henry might have gone on quoting Mr. Dalben, even to the end of the chapter, without conveying an idea to Marten's mind; he heard nothing whatever of what his companion said, beyond his opinion of what Lord H—— would think proper for him to do; and an idea had occurred to him, which he interrupted Henry to suggest.

"You write to Lord H—," he said, "often, don't you, Milner? I wish you would take occasion to mention my dilemma, though not as from me; if he thinks, and says so in his answer to you, that it would be right for me to eat my way into a few more suet-puddings at Clent Green, it will be a great encouragement to me; Milner, will you do thus much for me?"

Henry's reply was at once ready, hearty, and careless; he would do it, and would write that very night to his kind patron,—and then he changed his tone, saying,—

"Well, Marten, if you can be contented at Clent Green, how glad shall I be to have you so near me in the vacations! I shall often come riding over, and perhaps Lord H—— will be so kind as to invite you to spend the holidays with me; I wish I could help being glad of what makes you sorry."

"Can you suppose," asked Marten, "that Lord H— would notice an usher of Dr. Matthews?"

"It might depend," replied Henry, "on who or what that usher might be."

"You are beginning to understand a little of the world, Milner," returned Marten, with

another sentiment of his father's letter uppermost in his mind. 'You will soon find the Henry Milner at the cottage in Worcestershire, and the Mr. Milner residing at Lord H——'s, very distinct persons.'

"*The world*," repeated Henry; "of course I cannot live in the world without learning something of it. Is not Oxford a little *world* of itself? And one cannot live in Oxford without understanding something of this little world; but, honestly, Marten, the more I see of what is called the world, the less I wish to have to do with it."

"That sentiment," returned Marten, "will do very well for an independent man like you, Milner; you have an easy income, and are sure of preferment; but a man who is to make his way like me, must not shrink from the world; he must meet it in something of its own spirit, and avail himself of every opening to bustle his way through the contending crowd; he must keep pushing on.—Why do you smile, Milner?"

"Because," replied Henry, "I am thinking what pains you are taking to avoid such plain phrases as you do not think I shall like, by using circumlocutions."

"I do not understand you," said Marten.

"Why not say at once," answered Henry, "that unless a man is ambitious and pushing, he will never get on!—By-the-bye, we must decide what getting on means."

"Getting on!" returned Marten, "what is it but advancing one's position in life; and if

you call every effort which a man uses for advancing his position in life ambition, I maintain that you are ambitious when you study to obtain your degree."

"I think not," replied Henry.

"Explain," returned Marten; "let us hear a little of your logic, Milner."

"Is there no distinction, Marten," replied Henry, "between endeavouring to do your duty in that state of life in which Providence has placed you, and forcing your way by your own exertions into a place above your own?"

"As I before said," added Marten, "these sentiments will do for you, Milner, because you are well assured of an agreeable position in society, but not for one who, like me, has no position at all."

"Nay!" replied Henry, "you have a position now, the same nearly as mine, and are likely to have another for some months afterwards; and the only desire which you and I ought to entertain, according to the principles I have been taught, should be to do our best in these our present conditions, and leave it to Providence to open out the future to us: should it not be so, Marten?"

The young man made no answer; he fancied that there was some affectation of superior wisdom in Henry's last remark; he was on the look-out for symptoms of that superiority which his father had admonished him to expect sooner or later in the protégé of a nobleman, and he feared that he had already found one of these symptoms. He therefore spoke

not again, till the silence was broken by a sudden start and exclamation of his companion.

"There it is," Henry cried, "and in full bloom!" and the next minute, he was in the act of gathering the plant which he had come out to seek.

Another party of specimen-seekers joined Henry and Marten on their return, and gave Marten time to recover his usually easy, lively, and affectionate manner towards Henry, a process which was greatly facilitated by the total unconsciousness of his friend, in respect to what had before passed in his mind.

Marten, in order to give a colour to his violent irritation, had misstated his father's plans respecting his establishment at Clent Green. There had been no idea of making him an usher, and no proposition of the kind, as speedily appeared by a letter from Dr. Matthews, stating most cordially, that he should rejoice to have his old pupil in his house for a few months'—hinting that everything should be done to make him comfortable, and proposing very fair terms, in consideration for any assistance the young gentleman might give him, in certain processes of cramming, in which he was continually engaged, and of which he professed himself especially weary.

So far all was smooth before Marten, and a paragraph in the next letter Henry received from Lord H— —, made the way more than smooth, actually slippery, for the paragraph announced pleasure, on Henry's account, on the prospect

of the near neighbourhood of his friend for so many months to come. Marten's views certainly took a long stretch, when Henry read this passage to him.

Within two months from this period Marten had finished his career in Oxford with great credit to himself, spent a few days at Lord H—'s, taken a walk in North Wales, with another liberated member of old Queen's, and become a resident at Clent Green.

CHAPTER II.

MARTEN was allowed many privileges at Clent Green, which he had no right to expect. A small study was entirely appropriated to his use, and if it was located on the second floor, it was only so much the farther from the incessant turmoil of the lower parts of the house. Marten was never required to go into the school-room, for the young gentlemen had received orders to wait upon him, and he took great care that they should treat him with all due respect.

He dined with the family, and only at those times appeared in the parlour, though he often spent the evening in Dr. Matthews' study, where the discourse generally ran on subjects of erudition.

Marten always held aloof from the ushers, though he made a very proper distinction in his occasional salutations of Mr. Simson and Mr. Perkins.

It was a proud day to the young man when Lord H—'s carriage drove up to the door to bear him to Woodville to spend the Christmas vacation with Henry Milner.

The party which he met at Woodville was quite a domestic one, Henry of course excepted. Lord H—'s two sons, the elder of whom was a fine youth

of about seventeen, were also present and ready to receive the visitor into all their plans of amusement. Lord and Lady H— were, as ever, all kindness, and made Marten feel himself more at home than he ever could have done at Clent Green.

We must now refer to a former hint respecting our young gentleman, which occurs in the last volume of the history of his friend, and which we did not think ourselves bound to explain at the time, not having then pledged ourselves, as we now have done, to account for all his important or mysterious movements. The passage is as follows, and refers to the first visit which Henry Milner and his friend made together at Woodville.

“In the mean time, Henry knew not what to make of Marten, whose manner, though always kind, seemed to carry with it an unaccountable reservedness, for he was often absent for hours in a morning, and never volunteered any account of those excursions.”

It would be leaving a shadow over the character of the young man if we suffered this passage to remain unexplained, and did not now account for these frequent and mysterious absences; and though we do not defend the mystery of his movements, yet are we anxious to prove that it was with no low nor disgraceful purpose that he took steps which he thought right to conceal from his best young friend.

The very need which he felt of such concealment ought to have admonished him that he was treading a perilous path, and probably he did feel this after a while, from the impatience which he is

said to have expressed, in the next passage to that we have cited, to return into Worcestershire.

The reader of the fourth volume of Henry Milner cannot have forgotten the Howard woods, the chapel on the rock, and the hermitage below; nor can they have forgotten the highly polished and insinuating priest, the Father Rolandi, nor how courteously he did the honours of his hermitage of the woods to the two young gentlemen, accompanying them to the boundary-line between the Elminton or Howard grounds, and of Lord H——.

All intercourse had then and there ceased between Henry and the priest; but not so with Marten.

The wily Jesuit had probably seen at once that nothing could be done with the former, whilst there were points in the character or physiognomy of the latter, which he conceived might be taken hold of. So fine a young man was worth trying for, at least so he thought, and he set machinery to work, the nature of which may be explained hereafter, by which he became informed of Marten's movements, and contriving to meet him alone one day, he invited him to his hermitage, which in fact was his study, on pretence of showing him some natural curiosities.

Wherefore Marten, when he returned to Woodville, should not at once have told where he had been, is a natural inquiry, and demands some explanation. The truth is, that the conversation between himself and the priest, which had commenced by the simple discussion of natural objects, had ended in a deep controversy respecting the nature and privileges of the church, of which the priest spoke

indefinitely; and he had already made many assertions which Marten was totally unprepared to answer, when the latter was admonished by a distant bell, that he must hasten back to Woodville.

In this case what was to be done but to make an engagement for meeting again the next day.

This second meeting only led to another and another, Marten becoming more and more interested in the discussion, and more and more convinced by the priest's arguments, that the legitimate church, and the ministry, who are such by right of laying on of hands, in direct line from the apostles, are possessed of privileges amounting in fact to the opening and shutting of the door of heaven. Though whenever the Jesuit, for such he was, attempted to prove that this church could be no other than the Church of Rome, and that the Church of England was schismatic, Marten had always drawn back, and had at length left the priest, the argument, and the place, under the full persuasion that he had fought a good fight and come off scatheless.

And so far he had fought well; he had not given up the Church of England, he had not become an actual Papist, as many another might have done in his circumstances, but he had brought away with him many opinions, which worked like leaven in his mind, though they never operated strongly upon him till he began to think seriously of his approaching ordination.

It had always been his determination to seek out this same Father Rolandi, should he ever visit Woodville again, for he felt that he was better prepared to meet him and to contend with

him than he had been ; and therefore as soon after his arrival in the country as he could escape the observation of Henry, he turned his steps towards the gate in the valley which opened on the Elmington grounds.

He had scarcely reached the wicket between the grounds, when he saw before him, at a considerable distance, just at a point where the wood walk formed a considerable bend, the floating drapery of a dark figure, which the next instant was out of sight.

He thought that this person might probably be the one he sought, and if he were so, he had no suspicion that he himself had been observed, and that the man whose garments he had seen was doing his utmost to avoid meeting him. As he had done many times before, he sprang over the gate, and walked rapidly on towards the hermitage, and through an opening in the underwood caught another view of the person before him, whom he then ascertained to be the Father Rolandi whom he sought.

He lost sight of him again ; but had a third glimpse, not of him, but of the skirt of his coat, as he entered the glade in front of the hermitage.

Everything there was precisely as he had seen it before, and he made not the smallest doubt of being received as aforetime at the solitary place, which he considered as the retreat of sincere though mistaken piety.

As he walked up to it he discerned the glimmer of fire through the stained windows, and going up to the door knocked, at first gently, and then louder.

Once, twice, and thrice he knocked; suffering a minute to pass between each of these intimations of his presence; the fourth time he made the old door quake under his hand, and with such success, that it was then half-opened, and a boy, in a dress which reminded Marten of the little acolytes he had seen in the churches in France, peeping forward, asked him whom he wanted.

He replied, "His reverence, the Father Rolandi."

"He is not within," replied the youth; so decidedly as to show that it gave him small pain to assert that which he knew to be false.

"Surely, you mistake," replied the astonished Marten; "I saw him enter only a few minutes since."

"If so," returned the boy, "he has gone up to his devotions, and I have not seen him."

"Be so good," said Marten, "to give him this card, and to ask him when I may call again."

The boy withdrew, leaving Marten without, and returned a minute afterwards to repeat his assertion that the Father was not within.

"Very well," replied Marten, "it is of no consequence; give him the card when he returns, and tell him that I am residing at Woodville Hall." He then turned shortly from the door, murmuring to himself, "Nor shall I visit this place again until this behaviour is accounted for, and a very ample apology made."

An affront, of whatever kind it might be, was never lost on Marten; he could never have done with it till he had viewed it in all its phases

through the magnifying glass of his susceptibility; and such a marked affront as this glared in his face in a most offensive manner; he felt that he could not return to Woodville whilst under the influence of an irritation for which he could not account even to Henry, so he dashed on through the woods in a contrary direction to that by which he had come.

During this progress he came to the foot of a mound where four ways branched off; at the top of this mound was a stone cross, to which Marten mounted to ascertain the bearings of the country. He saw that the avenue right before him would lead him to a lodge with gates opening, as he supposed, on the public road, which led to Spirehill, which town he saw at the distance of less than a mile as a bird would fly. As he faced the lodge, he found that the mansion-house was on his left at no great distance, but so embosomed in trees, that he could only discern a few turrets, such as he had seen oftentimes in France, and various clusters of chimneys, of which the brickwork was tortured and twisted in the most ingenious style. On leaving the cross, he made his way to the lodge, passed the iron gates by a little wicket, and proceeded by the turnpike-road to Spirehill.

He lounged awhile about the church, and went through several of the streets. The observations which he made on the little town being anything but favourable to the moral condition of its inhabitants, especially when compared with that of the village of Woodville. He had a high and honourable sense of morality, and excessive disgust for what was low-lived and vulgar.

On the whole, he came back little pleased with his adventures of the morning, though he had explored many beautiful natural scenes.

Lord H—— frequently invited and encouraged the young men under his roof to converse openly with him after dinner, when they sat, not over their wine, for they drank little or none, but over their walnuts.

Marten had no reason this day after dinner for not telling that he had been through the woods to Spirehill, and for not expressing his opinion of the neglected state of the place. Lord H—— accounted for this, by saying that the Howard family were not only possessors of the larger part of the parish, but lords of the manor and patrons of the living, which was a good one in point of revenue; and he added, that as they were zealous Papists, it had always been their object, since they could only bestow the benefice on a member of the Church of England, to give it to the most inefficient man they could find.

"It is what I should do," said Edmund, Lord H——'s youngest son, "if I was forced to give a living to a Popish priest. I should choose the dullest stop-gap I could find."

"I am sure then, Edmund," answered his brother, "you could not find one that would suit you better than the present rector of Spirehill. How long has he been there, papa?"

"Ever since I was a child," replied Lord H——; "and the best we can say of him, with the utmost stretch of christian charity is, that he is a nonentity—a mere animal, which eats, and drinks, and sleeps, and thinks only of its own comfort."

"If he should die, Mrs. Howard would find such another to fill his place; don't you think she would, papa?" said Edmund; "does not she manage everything, though she is never seen?"

"She is a woman of immense spirit," replied Lord H——, "and governs both her husband and son, as we are told, and all her people, with a high hand. No one has much influence with her but the priest who resides at the Hermitage;" and Lord H—— told the young men how this influence had been exerted on two occasions, in almost forcing two of the daughters of the family to take the veil.

He added that Mr. Howard, senior, was much in Italy, and that Mr. Howard, junior, had married there, and lost his lady only a few months since. It was probable, he said, as he was the last heir male, that he would marry again; he trusted that his second choice would at least be English, Protestant he could not hope it to prove.

The discourse then turned back on the rector of Spirehill, and Marten became very warm and eloquent in the exhibition of his views respecting the great and mighty reformations which an active and talented clergyman might and ought to effect in a parish over which he presided.

He certainly startled both Lord H—— and Henry by the exhibitions he made of his appreciation of the clerical profession; with the display of his views of its high prerogatives, and the decision with which he excluded all persons from a participation in these prerogatives, who were not regularly admitted to the ministry. I am sorry to confess that he had derived his opi-

nions though himself not quite aware of their source, in great measure from his former discourses with the Padre Carlo Rolandi, and from other conversations held with persons of the same way of thinking in France.

Henry, in his amazement, could hardly help exclaiming, "Why, Marten, you are on the very borders of the infallibility of the Church;" and Edmund, who was intended to be a clergyman, opened his eyes and ears with astonishment. But Lord H——, without taking up the controversy respecting the prerogatives of the Church, entered at once into the statement of that truth which no enlightened man can dispute, that all reformation of society, all real improvement of mankind, must proceed directly from the great High Priest, and from none inferior to him; and that if human ministry is ever made available, it can only be in and through the immediate blessing of Him in whose hands are the hearts of all men.

CHAPTER III.

OUR third chapter finds Marten restored to his old haunts at Clent Green, having brought back with him from Woodville additional horror of Mr. Perkins, the Misses Matthews, and poor Mrs. Judy Meakin's inexhaustible bag of stockings. Nor, it must be confessed, had he acquired more taste for the dry and pompous tones of the Doctor's discussions; but a certain portion of time was to be got over, and as it advanced, it brought its employments and its objects. There was, however, one reasonable cause of care for the young man; the time of his ordination was drawing near, and he could not hear of a curacy, to give him a title, at least such a one as he could think of accepting, for a title includes a residency of two years at the curacy. Lord H—— was not in the country; Henry Milner still at Oxford, and inquiring, without success, for something which might suit his friend, and time was going with its usual jog-trot pace, for it never ambled very rapidly at Clent Green, excepting now and then on a bright holiday, when a very sudden and unlooked-for turn took place in the fortunes of the young man, although not until he had arrived at the point of thinking himself the most unfortunate individual in the world.

A letter was brought one auspicious morning, and placed in the hands of Dr. Matthews, just as that worthy pedagogue had prepared himself for the labours of the day by a hearty breakfast. The pale pink of the envelope, as well as the delicate flowing hand, whilst it left no doubt of the writer being a female, drew forth an impatient exclamation from the recipient; to which he added a sweeping clause of condemnation on the uses of coloured paper and light ink. Nevertheless he opened the envelope with some curiosity, expecting to find a proposal for a pupil, but before he was half through the lecture, he called to Marten, who was just escaping by the door, and directing him with his eye to sit down again, he dismissed the other members of the breakfast table by saying to his wife, "Have you and your daughters no domestic matters to attend to, my dear?" a hint so well understood, that Marten was left the next minute alone with his tutor.

We will take the opportunity, whilst the doctor is decyphering the latter half of the letter, and Marten is awaiting the process with more curiosity than he was quite aware of himself, to give some account of the writer.

The Lady Alicia Devereux was a widow of a certain age, possessed of a large fortune, and without children. She resided in an elegant retirement from the great world, in a house to which she had given the name of the Fair Holmes cottage.

This residence was situated in a large and populous parish, where, especially around the church, the habitations were so numerous as in fact to form a small town, which from the beauty and salubrity of the neighbourhood, could boast of more than

the usual proportion of genteel families, particularly since the residence of Lady Alicia in the vicinity.

At the head of this parish was a rector, Doctor Beecher, who was not to the taste of this lady, as she professed and believed herself to be decidedly religious.

This rector was a man of the world, one who looked merely for the loaves and fishes of the church, and yet one who loved his own ease too well to put himself far out of the way, even for these, being already in affluent circumstances. He had, however, no manner of objection to an increase of income, and as there was a benefice likely soon to fall in Lady Alicia's gift, which he thought would suit him far better than his present living, he formed his plans of proceeding with regard to the lady on this foundation.

He knew perfectly well that she would be glad to get rid of him, and it seemed very far from improbable, that if she were permitted to choose a curate herself, and if that curate should become a favourite, she might be glad, in case of the death of the present incumbent of the living under her patronage, to negotiate an exchange, and to endow himself, the said Doctor Beecher, with that living, on condition of his resigning Steeple Lawford in favour of the curate.

Acting upon this scheme, he made up his mind to go all lengths to please her ladyship, and to humour such of her caprices as might neither give himself trouble, nor implicate his character with the higher ecclesiastical rulers.

When, therefore, this Doctor Beecher found that Lady Alicia greatly disliked his curate, who

happened to be very touchy as to any interference, especially of women, in his ministry, he procured another situation for him, and conceded to the wishes of the lady, that she should look out for and recommend a successor, according to her own pleasure—the doctor only insisting, that if a young man were selected, he should have a good character from his college, and his testimonials signed by orthodox men. In consequence of this permission, Lady Alicia wrote to Doctor Matthews from Malvern Wells, where she was spending a few weeks with her humble companion, Miss Liptrot, asking him if he could recommend any young gentleman of decided piety to the vacant curacy; one whose qualifications would answer to the conditions required by the rector, and also to those, which with her were indispensable—these last she stated to be, an ardent desire to promote the good cause, the ability to express himself well in the pulpit, and such manners as would recommend all his other excellencies to persons of refined feelings.

The curacy, she continued, had been worth one hundred a year to the late curate, according to the agreement made between himself and the rector, and the rector did not object to give the same to his successor. But if this successor were disposed to give an evening lecture on a Sunday, and to add another on a week day, —to attend to the schools—to give his aid and countenance to a few of her own little plans—if, in short, he proved to be the man after the heart of every serious Christian, she had no doubt but that the original salary would be almost doubled to him, though, as her Ladyship added, “I trust

that if a young man can be found who answers to my desires, the consideration of worldly emolument will be the last on which his mind will rest."

Doctor Matthews was not by any means aware of the tortures which he was inflicting upon Marten by the deliberation which he used in inspecting and re-inspecting the lady's letter. At length, however, he tossed it to Marten with a smile, and one of his often-used expressions from the classics, importing some idea of the inferiority of the female mind, and the feminine aptitude to meddle with matters beyond their sphere.

Then he added, "That letter concerns you, young man, more than myself; take it, read it attentively, and give me the result of your cogitations after school; and if you resolve to abide by it, and can put up with the lady's caprices, it is a good thing in a pecuniary way, a good starting point. You may be quite assured of my good word, though, by-the-by, even two hundred a year, is but a poor salary to pay for so many lofty qualifications as the good lady requires."

If there had arisen any doubts in the mind of Marten respecting his acceptance of this offer, these would have been set at rest by two seemingly very unimportant circumstances; the first of which was, the title of the patroness, and the second, the name of her cottage. The name of the parish for which for certain reasons we have substituted another,—Steeple Lawford being a composition of our own—was also suited to his fancy; how much has been often conceded in this world to names and sounds!

When the hour arrived in which emancipation

from dog-eared grammars and dictionaries, slates and inkhorns, was proclaimed at Clent Green, Marten sought Doctor Matthews, and stated his wish that he might be recommended to the Lady Alicia, as being quite ready to undertake the curacy.

"And," added Doctor Matthews, "to make yourself agreeable in every way which her ladyship requires?"

"As far," answered Marten proudly, "as her requisitions are consistent with my duty and my character as a clergyman of the Church of England, which I shall be when at Steeple Lawford."

"Am I to impart the whole of what you say to the lady?" asked the doctor drily. "But, I don't see that you can do better, Marten," he added kindly; "and you might do worse: leave me to say all that is handsome about you. I shall lose no time, depend upon it."

Neither did the doctor lose time. He wrote that day, and received an answer so speedily, that within a week Marten was prepared with a title given by Doctor Beecher, rector of Steeple Lawford, to appear as a candidate for ordination; and the news had travelled as far as Henry Milner's rooms at Queen's, and been told to all who took an interest in Marten in the old college.

We shall not enter into the particulars of the young man's ordination and previous examination, nor say when it took place; but, immediately after the solemn ceremony, the young divine hastened to fulfil an appointment which he had made with his friend Henry.

It was the season of the long vacation, and Marten having a fortnight's grace from the day

of his ordination before he was to proceed to Steeple Lawford, had agreed with Henry that they would spend that fortnight together in some retired place, where Marten might obtain permission to exercise his new profession in some small country church, where a few mistakes, if such should occur, would not be noticed so much as in a larger place. It was left to Henry to find such a retirement, and he found one to his heart's content.

It was a small village, and a very little church, in one of those lovely valleys, through which a pure and sparkling stream brings its contributions to his favourite river, the wild and beautiful Teme.

There he had secured rooms in a farm-house, and when Marten had come as near to the place as a public vehicle could bring him, he was ready to receive him, and even to carry his portmanteau to the nearest cottage, from whence assisting hands might be procured to carry it to its destination. Whenever Henry was in any situation which reminded him of the simple habits of his happy childhood, there was a freshness and buoyancy about his manner and appearance which awakened and invigorated all Marten's old feelings of affection for him.

At the sight of his friend at the coach door the memory of all Marten's late anxieties seemed to fly away, and his greeting was almost as gay as that of Henry. "But you shall not shoulder my portmanteau, Milner;" he said, "not even to the cottage before us." To which Henry answered, by reminding his friend in a playful way, of his late advancement, and of the dignified character

he had now to support; but adding, with more seriousness, "Well, Marten, from my heart I congratulate you on having passed so many of the ordeals of examinations, and on having obtained the position which you have so long desired; there is only one thing more to be wished for by you, Marten."

"A fat benefice, a plump rectory, is it not?" asked Marten.

"No, not that," answered Henry.

"Well, then," replied Marten, "that my examination as priest may be got over as easily as that which is just past."

"I was not alluding to that, Marten," replied Henry, "indeed, for the moment, I forgot that you had not yet arrived at that step; but I have been looking over the ordination services, and thinking what was passing in your mind, in the cathedral before the bishop.

"Both services are solemn. I cannot think how any one can go through them lightly and from worldly views, but there is no part of either form so fine, I feel, or so appropriate as the 'Veni Creator Spiritus;'" and he repeated the few first lines of the hymn:

" 'Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire
And lighten with celestial fire;
Thou the anointing Spirit art,
Who does the seven-fold gift impart;
Thy blessed unction from above,
Is comfort, life, and fire of love.' "

"When I said that you have only one thing more to desire as a clergyman, Marten, I meant this unction from above."

"How is it," thought Marten, "that one so much younger than myself, of such inferior standing in the University, and so little versed in the world, and one who is not appreciated as having very superior abilities, should be always posing me as he does, and making me half ashamed of myself and of my sentiments, without even seeming aware that he does so? Is it not from the habit, which he has got from his uncle, of dragging every controversy or discussion into the full light of Scripture; and yet he has no cant? But I must say something, I must defend my sentiments, or rather the conjecture I expressed, as to what only object of desire remained before me. I must not teach him to think that he can silence me whenever he pleases;" and then affecting ease, "Of course, Milner," he said, "of course, no man uninstructed by the Divine Spirit is or can be fitted for the ministry. But one does not always refer to divine things in common conversation. A reference to these is very apt to end in cant when it becomes habitual. There are certain doctrines and opinions which must be a part of every man deserving the name of Christian, but in common intercourse with society, one must either talk as others do, or be content to be silent. But here we are at your cottage, and no further shall I permit you to carry my goods and chattels."

Notwithstanding the diversity in the modes of thinking of the two young men, noticed above, the remembrances attached to that fortnight which they spent together, followed Marten with their soothing influences through many an after scene. Their retirement was in one of the deep-

est solitudes of [the banks of the Teme, where long reaches of meadows rich with verdure, dingles sacred to the blackbird and thrush, and valleys haunted by echo, all combined with the fresh, and lively, and simply pious discourse of his companion to tranquillize the mind of Marten, and for the time greatly to deaden the influence of all worldly and ambitious feelings in his heart.

Both Henry and Marten were weary of imposed studies, they therefore read little, but spent all their time out of doors, reposing for hours under the cool shade of trees; their conversation being much upon what was before them as clergymen of the Church of England. It has been attempted by religious writers, to whom a considerable measure of divine teaching has been given, to draw a line of demarcation so exactly between the different grades of professors, as to show how far the natural mind may advance in the knowledge of religion, and the exact boundary beyond which it never advances, even under the most favourable circumstances; certain it is, that a natural mind under cultivation may interest itself in the acquirement of the knowledge of the letter of Scripture, and may learn to use it aptly. The natural man may learn to respect its injunctions, to desire the happiness it promises, and to dread the threatenings; but there is a limit beyond which the mere carnal man can never pass.

Such a one may talk of justification and free salvation, but he cannot deliver himself from the idea of some condition attached to the obtainment of this salvation to be performed by himself.

He is ever for doing something before he feels himself safe ; whilst the real child of God performs what in him lies, not in order that he may be saved, but because he *is* saved.

According to this view, we may understand how the long and frequent conversations, which passed between Henry and Marten respecting the profession which they had chosen, acted upon Henry only to make him feel more dependent on the divine guidance, and upon Marten to fill him with zeal to do great things for the cause of God, in order to secure, not a plump benefice, for he was ashamed of what had dropped from him on that subject, but certainly a far nobler reward ; and assuredly, he who thinks it is required of him to do great things, will not find his self-conceit behind-hand in whispering to him that he *can* do them.

Marten did duty twice on the two Sundays of his residence on the banks of the Teme, and Henry was in as much agitation during the first Sunday as the young clergyman himself ; but on the second Sunday he was quite able to appreciate the powers of his friend, in reference to his manner, his voice, and his appearance, all of which were very superior to those of any young man of his standing, with whom he had ever been acquainted.

Marten's countenance was singularly fine and expressive, his voice rich and harmonious, his elocution flowing, and his air and carriage noble and easy. As to the composition of his discourse, Henry felt himself hardly sufficiently calm and impartial to decide upon it, yet he felt that they were not suited for the old women and labouring

men to whom they were delivered. They had been prepared for a more refined congregation, and he could scarcely think of anything whilst his friend was delivering them, but how each sentence would sound in the untaught ears of the auditors then present. It certainly did occur to him that a discourse founded on the Gospel should be fitted for the ears of all interested in the good news, and yet when he recollected the various styles used in the volumes of sacred writ, he was brought back again, and refrained from giving his opinion until he had seen and heard more.

He had agreed to accompany his friend to Steeple Lawford, and to remain with him there a short time; and when a move was necessary, the young men took leave of their sweet solitude, and meeting the coach in the place where Marten had got out, were whirled away with all speed to their place of destination.

But it must not be supposed that the Lady Alicia Devereux had been quiet since last we heard of her. She had not seen Marten, indeed, but she had seen those who had; amongst whom was Dr. Matthews.

The worthy doctor, who had the kindest feeling for Marten, though not blind to his faults, was not slow in appreciating the character of the Lady Alicia; he saw that she was on the look out for a new idol, and was disposed to advance Marten to the pedestal from which her last had fallen, and in order to play a little upon her idolatrous propensity, he failed not to describe the object which she had fixed upon as the man exactly suited to answer her every wish, one whom

he even ventured to say, in hopes that she would not see through the jest, had been so much distinguished at school and college as to be called the Exquisite!

"In what sense?" the lady asked.

"Of course," replied the doctor, "as being so much superior to others of his age—so much above all par;" and he then added commendations of his pupil in so serious and heart-felt a tone, that the lady was highly gratified, and forthwith began to exert herself to make many little preparations for the young man, not only in reference to comfort but elegance. A pink envelope in consequence soon followed him, through Dr. Matthews, to inform him that she had taken lodgings for him at the entrance of the town, in a house the upper windows of which overlooked her own pleasure grounds; that she had seen they were tastefully decorated; that she had arranged the very minutiae of table duties, and actually made a bargain for what he had to pay.

Of course Marten felt himself highly honoured, the obligations losing none of their value by their being conferred by a noble hand; and the paper on which he wrote his answer was gilt-edged, to obtain which he sent a special messenger ten miles.

It was so late when the travellers first obtained the view of the steeple of Marten's curacy, that they resolved to go directly to the inn, and not to make themselves known at the lodgings nor to pay any visits that night, and thus to secure one more quiet evening to themselves.

They had two miles to go after they had seen

the church; and whilst Marten was lost in thought, Henry was looking from his exalted station by the coachman, on many sweet features exhibited by the country through which they were passing.

The sun had set before they had seen Steeple Lawford, and the moon had risen behind the church tower, before the coach wheels rattled through the turnpike. The coachman pointed his whip towards an old house in a walled garden to the right, saying, "That is the parsonage, and the doctor is at home, I see by the lights in the bow-window."

A little farther on was the church, only partially seen amid the trees in the church-yard; and a little beyond the church, the houses began to form a continuous street, which extended a considerable way beyond the inn, where the coachman pulled up, and Marten and Henry went in.

And here, having landed the young divine at Steeple Lawford, we conclude our chapter.

CHAPTER IV,

EAGER as Martin was to see his patroness, yet it was thought right that his first call should be on his rector. There was no impropriety in his young friend walking with him; but it was settled that Henry was to withdraw or keep apart, should Doctor Beecher wish for any private conference with Marten.

The young men waited till near noon, and then set forth. Their appearance in the little street instantly caught the attention of every disengaged person. The shopkeepers ran to their doors, and their wives and daughters pressed close to their windows to get a better view of the new curate, for such assuredly was that tall fine young man who was walking towards the rectory; but who was that handsome youth who was with him? On that point there were many conjectures.

The young men went up to the house through a small shrubbery, which looked dark, and even damp, from an exuberance of evergreens.

Having sent in their cards, on one of which the Rev. John Marten was engraved in fine copperplate, they were requested to walk in.

They were introduced into a large wainscoted parlour, the furniture of which was neither old enough to be accommodated to the present rage

for the revival of ancient models, nor sufficiently new to suit the more airy style lately gone out.

In this wide low parlour of the rectory not an article was out of place; even the only person found in the room, was exactly in a position conformed to what might be expected.

She, for this person was the rector's lady, to whom the young men were introduced, sat in the centre of the room, at a glossy table, on a high-backed chair, with a netting box before her, and a purse little Blenheim at her feet. She was a much older person than might have been expected as the wife of a man of scarcely middle age, was excessively sallow and long-faced, of cold unvaried expression, and highly dressed for a morning appearance. She arose, indeed, when the young men came in, but addressed them so coldly, and invited them to be seated with such hauteur, and even ill-humour, that Marten seemed to be scarcely able to command himself; and, if Henry had not come forward at the critical moment, there is no saying what imprudence he might not have committed. However, Henry found something to say immediately, and even had the readiness to talk on till he actually almost forced Mrs. Beecher not only to answer him, but to condescend to give her own opinion on some of these important matters. Her attentions, however, were all paid to Henry, and none of her condescensions as yet had lighted upon Marten. She had told the servant to tell Doctor Beecher that Mr. Marten was come, and she had said, "The doctor will soon attend you, Mr. Marten;" but this had been all the notice she had taken of him, and all the revenge which he hitherto, through Henry's

address, had expressed, was to assume the most careless attitude he could possibly devise, and to throw himself back in his chair, whilst he fixed his earnest gaze at the laurels beyond the window.

Henry was even almost prepared to hear his friend use some contemptuous expression, so he had nothing for it but to talk on, and to monopolize, if possible, the lady's attention.

Having exhausted other matters, and being at his last gasp for something to say, he fell on a topic which hitherto he had avoided, though scarcely knowing wherefore. He had so far refrained from mentioning the Lady Alicia, but being afraid of a dead silence, he asked if the Fair Holmes cottage was on the same side of the town with the rectory. Mrs. Beecher's face assumed a deepened yellow. She laughed a faint laugh, and then said, "So you have not been there, Mr. Marten, you have not yet been at the Fair Holmes—what will her ladyship think of your paying your first visit to the Doctor?"

"As my rector," answered Marten, assuming a more dignified position, "my first visit is due to Doctor Beecher."

"You know, I presume," said Mrs. Beecher, "that the Lady Alicia is your patroness. The Doctor now is only a secondary person in all parochial matters in this place. Lady Alicia is so very kind she spares him every sort of trouble; of course she cannot herself mount the pulpit, but she hopes, no doubt, to obtain the means of delivering her own opinions even from that hitherto privileged place." A faint laugh and bitter smile of the lips, accompanied with a sort of scintillation of the light grey eyes, followed

this speech, after which she seemed conscious of some sudden relief.

"Madam," exclaimed Marten, "I do not understand you—did you mean to insinuate that Lady Alicia"—then came a hesitation—"that I—that any man"—and another break, for Henry Milner had interposed, and was asking questions about the little Blenheim, suggesting that the creature had symptoms of becoming blind, and inquiring eagerly about its age.

Another moment and Marten had committed himself—the next found him at the window trying to cool himself by the damp vapours which came in from under the trees, and Henry on his knees by the dog, whilst all that was allied to the tenderness of the female sex was drawn forth to action in the heart of the rector's lady.

Such was the state of the persons in the parlour when Doctor Beecher entered, hastening to meet Marten with a manner as warm as that of his wife had been cold.

The rector looked ten or fifteen years younger than Mrs. Beecher. He was evidently at first sight a man of the world, and a man used to polished company. He had adopted his plan of acting in reference to Lady Alicia, as hath been hinted before, and he was prepared to meet the object of her choice as a curate with all apparent cordiality. Much pleased was he also with the young man's appearance, for Marten had come forward to meet him with an aspect quite changed, and brightened up by the unexpected cordiality of the first words uttered by him. When our hero was disposed to try to please, he possessed the powers in no inferior degree, and

few could smile as Marten could do, and no brow was ever brighter than that of Marten in his gentler, happier moods; every tone of his voice also was harmonious.

Well, thought Doctor Beecher, her ladyship has been in luck. I was half afraid of what might have turned up—this looks as if it might do; and then he repeated his welcome, invited him to eat if he had not breakfasted, and inquired if Henry was a brother, hastening to shake him also by the hand, and gaily asking him, if he were come as candidate for the clerk's place?

"And now, Mr. Marten," added he, "one word with you in private—but first, will you and your friend take your dinner with us at four o'clock?"

"Doctor Beecher," said his lady, "how can you expect anything of the kind? Mr. Marten has not yet paid his respects at the Fair Holmes. You may rest assured, that when there, he will not be let off to dine with us, on this his first day. Lady Alicia will not concede her rights to the rector's wife, in this instance, any more than in any other, and there can be no doubt but that there is some committee meeting, or some assembly of exclusives this evening, to which Mr. Marten's presence will give zest;—not that I know how Lady Alicia disposes of her evenings—I am not in her confidence—she should have been the rector's lady herself."

"Well, well, my dear," said the Doctor, "make yourself easy. Lady Alicia is an excellent personage, and I am not aware that she ever interferes with you; but come, Mr. Marten, I shall not detain you five minutes—Mr. Milner will excuse us—I leave the young gentleman to entertain Mrs. Beecher."

It was twenty minutes before the Doctor and Marten returned, and another ten before the young men were clear of the rectory, and on their way to the Fair Holmes, which was situated at the other end of the only street in Steeple Lawford.

Marten had been very well pleased with his rector, but he was very liberal with the third degree of comparison, in speaking of the rector's wife; and so much had he to say on the subject, that it was not exhausted when the two friends made their exit from the town by another turnpike, and came out upon a scene where it was evident that a tasteful hand and liberal mind had been busily engaged.

There was not an ordinary house beyond the toll-gate, but several tasteful cottages, in gardens abounding with elegant shrubs. In the front of one of these a number of neatly-dressed, very young children were at high play, making the air to resound with their merriment. Over the door of this cottage was a tablet, denoting that there was the Infant School, supported by the ladies of the Fair Holmes and its vicinity.

Not a hundred yards from the school-house commenced the fragrant shrubberies of the Fair Holmes itself, and close without the gates, on the side nearest the town, was a new house of the cottage kind, with a rustic porch, standing in a garden redolent with vegetable perfume. The young men instantly fixed upon it as Marten's probable residence for the next two years; and were the more convinced in this conjecture, by the indications they saw, through a large open window, of elegant drapery and other decorations in the interior of a lower room.

Marten's self-consequence had been gradually on the ascendancy since he had closed the gate of the rectory behind him: the quicksilver of his mind was liable to rapid risings and as rapid depressions; though its then degree was still not obviously very far above temperate.

He was taking considerable pains to conceal his feelings, and therefore, when Henry exclaimed, "Well, this is very pleasant;" he answered, with as much nonchalance as he could command, "The whole thing is small; but I grant that the capabilities of the place have been consulted. But we are drawing near; don't speak your sentiments aloud, Milner." It is universally allowed that the tone and manner of the servant is often a good indication of that of the principal; Marten judged that he was more welcome at the Fair Holmes than he had been at the rectory, by the alacrity with which a very small footman showed him and his friend through an elegant vestibule, into a morning-parlour, which opened on a sort of wilderness of fragrant shrubs.

As no one was in the room, the young men had abundance of time to make their conjectures upon the nature of the pursuits of the usual occupants, for it was evidently a private room, a family workshop, and not a chamber of state.

Show a discerning visitor a family sitting-room, a study, or a lady's boudoir, and you let him into more of the character of the occupant than might always be thought convenient or desirable.

An experienced person might have decyphered many amiable and many weak points in the cha-

racter of Lady Alicia, by the tokens exhibited in this her morning room.

It was littered from one end to another with unfinished works, and the materials for carrying them on. Several tables, for there were many in the room, were covered with coarse garments under various processes of completion from the huge roll or web opened out on the floor, with an immense pair of shears laid upon it, to the final touch of adding the tapes and bobbins.

On one table were a number of half-finished knick-knacks, with an inexplicable variety of those manifold articles, which are necessary for the manufacturing of such little handicrafts; near this table, on the carpet, was a mass of odds and ends, and in a corner, close to them, stood a china jar, probably containing some sort of cement.

Another table was occupied with small tracts or pamphlets, the brown paper and coarse needles and threads lying with them, showing that some one had been busy in covering and ticketing them.

But the ornaments of the mantelpiece were what most attracted the attention of the visitors; these consisted of placards in gilt frames and various kinds of models; the latter evidently the work of some ingenious amateur, and representing subjects of interest to benevolent minds.

There were two Lilliputian charity girls in the costume which Marten and Henry had seen worn by the children in the play-ground of the Ladies' Infant School, holding out their small hands, as if uttering the words, which were elegantly written on a small scroll fixed between them, "Kind stranger, give the poor children a penny."

Another model embodied that common design of the kneeling negro, with the usual motto of the piece, "Am I not a man and a brother?" Another represented an Indian hut, which was no other, in fact, than a missionary box, a hole in the roof being provided for dropping in the donations.

The placards all referred to charitable associations and plans as various as extensive, but so multiplied, as to threaten the exhaustion, not only of the purse, but of the feelings of any creature so finite in his resources as an ordinary man.

The most blazing of these placards, and the one set in the most conspicuous place, as being the immediate subject of attention, was a proposal for a bazaar, to be held during the same summer at the Fair Holmes, for the purpose of sending out a missionary for the discovery of the lost Israelitish tribes.

There could be no mistake in attributing all these exhibitions of good works and good intentions to the workings of a benevolent and busy mind; though their extent, and the absence of order in their arrangement, could not fail of betraying to an experienced observer the weak points of the same mind; what these weak points were, however, we have in our narrative to unfold, in failure of which, we must be content to place our delineative powers on a par with those of the artist, who having attempted a lion on a sign-post was fain to write under it, "This is a lion."

The adornments of the mantelpiece were still

occupying Marten and Henry, when a step was heard on the gravel without the window, which opened to the ground, and a lady entered the room.

Marten turned hastily, prepared his lowest bow, and stepped to meet her, rather starting back, however, as she came forward, so little did she resemble the belle ideale of his patroness. The lady was anything but elegant in form or aristocratic in face; brown, elderly, and plain, but not in the least troubled with *mauvaise honte*. "Mr. Marten," she said, "and a friend, Mr. Milner, did you say? Gentlemen, you are both welcome; we heard of your arrival last night; nothing can be done in secret at Steeple Lawford. We have been expecting you for the last hour; Lady Alicia was in despair, but she had a meeting—"

"It is not Lady Alicia, then,—" began Marten, but was not permitted to finish his sentence.

"And so you took me for her ladyship, did you, sir?" said the lady; "I thought so; you have never seen her, so I do not feel myself obliged for the compliment. But, as I said, she was in despair to be obliged to go out, but business must be attended to; and this bazaar, now it is advertised, must be carried through. My name, Mr. Marten, is Liptrot—Mrs. Mary Liptrot, at your service; the friend of dear Lady Alicia, the humble assistant in her numerous good works. O Mr. Marten! you can have no idea of half the excellencies of Lady Alicia; of her activity, her benevolence, her deep piety; much I fear that she will destroy herself, and ruin

her constitution; her nerves are already cruelly shattered, but we look to you—you will aid, uphold, support this first of women. Your predecessor—he was the most touchy, jealous, distressing person; but we have got rid of him. If her ladyship did but give him a hint respecting a discourse, we were sure that the next would be a tirade against the very opinions which she had endeavoured to insinuate.

“I used to tell her ladyship,” added the humble friend, with a laugh, “that if she would but declaim stoutly before Mr. Smith, against any favourite doctrine, it would certainly be recommended from the pulpit the next Sunday. But I hear her ladyship’s voice—” and at the same moment the door opened, and the lady entered, Marten acknowledging at the first glance that he had not raised his expectations of her appearance beyond the truth.

She was an elegant woman, her person being of that kind which dress does not affect. She appeared to be more than fifty, yet had all the life and elasticity of thirty; and, although her judgment was by no means the strongest part of her mind, she never descended into lively familiarity of manner; the bitterest malice could never fasten upon her any act tending to a betrayal of any dishonourable feelings; though it might, if her dignity and delicacy had not been irreproachable, have done so, on the sudden and violent likings to which she was liable.

She was prepared to make Marten an object of one of these caprices; nor was it likely that his appearance should offer any check to its development. She was delighted at once with his

smile; his bow was exactly the thing, it spoke the gentleman; his voice promised very much; she doubted not that he would be all she could wish; she was perfectly satisfied with him before he had spoken six sentences. She was also inclined to extend her benevolence to Henry Milner; "And who is this?" she said, turning to him with a smile; "your friend, Mr. Marten; most welcome he is. But now have you seen your lodgings? You have paid your first visit to the rector, I presume; very good. Will you and your friend dine with me? though perhaps not the first day. Miss Liptrot and I must make a hurried repast; we have a multitude of arrangements to make after our meal; we have a meeting to-night. Our friends are coming to glue, and paste, and paint, and sew for this bazaar. We shall be sadly behindhand, and you must come, Mr. Marten; you can do something, I am sure; you must be here precisely at six, not a moment later."

"I have no talent, I fear," replied Marten, "in the manufacturing or handicraft way, but my friend here is a perfect adept."

"Charming, charming!" said Lady Alicia, "delightful! what will you do? what can you do? my dear young gentleman, you shall have hammer, and saw, and chisel, and a glue-pot, and all those sorts of things, and Mr. Marten shall read to us; I have a delightful little new tract; but first we must domicile you. Come, Miss Liptrot." And she led the way out of the house, through the window, and plunging into the thickets of the shrubbery, opened a little gate, by which they all entered the garden of the

very house which Marten had fixed upon for his future abode.

Nothing could be more agreeable, convenient, better arranged, and even elegant, than the lodgings prepared for the young curate; even a nook for a friend had been thought of, and the master and mistress of the house were ready to pay every attention.

"Can anything be more comfortable," cried Marten, when left with Henry, "when my books arrive to fill those empty shelves? What more can I want?—but is not Lady Alicia a most charming woman? She quite surpasses my expectations."

"She is not quite the same as I had expected," replied Henry, "but she is excessively kind, and if I could do anything for her bazaar, I should so rejoice."

I know not whether we should like either Marten or Henry better had they detected any flaws, or suspected any weakness, in the character of a lady who was heaping kindnesses upon them in the most gracious manner. The clear-sightedness which comes with experience of life is no blessing, unless it comes accompanied by that charity from on high which beareth all things and hopeth all things, through the assurance of the divine mercy, as promised by the Father in the Son.

The little dinner was served up with great neatness to Marten and Henry; after which they took an exploring walk in the most retired parts of their neighbourhood, and were prepared before six o'clock, to keep their appointment with Lady Alicia.

It was in an elegant apartment on the ground

floor, in front of the house, with an elegant tea and coffee apparatus arranged on a large table, that Lady Alicia, encircled by a number of ladies, awaited the arrival of the two young gentlemen.

The company consisted of the most select, and for the greater part, most amiable and kindly disposed of the elderly spinster department of the population of Steeple Lawford. There were few of the Mrs. Bridgets and Mrs. Aletheas in the neighbourhood who had not been attracted within the influence of the Fair Holmes, and if some of these had felt the influence more decidedly on account of the high-sounding name of the attracting lady, we must set the weakness down to the account of poor human nature.

Added to this amiable spinster sisterhood, were two or three widows, and several married ladies; there were some young misses also, who seemed to have lost all the light-heartedness of youth.

These last, however, did not converse with the company in general, all their communications being carried on by whispers among themselves.

Next to Lady Alicia, the leading character in the society was, undoubtedly, one of the widows. This lady was conscious of a large jointure, and the very best house in the town;—and it had been with some heart-burnings that she found herself obliged to give place to Lady Alicia and to seem to follow in her train, in all her popular and benevolent plans; but unless she had thus accommodated herself, she would necessarily have been excluded from all the agitations which that lady excited, and been condemned for all change of scene in her near neighbourhood to the monotony of Mrs. Beecher's parlour.

This lady felt herself but ill fitted for the second place, in any society. She had therefore taken up and sustained a peculiar place for herself, suited to her own natural character, and had succeeded, by a sort of off-hand freedom, to overpower the more refined and delicate patroness on a thousand occasions.

This lady's name was Lambert; and when Marten and his friend passed the open window, her voice was heard above all else, and she was saying, "I make a point, Miss Liptrot, of judging for myself, and if he is the very delightful person you say, why then——"

They heard no more, for they hastened on, but the young curate's heightened glow apprized his friend that he had heard enough, and more than enough.

When they were introduced, Lady Alicia advanced to meet them, and taking Marten and Henry by the hand, presented them to the ladies in general, and then invited them to take chairs at the head of the table, on each side of herself, entering immediately into easy conversation with them on indifferent matters.

Every eye at the table was occupied, either covertly or otherwise, in the contemplation of the stranger youths; each lady comparing what she saw of them, with what she had heard.

Marten was so fully aware of the interest he was exciting, that he could hardly command his attention to answer the commonest question; and when a very audible whisper from Mrs. Lambert, at the other end of the table, of which he knew himself to be the subject, reached his ear, he was wholly indebted to Henry for covering his confusion.

Henry had asked Lady Alicia if she had caused the tools to be sought for, and what she wanted him to do, and was suggesting what devices might be executed to give variety to the sale, and was soon so thoroughly engaged with his object, that if every eye in the company had been fixed on him, he would not have felt a single glance.

Lady Alicia, at this time, had two prime objects—the first, the new curate; the second, the bazaar—and these two she resolved to make to bear upon each other. If the new curate could not make knick-knacks, if he could neither glue nor hammer, he could make speeches; and his presence, his very presence would give life to the scene. He must sit, or stand, or walk by her, in the room, wherever she might be on this great day. He was just the man to do credit to her choice; and his friend was the most delightful, simply elegant youth, ever seen.

Whilst Henry and Lady Alicia were taking an excursion on the hobby which had always pleased the younger, and which just then exactly suited the whim of the elder, the whisperings at the lower end of the table were gradually rising to the tones of the natural voices of the speakers.

“I confess, Miss Liptrot,” said Mrs. Lambert, who was the first who spoke out, “that I thought you were now, as often before, palming some green goose or owl upon me, under the name of a Phoenix, but this time I confess myself satisfied.”

“Mrs. Lambert enjoys the privilege of speaking her mind without reserve,” said a prim elderly lady, from behind the tea-urn.

“A privilege of widows in general,” returned

Mrs. Lambert. "We are the only portion of the female sex who do not disguise our thoughts, or who dare to speak openly when we approve, or even when we disapprove," she added, with a significant glance across the table towards an elderly lady in a widow's cap, whose physiognomy was of portentous length and immobility.

As Mrs. Lambert occupied the position of the wit of the society, having prevailed on many of its members to accept her freedom of speech in lieu of that very rare gift of nature, Mrs. Doleman, without effort, had sank into the seat of the Prophetess, and had been elected the Cassandra of the Fair Holmes, from the influence of her very superior powers of foreseeing evil, of pursuing its prognostics through every change of circumstances, and finding it at the bottom of those which to others seemed most promising of good.

The pertinacity with which she declared, and held to her prognostics, was honoured in the society with the title of sincerity, which may account for Mrs. Lambert's reference to her, when speaking of the privilege of widows to declare their minds.

Poor human nature has many untoward points belonging to it, and in none is it more unfortunate than in its aptitude to spurious virtues, by which an individual not only deceives others, but often plays the hypocrite with himself.

What more current form can natural sourness of temper assume, than that of pretended anxiety for the religious good of society; and how can ill-temper spend itself more creditably than by harshly condemning its neighbours?

Poor Mrs. Doleman was naturally a most sour and captious person, but as it suited her to keep

her position at the Fair Holmes, she never allowed her temper to suggest any language but what might pass there. She was not pleased with Mrs. Lambert's significant look, and reference to herself, and felt herself called upon to speak, and to apologize for her sincerity.

"I understand you, Mrs. Lambert," she said; "I am plain spoken, I know it; I consider it to be my duty to utter the truth whenever the truth can avail. Differing from all the ladies present," she added, "I have not yet formed a high opinion of the young gentleman to whom we are introduced this day. I cannot judge from his outward appearance, what tone of mind he may possess; all I know is, that I have faint hope of any desirable results to any in this place, even from the exertions of the highest abilities."

She was proceeding to expatiate on the state of the country at large, and of the parish of Steeple Lawford particularly, and would, no doubt, have gone through the whole list of human grievances, past, present, and to come, with which she was wont to treat her auditors, when Mrs. Lambert effected a diversion in favour of the company, by raising her voice and addressing Marten.

"We are speaking and thinking of you, young gentleman," she said. "With one exception, we all like your appearance, we will not say how much! Ladies must not even seem to flatter."

Martin bowed: what could he say?

"If," added Mrs. Lambert, "you obtain as much favour in our eyes in the pulpit, as in this private room, you will find us all prepared to adopt you as our guide, our friend, our counselor. Be but worthy, and we concede our hearts

to you;" and looking round, she seemed to demand a confirmation of her words from all the company present.

Few of the ladies, old or young, were disposed to go the lengths which Mrs. Lambert required, but a general buz or hum ensued, which suddenly drew the attention of Lady Alicia.

She felt that perhaps she had been too much absorbed by one object; and, like a graceful and skilful driver, taking the reins of the society in her own hands, her elegant influence was immediately felt, and though the breath of flattery still fanned the person of Marten, it came not with the violent gusts with which it had blown upon him but a little while before; though may-be, from its very gentleness, its effect was only the more enervating.

The company sate at the table for half an hour more; after which, Lady Alicia, seeing that every guest was satisfied with the refreshments provided, arose, and placing one hand within the arm of Marten, and the other on that of Henry, she moved with them to the work-room, being followed by her whole train.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN first the mixed multitude of Lady Alicia's disciples and guests were turned into the work-room, the scene was one of general confusion, and of as much talking and as little answering as if all the echoes in the kingdom had met to hold a court. Mrs. Lambert made her way up to Marten, and was improving her acquaintance with him by rapid questions, intended, had he had time to answer, to elicit some of his modes of thinking, and his purposes of acting in his new character; telling him, that under the patronage of Lady Alicia, he had little to apprehend from the interference of Dr. Beecher.

The young misses gathered together in groups, no longer speaking in whispers, but uttering shrill exclamations of delight at all and everything they saw in the way of the finished or unfinished knick-knacks which lay about. Lady Alicia was wholly occupied for a little while by first setting Henry to work in one corner with his tools about him, and afterwards by allotting the work of the different persons in the company, according to her knowledge of their various powers, and assigning the drudgery of stuffing pincushions with bran and sewing them to those

who were incapable of any more delicate work. Miss Liptrot followed on the train of her patroness to supply all necessary materials. And, although after a little while, every one was seated and seemed busy, the voices of the fair company were in as active exercise as ever; each person calling in a high key for something which was required by them for the carrying on of their several purposes.

Insensibly, however, these universal calls being satisfied, and Lady Alicia herself seated with a pair of needles, as long as her arm, set in motion to complete a lambs'-wool comforter, knitting being the department which she had chosen in the fitting out of the bazaar, something like silence ensued, at least few spoke at once, and Marten being appointed to sit by his patroness, the question arose, which of a collection of new tracts, which were lying before the lady at the largest table, should be chosen to be read aloud for the improvement of the evening.

The principal elderly ladies were seated round this table, and when Lady Alicia mentioned the tracts, and extended her hand to select one, Mrs. Lambert did the same, and another, and another imitated her.

Before Lady Alicia could speak, Mrs. Lambert threw away the tract which she had taken up, saying, "That will never do; you will select one which treats on practical subjects, no doubt, Lady Alicia; this is quite the reverse, if we may judge from the title. It is in the Smith style, to all appearance; good, dull Mr. Smith! ever prosing on some doctrinal point, and trying, at least, to make his congregation think that good works avail nothing to the saving of souls."

"Pardon me, Mrs. Lambert," said Mrs. Doleman, "you do not represent Mr. Smith as he was; he was not a doctrinal man, but one who cared as little for the spiritual good of his people as—one, not far from hence, who shall be nameless. It might happen that he sometimes hit upon doctrinal subjects; for I was told by Mrs. Dawson, where he lodged, that he copied his discourses from printed volumes of sermons, tacking a new text at one end, and a finishing of his own at the other, with very little attention to what might be in the centre; never heeding whether his last Sunday's discourse contradicted the present, or whether he denied this week what he had averred the last."

"Well," said Mrs. Lambert, "I did not happen to hear him often, and I suppose that when I did hear him, he had stumbled on some faith-without-works performance, but, to speak generally, I do think that practical discourses are always the most profitable, especially for young people."

"You probably heard Mr. Smith immediately after he had had a hint from Lady Alicia, Mrs. Lambert," remarked Miss Liptrot; "he invariably became abstruse and metaphysical on such occasions."

Whilst this little conversation was going on, Lady Alicia had selected a tract, entitled "Consolations at the Dying Hour," and had placed it in Marten's hand; thereby hinting that her judgment must be considered as paramount at the Fair Holmes; and the next minute the fine-toned voice of the young curate was giving the author's sentences every possible advantage of which they were capable, whilst a profound silence prevailed through the room.

From nearly the first clause, Marten suspected that he should find nothing but the veriest common places in this little work, and Henry made up his mind for the very lowest set of doctrines which ever filled the pages of anything honoured by the title of a christian lecture. The highest and purest principles may be and often are found in penny publications for the humblest reader, arranged in language of the simplest description; but the language of this small publication was anything but simple, for had it been so, the poverty and staleness of the sentiments must have been conspicuous, even to the most ordinary reader.

The work commenced with manifold flowery sentiments of the most hackneyed description on the subject of death, each sentiment being illustrated by a simile, each simile having the advantage of general acceptance ever since the first use of letters in composition.

Amongst these, were brought forward comparisons between the extinction of man's life and the setting of the sun, the fading of flowers, the fall of the leaves, the cold of winter, the drying of brooks, and the cessation of the motion of a wheel. The sentiments were invariably exhibited in three-fold sentences, a second three-fold sentence being often added to the first by way of contrast, according to that figure of composition called antithesis, as an example of which we quote one passage of our small treatise.

"Behold the flower of the field, and profit by the lesson which is conveyed in its ephemeral and pathetic history.

"Observe the brightness of its colours—the richness of its variegated hues,—the rainbow-like

tints of its petals. Remark the elegance of its form, the uprightness of its stem, and the graceful luxuriance of its foliage. Refresh your senses with the perfume which it sheds in the fresh morning air; see again its loveliness in the full noon of day; then return at night, and enter the field where the mower with his murderous scythe has cut down your flower. Mark how its colours are already faded, how they are paled; and behold how they are changed by the already commencing operations of decay. Note the contraction of that elegant form, the rolling together and shrivelling of those leaves, the laxity of that broken stem. Seek not again to inhale the scent from that cup—the fragrance which breathed of life at the dawn is past—the sickly odour now poured forth is that of dissolution.”

Most disagreeably was Marten affected by these perpetual triads, for not expecting that they were to run through the whole composition, he had commenced by endeavouring to give the proper emphasis, by raising his voice in the former parts of each triplex figure of the composition, and depressing it in the latter. But soon he was aware that his voice, in consequence of this effort, was sounding like that of a person repeating some doggrel ballad, where each stanza, supposed to be uttered by two persons alternately, required to be spoken small or gruff, to suit the characters. He thought of the discussion between Death and the Lady, as his nurse used to repeat it to him, and he, who was one of the most sensitive of sensitive young gentlemen on the subject of the ridiculous, suddenly felt that he was making himself absurd. But what was he to do? The triplets extended, he found by a hasty glance,

to the very end of the chapter, and he knew no more how he was to get over them, than a man in a boat can get to land when out at sea, without being rocked by the waves.

There was nothing for it but to go on, and to go on much as he had begun; but as he advanced he forgot his first embarrassment in a much worse.

Consolations for the Dying Hour was the title of the tract; and when the similes had been got through with, then came the author's statements of these consolations.

Henry had not expected anything very luminous from the commencement of the lecture. He did not expect, indeed, to hear the conqueror of death fully declared; but neither he nor Marten were quite prepared to be told that a good conscience, with the remembrance of many good works, and of many and sincere efforts to benefit the souls of fellow creatures, was that only which could smooth the death-bed, and enable the dying individual to meet his Saviour without fear; the Saviour himself being, according to this statement, merely a judge, though, as the author seemed to infer, one who was willing to forgive where it could possibly be done consistently with divine justice.

Whilst Henry was thinking what would be said when the lecture was finished, it came to an end; and the reader's voice had hardly ceased, when there was a general burst of applause. The reader, the writer, and the entertainer of the company all came in for their share of encomiums; and several minutes passed before these general applauses, gave way for the hearing of more distinct ones. Then what individuals said could be heard, and Henry looked anxiously at

Marten, in the hope that he would have courage to give a sincere opinion of the one grievous defect of the composition just read. Did Marten see his earnest look? He could not tell; but his friend did not seem forward to speak.

"I am glad," said Lady Alicia, when she could be heard, "that you like my selection. Miss Liptrot, you will remember that we order some dozens of this tract for circulation. Mr. Marten, we all thank you for the justice you have done to the author;" and she paid him a high though delicate compliment on the possession of a singularly fine voice.

Marten blushed and bowed, and at the same moment his eye caught that of his friend; but no leisure was given him to speak, had he been ever so disposed to be sincere, for Lady Alicia's compliment to his voice had again opened many mouths.

Mrs. Lambert said, "Music—harmony itself, Mr. Marten;" and Mistress Alethea remarked, that it was a talent given for the invitation of souls to their own salvation; the right use of which would be the sweetest consolation for the dying hour;—and Mrs. Doleman added, "One, however, which would severely embitter that hour if wrapped up in a napkin."

But these were not the only compliments which continued to be poured into Marten's ear; others came upon him in the more dangerous form of whisperings and short sentences, inferring hopes of the great things which he was to effect in the little world of Steeple Lawford, whilst anecdotes were told of vast successes of this kind which had been worked, and still were working, in different parts of the world.

As this sort of thing went on, now being taken up by Lady Alicia, Marten was becoming less and less able to speak on the subject of the tract which he had been reading with sincerity, or to beg, as he ought to have done, that copies of it should not be dispersed until it had been farther considered.

In his situation, his youth being considered, he did well to avoid any heat or violence of speech; but the silence with which he acquiesced in what he knew to be wrong, was certainly more condemnable, and eventually proved more detrimental to his interests at the Fair Holmes, than any display within the bounds of moderation, done in a gentlemanly way, which he could have made of his real sentiments. It was not for an opinion respecting unimportant matters on the arrangements of any externals—on affairs of forms and ceremonies—or of mere whims and caprices and arrangements in the visible church, that he was called upon to speak, but on the vital point of Christianity—the *hope of the sinner*.

Henry Milner waited, however, in vain for such declaration from Marten. He was in a remote corner of the room—had he been near the centre table, he certainly would have ventured a remark, but he doubted till it was too late, and other subjects were brought forward, the bazaar and its concerns and arrangements supplying the leading topic.

Lady Alicia's mind was full of this object; after Marten himself, it was her present reigning pursuit; and to bring the young curate and the other together with advantage to both, and with the most credit to herself, was a point on which her mind was continually exercising itself.

She had caused Miss Liptrot to bring pen, ink, and paper. "We must," she said, "lose no more time, now Mr. Marten is come, for arranging the order of the affair. I wish my dining-room were larger. I fear when the tables are arranged, it will be a perfect squeeze, and our pretty things will show to no advantage. I have been thinking of tents in the shrubbery—there we shall have full space and room for garlands and drapery and arches of evergreens,—and there can be a sort of dais for Mr. Marten to address the company from. What say you, ladies—what are your opinions? I would do nothing on any account but what is generally approved."

Which last sentence being duly interpreted, might be understood to signify, I have made up my mind on the subject, and expect no opposition. A little, however, there was. Some slight objection was made to the publicity of a sale out of doors. The objection was borne down by a large majority, led by Lady Alicia; for how was money to be obtained, it was pleaded, if the sale were not open to the public? It was one of the strongest arguments in favour of an out-of-door concern, that persons would enter there, who might not like to intrude within the doors of a private house.

Something was said of the address which was to precede the opening of the sale; and Marten, who really shrunk from such a display of himself,—as many an older clergyman would do out of the pulpit,—begged that he might not be brought forward on the occasion, hinting that Dr. Beecher, as his superior, was the proper person. There were faint laughs heard about the room,

in consequence of this proposal, and Lady Alicia said quietly, "Excuse us, Mr. Marten, if we prefer you;" and Mrs. Lambert added, without reserve, "Have you yet to learn, my dear sir, that though Dr. Beecher is our very best friend, and never interferes with any of Lady Alicia's laudable plans, yet so little, so very little does he enter into them, that it is probable, if he should attend our bazaar, and make purchases to a large amount, which he is not unlikely to do, he will not even make himself acquainted with the object for which the articles are sold." "Though he will commend it to all his acquaintance as a most excellent work," added Miss Liptrot, laughing. "We speak from what has happened before, Mr. Marten. He is a good-natured soul."

"Which cannot be said of his better half," remarked Mrs. Doleman; and as many of the ladies round the table had, it seems, been exposed to the cold airs of the rector's wife, the conversation was sinking rapidly into personal abuse, when Lady Alicia interfered with her more refined and delicate ideas of what ought to be talked of at a meeting of females."

Lady Alicia never suffered any thing like gossip, excepting when that gossip bore any reference to the religious character. Had it been asserted of Mrs. Beecher, that she was wholly without pious feelings, and that there was and could be little hope for her everlasting happiness, she would have suffered the remark to pass uncensored, but when the comments of the company touched on private and petty matters of gossip, she immediately drew the attention back again to the arrangements for the bazaar. She then

went over the list of stall-keepers, and busied herself in examining the works. Thus closed the evening, and after a repast of fruits and wine and lemonade, Henry and Martin retired, Lady Alicia having requested to see them again the following morning.

It was not till the two young men sat at breakfast the next day, that anything was said by them about the evening before.

Marten began the subject by saying, "Well, Milner, what did you think of last night?—you are very quiet about it."

"I always am quiet," replied Henry, "when I don't know quite what to say."

Marten bristled.—"Not know what to say!" he repeated. "Why, surely, you must think Lady Alicia a charming woman?"

"Very, very kind," replied Henry.

"Kind," said Marten; "is that all you can find to say?—You might say as much of our landlady here."

"What makes me less warm in my praises than I should be, Marten," returned Henry, "is, that though she does and professes so much, I am much afraid that she does not know what true religion is."

"True or pure religion," replied Marten, "and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world,"—James i, 27; "and by whom is this description more exemplified than by Lady Alicia?"

"If," said Henry, "Lady Alicia, or any mere human being, could act up to this description of true religion, his true religion would be sufficient for him, and he might live by his works; but no

man is justified by works—no man is unspotted from the world—and therefore, Marten, no person can be said to have right views, or any real knowledge of himself, whose dependence is in any degree on his own works, or who could approve such a tract as was read last evening.”

Marten confessed that it was a vile, ill-written, common-place concern.

Henry said it was worse than common-place, and candidly stated how eagerly he had waited to hear his friend give his opinion of it.

Marten insisted that it would have been premature for him at that time to have been opening out a controversy.

Henry asserted that if he had expressed his opinions at once, it would perhaps have saved him much future difficulty.

Marten pleaded that there is a time for all things, and that yesterday evening was not the time for any bold declaration.

Henry maintained his opinion that it was the time and the best time for his friend to assert his determination of speaking out the truth on all occasions.

Marten had his answers derived from the doctrines of expediency, which he was trying to make himself believe to be fully compatible with christian sincerity, to bring forward against the adversary: and it is more than probable that the argument would have assumed some heat, had not the feelings of deep and strong affection—affection of ancient date in their young lives—suddenly thrown its gentle influence over them both. They each, with one accord, dropped the subject—and the momentary glance which passed between them over the table, set all things

as it regarded their mutual affection, in perfect order; leaving Marten under the conviction that his friend was more right than he was, though, perchance, not so fit to deal with the ladies of the Fair Holmes, and Henry convinced that he had been too hot and impatient.

Scarcely had they concluded their breakfast, when a summons arrived from the Lady Alicia.

They were received in the work-room. Henry was set at once to his carpenter's tools, whilst the lady, throwing a shawl over her head, took Marten out for a private conference in the shrubbery.

Of course, Henry could know nothing of the subjects of this conference, till he returned with his friend to the lodgings; but he then discovered that they had been manifold.

Marten was in a state of high excitement, for Lady Alicia had expressed her high approbation of him—even beyond what she had any right to do, from what she had yet seen of him.

It was not likely, however, that the young man should quarrel with her for thinking too well of him, or that he should doubt the assertion, that she was already enabled to augur all that was desirable in him, from the expression of his countenance. Neither could he be displeased at the sudden confidence which she seemed disposed to place in him. As she said,—though Miss Liptrot was an excellent creature, she was not the person to open her heart to on her spiritual concerns. Marten, she was assured, would understand her: Liptrot, from warmth of affection, was too flattering. She would not allow that her friend had any faults, and she had many, many weaknesses—many errors. She did not say what

they were, she only begged Mr. Marten to believe that they existed.

She spoke of Doctor Beecher, and assured Marten that he would not interfere with any regulation he proposed for the good of the parish: and when Marten asked her what could be done, she mentioned, the suppression of beer-houses, the prohibition of wakes, and any sort of Sunday amusement, even as far as Sunday evening walks for the working classes—which last offences might be advantageously reprov'd from the pulpit, an entire reformation in the singing gallery, and the establishment of a Sunday-school, with a lecture at six o'clock the whole year round, for the benefit especially of female servants who may have been engaged during the early part of the Sunday. These were all objects which she pressed on the attention of the young curate—concluding with a variety of more private duties and attentions; the whole together being suddenly thrown into the young man's mind, in the shape of new ideas, forming therein a sort of elementary intellectual confusion, not unlike the first movements of the atoms of which chaos is poetically described to be composed.

She concluded by asking the young man to dine with her, and to bring his friend. Marten declined the invitation for himself, on the plea of having preparations to make for the Sunday; she accepted the plea, but insisted on Henry's company. His assistance was what she required particularly, and he was so ingenious, so interesting, such a perfect gentleman, so fresh and simple, that his society was refreshing as the flowers of spring; and she would hear no other but that Marten should join her party at supper.

In consequence of these arrangements, Marten was left to study his sermon for the ensuing Sunday during the remainder of the day; and Lady Alicia was at leisure to bestow her attention on Henry and his handicrafts—never failing to extol any new idea which he struck out, or any little device which he succeeded in accomplishing, in terms as vivid as if he had actually executed a flying machine; Mistress Mary Liptrot, in the mean time, acting the part of Echo very successfully, and Henry secretly wishing that the kind ladies would leave him to himself.

CHAPTER VI.

As this day passed, much in the same way passed the remaining days of the week, with this difference only, that by the favour of St. Swithin, there was a perpetual pouring of rain, which, whilst it kept off all visitors, obliged Lady Alicia to hold her morning conferences with Marten under cover.

Breakfast was the only meal which Henry took with his friend alone during the remainder of this week. He observed that at these times Marten avoided all mention of his sermon; and Henry thought that it might not become him, as a younger, to speak upon it, unless his elder led to the subject. Henry was not past the age, or rather simple state of mind, in which he could not be excessively interested in the little ingenious works he was doing for Lady Alicia, though he wished that she would not be constantly talking to him when he was at work, and that Miss Liptrot would not connect his glue-pot and chips with sacred subjects; as if a human being could merit eternal happiness by making toys, even though such toys were wrought for charitable purposes.

Notwithstanding these little disagreeables, he certainly did enjoy himself in his corner of the

work-room, and succeeded in preparing several little models and devices. for the ladies of the bazaar committee and their assistants to finish and adorn. He had now and then some anxiety about this same sermon, by which Marten was to commence his career as a preacher at Steeple Lawford, and did not quite like his friend's manner, when once he reminded him of their conversation with Lord H—— on the evening after he had been in the Howard grounds.

There was a dilation in Marten's nostrils, and a sort of movement about the upper lip, when this conversation was referred to, by which Henry was informed that he must back out from that ground, unless he were willing to incur all consequences.

In the mean time very little was spoken of at the tea-tables in Steeple Lawford, but the new curate ; and those who had seen him, whilst they had much more to say than those who had not, had much less than those who had had the benefit of hearing him.

The Sunday morning came smiling in with an unveiled jewel on her serene brow—in plainer language, it was a fine morning, and the sun shone dazzlingly forth throughout all visible space.

As Marten and Henry issued from their gate, they were joined by Lady Alicia and Miss Lip-trot.

The lady immediately accommodated herself with Marten's arm, and Henry found himself obliged to offer his to her companion, by which service he obtained the privilege of her volubility through the whole length of the way.

He was anxious, however, about his friend, and heard little of what she said, though he was aware of the continuation of the sound of her

voice in a sort of under confidential key during the whole progress. Her addresses to himself all ran in the laudatory style ; the objects of these praises being sometimes Lady Alicia, and sometimes Marten, and sometimes both at once—suffering only occasional interruptions when a neighbour passed by or crossed their way.

As they advanced towards the centre of the town, the whole place seemed to be alive, and pressing on towards the church.

“We shall have a prodigious congregation,” said Miss Liptrot; “how will the doctor like to see the pews he has been emptying ever since he has been at Steeple Lawford, crowded to overflowing as they will be to-day?—how gratifying this sight must be to your friend!”

“Not so, Miss Liptrot,” answered Henry, “not exactly so—he can only set down this overflowing towards the church to curiosity to-day—he cannot derive any compliment to himself from this circumstance, at least this morning, before he has been heard.”

“And if the *empressement* is such before he has been heard, what will it be,” replied Miss Liptrot, with her usual sagacity and powers of ratiocination, “when he has been heard, Mr. Milner?” And then and there being arrived at the church door, the worthy lady was obliged to be silent.

The church at Steeple Lawford is a large and handsome and ancient edifice. It was most marvellously dusty, and most superlatively ill-pewed, the sittings being apportioned to the households which were a century or more before, and, in consequence, many of the best modern houses being without pews; but hitherto there had never been want of room in the church, though

the Rector's and the Fair Holmes' pew occupied great part of the chancel.

Mrs. Beecher always sate in solitary grandeur on her side; for had she allowed a neighbour or neighbours to sit with her, how could it have been known that the pew was all her own, in right of being the Rector's wife; but Lady Alicia's pew was always filled—as on this day, with one exception, was every pew in the church.

Hitherto there was no Sunday-school at Steeple Lawford, neither any foundation school; the singing, therefore, was left to adults, and was entirely carried on, with the assistance of the organ, by some of the idlest and least worthy of the young people of the place. Doctor Beecher never thought it worth his while to enter into a controversy with his musicians—a controversy, by-the-by, in which many a bold rector has met with a signal overthrow.

Marten did not enter the church by any of the public doors, but passed by a side door to the vestry, where he met his Rector, and between them it was settled what each was to do.

“This is your day, Mr. Marten,” said Doctor Beecher, good-humouredly; “I shall therefore give you the precedence. You preach, you know. I will take the prayers. You will take your station on the left side of the communion-table.”

Oh! for that unconsciousness of self, that absence of the sense of an interest in the creature distinct from that of the Creator—that oneness with the divine mind, in which all creature instincts in the fulness of beatitude shall be swallowed up in entire conformity with the divine nature—that ineffable oneness of object and desire with which God the Spirit has endowed some of

the chosen of the Lord, whilst yet in the flesh, though as yet in a limited degree! Oh! how infinitely precious would the endowment of such a spirit have been at that period to the young minister, when he first took his place, in the consciousness that all the eyes of the congregation were upon him, and with the further consciousness that his person would endure the scrutiny.

No man would be willing that feelings of this kind should be detected by his fellow-creatures, and as Marten had much self-command and presence of mind, so well did he stand the beams of the thousand eyes fixed upon him, for the church overflowed with the concourse, that even his friend Henry could only guess his feelings. He knew too well that Marten was sensitively alive to the impression he made upon his fellow-creatures, to be quite deceived by the solemn stillness of his attitude and the stone-like immobility of his countenance.

It was not until the communion service that Marten's singularly fine voice burst upon the ears of the congregation. Henry was in Lady Alicia's pew; it was absolutely crowded with the ladies who had met the night before: he saw glances of delight passing from one to another, and conveying congratulations to the patroness on the happiness of her choice.

At length the hero of the day mounted the pulpit; and, to use a familiar phrase, a pin might have been heard dropping on the pavement. Now was it Henry's turn to try to hide his feelings, and he could only succeed by fixing his eyes on the flooring of the pew: he felt like one who waited the casting of a lot to determine some

matter of vast importance to his future happiness in life.

Had he suffered any anxiety as to the three points so necessary in setting off a discourse, he would have been relieved from it in the space of a few minutes.

The management of the voice, the style and order of the composition, and the air and countenance of the preacher, were all decidedly superior,—there could not be a difference of opinion with educated people on these points.

The slight reference the young minister made to his being come amongst the people present as a stranger, and young in the ministry, and yet by the divine grace he hoped most anxious to do right, was eloquent, appropriate, and affectionate.

Henry was pleased with it, thought it like his friend in his best mood, and was glad also that the subject was dismissed in a very words. So far all was well, but as the discourse advanced Henry was not satisfied; he felt that it fell short of the measure given by Lord H— of the object of innumerable conversations held between Marten and his dear uncle, and since his death between the same and himself.

To describe in a few words where it failed in Henry's mind;—the tendency of the discourse was rather to lead the hearer up to Christ instead of showing him how Christ had descended to himself; and in consequence, instead of displaying or endeavouring to display the work of the Redeemer and the efficacy of such work, or, in other words, declaring the good news, as was done to the shepherds at Bethlehem, it went out of the way to point out what man must do to take hold of

this great salvation, thus attaching a sort of conditionality to what the scripture ever asserts to be free, and if not free, unattainable.

Henry was certainly disappointed, and found himself so unfit, when the service was over, to listen again to the outpourings of Miss Liptrot, who he was persuaded, meditated the possession of his arm in their homeward walk, that he slipped out the moment the congregation rose from their knees; and having reached the churchyard by a side-door, and the fields behind that by a turnstile, he soon found himself in a path amid a group of country people, going home to their cottages. They were talking of the new preacher—they called him a fine man, and one who spoke his words bravely, and laid down the gospel much to the point, but did not seem exactly to know what the gospel was.

Whilst Henry was making his way through by-paths to the lodgings, Marten was gathering many laurels in every step of his way home.

Doctor Beecher in the vestry was the first who gave him a sprig—"Very well done, Mr. Marten," he said; "very good, you have a fine voice, and ease of delivery, no rant—you don't forget the gentleman when you get into the pulpit. Well, now I have heard you, I shall leave you to it for some time. I did not like to say anything about my plans till I had seen you duly located. You are in high favour now, and whilst you continue so to be, I may be well spared," he added, with a smile. "So after this bazaar business is over, I shall be off with my better half. We meditate rather a lengthy tour. Mrs. Beecher is very nervous; and as it does not suit her to mix altogether with the ladies at the west end, as we call your side of

the town, she is quite cut out—but all this is between ourselves, Mr. Marten. Call on me when you are at liberty.” And shaking the young man heartily by the hand, and thanking him again for his excellent discourse, they parted. Marten being joined by Lady Alicia at the church-gate, was subjected from thence to the gate of her own house to one continued succession of encomiums on his performances in the church.

Lady Alicia occupied Marten entirely in visiting her infant school, and talking over various plans and schemes, till the hour of afternoon service at three o’clock; nor did Henry even see him till his return from service, excepting for a short time in the company of that lady.

He scarcely confessed it to himself, but he was already tiring of the sort of life at the Fair Holmes. He was not tired of his handicrafts—he could have spent hours in completing them with pleasure in a room to himself—in a hut beside the Teme—in a cottage or barn. But there was something so very tiresome to him in the continual talking and bustling, and even praises and compliments, which were going on at the Fair Holmes, that he would have preferred the dullest course of quiet study to such constant dissipation of thought. He was angry with himself for having such feelings, when he recollected Lady Alicia’s kindness; and he resolved not to tell them to Marten. He had only a few days more to spare for his friend, as he was to proceed from Steeple Lawford to Lord H——’s, and there to study with right good industry, for the family would be absent some time during the vacation.

He was not alone with Marten till their dinner

was on the table. Marten only then came in; and if not in high excited spirits, his cheeks were unusually flushed, and his eyes somewhat restless.

"What did you do with yourself, Milner, between the services?" was his first question. "You strolled in the fields, you say; you should have come to Lady Alicia's, she expected you at luncheon. You are a sulky fellow," he added, with a smile, "born for a hermit. You tire uncommonly soon of society."

"I always did," replied Henry. "I like to be alone, that is, to be quiet, and left to myself, most part of every day."

As Henry had resolved not to put Marten out of humour with his situation, by going deeply into any subject which might open his mind to its inconveniences, nothing was led to of any serious nature, until the dinner was removed and the servant gone, when the two young men sat eating fruit before the open window; and then Marten abruptly said, "Henry, you have not told me how you like my sermon."

Henry's face became crimson to the very brow; he felt himself called upon to be sincere, and sincere he was. He gave all the credit where it was due, and where he had felt it due at church—but failed not to state where he thought it altogether deficient, referring his friend to the many conversations held with Lord H—— and Mr. Dalben.

As the argument which ensued, affects many things in Marten's ministerial course, and as it treats of matters of paramount interest to all young ministers, we will give the outline of it, without entering into a minute detail of all that was said.

On Marten's taking up his defence, in answer to the reference to Lord H——, Henry asserted that the legitimate office of a minister of the gospel is, to declare the Saviour fully, truly, and repeatedly, as Scripture represents him; and that this was equally obligatory on all Christian ministers of every denomination.

To which Marten replied,—that though he did not deny Henry's assertion, yet he did not consider the preaching of Christ as the sole object of the minister, exclusive of all other duties.

Henry's answer was,—that he had hitherto spoken only of what is incumbent on a minister as addressing his people on religious subjects, in public and in private, and that of course he allowed, that a minister, as a man and member of society, had the same duties to perform as other christian men—the duties of kindness and courtesy, and of all the charities due from one fellow-creature to another; adding, that there is an additional obligation to these duties laid upon the clergy of the church of England, by the answer of the deacon to the bishop's address in the ordination service.

Marten made no comment on this last remark of his friend, but broke out with some heat, and much rapidity of elocution, on the present state of the times—on the danger to the established church from internal heresies and external enemies—from infidelity—profligacy of living—from schismatics—self-elected reformers—from meddlers, in short, he added, of every possible description; and he concluded his oration by asking Henry, if the purport of his advice was, that he was not to take notice of the diseases of the times in any of his addresses to his people—but quietly

to leave one blind man to mislead another without one word of caution. "Am I so to understand you?" he asked; and then answering his own question—"You must excuse me, Milner," he added, "if I do not entirely coincide in your opinion"—hinting, with a bitter smile, that as his friend was very young, it could be no offence to him to suppose that he was not deeply read in the experiences of a minister.

Henry acknowledged that he did not pretend to any such experience, and that all his arguments were brought forward from passages of Scripture, bearing upon the subject which had been pointed out to him by his uncle and Lord H——. From these he had arrived at the assurance, that as all infidelities and heresies were the effects of ignorance of the attributes of the Most High, and of his dealings with man, as manifested in Scripture, to declare these fully and continually, was the only hopeful way of overcoming the many-headed monster in any congregation, or among any set of people.

Marten brought forward as one plea against Henry, when the latter said that a preacher should never cease to declare the Saviour, that a man could not be always dwelling on one subject without exhausting it.

"When a man has exhausted the subject of salvation," Henry answered, with one of his bright smiles, "then let him take a new one. But, dear Marten," he said, seeing his friend looking very much irritated, "excuse me if I have said too much; remember you asked me for my opinion. I have a few more words to say, and then I have done. You always like to hear anecdotes of my uncle, and I will tell you one.

"I was walking with that dear uncle, when I was still a boy, for he held my hand, on one of the highest ridges of Malvern; and he showed me, amongst other things, a certain dusky spot in the sky, near the horizon. He told me that it was the smoke of a town not very far from Worcester. He had once a friend, he added, who was vicar of that place. The town had been for more than a century past the arena of what are called religious discords—Presbyterians, Unitarians, and Churchmen, continually contending in it, against each other, and exercising all the devices of malice which ill-will can devise, without incurring the penalties of the law.

"'It might seem impossible,' said my uncle, 'that a clergyman coming to such a parish, and amongst such a people, could escape being involved in perpetual discord, and yet be sincere; and that he should leave a memory of himself in that town to this far distant day, for he has been dead more than forty years, as sweet to all denominations as to his own especial people;' and he asked me how he had been enabled to do it?—Of course I could not answer.

"He replied, though in plainer words than I now use, 'By never entering into discussions, as the minister of sacred things, on his people's faults and follies, but by ever holding forth the light of gospel truth, and by that bright light showing man the error of his way, and filling him, through that divine blessing which ever attends such ministry, with that love which is the fulfilment of the law.'"

How Marten might have commented on this anecdote can never be ascertained, for Henry had hardly concluded it when Miss Liptrot appeared

on the grass plat before the open window. She came with a message from Lady Alicia, requesting, that as there was no evening service, Marten and Henry would take their tea with her, and afterwards attend her to the large room of the infant-school, where she expected a few friends to meet them.

CHAPTER VII.

HAVING introduced our readers to all the most important particularities and circumstantialities of Marten's situation at Steeple Lawford, we must pass over a few days, during which Henry had not many opportunities of private conversation with Marten. He was obliged to depart before the next Sunday; and Lady Alicia found more for him to execute than could be effected, without much industry. He could not but wonder, as he sat hammering and glueing in his corner, how she managed to keep up such a perpetual agitation as she did; nor could he comprehend what all this bustle could have to do with real religion, or even in making money for religious purposes, as the sale must be advantageous indeed if it covered the outlay; and why not, he thought, send the money, if money were needful, without turning it round in the shape of useless knick-knacks? He could not banish these thoughts altogether; though when he recollected what pleasure he had in the devices he was making, he was vexed at himself for entertaining them. Why, he asked himself, should not the ladies have as much enjoyment in their pincushions, and other needlework, as he had in his work? only he did

not think that any merit, in a religious way, ought to be attached to these works.

It was made known at Steeple Lawford, that Dr. Beecher was going from thence for some months after the bazaar had taken place. Lady Alicia had hinted to him certain plans of reform, which she hoped might be brought to bear; and he had signified that he could not possibly object to any thing her Ladyship might propose, though he might be as well pleased if these little arrangements were deferred till his absence. He had obtained permission from his diocesan for a certain term, on the plea of his lady's health, and was really glad to get away from the thorn which pressed so closely upon him at Steeple Lawford; though, for reasons before alleged, he did not choose to handle that thorn too roughly.

It was much in favour of the delay which he desired, that the preparations for the bazaar, just at the moment, occupied all the energies of the lady; and that, as the time drew nearer, these energies were more and more excited towards this object.

Every conversation at the Fair Holmes, commence where it might, was certain to end with the arrangements on the lawn;—in the manifold details of marquees, stalls, garlands, bouquets, cold collations—which, by-the-by, were to be paid for by those who partook of them—knick-knacks, and toys of every possible description; and Marten upon a platform, opening the affair by an address to the company. There was, of course, to be a band of music; and there was no question from any one but Mrs. Dolman, of the due attendance of the sun, with permission for a few soft clouds, as an agreeable rest and relief from the too oppressive beams.

Marten was urged to prepare his address; and he was informed by Lady Alicia that he must explain the object of the charity, and press its importance with all the pathos of his fine voice. Miss Liptrot told him privately, that a compliment to Lady Alicia might not be dispensed with; and this hint was repeated by many others of the select committee; added to which came another suggestion, whispered by several ladies, that it would not be quite the thing to pass over the contributors to the charity.

The very first evidence which the young curate gave of a disposition to calcitrate under the silken and soft rein of the sisterhood of the Fair Holmes was when this third suggestion was made to him. It happened to be at one of the committee meetings; Lady Alicia was present, though at some distance, but he made his way to her, and said that the more he considered the affair, the more he thought it would not be proper for him to come forward in an assembly so public as the bazaar would be, when he was only a second in the parish, and that he must entreat that Dr. Beecher might be requested to deliver the address.

Lady Alicia was too much astonished at the proposal to be able to answer immediately; but Miss Liptrot saved her the trouble.

"Perhaps Mr. Marten is right," she said. "The compliment may as well be passed; it is a mere matter of form—the Doctor will at once and decidedly decline the honour. Only fancy the rector on a platform paying compliments to yourself, Lady Alicia—bowing to our committee, and insinuating gracious things to us all; it would be too good, and poor Mrs. Beecher, she

would actually expire with malice and all uncharitableness. Do, Lady Alicia, let us send an ambassador to the worthy Doctor, with an humble entreaty that he would grace our rostrum: Would not it be good?"

"And if he should accept our invitation," said Lady Alicia; "what could we do?"

"Be not the least afraid," remarked Mrs. Lambert, "he is certain to decline the honour."

"Permit me," said Marten, "to convey the message. I will go this moment, if allowed:" for he privately hoped that he should have more influence than any other ambassador—for at least he should be sincere in his desire of success.

After some deliberation, it was agreed that Marten should go, and bring the answer if possible before the company separated: and it was also agreed that Mrs. Beecher should be asked to keep a stall.

When Marten had got his credentials, which were two elegant violet tintured notes in embossed envelopes, away he started with mercurial speed for the rectory, and found Doctor and Mrs. Beecher in their sunless room, at their large smooth table, drinking tea; and whilst the lady compounded, the Doctor read a newspaper.

Marten was received with the wonted cordiality of the Rector's manner, and the usual coldness of the lady's.

His first movement was to deliver his notes; the Doctor took his and read it with a smile. The lady looked sharp as pins and needles at her's—evidently honouring it with several repeated readings, as if she could not comprehend it at the first or second.

"Sit down, Marten," said the Rector, as he laid

the note on the table; "what an unfortunate fellow you are to have a surname so much of a christian name, that one forgets to add the Mr. to it; but I am glad to see you. How goes it with all the fair dames at the Fair Holmes?—but the old town of Steeple Lawford is obliged to Lady Alicia: if she did what she could to spoil our last races, and made our landlord at the 'George' very angry, she is making it up with him by her bazaar——"

"The races?" said Marten.

"Oh yes!" returned the Doctor, "our little town boasts of races. They occur early in the year; they were just over when you arrived. You will hear of them next year there is no question. But with respect to this note, you know its purport?"

Marten said he did, and began to plead with much earnestness for Doctor Beecher's acceptance of the invitation; adding, in his warmth, that Lady Alicia would esteem it a great favour if he would grant her petition.

The Doctor laughed. "Pardon me, Marten," he said, "her ladyship studies effect, I know, and she cannot possibly have so bad a taste as to think that one like myself, for my hair is not quite grey enough at present, would show in such a picturesque scene as she is about to create, as a young man like yourself. No, no, Marten! I know better; I will not disappoint her ladyship by taking the place so much better fitted for another. Give my very best compliments—but no, that will not do, it must be a note. Excuse me a moment:"—and off he was to his study to write a note, quite inattentive to all the pleadings from his curate which could reach him before he closed the door upon himself.

By this time, Mrs. Beecher had made herself mistress of the import of the Lady Alicia's note: of course she felt herself offended by it. Lady Alicia never did and never could send her a note or a message from which this amiable lady was not able to extract offence: but as she had not made up her mind as to whether it would or would not gratify her most to refuse or accept the invitation, she was not ready to give a definite answer, and therefore charged Marten to tell her ladyship that she would send a reply in the morning.

When Doctor Beecher returned from his study with the note in his hand, he seemed to be in a very merry mood.

"Well, young gentleman," he said, "I hope you continue to like us as well as at first; you find the Fair Holmes a delightful residence, I trust. You are almost under the same roof with your patroness; you can be with her at the shortest notice, how delightful that must be! You find her ladyship a most charming companion, and she has formed a most interesting society about her, has she not? Well, give her my note, and tell her that had I thought I should have added grace to her fête, I would not have held back from figuring in it—but if I cannot be ornamental in her service, I will endeavour to be useful—so adieu."

The result of Marten's embassy to the rectory was perfectly satisfactory to the ladies, and after a little reflection, not displeasing to himself. He flattered himself that he might manage the complimentary parts of his address so as to avoid any appearance of adulation, and if he could succeed in so doing, wherefore should he object

to take a lead in an undertaking so excellent as that of this bazaar? Having ascertained what length the address ought to be, he set to work to prepare it; and most assuredly the composition did him credit, as he never once had recourse to any one of those common places which are so largely used in addresses of this kind. He made no mention of Britannia. Nor once told how she, in the exuberance of her piety and her charity, extended her arms to the utmost limits of the earth, to diffuse the knowledge of the truth from east to west, from north to south; he never even alluded to her being more highly favoured than all the female genii or allegorical representations of every nation under the sun. He did not make use of one single triad or one antithesis—but he commenced with a simple statement of the object of the charity. He proceeded to plead its cause with pathos and force, and the compliments which he paid to the ladies who had already engaged themselves, heart and hand, for the service, were introduced with taste and feeling, without a tincture of servility or apparent flattery.

It is said of the canine race, that every individual thereof has his day. If such is the fact—and the proverb seems to argue that it is so, of this often ill-used species of animals—we cannot doubt that it must be more true of that higher order which consists of men. Accordingly Marten was entitled to his day, and his day was unquestionably the day of the bazaar at the Fair Holmes.

Contrary to all the prognostics of Mrs. Dolman, the morning arose with the most agreeable aspects, and Marten, looking out from his window

at the early dawn, saw many of the functionaries of his patroness adorning the marquees on the lawn before the mansion, with the brilliant spoils of almost every garden in the Fair Holmes and Steeple Lawford, whilst they were still wet with the dew.

The tents had been arranged the day before, under the eye of the lady; they formed a half-circle, all opening towards a centre where the fine turf formed a carpet exceeding all that ever proceeded from an oriental loom. The windows of the drawing room, three in number, and opening to the ground, faced the lawn, and within this room, as well as in every tent, were tables arranged to form the stalls with draperies and garlands elegantly arranged above them, the draperies being of soft sky blue, entwined with muslin as white and soft as could be procured.

Every table was covered with white linen: and before the sun had manifested its full golden glories above the horizon, the busy sisterhood,—wives, widows, and unmarried damsels, were to be seen fluttering to and fro, arranging their wares on their tables according to previous numberings and ticketings, all done under the eye of the lady inspectress. Marten thought that as he was himself to fill a most important place in that day's exhibition, it would be best for him to keep himself cool and quiet till the critical moment.

We must not fail to mention, that in a line with the drawing-room windows, on the farthest side from the entrance, but forming one part of the string of the bow formed by the marquees, was the platform where Marten was to stand to address the company—this platform being afterwards to be appropriated to the band.

The tables where the refreshments were to be sold, were situated under trees in other parts of the pleasure-ground, and it was thought that a considerable profit would ensue from this branch of the affair.

As the morning advanced the plot thickened ; various vehicles came rolling by to the town, with horsemen, and horsewomen, and foot passengers, respectably dressed ; the very inferior people were all indeed in a state of excitement, all in their best apparel, and all idle, and all preparing for a walk out in the Fair Holmes direction, for all expected to get within the gates.

If any breakfasts were taken that morning at the Fair Holmes, not much ceremony was used at them. As to Lady Alicia herself, she was the most careless person living about regular meals ; she seemed to exist for days together on excitement.

The striking up of the bells from the old tower was another symptom, and one quite unexpected by Marten, of the sense of importance of the occasion, experienced by the people of Steeple Lawford, and soon after these struck up, the mistress of the infant school entered the grounds with her young brood, all in the Devereux colour, pale blue—or as Doctor Beecher used to call it, *sky* blue—not very piously nor charitably alluding to the subject which the lady had selected for the display of her talents.

The presence of these little people was required upon the same principle as the sheep were thrown in to fill up the family picture of the Vicar of Wakefield. The lambs, however, had a decided advantage over the aforesaid sheep, in that they were far prettier, and added a living and happy beauty to the picture.

The little flock and their shepherdess were succeeded by the Steeple Lawford band with their various instruments: soon after which the rehearsal of the pieces they were to play commenced, sweetly mellowed to Marten's ear by the distance at which the musicians were stationed.

As the morning advanced, the whole visible expanse of the pleasure grounds about the house shewed like a bee-hive, so alive was it, in such a state of universal excitement, such running to and fro, such passing and repassing. Anon the bustling ladies disappeared from the scene, and then appeared again, a few at a time, dressed in white, with scarves or ribbons of the favourite colour.

Marten read his address again, made his last preparations and looked first at his watch, and then again out of his window.

The important crisis was at hand; the company were expected to begin to come at eleven, and it was not far from that hour. There was a constant rolling of carriages in both directions towards the gates, and many well-dressed heads passing along just above his own laurel hedge.

He sat down, not thinking it dignified to be seen peeping out of his window, when suddenly his landlady opened the door and ushered in no less a person than Lord H——.

This was a crowning of Marten's day, beyond his highest expectations; and whilst he was speaking and looking his delight, Lord H—— was accounting for his appearance.

It happened that he was passing the day before at some little distance from Steeple Lawford, and hearing the fame of the bazaar, had come a few miles out of his way to be present; being,

as he added, further tempted by the prospect of seeing him, the said Marten.

He should have been with him an hour before, but he had staid to breakfast at the inn. "And most glad I am that I came," he said; "the whole scene delights me. The little town is in one universal ferment. I take it for granted that every individual in it cannot be personally required to busy himself in the affair, but all seem to do so, down to the very lowest personages. Well, all this is pleasant; human beings require occasional amusement. Many ill feelings may be carried off in private and public societies by simple pursuits and amusements of a pleasurable kind; but how to provide such as spend the exuberant animal spirits in a healthful way, there is the difficulty. Such a scene as this of to-day, all in broad-daylight as it is, and proposing as it does a pure, benevolent and even pious object, is as unexceptionable as any which man can devise. How vastly preferable are these bazaars for charitable purposes, the fêtes of Sunday schools, the tea-drinkings of the various small societies, the marches and countermarches of clubs, with the many other devices of well-meaning persons in the present day, to the cruel, superstitious, and often murderous pastimes of former ages, and of heathen and infidel countries at the present time. How brightly shines the reflected light, the improving morality, and the kinder feelings of Christianity in scenes like the present! I make it a principle in my small way to encourage them whenever I fall in with them. I respect your patroness as one who adds considerably to the sum of human happiness in her little circle; but perfection in a child of Adam we are

not to expect. One thing we have, however, seriously to guard against, Marten, and that is that we do not attribute, even in thought, such merit and efficiency to works of the kind now before us as belong only to the blood of Christ. But," he added, "if you are prepared, you shall take me to Lady Alicia and introduce me; and you must help me in selecting some little presents for Lucilla from some of the ingenious manufactures of your ladies. Henry Milner has had a hand in some of them, I hear; let these be your choice, they will have a particular value for my niece, who thinks your friend a prodigy of cleverness."

Behold Marten accompanying my Lord H—— through the small gate into the shrubbery; see him leading him round through the midst of the company now assembled in many gay groups on the lawn, and bringing him in by the open glass doors into the drawing-room, and hear the young curate say, "I have the honour to present, &c., &c.;" and if you, my gentle or simple reader, do not acknowledge that this above all which ever went before was Marten's day, why then I must suppose that you expect more than you have any right to expect for any young curate of Marten's degree.

The Lady Alicia had reserved for herself the largest and best-appointed stall at the highest end of the drawing-room. She was already invested with a brown Holland apron quaintly trimmed with blue braiding and furnished with a resplendent pocket—the badge of every stall-keeper; but she had not yet taken her place, for the sale was not to begin till Marten had spoken his address. But it mattered not what she wore,

her really noble countenance and aristocratic figure would have betrayed her under any costume. She knew Lord H—— well by report. She was at liberty to pay him every attention, and she came forward and accepted his arm to go out upon the lawn, where people were disposing themselves to hear the address.

Marten was following them with a raised colour and somewhat fluttering heart, when a querulous voice called him by name from behind the stall, on the right hand of Lady Alicia's.

It was Mrs. Beecher, who had condescended to accept this position, and as it had been suggested, that her somewhat acid countenance would not attract many purchasers, very few valuable articles had been committed to her disposal; much pains had been taken, however, to conceal the paucity of the distribution by many vases of flowers tastefully arranged on the board amid the toys, and as the whole looked gay, it was hoped that the lady would not discover the slight put upon her.

Those who had planned it were, however, mistaken; Mrs. Beecher's eyes took the whole thing in at once, and her call to Marten was for the purpose of informing him of the slight.

He stood a minute, not to listen, for he heard not a word she said, but to seem to do so, and hearing his name called by some one—"Now, Mr. Marten, you are expected," he flew off, merely saying to Mrs. Beecher what happened to come uppermost,—“Indeed, madam, I am very glad that you are so well pleased;” the next moment he was gone.

The band was playing loud and full, as the young man stepped on the scaffold from behind,

and stood forth with a face and figure just fit, as everybody declared, for the position he was filling.

The band ceased with a flourish, and the full deep melodious voice succeeded, heard as well afar as near through the whole circle. He delivered the address without hesitation, and so perfectly and easily, that it was supposed by all who knew no better, that it was extempore; it was, in short, so very well done, that Lord H—— was gratified, and the mass of the company in raptures. There was a general murmur of applause at several passages, and at the mention of Lady Alicia and the fair sisterhood, a general burst, which was repeated with increased vehemence, when Marten made his graceful bow before his exit.

"Well done, Marten," said Dr. Beecher, "I could not have done it better myself;" and he added to Lady Alicia,—that he hoped she would now cordially forgive him for having shifted the honour she intended him on much more worthy shoulders.

Where Marten had been, there was now the band, striking up a lively stirring tune; the sellers flew to their stalls, and the real business of the day commenced.

Henry's handicrafts were secured by Lord H——, under the auspices of Marten, with as much speed as possible, and sent by a servant to the George, and then the excellent nobleman, having no other business, strolled about with his friend, amusing himself with feeding the little lambs in blue, with the tarts and cakes arranged on the tables under the trees, thus adding many items to the sum of that day's felicity.

By dint of a constant succession of arrivals, the ferment went on till Lord H—— was obliged to take leave, but he would not let Marten accompany him to the inn. Lady Alicia had left him in quiet till his distinguished visitor was gone; she then sent for him to stand by her, count the money she received, and make calculations for her. When she needed refreshment, he was to give her his arm through the crowd, and as they moved together, she introduced him to many of the superior persons, from whom he received thanks for his very elegant address; on which occasions Lady Alicia invariably signified that she considered no compliment beyond his deserts. Even prosperity is fatiguing, and flattery, like honey, is agreeable only in very small quantities.

Before six o'clock that evening, Marten was obliged to acknowledge to himself, that he had heard enough of his address, and that he should be glad to get out of the hearing of sweet tones of compliment, but it behoved him to stand it all out. The crowd began to diminish rapidly between five and six o'clock in the afternoon, and by seven, none were left within the grounds but the ladies of the committee.

The sale had been beyond all expectation, very few articles were left, and those of the least value, and these, it was agreed, were to be laid by for another occasion.

It was between eight and nine, that Marten returned to his lodgings, excessively tired, and very glad that the thing was over, but at the same time very decidedly pleased with his own part in the affair, to which the unexpected presence of Lord H—— had given a decided eclat.

When a human mind has been wound up as

Marten's was that day, to the top of its powers by worldly stimulants, all we can hope is, that it may sink down to its usual level without falling too low, as not unseldom happens.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE termination of the bazaar seemed to be a general signal for many movements in the parish of Steeple Lawford. Lady Alicia, being persuaded by Miss Liptrot that her health required recruit after her almost unparalleled exertions, took a kind leave of Marten, and repaired with her friend to her favourite watering place, Malvern Wells. Doctor and Mrs. Becher went off at the same time in another direction, and sundry also of the members of the sisterhood of the Fair Holmes, as the Doctor called Lady Alicia's followers, withdrew for the remaining weeks of summer, so that, in fact, none of the especial committee were left, excepting Mrs. Lambert. This last-named lady made no other change in her plans for the season than by receiving into her house two spinster sisters of her late husband, ladies who could boast of no superabundance of any quality or possession but years, of which article they had more than they were willing to acknowledge.

When the young curate had handed his patroness to her carriage, for she had kept him in attendance to the last moment, he went back to his own abode under that sort of uncomfortable feeling in which a man is disposed to say,—

"Well! what is to be done next?" and to look around upon the inanimate things about him, as if they were to suggest the answer; and verily in such cases they are often enabled to suggest hints which are very much to the purpose. For example, there were many shelves of books, the members of which had never been disturbed since their owner placed them where they stood in long and neat order, and there was a flute and a music-book on a stand, and a sketch-book, and pens and ink on a writing-table, and quires of blank paper, and a Concordance and Bible lying by them—each and all of which objects seemed to call Marten's attention, though their calls were feeble; for his mind was unable to settle on any occupation whatever.

The term dissipation is generally applied to what is decidedly corrupt, and by a dissipated young man we commonly understand a man of very immoral character: but Marten's mind was in a state of dissipation, though not of immorality,—for the whole tone of the Fair Holmes, under the influence of Lady Alicia, was that of the dissipation of all serious thought by means of the perpetual excitement which she maintained.

The end which she proposed to herself undoubtedly was to do good, but like all others who lean to their own understandings, she more often misled than benefited those under her influence; and the principal mischief which she wrought was by diverting the attention of the persons about her from the truths of Christianity, which only are important, and alone are effectual in permanently benefiting mankind, to things which are of no value in a spiritual point of view, yet made to seem so by the stress laid upon them.

It was as if in explaining the nature of the dial to a child, his attention were drawn only to the motion of the shadow thereon, and never directed to that heavenly luminary whereon that shadow depends for its being.

It may perhaps be pleaded that she herself had no spiritual view of divine things, and that therefore, being blind herself, she could not act otherwise than as one blind person leading another; but we are not charging her with hypocrisy, nor judging her personally; we are speaking only of the influence which she exercised, in common with many other persons of her description. This influence, in the case of Marten, was decidedly far from beneficial, for it tended to that which of all others is most baneful to a young man in the ministry;—to give him false views of what the creature is able to perform in the service of his Creator.

Perhaps, in order to estimate aright all characters which come before us professing serious views of Christianity, it would be well to accustom ourselves to class them (generally, not individually, for are we not forbidden to judge each other) under two orders:—first, such as under fleshly views use the light given by the letter of scripture on the improved human intellect, to lift themselves and their fellow creatures up to God: and secondly, those who, knowing that all such efforts are worse than vain, because presumptuous and contrary to the express declaration of scripture, which holds out no promise of the improvement of the nature of Adam, restrain their religious labours to the simple declaration of the truth as it is in Jesus, and tremble at the bare idea of taking credit to them-

selves for any acts of kindness or any exertions which it may be given them to make for the benefit of their fellow creatures.

But to return to Marten; he was still lounging on the arm-chair into which he had thrown himself, in that most deplorable of all conditions, uncertainty with regard to what was to come next, when a note was handed to him from Mrs. Lambert, begging him to take pity upon her and to dine with her at three o'clock that day, with an intimation that she was suffering the first twelve hours of very dull domestic society, which she hoped to be able to bear better when somewhat more used to it. She did not tell Marten that she meant to draw pretty largely upon his services to help her forward through the future as well as the present.

Marten looked at his watch—it was an hour past noon when he had sent his answer to Mrs. Lambert. "It is no use to commence anything to-day," he thought, with a glance at his books; "well I must begin a course of reading to-morrow. I have not read anything of any consequence for the last few months. Well then to-morrow"—and he got up, stretched his limbs, and stamped once or twice to feel how he stood on his feet, yawned, sat down again, took up one of the many small pamphlets sewn in blue paper, with which Lady Alicia supplied all her friends, read a list of subscribers to some charity at the end of one of them, threw it down, yawned again, rubbed his fingers through his hair, and seeing it was near two o'clock, went to his room to dress.

Now, whereas the six or more weeks which ensued brought in their course little worth re-

ording, we shall pass them over as hastily as possible.

Mrs. Lambert, in the absence of Lady Alicia, thought that she had the best right to Marten's attentions, and she managed to avail herself very skilfully of this supposed right.

She was no otherwise a religious woman than as a member of a society in which some profession was decidedly requisite; but she was a clever woman, had seen a vast deal of the world, could discourse well, and was up to every topic which occupied the attention of the day. She did not flatter young men; but though particularly ill-favoured and considerably above fifty, she could attract and keep their attention merely by the entertainment which her conversation supplied; nor was this attraction without its power on Marten, who, because she was old and exceedingly plain, never thought it possible that she could obtain any influence over him.

Such however it was, that he was induced to spend some part of every day with her, during Lady Alicia's absence, and with the two mutes, or rather echoes—her sisters-in-law.

Often he dined with them, walking out with them in the evenings, and even the best of his morning hours and studies were directed by Mrs. Lambert.

This lady possessed a vein of great sarcasm, which added not a little to the piquancy of her conversation. There was not a single member of the society of Steeple Lawford to whom it did not occasionally reach—with the exception only of Lady Alicia, of whom she spoke as of an excellent person, though always somewhat in a tone of pity which Marten hardly knew what to make of.

But her most pointed and cutting sarcasms were thrown on the religious parties which have multiplied of late years in the kingdom beyond all precedent, and she succeeded in convincing Marten that, as a champion and defender of his church, he ought to make himself acquainted with the doctrines and opinions of all these sects and parties; and thus, by supplying him with books on these subjects, she fully occupied the time he should have given to the Bible, and to the Bible alone. In consequence of this misdirection, his mind, which was naturally powerful, taking strong hold of what was presented to it, became so full of doubts and difficulties, that all the enlightened teachings of his early years had passed away, leaving no more traces than if they had never been.

The question might here be suggested, had an effectual work of grace really commenced at that time within the heart of this fine young man? or was all that Mr. Dalben, and Henry Milner, and Lord H—, had hitherto loved and admired in him, but a superior specimen of human nature in its most honourable, most intellectual, and most amiable form?

Were all the beautiful and graceful exhibitions of his character only natural? Had he so often spoken well on religious subjects without any real feeling of their importance? If so, there was nothing in him to be depended upon, but all his finest qualifications were as liable to fade and change, as the freshness and glory of mortal beauty.

The summer passed away, Marten, as we before said giving much of his time to Mrs. Lambert; and being, by her, so gradually withdrawn

from all things appertaining to religious considerations, save as matters of argument on doctrinal points, that when Lady Alicia returned, with all her wonted zeal for doing good, and with all her energies refreshed, he felt like one awakened from a doze in which he had had dreams already forgotten.

Not a week was lost before various projects were set forward. The evening lectures commenced on the second Sunday after her return, and were largely attended, and in descending from the pulpit, Marten was told that he had excelled his usual self, and was specially commended by Lady Alicia, for the choice of his subject and his mode of treating it.

The preacher himself was not quite satisfied with it, as he felt that when speaking of the benefit and the duty of attending public worship, he had confounded the place of worship at Steeple Lawford with the temple of Jerusalem; but he trusted that no person besides himself would detect the mistake, and he was not disappointed in this hope.

A sermon, petitioning aid for the infant school, occurred the next Sunday morning, when all or a greater part of the little ones, dressed in pale blue, slept during the service in the church.

This call on the public feelings was very successful, and many of the ladies of the Fair Holmes society attributed the success to the pathetic pleadings of their dear young minister; but Mrs. Dolman asserted that no one could possibly see so many poor infants in a state of unconsciousness of the doom which threatened them eternally, and actually sleeping whilst the clergyman was denouncing that doom, and

not feel the sentence strike fearfully on their hearts.

Mrs. Dolman had not done Marten justice when she said he had pronounced a fearful doom for the little ones in blue; he had done no such thing in so many words, and had not been quite aware that he had inferred something of the same kind, when he elegantly and pathetically stated what the condition of these little unconscious beings would be in case the hand of charity was not extended for their preservation.

This affair passed off well, and new laurels were added to the crown of Marten. He became more than ever the subject of all tea-table discourse, and there was quite a contest to procure his presence at every party—especially among the sisterhood—but Lady Alicia held him fast; and it soon appeared that when his company was required, hers must be first secured.

It may reasonably be asked, were there no husbands, fathers, nor brothers at Steeple Lawford? Was Doctor Beecher, then absent, the only master of a house among the higher circles in the town? In reply to which obvious inquiry we answer that in Steeple Lawford there was by no means the usual allotment of this description of personages. Men there were in the town, but they were chiefly of a different class: the butchers, carpenters, masons, and shoemakers, were men; the single lawyer and the doctor were of the nobler sex; and there were two or three young gentlemen who held closely together to hate Marten, and call him a parson, and a prig, and a puppy, &c.; but especially since the Lady Alicia's settlement in the neighbourhood, the town had been considered a most genteel and convenient

abode for single ladies of small fortune, and for widows with or without grown-up daughters. In consequence of this, the female influence in Steeple Lawford so far exceeded that of the male, that the men had hardly a voice, even at the elections, and it was usual for the afternoon parties to consist entirely of ladies.

The next project formed by Lady Alicia, was one of far more difficulty and peril than any in which she had yet engaged; it was neither more nor less than the entire reformation of the singing-gallery.

It is believed, that upon strict inquiry, it would be found that no war carried on by a clergyman, squire, churchwarden, or other person in authority, against the singers or musicians, in a parish church, ever terminated to the advantage of the former parties. To account for this fact, several reasons may be adduced; one of which is, that the persons who compose a musical band in any public place, have almost uniformly a high opinion of their own powers, this opinion not unseldom standing in inverse ratio with their musical merits. The person, therefore, who presumes to disturb this self-complacency, can have little to expect but uncompromising enmity. Precisely at the time when the reformation of the singing-gallery was the leading topic of the Fair Holmes, the organist, who was an inferior person, was induced by the singers to assist in the *execution* of an anthem, by one of the fine old masters. The reader is at liberty to understand the word used above in any sense he pleases.

This execution so excited Lady Alicia, that she talked of little else for several days, till she had

worked up the curate to go himself to speak to the organist, and to beg that henceforward none but the simplest tunes might be played in the church. Marten was never particularly skilful in the art of clothing strong measures in soft raiment, nor did he attempt to do so on the present occasion. He had a pretty considerable idea of the authority of a clergyman in church matters, although his mind was not made up as to the deep questions on that point now so warmly agitated.

The consequence of what he had said that day to the organist was, that the singing-gallery presented a vacuum the next Sunday, and remained tenantless during the whole of the service.

The clerk, an old and feeble man, gave out the psalm as usual, and the organist played his prelude, struck up the tune, to which, for want of better aid, the clerk added his cracked voice, and thus the first stanza was got over, whilst the congregation looked upon each other in dismay.

To the second verse, however, several voices were added, Miss Liptrot's being the most decided, and even more than rivalling in strength, firmness, and sweetness, that of the clerk.

Mrs. Dolman also fell in, but her key was as much too low, as that of Miss Liptrot was too high. Two or three other elderly female voices from different parts of the church, added their discords; but not all the nods, winks, and even nudges of fathers, mothers, aunts, or uncles, could induce one of the young ladies in the congregation, who had learned to sing scientifically, to open their ruby lips—all young ladies have ruby lips—or to exercise their delicate throats. How it would have been, had Marten's fine voice struck

up from the reading-desk, intoning the psalm, which was no other than the fine Old Hundreth, we cannot say, but probably a full congregational chorus would have ensued, and the enemy, every member of which was in the church, would have suffered a complete defeat. Had Henry Milner been in his friend's place, such indeed might have been the case, but the sensitiveness, the strong sense of horror of the ridiculous, which is the bane of all persons who think too much of their own particular appearance, and the impression made by their own particular selves in society, rendered the young curate so wholly inefficient on this occasion, that the triumph of the singing-gallery people was complete, and as a few of them condescended to appear again in their places in the afternoon, their cause was supposed to be established. But Lady Alicia was not so to be overcome; Marten had never seen her so irritated as she was whilst walking back from church; she actually scolded him—"To abandon our cause as you did, Mr. Marten," she said, "with your fine voice and accurate ear; I cannot pardon you; had I but possessed the voice of a robin, you should have heard me, I promise you; the bird that can sing, &c. Well, go home, and do not let me see you till I have recovered my temper; I only wish that I could bear malice against you for a week to come; I fear I shall hardly hold out till night. I hope that I shall be able to let the sun go down on my wrath."

This desire was not, however, fulfilled. After the evening lecture, a little twisted note from Lady Alicia brought the curate an invitation to supper.

He found his patroness primed with a new scheme, and, in consequence, in the highest possible spirits.

"Remember, Mr. Marten," she begun, "that I am not yet appeased; I am excessively angry still, but I cannot do without your aid."

"And her ladyship trusts," said Miss Liptrot, "that it will prove more effectual than it did this day in the church."

"No apologies, Mr. Marten," said Lady Alicia, seeing that he was beginning to speak; "you cannot possibly have a word to say in your defence; but I must tell you what I have been thinking of;" and she opened her scheme, which shall be stated in a few words.

The singers must be degraded from their exalted place in the church, and a set of children prepared to take that place; but as there was not one public school, and no place of education in Steeple Lawford, for children too old for the infant school excepting that of one old dull writing, and cyphering, and common reading master, for boys, and a poor old dame-school for girls, where nothing was taught but hammering over the Reading-Made-Easy, and working parrots with cherries in their beaks in marking-stitch, she was resolved to establish charity-schools for both sexes, on the national plan; and these children being under the control of the governors, (she herself being at the head, as she resolved to be, of the whole affair,) they might be taught to sing, and would, of course, be directed in what they should sing.

Such was her plan, and it was to be worked out immediately. The very next day she would assemble her friends to discuss the ways and

means, and who was to be asked for contributions, &c. &c. It was midnight before she had explained all the et-ceteras attached to her plans to Marten, and if the truth must be told, he withdrew to his lodgings, heartily wishing that there were more level spots in the mind of his patroness, and that another difficulty did not immediately present itself the instant that one was either surmounted, or in some way evaded.

As alps on alps arise, were the words which sounded in the ears of his mind that night, or rather morning, till he fell asleep; but a bright morning, and a few flattering smiles and speeches from Lady Alicia, who was in the highest spirits, soon succeeded in smoothing the ruffling of his temper.

There was a vast deal to be done, and many delays occurred before this business of the school could be brought to bear; the raising of the ways and means was the principal difficulty, and it is marvellous how time slips on whilst persons are waiting for letters from a distance; and letters asking money are never very speedily answered. Lady Alicia applied to everybody she knew, from whom she could expect the smallest aid, and urged all her particular friends in the neighbourhood to do the same, having weekly meetings to report progress, to drink tea, and hear Marten read. There was seldom a week in which the same party did not meet at some other house in the neighbourhood, when Marten was to read again, and then he had many private duties, conferences of daily occurrence with Lady Alicia, visits with her to the infant schools, two sermons to prepare each week, occasional calls on Mrs. Lambert, and letters to answer for his patroness,

respecting the matter in hand, the reigning object.

Thus passed the winter; it was gone almost before Marten was aware that it had commenced.

CHAPTER IX.

It is wonderful how swiftly days pass on under the influence of a busy spirit, like that of Lady Alicia, and how very little time for serious reflection or deep and steady reading is found in a life like this.

Month passed after month with Marten, and even season after season, and if now and then it crossed his mind that he ought to give more time to the study of the Scriptures, he soon consoled himself with the idea, that he could only be employed in doing good, if not in one way, in another; and was he not always engaged in some good work, under his patroness and with her associates, and the persons under her influence? He felt that for so young a man he was moving in a wide sphere of usefulness, and he was told, and he believed, that he was doing much in the great cause. His sermons met with the entire approbation of the sisterhood, and more than one or two of the elderly spinsters assured him that they had never really felt the influence of true religion till they had heard him, giving him the credit of having awakened their dead souls to a new life.

He was as one lulled by flattery into a sort of dosing state, therefore not in a condition to inves-

tigate other people's dreams ; for we must be wide awake ourselves before we can analyze our neighbour's visions.

During these times he received few letters ; those from Henry Milner were particularly short, for his young friend was approaching the ordeal of his examination, and had no time to spare from his studies.

Marten's state of tranquillity suffered a temporary disturbance when the season of the races were coming round. Lady Alicia insisted that he should denounce this amusement in very strong language from the pulpit, three or four Sundays before the appointed time. Marten thought that there was too much of the dictatorial in her manner towards himself, a clergyman of the Church of England, exhibited on this occasion ; he had seen before times, that her ladyship could use this figure of speech, but hitherto it had not been done in addressing himself.

There is a wide difference in our appreciation of a box on the ear, given to a friend, and applied to our own particular ear.

When Lady Alicia said, "It is your decided duty, Mr. Marten, to utter your strongest protest against those races, and I shall not think you the real friend of religion I have hitherto believed you to be, unless you do so," the young divine felt himself much offended, and he actually ventured to say to his patroness, that he believed such to be the perversity of human nature, that more persons would be disposed to attend the races, if they should hear them condemned from the pulpit, than would be restrained from going by anything he could say.

Of course Lady Alicia was not wanting to her cause, but as Marten's favour with her was hardly yet declining from its zenith, she advocated it so kindly, and in such a ladylike way, that she failed not to carry her point, for she succeeded in showing Marten the various ways in which the sort of amusement in question injured society. This was a subject to which he had given little thought since his own memorable visit to the races of Worcester, years before, and being now convinced by the lady's statements, and the recollections of what he had himself seen, he hastened to pen a discourse on the desired subject, gathering such heat as he proceeded with his composition, that without intending any such thing, he almost asserted that a visit to a race-course was a sin of the most deadly description, under any circumstances, and *vice versâ*, that the refraining from frequenting amusements of the kind was an act of merit in a religious point of view, the latter being a more dangerous assertion than the former.

The discourse was preached the next Sunday, and was highly commended by the ladies. But for truth's sake, we must add, that its influence on the congregation in general was something problematical.

Those who did not intend to take part in the festival, certainly thought better of themselves, and worse of such of their neighbours as were resolved to participate therein, after having heard the sermon than they did before : but it is more than we are authorized to assert, that any of those determined on the amusement, altered their plans from hearing Marten's arguments.

One effect, however, the sermon certainly had; it reminded many of the slower-minded members of the congregation, that the races were nearer than they had thought, and that no time should be lost in inviting friends, getting forward with household preparations, and pushing on the hay-harvest, and other rural matters, before the interruption. This affair, however, rendered Marten less popular than he had been with many of the inferior inhabitants of the parish; a circumstance which seemed rather to lead to the increase of his favour at the Fair Holmes, and with the ladies of that society, for there is nothing like a little opposition to keep up enthusiasm.

So many difficulties arose in procuring the ways and means for establishing the new schools, that Lady Alicia was almost tired of the subject before anything was done; but what principally aided in throwing this scheme rather into the back ground, though there was no proposal that it should be given up, was that a new one had arisen in her fertile imagination, which was to do more in reforming the town, than any which had ever been thought of before. This was the suppression of beer-houses on the Sunday. The idea was suggested by a small pamphlet, which had been inserted in a packet of tracts from London; she read it while at breakfast one morning, and the mighty project of shutting up all the beer-houses in Steeple Lawford was formed, and grew to such force and magnitude thereupon, that the lady's brain could scarcely hold it till Marten could come across the shrubbery in obedience to a hasty call.

Marten, as it happened, when thus summoned,

was smarting under the infliction of a letter from his Rector, who was still abroad. This letter, the object of which was to announce his speedy return, was written in the Doctor's usual off-hand manner,—a manner by which that worthy personage had hitherto succeeded pretty well in concealing a cold calculating heart, under the cloak of careless good-humour. There was, therefore, nothing displeasing to the mind of the young curate in the body of the letter, but in the postscript was this passage :

“So I hear that the lady championess and her doughty squire are engaged in two crusades, one against the singing gallery, and another against the races. I am bound to wish success to every pious enterprise.”

Marten was fully assured, that a sneer lay scotched beneath this flowery postscript, and in consequence, obeyed Lady Alicia's summons in such a temper, that some sort of explosion was certain to take place.

And undoubtedly such a blowing off of steam did occur almost before the lady had opened her project; but as it happened to take a southward direction, alias in the direction of Paris, it was all as it should be as far as Lady Alicia was concerned, as Marten took up the cause in the true spirit of an offended knight errant. He thought that Dr. Beecher had hinted that he and the lady would be foiled in what they had already attempted, and he was resolved to show him that they could do more than ever he had dreamed of.

Uncertain as the wind is the direction which human passions seem to take—seem, I say—for there is no uncertainty in either case—each is directed by omnipotence, and the movements of

each must remain a secret till man is able to calculate all the hidden causes by which they are governed.

During many weeks which followed, Lady Alicia, and Marten, under her direction, were using every possible and feasible exertion even to annihilate the beer-houses in and about Steeple Lawford. These exertions consisted of letters, visits to magistrates and landlords, expostulations, preachings, strong and open censures, withdrawal of favours of every kind from opponents high or low, and placards against drinking pasted on walls, in conspicuous places in and about the town. In return for these unceasing and various labours, some of the magistrates gave soothing promises to the lady and curate. The house proprietors talked of leases which rendered them powerless; people drew off when they saw Lady Alicia approaching; many of the lower classes left the church; and those persons who depended in any way on her ladyship's favour, drank their beer at the backs instead of the fronts of the houses; whilst Lady Alicia was shown up in a caricature, to which some wretched verses were added by an anonymous writer, the whole being displayed and hawked about on coarse paper.

The caricature represented the lady in the character of a female Quixote, with a squire in canonicals.

This affair carried Marten on till after the second Christmas at Steeple Lawford, the return of his Rector making little or no alteration in his mode of procedure.

He had not been so much hurt as might have been expected at the sketch of himself, which had been made public; first, because it repre-

sented him in high company, and secondly, because his figure, though caricatured, was still handsome,—for had it not been so, it would not have represented himself,—and thirdly, it was pleasing to have it continually repeated in his ear, that it is blessed to be persecuted for righteousness' sake.

The barleycorn war, as Mrs. Lambert called it, whenever she ventured to use the expression, was still in an undecided state, and likely to remain so, when one morning a letter with Lord H——'s seal was placed in Marten's hands. He had some time before written to that nobleman, to state Lady Alicia's plans for her schools, and had felt himself hurt, because he thought his letter slighted.

What then was his astonishment, to find that this letter contained permission for him to draw upon that truly excellent nobleman for a sum of fifty pounds, the contributions of himself and his connexions. With the letter open in his hand, the young man flew to Lady Alicia, and from that moment all the grievances of the barleycorn campaign were forgotten by her, or rather laid by for a future day, and she became all alive in the cause of the schools.

Miss Liptrot was sent round to call a special committee for the evening; and the lady spent the residue of the morning in looking over her resources, and drawing out her plans, with Marten at her right hand.

"I shall propose this evening," she said, "that every person subscribing five pounds, shall have a single vote in the management of the schools; two if subscribing ten; and so on; and I shall even allow one to any set of persons making up

five amongst them,—for instance, Mrs. Dolman and Miss Fairweather, who between them make the sum. And I shall also propose that, as we have not even yet sufficient funds for both schools, that we should begin with our arrangements for the girls only.”

By the plan of allowing a vote for each person or any two persons subscribing five pounds, Lady Alicia thought that she should keep the power in her own hands, for she calculated entirely on all Lord H——’s votes being at her command, and said as much to Marten.

The ladies arrived at the usual hour, the business was opened after tea, and every thing went on smoothly, until mention being made of a properly instructed governess being brought from London, a lady of the name of Arnould, who, hitherto, had been remarkable only for her silence, and her industry in any plain and useful needle-work which might be going forward, caused herself to be heard.

She stated that she had been in the habit of visiting the dame school, which was, in fact, the only one in the place, and was, as she thought, together with the infant school, adequate to the wants of the town, it not being convenient for parents in general to part with their daughters after they had attained a certain age, to attend any school; and therefore as the population was very small, the purpose was sufficiently answered by the present dame and her daughter, of whom she had the highest opinion.

She furthermore said, that the old cottage in its garden of flowers, and in its retired nook behind the churchyard, had been the place of the dame’s school of Steeple Lawford so long, that

the grandfathers and grandmothers of the parish had many of them been educated there, the former so long as they wore petticoats, and the latter so long as they were required to attend any school. She confessed that she should almost be sorry to see any change; but hoped, that when a girls' school was established on the new plan, Mrs. Fell and her daughter, a widow like herself, might be placed at the head of the establishment: better and more sincere persons, she added, could not be found, and they were loved and honoured in the town.

Mrs. Lambert seconded Mrs. Arnould's proposition, and was very decided in her approval of Dame Fell.

A very warm discussion followed upon this speech of Mrs. Arnould, and the arguments in reply brought forward by Lady Alicia, and vehemently seconded by the other ladies, were as follows:—

That if Dame Fell had been the instructress of the female youth of Steeple Lawford for many years, she had fully demonstrated her incapacity by the state in which the females of the lower classes then were;—that, however sorry the ladies might be to take the bread out of the mouth of a poor widow, private interests must be made to give way to public good. And that such an establishment as was about to be formed, must not be put into the hands of one whose highest accomplishment was to work Adam and Eve in true darning.

Mrs. Arnould pleaded that much as evil prevailed in Steeple Lawford, there were many excellent retired female characters in the place, good wives, and mothers, who attributed very much to Dame

Fell's early instructions, and endeavoured to convince Lady Alicia that she made the first and best use of the Bible in her school. Indeed she pleaded her cause so well, that Marten was more than half convinced that she was right; that is, if her accounts of Dame Fell were correct, and he intended to ascertain this point himself by the earliest opportunity:—but, alas! many are the good intentions of man not destined to be fulfilled.

The result of this meeting was, that Mrs. Arnould was silenced, and it was settled that a letter should be dispatched to the proper persons in London, to procure a well-instructed governess to be sent down when the school-house was ready.

The procuring of the house was the next care; but this matter was sooner settled than was expected.

There was an old warehouse, with a few rooms adjoining to it, which had once belonged to some abortive attempt at introducing a lace manufactory into Steeple Lawford. This the ladies purchased on very favourable terms, and placed immediately under repair; Marten being the active agent in the whole concern.

We pass over a few more weeks, during which the young curate was up to the ears in the affairs of the school, and the active agent in all matters belonging to it; but not to give a false colouring to the affair, much more deeply engaged with the material parts of the business, than with any thoughts either of a spiritual and intellectual nature, so far as related to the concern. He was very willing to believe what the ladies told him, that he was doing, and already had done, by

means of Lord H—, vast things for the rising generation of Steeple Lawford ; but never paused to ask himself of what kind that good might turn out to be ; for the simple collecting a number of children together is a very doubtful good, unless immense and incessant pains are taken to render such assemblage profitable.

Nothing very particular happened about that time, excepting that a letter was received from Lord H—, containing a private hint to Marten that he should make no promise to Lady Alicia of his votes, of which he had been made to understand that he had ten, in any matters concerning the choice of mistresses of the little school. Marten did not relish this hint. It appeared to him that his noble friend ought to have empowered him to tell Lady Alicia that his interest was wholly at her command. He said nothing, however, of this letter, but left his patroness to count the nobleman's votes amongst her own.

CHAPTER X.

"Did you not think," said Mrs. Bridget Elton, one of the followers of Lady Alicia, to a little party of female friends, who had met one Monday evening, in the end of the winter, to drink tea at her lodgings, "did you not think that the voice of our dear minister sounded a little husky last evening?"

"I did observe it," answered Mrs. Alethea Dow, another of the exclusives, "I did notice it, and with pain. Much I fear that he is wearing himself out by his unwearied devotion to the cause!"

"It is a painful but undeniable truth," remarked Mrs. Dolman, fetching a deep breath, "that the best of us are taken first, as if such were too good for our wicked world."

"Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards," murmured Mrs. Bridget.

"Who has lived as long as I have?" continued Mrs. Dolman, "without beholding the blight of many a blossom, and the prostration of many a tall tree in its strength and greenness!"

"Ay! ay!—indeed! Very—very true!" were words which echoed round the table at the conclusion of Mrs. Dolman's speech; whilst some of the kindest hearts—and there were some very,

very kind in that room—brought the discourse back to Marten and his hoarseness, all agreeing that a hoarseness was not a thing to be neglected.

Mrs. Dolman remarked that consumptive complaints generally first showed themselves by hoarsenesses; adding, that Marten's complexion was precisely that of a person constitutionally consumptive; and that whenever the eyes of a young person were particularly bright, and the colour in the cheeks particularly glowing, there was always reason to fear that this dire disease lurked within.

Persons of Mrs. Dolman's description, those whose notes partake of the nature of the boding screech-owl, or death-watch, are invariably incapable of strong and tender feeling; but there were in that room several ladies, chiefly elderly spinsters, who were richly endued with all the tenderness of the best examples of female nature; and on these her remarks had a very painful effect, and not the less so because they had, during the last few months, made an idol of their minister, and had mistaken their admiration for an interesting human being, for real and true religion.

In consequence of the conversation at this tea-drinking, and the doleful prognostics there and then encouraged, the next news which reached the persons of whom the party had been composed, declaring that Marten had so bad a cold, that it was doubtful whether he could do duty the next Sunday, excited them all into a ferment, and nothing was spoken of among the sisterhood, but of the ailments and the various merits of the dear young minister. In the mean time, Marten was

very unwell; he had caught a violent cold, which manifested itself first in hoarseness, and terminated in a sore throat, with slight feverish symptoms. Lady Alicia insisted that he should consult the Steeple Lawford doctor; and when Marten shewed resistance, and insisted that he needed no medical aid, she sent for this said doctor on her own responsibility, and saw that the patient was closeted with him in her own morning room.

In consequence of this conference, the patient was condemned to his own lodgings; and to flannels and gargles and slops, and to the absorption of the contents of sundry portentous-looking phials. These last having, by Lady Alicia's desire, been first sent to her own house, were carried to Marten's lodgings by Miss Liptrot, and administered by that lady's own hand.

These visits of necessity, as they were judged to be, formed precedents for others not so necessary, and as the calls of Miss Liptrot were known to Mrs. Lambert, that lady also thought herself privileged to visit him, so that he was not left, even when shut up in his own parlour, to the entire quiet he might have expected.

His seclusion took place on the Wednesday morning, and it was known through Steeple Lawford before night; and on the Thursday his landlady had as much as she could do to answer inquiries, and go into the patient's parlour with messages, and little presents and recipes sent by the ladies; all of which Marten, who was longing for quiet above all things, begged her to set on a side-table, adding the favour of returning proper thanks.

As Marten was born and fitted in every way

to be a hero, and as we have done our best that the world should know that he was such, the reader must not be surprised if circumstances fell out with him much more fitly and conveniently than they do in common with ordinary persons. Had he been like an ordinary man, when he saw no chance of his being able to do duty next Sunday, he must have used some means of making his distress known to the neighbouring clergy; but as we before asserted, being a hero, his doctor had but just left him on the Friday morning, after having assured him of the impossibility of his going out on Sunday, when he heard a familiar voice and step in the passage to his parlour, and who should appear within his door the next moment, but his friend Edward Mansfield, not in the least changed from what he was nearly two years before, but that he wore a clerical costume.

"What, Marten, my good fellow," were his first words, "do I find you on the sick list?—nothing very serious, I trust; a cold and sore-throat—a little feverish? Well, you have got a comfortable berth here, and I am come at the very crisis, on purpose to help you. I was with Milner at Oxford when your note of last Tuesday reached him, and suspecting that you were worse than you acknowledged, I agreed with him to turn my horse's head towards Steeple Lawford, to see if I could not be useful. I can give you two Sundays."

"And your company on the intervening weekdays," said Marten, brightening up, both as to eye and cheek, so very decidedly, that Mrs. Dolman, had she been present, would certainly have taken occasion for another prognostic. "Well,"

he added, "this is pleasant, I was just thinking what I could possibly do with myself from very ennui; for I can neither write, read, or move with any satisfaction; but now I shall be content to live, and try to get better. Sit down, and tell me all about it."

"Stop," cried Edward, "I must eat before I talk. Ring your bell, Marten; I have not breakfasted since five o'clock this morning, and it is now ten."

Marten smiled, notwithstanding the pain in his throat, murmuring, *semper idem*—and begging his friend to make his wants known to the landlady, when she obeyed the bell.

"What is her name, Marten?" asked Edward; and when she appeared he thus addressed her.

"Mrs. Brett," he said, "here I am, having fallen from the clouds to assist a friend in distress."

"Bless me, sir!" exclaimed the woman.

Mansfield went on. "Oh! these are no uncommon events in the present days—these days of the march of intellect; but you have no idea, probably having never had them, how journeys of this kind sharpen the appetite. I am excessively hungry: have you such a thing as a quarter loaf in the house, or could you take the trouble to toast me a rasher or two of bacon? May be you have a little coffee by you, and a small jug of cream. You will not put salt into the coffee, if you please"—an allusion, probably, to the salt plot—"I generally prefer sugar to my coffee."

"You shall have all you wish, sir," answered the good-humoured woman; and when she went into her kitchen to make her preparations, she

told her husband that she had never seen a more pleasant spoken gentleman in her life, barring Mr. Marten himself; though, to be sure, he was a little romancing, for which she liked him none the worse, though it was not a thing as her lady approved.

Edward Mansfield, when seated at his coffee and bacon, lost no time either in satisfying his hunger, or telling such news as might interest Marten.

"Milner," he said, "was looking forward to his examination."

"And," remarked Marten, "a little nervous of course."

"Not in the least," replied Edward. "Very busy, reading hard; but otherwise just as usual. All he expressed was, that he wished it was over, that he might read what he liked."

"And Wellings," asked Marten, "what is he doing?"

"Doing as I am doing," replied Edward, "eating."

"Eating!" reiterated Marten.

"Yes," said Edward; "eating his way to the bar—exhibiting much talent in the progress; he is just the same sort of fellow as ever, only, may be, more disagreeable."

"And Clayton?" asked Marten.

"The last I heard of him," answered Edward, "was, that he was laid up with a broken leg somewhere, having taken a flight over his horse's head."

"And yourself, Mansfield, what have you been doing the last eighteen months?"

Edward had little to say of himself, but that he was, as Marten knew, curate to his uncle, who

had given him a title, and had a holiday because his church was suffering the process of a new pewing.

How long the invalid might have been able to enjoy and be the better for the discourse of his friend, which was restoring many remembrances of his boyish days, cannot be said, if suddenly the far-off tones of a female voice towards the back of the house had not reached his ear.

"Excuse me a minute, Mansfield," he said, "I leave you to look over my books—you will find some old friends;" and at the same instant he quitted the parlour, resolving to remain in his own room till the visit indicated by the voice should be concluded.

Marten had hardly effected his escape, when the shrill high tones of Miss Mary Liptrot were heard in the passage, and so loud in communication with Mrs. Brett, that what the latter said, could only be guessed by the exclamations of the former; by these Mansfield was made aware that his arrival formed the subject of the discourse.

The next minute the parlour-door was opened, and in walked Miss Liptrot in such haste, to congratulate Marten on the arrival of his friend, that she had actually accomplished half of the speech prompted by the occasion, before she observed that the invalid was not in the room.

Mansfield for an instant made the same mistake that Marten had done, and thought that the gaudy, plain, and voluble person who had entered, was Lady Alicia, but his mistake endured not an instant; indeed, the visitor set the matter right in her very first address to himself.

"I am quite transported," she said, "and Lady Alicia will be delighted; and how did it happen? from the clouds indeed—as Mrs. Brett says; so very opportunely—and how long can you stay?—truly, I rejoice; you don't know, Mr.—; Mansfield you say; well, Mr. Mansfield, you can have no idea how we love, admire, adore your friend. He is our idol! indeed, many of us have a right, young as he is, to call him—yes, Mr. Mansfield, many of us do call him our spiritual father! his discourses—O Mr. Mansfield, persuasion hangs upon his lip; but how is he?—why do I not see him in his wonted place? I hope—I trust—well, your smile assures me that he is no worse—better, I trust—your presence will revive him—we thought him low, depressed—he knows his value, and to be disabled in the midst of his usefulness, pained him—can you wonder?—so many souls hanging on him for daily support."

How long this might have gone on, for Mansfield offered no interruption, is doubtful, if Mrs. Brett, having first knocked, had not afterwards ushered an elderly woman into the room; this personage had somewhat the air of a migratory nurse, but was in reality the housekeeper and factotum of Mrs. Alethea Dow; and one withal of such short sight and limited endowments, both physical and intellectual, that as she entered the parlour, she was by no means aware that the young gentleman, who stood with his back to the window, with his physiognomy somewhat in the shade, was other than Marten himself, whom her mistress had ordered her to see, if possible.

The worthy dame bore on her arm a little basket, neatly covered with a fair white napkin,

and advancing to Edward, she raised the napkin, and extracting from thence a small white jar, she thus delivered herself—

“If you please, sir, my mistress sends her best compliments to you, and hopes you will please to accept this pot of black-currant jam, and Mrs. Bridget, sir, knowing as I was coming, sends this pair of carpet slippers, being her own work, though I calls them carpet, and hopes as you will find them comfortable to wear in the house, for she says as you ought to keep your feet particular warm, and Missis bid me to be very careful to ask you, if you wears a flannel waistcoat?”

“Tell the ladies,” replied Edward, with a solemn gravity, commanded for the occasion to conceal a violent inclination to laugh, “that I am most deeply obliged to them; I shall eat their jam with the greatest pleasure, and serve myself with the slippers under a strong sense of obligation to the kind hand which brought them; and as to the flannel waistcoat, have the goodness to tell your lady, that I do not wear one, but have had passing thoughts of so doing at some future time.”

If Mrs. Betty's eyes would not soon have convinced her of the mistake she had made, her ears would have served her better, even had not Miss Liptrot explained the matter with one of her shrill bursts of laughter.

“Here, Mrs. Brett,” she said, “take the shoes and the jam and lay them aside, and take Mrs. Betty out with you, and tell her what messages she is to carry back; and now, Mr. Mansfield,” she added, as soon as they were alone again, “you have had a proof of the estimation in which we hold our dear young curate; but this evening is

our weekly meeting, we always meet once a week at the Fair Holmes—you must certainly be present—I am certain that when her ladyship hears of your arrival, she will insist on your coming."

"Greatly as I should esteem the honour," replied Edward, "I will make no promise; my accepting the invitation will depend on the state in which I find my friend Marten in the evening."

Edward was left for some time entirely to himself when Miss Liptrot went, but though he took a book in his hand, he was not disposed to read. He placed himself in the great chair in which he had found Marten, and having speculated awhile on his friend's present situation, under the almost uncharitable idea that it was a sort of fool's paradise, little suited to the improvement of a young and fine mind, he soon fell asleep, and slept below as soundly as the invalid was sleeping above, for he had risen long before dawn, until he was roused to have a pink note handed to him from the lady at the great house, insisting on his presence at the evening meeting.

"Tell the lady's servant," he said to Mrs. Brett, "that I will send an answer when I see how Mr. Marten is, after dinner."

"But her ladyship desires an immediate answer;" said Mrs. Brett.

"Well then," replied Edward, "let her be told what I say, I can give no other reply at present;" and as the landlady went out, he murmured to himself, "I should never do for this paradise, and how Marten has borne this thing so long, I cannot understand—but I will spare him till he is better, and then—"

But it needeth for me to call my pen to order,

and to admonish it not to proceed in the recording of so many particulars.

Marten's mind had suddenly been relieved of many cares by the arrival of his friend; in consequence of which he had slept, when he threw himself on the bed in flying from the voice of Miss Liptrot, more calmly than he had since his attack, and came down to sup gruel, and see his friend dine, quite another man to what he had been a few hours before.

Mansfield avoided all reference during the afternoon to his friend's present situation, excepting once only, when happening to observe the various articles ranged carefully by Mrs. Brett on the side-table, the many little jars of sweetmeats, the lamb's-wool comforters, and other matters, which, however different, were all some-way prepared and intended for alleviations or remedies in sickness, he made some remark which caused Marten to colour.

The colour, however, soon passed away, through weakness and the abstinence of several days, and on seeing the blush, Edward turned immediately to the subject of the invitation for the evening. It was agreed by the young men that it should be accepted; in consequence of which, when Marten retired to his room, at an early hour, Mansfield presented himself at the Fair Holmes Cottage.

How far he pleased the Lady Alicia was not immediately known by the other ladies: but every one, particularly Mrs. Lambert, was struck with the fine, deep and manly tone of his friendship for Martin.

He refused all invitations for the next day, which he devoted entirely to his friend, though

he avoided all particular conversation, dwelling much on old times. He went through the Sunday duties with great seriousness and propriety, though no one compared his voice to Marten's, and the ladies, in general, acknowledged to each other, that they did not quite understand the object of his sermons.

Lady Alicia said that they had a tendency to antinomianism, and that he made salvation too easy and unconditional; she rejoiced, she added, that they were not to have him always. Miss Liptrot and others were quite of her opinion. A few obscure persons of the congregation, however, went home rejoicing that the doctrines which they had heard that day, had, at length, found a voice in their parish church.

Marten was so well on the Sunday evening, that he asked Edward to read his sermons to him as he sat in his easy chair.

This reading introduced a long and deep discussion between the young men, commenced by a question of Marten's. "Did Lady Alicia, as you walked from church this evening, give you any opinion respecting these discourses, Edward?"

"None whatever," he replied; immediately proceeding to open out his whole mind respecting what he had heard at the Fair Holmes, and telling his friend that he had been startled by the very evident low standard of religion in that society.

Marten asked him what he meant. To which he answered, "Are you not aware that these ladies believe, or profess to believe, that good works are necessary to salvation?"

"And are they not?" asked Marten; speaking without reflection, or rather in heat, for he felt some implied attack upon himself.

"*Argumentum ad hominem*, as Ladbroke used to say," answered Mansfield. "Therefore the eleventh and twelfth Articles of the Church of England, for the Rev. John Marten, in answer to the said question, respecting the necessity of good works for justification, which is the forerunner of, and includes, every christian blessing.

Marten candidly confessed that he had spoken hastily; and made no attempt to refute or soften down the articles to which his companion had alluded; but turned the discourse on the point of expediency. He had, he said, thought the ladies so good, and doing so much good in their way, and meaning so well, that it seemed almost a pity to disturb their minds, by bringing doctrines forward which seemed to be too high for them.

"Well," replied Mansfield, "granting for argument's sake, that they are so very good, and doing so much good, what more can be required—'They that are whole need not a physician, &c.' But a question might be suggested, setting courtesy aside—for courtesy attributes no defects to a fair lady—if these said ladies of the Fair Holmes are of the race of Adam, can they be so very good? or can they perform works good and acceptable in the sight of divine purity, and hence deserving of salvation.

"Why, my dear fellow, never was the mere man nor woman yet, who could by his deservings evade the penalty of natural death, the punishment of sin: how then can any such expect to merit eternal life by any of his good deeds, or anything like irreproachable purity?—Therefore, without questioning the qualities of your ladies, I cannot conceal my fears from you,

that you have rather administered to their self-approval than endeavoured to awaken them from their dangerous state of self-delusion, by boldly telling them that in common with all mankind, their condition, independently of Christ, is utterly without hope."

It was a blessing to Marten that his strength had been brought low before this conversation with Mansfield, and that he had not power to argue. He was compelled from very weakness to listen; and many were the truths brought before him, not only that evening, but during the remainder of the period spent with him by Mansfield.

Amongst these was a remark on the efficacy of means. All means, however small, and even apparently adverse, in the hand of God are effectual, though in themselves utterly unavailing. Man should use his ministry under the conviction of this twofold truth—that simply, and without the Divine blessing, it is of no avail; but may extend its influence through time into eternity if that blessing accompany it.

"The multiplied works of benevolence," Mansfield also remarked, "are the effects of the prevalence at one time or other, however distant and remote, of Christian principles; these are the roots of them, for they flourish not in heathen societies. But in the degree that these works are severed from pure Christian motives, they become more worldly in their object, and tend more surely to formality and corruption; like beautiful blossoms broken from the root which nourished them, which never bear fruit, but presently fade, and after a little while, are fit only to be cast out upon the dunghill. That minister,

therefore, who is most highly blessed in declaring the Saviour, is the man whose branches assuredly will bear the most abundant fruit."

It was occasionally only that Mansfield conversed consecutively as seriously as he did that Sunday evening.

As Marten got better, and was better able to bear it, he no longer restrained certain impulses which were strong within him, to play a little with what he considered the ridiculous circumstances of Marten's situation.

"These women, Marten," he said, "with their sweetmeats and their comforters, and their codlings and their messages, and their dear minister, will soon make you little better than themselves; they will wholly unman you. You must get away, or you will be drawn in to knit comforters with your own hands, to wear flannel waistcoats in the dog days, and to be needle-threader in general at the ladies' committees. Your mind will be ruined out and out. You must cut and run; for you cannot suppose that you will be spared voluntarily."

Now, if there was one thing more than another more hateful to Marten, it was to be an object of even the most good-natured ridicule. Mansfield's was kindly intended, but Marten felt it the more, because he had had some misgivings on the subject in his own mind: he, however, endeavoured to put off the subject, and when his friend thought that he had said enough, the affair was suffered to drop.

During the last few days of Mansfield's visit, Marten was so recovered as to be able to take walks with him, in which he did not obtain more vigour in body from the fresh air, than in mind,

from the manly and pious conversation of his companion.

Mansfield left Marten in a very different frame to that in which he found him, which will appear as we proceed.

When Edward was gone, and Marten fell into his former habits, a careless observer might have said, that the illness and the visitor had left no impression; but so it was not—there had commenced in the mind of Marten a dissatisfaction and distaste for his condition—an inclination to look more deeply into what was going forward—to weigh and scrutinize the schemes of his patroness—and to calculate the value of the compliments poured upon him.

These feelings undoubtedly affected his manner; he became graver than usual, and often seemed to be absent in mind when present in body.

The buildings and preparations for the school had, in the mean time, so far advanced, that Lady Alicia set seriously to work to inquire for a schoolmistress; but as she intended to have her own way, this affair had not been again discussed in public, nor was it generally known in the town what was proposed, nor exactly whether the building, which was under preparation, was intended for a general day-school, or an asylum for orphans.

Marten's illness had passed several weeks, and April had come in with her fairest flowers and softest gales, when one morning the subject of the schoolmistress was revived between Marten and the Lady Alicia, the latter never dreaming of the possibility that Marten's ideas on the matter should not entirely coincide with hers.

Her first words reminded him of his neglect in

not having ascertained something more of the characters and capabilities of Mrs. Fell, but he gave no utterance to his thoughts.

Lady Alicia, therefore, was permitted to go on with her plans. "There may be," she said, "a little opposition; there is a party, I am aware, for the old schoolmistress, but it can make no head against us. We have two hundred and fifty pounds, one hundred nearly of which are so contributed, as to carry no votes: thirty-one votes, therefore, is the present number, and I shall make it a law, that as soon as we begin the public canvass, no new vote for this year shall be purchased. Thus, then, the matter now stands: of my suspected enemies I count Mrs. Lambert two; Mrs. Arnould and two of her intimates in the town, three; Mrs. Alethea Dow, one; and Mrs. Bridget Elton, one: in all, seven. On my side my own ten; Mrs. Dolman, and two more of our ladies, three, and Dr. Beecher one; which, with Lord H——'s ten, gives us an overwhelming majority."

"But," thought Marten, "are these last ten quite certain?"

A hint at a walk in the afternoon with Miss Mary Liptrot and one other of the ladies, with an implied request, that Marten would accompany them, induced him to proclaim a call after dinner on parish business, and, in consequence, he set forth as soon as he had taken that meal. He set out to do that which should have been done months before—to make an acquaintance with the school-dame, Mrs. Fell.

He knew where to look for the widow's house: it was quite on the other side of the town, behind the church, on a sloping ground, not very

remote from a water-mill, the noise of which was distinctly heard when the breeze set that way, as well as the rushing of the stream which turned the wheel.

The cottage, which was old and roomy, stood in a garden fragrant with old-fashioned flowers; for there is a fashion in flowers as well as in all things else in creation: but when Marten knocked at the door, which was protected by a porch, he could make no one hear, with the exception of a magpie, which chattered from within, and had something to say in answer to every peal from without. Marten recollected that it was Thursday, half-holiday evening, and he turned from the door, purposing another visit at some future time not far distant.

CHAPTER XI.

FROM the old school-house, Marten pursued his walk in the direction of a wood of considerable extent, at a small distance, one which he had aforetime visited in company with Mansfield. He walked quickly, having Miss Liptrot in his mind's eye, until he had concealed his person from the view of any one who might be walking in the open fields on that side of the town, in one so young and active as Marten, and then fell into that lingering step which denotes a pre-occupied mind.

The spring was an early one, and April seemed that year to have lost no time in adorning herself in all that garniture with which the poets generally endow her. The trees were bursting into leaf; birds were hailing the bright days from every branch; primroses appeared in clusters on the more open banks, and there was a scent of violets, that sweetest of sweet perfumes, unknown in torrid latitudes. Bees were busy amid the opening blossoms; the rush of the river above the mill was heard more distinctly than at the cottage below; and though Marten seemed to be hardly conscious of the scenes through which

he loitered, yet was he invited, by the impression made by its various circumstances on his senses, to turn back to the earliest, simplest, and happiest periods of his life.

His very early years had been spent amid rural scenes, before his family was broken up by the death of his mother, and he had been sent to school when his father went abroad. Dim, very dim and undefined were all his real recollections of his mother; but even that very dimness had assisted him in forming such an image of her—not exactly such indeed

“As youthful poets fancy when they love,”

but such as many a bereaved child, of fine imagination, has formed of parents who have passed away, whilst yet his infant memory was incapable of retaining distinct and permanent images. Marten thought of his mother, such as he imagined her to have been, then of Henry Milner, Mr. Dolben, and Mansfield, and of his late happy intercourse with his young friend, and lastly, of what this friend had said of his own situation, and the influence it was likely to have on his character. He felt that he was beginning to weary of its irksomeness; and yet he thought, how could he give Lady Alicia the pain of even hinting to her, that he was capable of such ingratitude? He had turned out of the more public path through the wood into a long embowered vista, where the trees arching above, much resembled a long cloister, shadowy, and well-defined in its whole length, but opening at the farther end on the brilliant sky. Towards the centre of this vista, Marten observed the procumbent trunk of a tree a little out of the path. He

turned to it, and sat down, leaning back on the convenient bough of another tree, and thus situated in perfect ease of limb, his mind became even more busy than before. Whilst in this position, with his eyes bent down on the quivering and dancing light, reflected through the slightly agitated boughs above upon the moss below, a soft young voice reached his ear, and looking up, he saw two figures passing before him along the avenue.

The one was that of an aged woman, small, and slightly, though not ungracefully, bent; the air was not that of a peasant, nor of a low person of town life; it was rather that of a humble gentlewoman, who, with the mind of a lady, was in the position of one of lowly habits.

But we may ask, what is it we mean, when we speak of the air of an individual? Who can answer this question? It is a something by many understood, but by what sense we know not; but it pervades the whole person, and is incapable of disguise.

The dress of this old person was particularly neat, though showing that it had been carefully saved. The fashion belonged to past years; the cloak, of black mode, trimmed with narrow lace, and the transparent white apron, fresh from the folds, both spoke of the days of the grandmother of such a man as Marten.

A walking-stick, headed with silver, was in the right hand of the venerable dame. She held by the left a little girl, probably about six years of age, a light and fairy-like child; who, if her delicate auburn ringlets, which fell below her straw bonnet, were not displaced, must be supposed to be as pretty and fair as she was neat in attire.

and graceful in step. She was looking up to her aged companion, as Marten saw by the position of her head, for he could not see her face, and the sweet tones of her voice reached him for some time, as the progress of the little party was very slow. They were going on to where the light without broke in on the shade of the wood.

They had hardly passed out of sight, when voices of a very different kind from that of the fair-haired child burst unwelcomely on the ear of the young curate. They came by the way of the town, at the end of the shadowy path directly opposed to that by which the old person and the little girl had gone.

Marten listened attentively, and soon ascertained the voice to be that of Miss Mary Liptrot, who was talking with her usual exaltation of tone to some person whom she had brought with her as a convenient auditor.

After having delivered himself of an exclamation of impatience, up sprang the young curate, turning his back on the path, and diving deeper into the wood, with the intention of making his way out at the opposite end, and getting round in that direction to the high road, and thus back to the town. But the progress of a man through a grove where there is much tangled underwood, can never be forward to his object, unless he has lost all regard for the consistency of his coat, which was not the case of our curate; he therefore was compelled to wind about and about, and to return oftentimes on his steps. Hence there was sufficient leisure for that to happen, which one of the three parties in and near the wood most sincerely desired might not happen, namely, a general meeting.

Marten was so long in making his progress, that when he arrived at the corner of the wood, nearest the road, he saw, and was startled to see, a figure seated on the bank just at the skirt of the copse; and as this was a female figure, he had his fears lest she might prove to be Miss Liptrot; he accordingly drew behind a screen of brush-wood, from whence, unseen, he might inspect the figure.

Soon, however, he was satisfied that the person whom he could see clearly through his screen was not the one he was flying from—but the ancient dame in the mode cloak; she sate alone, with her stick in her hand—the very image of quiet.

Marten, however, at the same moment that he had ascertained this point, very distinctly heard steps, and a rustling among the boughs, so very near to himself, that he did not doubt that the tormentor had followed him, and that his only chance was to remain still, where he was.

Again all was quiet for more than a minute, and then he heard the old person utter a rather feeble call. She was calling to the child who had been with her when he had first seen her; the name by which she invoked the little one was Rosa; and she repeated the call after another minute, somewhat elevating her voice, and saying, "Rosa—Rosa!—where are you, my child?"

Another instant, and the crackling of dry boughs and sere leaves under a light foot, was heard in the vicinity of Marten, and the child came bounding from the copse in full view of the young man, and came dancing up to the aged woman.

All that the dark gold ringlets had promised was more than verified in the beautiful features

and beaming countenance of this lovely child. Her bonnet had been pushed back from her head by some projecting bough, and being held by the strings, rested like a monk's hood on her shoulders, as she came with her small hand laden with flowers.

"Did you think me long, dear grandmother?" she said; "but you know that I am a fairy—your little fairy rose. I have been through the wood, and through the wood.

Who would not be
A fairy like me?

But see, grandmother," she added, whilst the gayer expression of her countenance passed away, and her sweet young features assumed a beautiful and almost holy expression, "see, grandmother,"—and with her right hand she took the flowers which she had gathered one by one from her left, and presented them to the venerable dame. "There," she said, "is the sweet violet and the pale primrose, and the wood anemone; see it droops already, yet it is very beautiful: see how they are all decked and painted without and within. Your fairy rose never wore such colours, did she dear grandmother? But I went a long, long way in the wood to where we once found lilies, and there was not one. I did want a lily for a very particular reason."

"What for, my child?" asked the old person; "lilies are fair indeed, but are not these you have brought me equally so? Are not all flowers given to man to remind him of the rich bounty of God, and to give the believer some notices of what that world will be when death shall have no longer any power over creation?"

"But grandmother," resumed the child, with a sweet earnestness, for her whole face was visible to Marten, "I did want to find a lily for a very particular reason; but you say that the flowers I have brought are as pretty as lilies, then the verse will do as well for them."

Then, as if having made up some resolution—"Now then, grandmother," she said, laying her small hand on that of the old person, "consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field'—You know the rest, grandmother."

"What means my child?" asked the grandmother.

"Last night, dear grandmother," she answered, "when you and my mother had finished your prayers for me, you stood on each side my bed; you thought I was asleep, and you were crying, and you said—Oh! if that sorrow comes which we expect,—I do not know what sorrow it is,—then what will become of Rosa?—she may be a beggar, turned out from house and home. I did not speak though I was awake; but before I slept again I thought of the verse about the lilies, and I got you to walk to this wood this evening, because I thought I could find a lily here."

"Do you not feel sure," she added, in a tone still more serious than the one she had used before, "that if God takes thought for the grass of the field, he will take care of your fairy rose, and of you, too—and of my dear mother?" she added, throwing herself on the neck of the old person.

For an instant Marten heard only the low sobs of the sweet child, and then the solemn voice of the aged woman, saying, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to babes."

How discordant was the sound which the very next moment burst on Marten's ears!

"My good woman," said the shrill voice of Miss Liptrot, "have you seen Mr. Marten in this direction? he was traced as far as this coppice, and his presence is much required at the Fair Holmes. I have been seeking him this hour in this very wood."

"Have you so?" thought Marten, quietly extricating himself from the brushwood, and when clear, making off in double quick time, "but why is my presence needful at the Fair Holmes; must I ask leave whenever I wish to take a walk? What young man of any spirit would submit to this sort of thing? I wonder that I have borne it so long. So also does the writer of these memoirs; but iron chains do not gall, so long as the wearer can mistake them for silken fillets.

It was one of the peculiar qualities of Lady Alicia's sway, that she never left her dependants any time or opportunity for reflection; she had the art of keeping those under her influence in such a constant petty ferment during the busy portion of the twenty-four hours, that they were almost incapable of reflection during those generally given to retirement and rest.

Marten, as he stalked rapidly towards the Fair Holmes, was so full of conjectures respecting what possibly might have happened since he left home, that his mind could not rest a moment

upon what at the time had excited a high degree of interest in his mind. He wondered how such a family as that, two such members of which he had heard and seen, could have existed in Steeple Lawford, and he not know it. He had not seen the old person and the child, if he remembered aright, in the church. He was right there, for they occupied an obscure seat behind a pillar, and came in at a side door; so he settled it, that they were strangers, for he did not give the parish the credit of such people. He was not aware that there are few, if any, places where Christianity is professed, where the Almighty has not his hidden ones; but had Marten known this, and had he only been introduced to one of these, he would have found many more. But their very character as hidden ones, prevents them from forcing themselves forwards when not sought.

Marten being clear of the wood, made rapid progress to the Fair Holmes, and there he found Lady Alicia all excitement. She was on the outlook for him—all impatient to tell him what had happened: in her hand were open letters.

“This,” she said, pointing to one, “is from my sister; she is ill—very ill, I fear, at Leamington Spa. I must go to her. This,” she added, “is from London—the governess is found, and decided upon—a most superior person, and all that—we must have the election before I go. I have arranged it all four days hence. Lord H—— is at Woodville; you must write to him, Mr. Marten, and you shall send him, enclosed, this letter from London. We will have a committee meeting in the morning. Early the next day man and horse shall go off to Woodville. You will state to him how the affair

stands, and procure a document by which we can avail ourselves of his ten votes. Come, now sit down, we must write our circulars to call the committee for to-morrow, at noon."

It was getting dusk before these circulars were written, sealed, and sent out. Miss Liptrot had come in; and Marten was on the very point of betraying himself, by asking who the old person was, of whom she had asked if he had been seen; he, however, caught himself up in time.

Before he took leave that night, Lady Alicia engaged him to breakfast with her, as she had more last words to say before the meeting.

There was more discord at this meeting than had ever before occurred at any meeting at the Fair Holmes.

There was a strong and decided party for the present dame; the character given to her was very superior; it was allowed, indeed, that she was failing from age, but her daughter was asserted to be equal in piety and abilities to her mother, and it was strongly urged that she should be the person selected. The utter ruin of the family which had hitherto lived in comfort, was another plea which was urged, and the hold which both mother and daughter had on the affections of many in the town, was also very strongly stated; Mrs. Lambert and Mrs. Arnould being the chief speakers.

Marten was astonished at the irritation betrayed by Lady Alicia; he had never seen her so discomposed; but it is to be remembered, that he had never seen her so decidedly opposed. His own mind was strongly with the party for the daughter of Mrs. Fell, but not having seen her nor her mother, to his knowledge, for which he

blamed his own negligence, he could say the less, though he hinted more than once, that he thought Mrs. Lambert and Mrs. Arnould had adduced some arguments which should be attended to. Lady Alicia bore all down before her, by saying, that the affair would and must be settled on the Monday next, being the eve of her journey to Leamington: and that as votes were free, the general opinion would be ascertained by the numbers in favour of each candidate. She dismissed her committee shortly after this, and within two hours from that time the whole town was made acquainted with what had passed at the Fair Holmes, and Mrs. Fell told that there was little hope, but that she must shut her doors, and close her school.

Lady Alicia detained Marten with her for some time after the ladies were gone, being herself so hot, that she hardly suffered him to speak, though he made several attempts.

At length, on his saying that he could stay no longer, she said "well, you will prepare your packet for Lord H——, and enclose the letter about the person from town. The man will go off by day dawn. I cannot wait for the round-about business of posts."

"I shall tell his lordship," replied Marten, "how the case stands exactly; you will think that right, Lady Alicia."

"You will tell him my opinion," returned the lady, "and your own, of course."

"Mine," said Marten, "is not exactly decided."

"Indeed," replied the lady, "then of course it goes for nothing, and can have no influence;" and she was about to give him the London letters,

when she drew it back. "On second thoughts," she said, "I will write a few lines myself, and enclose the letter to send with your dispatch."

Marten then took his leave, and after a hasty dinner, went again in search of Mrs. Fell.

As he proceeded through the street, several respectable people met him, all full of the affair of the school, and all with much concern depicted in their countenances, lamenting the injury threatened to Mrs. Fell and her daughter. One bore witness to the excellent qualities of the mother, another to the daughter, Mrs. Merton; one lamented what was about to be, in consequence of recollections of former days, when he or she had been blessed with sweet instruction, poured from the lips of the venerable dame, and others grieved for their children who were under the teaching of the younger.

"But," said Marten, "even if the new school is established under the other person, why cannot Mrs. Fell carry on her school? there are children enough for both."

He was told that the poorer sort, those who chiefly sent their children to Mrs. Fell, would be glad to save their fourpences and sixpences; that the old school would be inevitably knocked up, and the dame, no doubt, obliged to break up her household, not having means to pay her rent. She had, they said, already made up her mind to this; and Mrs. Merton had talked of a service where she might have the care of children. "God help them, poor souls!" was the general cry.

As Marten passed the George, the landlord, who stood under the gateway, called to him to plead the same cause. "Lord sake, Mr. Mar-

ten," he said, "you must stop this business; her ladyship is a very good lady, for all her fads about the races and such like; but in this matter she is altogether in the wrong box. Why, Mr. Marten, there is not such another bible scholar in the parish, and it is not Dame Fell's fault, nor her daughter, if we are not all a pretty deal better than we are."

Marten got more and more excited as he went on, and was glad to turn off from the importunities of the people, by making a short cut across the churchyard, by which he was soon brought in view of the cottage, with its antique gables, its windows in the thatch, and its fragrant garden. He descended the bank in haste, for it lay a little lower than the churchyard, and had just opened the wicket, when he was brought to a stand by an object which thrilled through his heart. It was the same little girl whom he had seen and heard in the wood—the Fairy Rose, as her grandmother fondly called her. Her sunny locks were unshaded, and were disordered by the breeze which played through them. Her attitude was precisely such a one as an artist would have chosen to depict patient sorrow: she was leaning with her arm shading her eyes against the rustic pillar of the porch, and from one moment to another her whole person was agitated by a sob.

If the gentle reader requires any detailed explanation of what passed in Marten's mind when he looked on that fair weeping child—the Fairy Rose, all bathed in dew—I am grieved at not being able to satisfy him. Some feelings are too fine to be described, so I shall only say, Marten hastened back to his lodgings, and dashed off his letter to Lord H——, and fearing to read it, he

put it up with Lady Alicia's packet, which he found on his table when he returned, and gave it to Mrs. Brett, whose husband was the person to ride off with it by day-break. He then left his house again, not wishing to encounter Lady Alicia until the packet was past recall.

It requires almost a super-human effort for a man to become suddenly sincere with a person between whom and himself there has been for some length of time an interchange of flatteries. Marten's eyes seemed suddenly and violently, as it were, opened to the weakness—not to use a stronger word—of his compliance to his patroness. He saw that, to please her, he had lowered the tone of his doctrines, actually for her sake holding back many that he knew to be true. He had done wrong, he felt; but he had been misled by her excessive kindness. It was required of him to be more sincere with her; but he must not give her pain if it could be avoided. She, he felt, had the affection of a mother for him; she was as proud of him as mother ever was of a dear son; but he farther thought, I must not deceive her—I must tell her that I have spoken well of the old schoolmistress. I think I have done it correctly and fairly.

And he did make some sort of confession the next morning, but it was in a tone so guarded and so tame, that it hardly seemed to attract any attention from the lady, who was all alive with the two objects before her, and in all the bustle and excitement of preparation. Never did Marten appear to be in higher favour than he was at this time, for his patroness had a thousand little tasks for him to perform, and he had as many directions to receive, respecting what was to be done

in her absence. The messenger from Woodville arrived on the Saturday; he brought a polite note to Lady Alicia, wishing all success to the school, and a sealed packet to Marten, which was not to be opened till the votes of the other subscribers had all been collected. Lady Alicia had so arranged her plans, that she and Miss Liptrot were to set off immediately after the meeting on the Monday, not having the slightest suspicion that any defeat awaited at that meeting. Marten himself almost doubted how the affair would turn out; whilst Mrs. Fell, when looking at her Fairy Rose, derived her comfort principally from the light from above, thrown upon the quotation so beautifully adduced by that fair child, during their last walk together in the wood.

CHAPTER XII.

At eleven of the clock on the Monday morning, the Lady Alicia sate at the head of her long table in her elegant saloon, with her companion, Miss Liptrot, awaiting the arrival of the persons entitled to vote in the affair of the schoolmistress. Before her lay, in business-like order, sundry elegantly bound account books, and a handsome apparatus for writing; and her ladyship herself was in her most bland and agreeable spirits—not too high, neither too reserved nor fine—which last she could be on occasion, but prepared to be most extraordinarily polite.

Marten was the first person who came in; he brought Lord H——'s sealed packet in his hand; Lady Alicia took possession of it, and laid it on her right hand, with a look which seemed to say, this is our own—our corps de reserve.

Mrs. Lambert next appeared; that lady was not in her most talkative mood. Marten could not read her countenance, well as he thought he knew her. She was speedily followed by the other ladies; and when all were come, Lady Alicia having established Marten as secretary of the school, to collect and write down the votes, the business commenced.

“We will first, if you please, take one side, and

then the other," proposed Lady Alicia. "Mr. Marten, we will first take Mrs. Lambert's party—I should prefer speaking last." Marten wrote, "Mrs. Lambert first," &c. &c., until the seven votes expected to be in favour of Mrs. Fell, were all gathered in, and stood, in their paucity, ill-prepared to meet and contend with Lady Alicia's ten, and four more on the other side.

There was a momentary silence in the room when these votes were so far ascertained, and signs of very evident distress on the kindly countenances of several of the losing party. At this crisis Lady Alicia extended her jewelled hand to Lord H——'s sealed packet, and handed it to Marten, directing him to open it—at the same time busying herself with one of the books upon the table, to conceal the expression of her countenance, which was that of triumph,—one which is never graceful, and one which there are few occasions on which people like to betray it.

Every eye, excepting those of the lady, was fixed on Marten as he opened the seal; their gazes becoming more and more intent, whilst, reading an enclosed paper, his cheeks and brow became like crimson.

"What is it, Mr. Marten?" said Lady Alicia, "who had looked up, and been startled at his appearance."

"It is not—not as I expected, madam," he murmured.

"How, how!" she asked, "give me the paper; and as she read it, she turned excessively pale, and her lip quivered: but using all her self-command, she handed it to Mrs. Lambert, saying, "Well, ladies, you have gained the day, and I trust that all will turn out better than I expect—

Mr. Marten, you will take charge of these books:" and striking her repeater, "Liptrot," she added, "we must be off—we are too late already. Ladies, adieu! I shall hope to return in a few weeks." Then hastily giving Marten a finger, not as aforetime, a whole hand to shake, she passed from the room by an inner door, leaving the ladies to look at each other with a degree of astonishment which had not often been experienced at the Fair Holmes.

Before this astonishment had proceeded to express itself by anything more than open eyes and raised hands, Marten very prudently gathered up the books, and made off. Pleased he was beyond all contradiction at the decision; but he was sorry for Lady Alicia, and did not know how far he was himself implicated as having influenced Lord H——'s decision; the single finger convinced him that he had not come off clear of suspicion. He had scarcely reached his parlour when he saw the carriage drive off with his patroness and Miss Liptrot, and she was hardly gone when he saw the ladies go out in a body from the Fair Holmes; and not another half-hour succeeded, when he heard the bells strike up from the steeple, being set in motion by all, and they were many, who wished well to dame Fell, or who hated Lady Alicia on the score of the races and the beer-shops.

As it has been necessary to dwell so long on this part of Marten's career, we must not enlarge upon that portion of it which Lady Alicia spent at Leamington. Mrs. Lambert, as formerly, claimed much of his time, yet was that time not without its profit to him, and perhaps also to her. They went often together to visit the school-

dame's cottage, where things still went on in the old way, as no change was to be made till the return of the patroness.

In that cottage they enjoyed the benefit of witnessing the beautiful and ennobling effects of piety in the three stages of human life—venerable and feeble age, the strength and vigour of middle life, and the tender bloom of opening youth.

Many things which dropped at these times from the lips of the venerable mother, by the Divine blessing, sank deep into the breast of Marten, though for the time being they seemed unnoticed by him.

Something was said one day, in a tone of quiet sarcasm, by Mrs. Lambert, of Lady Alicia; in reply to which, Mrs. Fell said—"Ah! dear madam, be not too hard upon her; I believe her to be a worthy lady, and the instrument of much good in the hands of God. Look at her infant school, many a one cherished there will rise up and bless her. If, sometimes, she is mistaken, who is not so?—who can say I have done good and have not sinned." And as if her mind had shot beyond all present things, she proceeded to speak of him who was able to preserve the human nature from any spot or contamination of sin, and then addressing Marten, "My dear young gentleman," she said, "you have been called to the ministry during a time of much trouble, from the variety of opinions now afloat amongst professing Christians. It is your wish, I believe, to exercise your calling for the benefit of your fellow creatures, and your desire to be enabled to do for such as are under your influence what may prove of lasting benefit

to them. If so, may it be your prayer to God, that you may be enabled simply, faithfully, and continually, to declare what Christ has done for the race of Adam, a subject which never can be exhausted, and may be displayed in as many forms as there are beautiful objects in nature, or beautiful relations in society. Not, indeed, neglecting acts of charity and kindness to the mortal parts of your fellow creatures, but being ever confident and assured, that the only way in which one man can be instrumental to permanent good to another, is by making him, by divine permission, acquainted with the truth as it is in Christ our Lord. Every other act of kindness which it may be put into the heart of one man to do for another, being of the earth, and affecting only earthly things, changes with the elements of which it is composed, and with them will finally dissolve and pass away, as if they had never been; but the word of the Lord abideth for ever."

It was after having heard these remarks, that Mrs. Lambert said to Marten—"There is a great deal in what that old dame says; I shall not easily forget the manner in which she resolves all our good works into nothing. She makes no more of them than our great poet does of all the gorgeous works of art," and she repeated with some emphasis,—

"'The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherits, shall dissolve;
And like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind.'"

"So much for our good works. I believe she is more right than some of us are inclined to think."

Lady Alicia was detained longer than she had expected at Leamington, so that the races were over, and Marten's two years had expired, when she sent orders to her servants to get all things ready at the Fair Holmes for her reception.

The month of July was far advanced when Lady Alicia returned. It was evening, and Marten ran out to hand her from her carriage, for he was glad to see her; and yet he felt, though he could not have said wherefore, that there was a something deficient in the cordiality with which she met him, and which reminded him uncomfortably of the single finger which she had tendered before her departure. But she was more than usually polite, and even complimentary; he must drink tea with her, and walk with her about her grounds, and she had various questions to ask him, though she touched but lightly on the affair of the school. He was also to sup with her and Miss Liptrot; and as the hours advanced, he lost sight of the shadow which he thought he had observed when first they met.

Whilst at the supper-table, she said, with a sort of affected carelessness, "By-the-by, Mr. Marten, I have spent much time at Leamington with a friend of yours—a most charming woman, and I have reason to think a really pious one; though, as she herself confessed, in her own engaging simple way, till she happened to meet with me, she had ever been drawn too much away from serious matters; but she spoke of you with enthusiasm, as one of the most attached friends of her son, and he is a delightful young man. We were quite charmed with him; we heard him preach twice; he has not a strong voice, indeed, nor a forcible style, but he more than makes up

for these defects by his remarkable elegance of style, and the taste with which he uses the metaphorical language of Scripture : he created quite a sensation in Leamington."

Whilst Lady Alicia was pouring forth all which is written above, Marten's mind was running the course of all his old acquaintance, to find this charming woman, and her sensation-creating son ; being as little able to recognise the persons by the description, as the eagle was to discover the progeny of her friend the owl by the delineation given of them by the mother.

After some little hesitation, he was at length obliged to say, " Really, Lady Alicia, I am not able to recognise these persons ; a charming woman, you say—and a distinguished son."

" Have you forgotten Mrs. Bonville and that elegant interesting young man, her son ?" exclaimed Lady Alicia, in a sort of reproachful tone, though with an almost forced smile, the reproach arising from a gentle hint given to her by the mother ; to wit, that Edgar's superior merits had excited no small envy, and made a party against him at the university.

At the sound of these names Marten started so decidedly, that the chicken he was raising to his mouth fell from his silver fork, and at the very same moment his opinion of Lady Alicia's sagacity suffered also as decided a fall as the chicken. The look of astonishment which he gave to his patroness at the same critical moment—seeming to say—and could you possibly be gulled by that woman, or mistake that soft fellow Bonville for a man of sense ?—If so, what is the value of the high opinion you have professed for me ?

Lady Alicia was not so quick in reading coun-

tenances as was her apparently more inconsiderate friend. Miss Liptrot had been watching Marten closely through the whole conversation, and was almost as well acquainted with what was passing in his mind as he might be himself. She interrupted the silence by a laugh, and the remark that Mr. Marten did not appear to be quite so enthusiastic an admirer of Mr. Bonville as the people were at Leamington. "Am I right?" she asked, looking hard at him.

"Edgar is a good-natured fellow, and an old acquaintance," replied Marten; "at any rate, he is better than his mother."

"Well, but how," asked Miss Liptrot, "in the true spirit of one who pokes straws through the bars of a tiger's cage, to set the noble beast a roaring. But Marten saw her aim, and drawing himself into himself, suffered the pleadings and praises which she used in favour of the widow to go to any length she chose to carry them; nor was the subject dropped, till he heard that Mrs. Bonville, and perhaps her son, were likely soon to pay a visit at the Fair Holmes.

Marten felt annoyed and disgusted with the whole business; not that he experienced any other feeling for Edgar, than a sort of contempt, unmixed with dislike; but for his mother he had a rooted aversion, and having resolved, when they appeared, to withdraw himself as much as possible from their society, he dismissed them from his mind.

A week or more had passed since Lady Alicia's return, when Marten was made to understand that Mrs. Bonville had fixed her day, and would be at the Fair Holmes very shortly. He was walking in the shrubbery with Lady Alicia, when

she told him this news. Soon after which she said, "How speedily time flies! You have been here Mr. Marten, now, two years—you are not thinking of leaving us, are you, my dear sir?" The last words were uttered in the lady's gentlest accents, and appeared to Marten that they were intended to prevent what he supposed she would think a severe loss; even his society and his assistance in promoting all her plans for usefulness. He accordingly, in reply, failed not to pour forth such assurances of attachment to the place and to the people, and such interest in all that was going, and such a deep sense of gratitude to herself, that had an indifferent person heard them, he would have concluded that Marten was a fixture at the Fair Holmes so long as Dr. Beecher chose to secure him the situation.

Lady Alicia acknowledged her deep feeling of all that he asserted, and added a few delicate compliments upon the pleasure, satisfaction, &c., she had hitherto derived from his society.

"But, dear Mr. Marten," she said, "to account for my question respecting your intention of remaining here, I must inform you that Mrs. Bonville told me that her son, whilst we were in Leamington, had a letter from one of his and your common friends, who said, that the curacy of some place—I forget where—had been offered to you, and that you had not decidedly rejected it."

"Was the place Ravenswood?" asked Marten. "Mr. Mansfield wrote to tell me that such a curacy might be had; but being settled, I paid little attention to the affair."

"My reason," replied Lady Alicia, "was merely this, that in case you should think of removing, now or some time hence, you might inform me;

one sometimes, you know, wishes to serve a friend."

It is marvellous how a few little words sometimes overturn every feeling and purpose of the mind. So utterly astonished was Marten at these few little words of the lady, that for a few minutes he could not utter one word: the blood mantled to his very brow, and then receded till his very lips were colourless. The lady seemed purposely to avoid looking at him; she probably supposed that he was feeling something; but she did not seem to be troubled with any sympathetic emotions. Finding he did not immediately answer, she added, "Your friend, Mr. Bonville, is at present unemployed. His mother tells me he expects a family living, of some value, shortly to be thrown on his hands, but till then he is disengaged. Do you think, as we are not to lose you, as we feared, that he could procure this Ravenswood?"

"Lady Alicia," said Marten, endeavouring to manifest a coldness which he did not feel, "far be it from me to stand in Mr. Bonville's way. It is quite indifferent to me, whether I leave Steeple Lawford this year or the next. Your ladyship will have the goodness to state your plans to Dr. Beecher; at all events, I shall leave this place in a few weeks. I have the honour to wish your ladyship a good morning." And he walked away with such a dignified march, that his steps resounded till he had quitted the gravel-walk, and passed through the little wicket.

Shall we give our readers three or four pages of Marten's feelings?—No, we will spare him the infliction. We shall only say, the cruellest and deepest cut of all was, that Edgar Bonville should

be preferred to himself. Had it been any one on the face of the earth but Edgar Bonville, he thought he could have borne it better; but such a soft youth as that, and through the intrigues of his mother, the *stultissima*—as she used to be called at Queen's. To be overreached by the *stultissima*! He was exasperated almost to madness, until he had let off steam by two long letters, one to Henry Milner, and the other to Edward Mansfield, begging them to look out for something for him without the smallest delay. "That," as he expressed himself, "I may let the people here fully know that I can obtain what is much better, and far more agreeable elsewhere, than what I now relinquish." These letters being signed, sealed, and posted by Marten's own hand, he dashed off to consult with Mrs. Lambert, as to what was best to be done in his present predicament. Mrs. Lambert sympathised warmly in his irritated feelings, but congratulated him on getting free from Lady Alicia's influence. What pleased Marten most, however, was her information concerning a distant relation of her own, a rector, who had two livings, and was permitted to hold both; "and I know dear Mr. Marten," she said, "that he is in want of a curate even now."

Marten asked no questions of how it came that the situation seemed, as it were, to be going a begging; but in the heat of his resentment, he authorised Mrs. Lambert to write to her cousin, and to secure the situation for him.

Things, after the eclairsissement which had taken place between Lady Alicia and Marten, hurried to the crisis with the swiftness of fate.

Doctor Beecher behaved very handsomely to Marten; for when Lady Alicia spoke to him and

proposed Edgar as a substitute for the present curate, he would give no answer till he had seen the latter.

"I foresaw this, Marten," he said; "I knew her ladyship better than you did—this of course between friends—but I will not give way to her, unless you wish it. Now then, unless the character of this Mr. Bonville is perfectly correct—you know him, what is he?"

"I know no harm of him," replied Marten; "but to be quite sincere, he is not—" and there he stopped.

"Perchance not over bright," added the Doctor, laughing; "I have heard this hinted. But may not a ready-made fool—excuse me, Marten—do just as well for the ladies of the Fair Holmes, as one made by their own management, out of a man of sense? Eh, Marten, depend upon it, the sort of process carried on by the fair patroness is not good for the mind of any young man; it is an unnatural and enervating state of things. You did not expect such remarks from me, but of course, Marten, what the Rector says to his Curate goes no farther;" and then shaking him heartily by the hand, he added, "believe me, dear Marten, to be your most sincere well-wisher, wherever you go."

Marten having declared that he wished to leave the place, Lady Alicia had nothing to do but to write to Mrs. Bonville, and tell her that her son needed only to bring proper testimonials, to be accepted by Doctor Beecher.

Mrs. Lambert was successful in the interest she made for the curacy of Bickerton; she was only sorry that Marten could not have a holiday between giving up one curacy and taking another,

but it was necessary for him to repair to the new place as soon as possible.

Marten was rather pleased than otherwise that there was so much urgency in the case. It would deduct, he thought, from the triumph of Mrs. Bonville, to find that he was already provided with a charge on his leaving Steeple Lawford. He set manfully to pack, on the receipt of the letter, for it was his object to get off as soon as he could; if possible, before the Bonvilles came, or the intended change was known in the parish.

Mrs. Lambert, the only woman of sense, as Mansfield had said, among the sisterhood of the Fair Holmes, was one of the few persons at Steeple Lawford to whom he did not like to say adieu, and the humble inhabitants of the school-dame's house were amongst those of whom he also thought with regret. As to Lady Alicia, since the conversation in the shrubbery, he had entirely used his own convenience as to the times he visited her.

It was an exercise of skill between them, who should be most respectfully polite to the other, and one which both achieved well; unless that there might be in Marten's manner, a little too much hauteur, and in that of the lady a too evident attempt to flatter.

It was still only whispered in the town, that Marten was going, when he preached his last sermon; he gave no hint on the subject, but Mrs. Fell remarked, when she went home, that she had never before heard such a discourse from his lips—so sweet, so affectionate, or even of so high a tone regarding doctrine.

“Bless him, my God!” she added, “and he will

bless him, and my prayers shall be for him, till, as the hymn says—

‘This poor lisping stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave.’”

The next day Marten took a polite leave of Lady Alicia, and having dismissed his packages by a waggon, he said farewell to Doctor Beecher and Mrs. Lambert, and spent some sorrowful hours in his favourite wood, meditating there on the destruction of the many brilliant fancies and hopes with which he had come to Steeple Lawford, two years before.

The next day was fixed for the arrival of the Bonvilles; and early in the morning, Marten took leave of his pleasant lodgings, and walked down to the George, to wait for the starting of the coach. Not till the day before had the report of his speedy departure been talked of as a certain thing in the town, and at that hour few persons were up; but the landlord of the inn stood in his gateway.

“So, Mr. Marten,” he said, “you are off! I knew how it would be; some ladies is as change-ful as the moon, and sure to be on the wane after they have shone at the full. But I can’t but say as I am sorry, and so is my wife, and so is many more. We have had worse, and we may have worse; besides we was beginning to like you. It is the way with us Britains, we likes a face we have seen long; though it might not be such a face as yours, sir, which we thought agreeable at the first look.”

“But what is it, my little one, what is it?” added the good man to a little fair girl, who came up at the instant; “what’s these April showers?

Why, you have been a weeping this fine morning!"

Marten had looked in the direction pointed by the landlord's voice, and there he saw Rosa Merton, with the tear in her gentle eye, and a smile which looked almost forced on her ruddy lip. In her hand she held a small parcel, neatly sealed up; and she came close up to Marten and then dropped a low curtsy.

"Well, my dear child?" said Marten, perceiving that she hesitated to speak.

The little girl burst into tears. "I am sorry, we are all sorry," she murmured; "will you never come again, Mr. Martin? I did not think you would go; but will you please, sir, to take this parcel; it is a handkerchief, sir, of very white silk, and I have worked a rosebud in every corner. I thought when you used that handkerchief, you would think how God helped you to save us from being obliged to leave our happy home. My grandmother could not come, and my mother is gone out, so I came; but it makes me cry—I cannot help it:" so spake the Fairy Rose.

Marten took the handkerchief, and though his purse was not very heavy, he wished to force a guinea on the child.

But she almost recoiled from it, crying, "Oh, no! oh, no! but I am so sorry you are going, Mr. Marten."

Marten placed the little packet within the bosom of his waistcoat; and when mounted, a few minutes afterwards, on the top of the coach, he looked back as far as he could see, on the sweet figure of the weeping child.

Thus finished the first episode of Marten's clerical life—to which we may put this motto—*All is vanity.*

CHAPTER XIII.

It is one of the perverse principles of our self-tormenting nature to give us the first hint that we have been and are acting like a fool, precisely at the moment in which the hint cannot possibly be of any use to us, and in many instances, too, when only half an hour or a few days before, it might have been of considerable service. Such was the case with Marten: his high and haughty passions had kept him up, till the moment in which the coach moved. But whether it was that these had been stilled by the gentle and tender address of the little girl, or from some other cause which we do not understand, his indignant feelings quite forsook him when he most wanted their support, and left room within his breast for a train of reflections, which rendered the first few hours of his journey utterly uncomfortable.

He had not expected, for in truth he had not thought about it, that the coach would carry him out of the town before the gates of the Fair Holmes. He was to see his late abode in its fragrant garden, all still bespangled with the morning dew. Once again, and the question was

to be urged upon him for the first time since his angry passions had withdrawn into the background of his breast,—wherefore had he abandoned it? why had he given it up with all its agreeablenesses and the handsome income, and taken in exchange some mean lodging in some common-place town, for such he understood Bickerton to be, with a poor salary, and incessant labour? What had he done this for? To avenge himself? No, he could not apply that flattering unction to his soul; but to indulge the caprice of a silly woman, whom he heartily despised.

It was not till evening that the coach entered the straggling and not over-cleanly suburbs of Bickerton, the very name of which was an offence to the fastidious mind of our young curate. How different, he thought, are these low dirty houses, to the sweet cottages of the Fair Holmes; and then he knew his lodgings must be amongst them. He had, by letter, secured the apartments of his predecessor, which were stated to him to be convenient and not expensive; and he had ascertained from the coachman that he should pass these same lodgings, which Marten had told him were at the house of a Mr. Hobbins, in the High Street.

“I knows him well,” replied the coachman, when his passenger indicated the name, “he is a currier, and a respectable man—I will be sure to stop as we passes.”

A very short phrase will designate the character of Bickerton and all its appointments: Everything about the town was “common-place,” and consistent in its grade as the centre of an inferior manufacturing district; rather smoky, as all such places are, and somewhat depressed in

the scale of good manners, from the circumstance of its being invariably abandoned by the second or third generation of those persons who had thrived in the trade of the town.

Marten's heart sank, when, after having rattled through several streets, the coachman stopped his vehicle, and cried, "Now, if you please, sir," before the shop of a skinner; and when a fat personage in a leather apron, came out and signified himself to be the Hobbins whose name stood in large letters over the door.

He received the expected gentleman with more cordiality than respect, undertook to see his luggage brought in, and having summoned his wife to a little back parlour, committed the young curate to her guardianship, up a dark staircase to his rooms, which occupied the whole of the first floor.

Mrs. Hobbins said she hoped he would find everything convenient and genteel; adding, but now would he please tea, or a mutton chop, or anything else that she could get?

"Nothing at present," answered the disconsolate Marten, who really, as he looked about him, felt that he had already more than he could swallow.

We have hitherto been very particular and very graphic in describing the condition, and as the French would say, the *maniere d'être* of Marten in any change of situation, and mean to be so again, but when a hero falls into such a very every-day situation as was this at Bickerton, a biographer of any taste cannot be expected to linger with him there. We, his historian, could have followed our young clergyman with pleasure through fire or water—have had considerable

satisfaction in seeing him shipwrecked, or incarcerated in a dungeon of the Inquisition, and would have passed with him, very complacently, over the Bridge of Sighs, or to the platform of a guillotine, for all such incidents in a man's life, provided they end well, are treasures to his biographer: but we turn with loathing from such scenes and events as are supplied by a residence in such a place as Bickerton.

Indeed, could we have in any way accounted for the months which our hero spent there, we might almost have been tempted to pass over the whole episode.

Whilst chewing the cud of many sweet and bitter fancies, the young man paced his room as a lion paces his narrow cage; at the same time, almost unconsciously, he took in the whole imagery of the scene about him, in its minute detail, the gaudy paper, the elegant collection of allegorical prints arranged on the walls, the mirror over the mantel-piece, at once protected and rendered useless by the veil of yellow gauze, the cut paper in the grate sprinkled with soot, the muslin curtains which looked as though they had been dipped, blue fringes and all, into an infusion of saffron, the tarnished cruet-stand on the side table, the carpet, not unconscious of various stains, with the miserable view of the high dull houses opposite.

When his eye had got all these objects as it were by heart, and had solaced itself with a grove of chimneys seen from the bedroom window, then and not till then did poor Marten, in the profundity of his miserable feelings, condescend to recollect that he was hungry, and to ask for something to eat. After which, he walked out,

with the sole view of feeding his spleen, by comparing the beauties of Bickerton with those of the now so much regretted Fair Holmes.

That evening he was, however, a gentleman at large, and had full command of his time. But before he had breakfasted the next morning, he was admonished that he was not come to Bickerton to spend his time in the genteel occupation of doing nothing.

After a smart familiar rap at his door, his hostess ushered in a stumpy, dogged-looking, unwashed, unshaved, elderly man, who, stepping forward a few paces, announced himself as the clerk of the parish.

"Well," returned the young curate, "and what may your business be?"

"I comes to tell you, sir, as to-day is a saint's."

"And what then?" asked Marten.

"There is prayers at eleven o'clock, sir," answered the functionary, "and a churching; and afterwards a christening, and John Doe is to be prayed for, and there is a funeral at four in the afternoon; the body will be present in good time—they don't never keep us waiting more than half an hour or so; and this be the day for you to go up to the poorhouse; Tuesday was the day fixed by Mr. Crosby, and so you will be expected in case you don't give notice. And you knows, I reckon, sir, that we always has prayers on Wednesdays and Fridays, and then there is two on 'em as wishes to be prayed by, as are in a dying condition; one is down opposite the Fox, in New Street, his name is Luke Birley, sir, and there is the widow Jackson, up at the other end of the town, just beyond the pike, who has been

sending up to me ever since Mr. Crosby went, on Monday morning."

"Anything else?" asked Marten, with a suppressed sigh.

"Nought to-day, sir," replied the clerk; "if anything should turn up, I will be sure to insense you."

"Very well," said Marten; trying to look as if he were not miserably annoyed, "I will detain you no longer."

The functionary, however, moved no further than one step back, whilst he turned his fingers round the rim of his hat, his opinion being, as he told his intimates when he went out, that the new curate warn't no great things, he feared, being mighty high and positive like. But he had yet another piece of information to give to Mr. Marten, and that was, that there would be a vestry meeting on the following Monday, to consult about parish affairs, and that it was expected to be very full.

"Well," again said Marten, "and what have I to do with it? What is it about?"

The clerk dropped his hat in his astonishment, and then having picked it up, answered, "You is expected to be present, sir. Mr. Crosby—he attended all the meetings. Mr. Gregg, that is our conservative churchwarden, could have made no stand against Mr. Jobson, no how, without him. Mr. Jobson is the t'other warden, and a most powerful man in argolmentation. He is a churchman, or he wouldn't be an officer: but he is always a taking the part of the wrong side; he would have had me out of my desk years ago, if I had not been in it according to law, as fast as the Rector in his'n."

Marten murmured the words, "Low, odiously low;" and again informing the clerk that he was at liberty to withdraw, he set himself to his breakfast with the appetite of one who finds himself in a most disagreeable predicament, which is none the less displeasing from the conviction that it was wholly of his own mismanagement that he was in it.

But, however deep Marten's dissatisfaction might be, he was unable to brood upon any *one* disagreeable, for his annoyances succeeded each other so rapidly, that no one had time to take long hold upon him.

Scarcely had he seated himself with his concordance and bible, to prepare one of his next Sunday discourses, when a horribly intrusive jarring ting-tang began to sound in his ears; he looked at his watch, and found he had only time to reach the church, near as the sound apprized him it must be, before the stroke of eleven. He hurried on his gloves and hat in no very complacent mood, sprang down stairs, and rushed into the street, when there he looked up and down for the church, and at length discerned the old tower, looming broad, black, and high, amid, and rather behind a grove of chimneys.

He turned instantly in that direction, but had to pass between several sordid old houses before he reached the iron gates, which brought him into a churchyard, so heaped up with graves upon graves, so slovenly and so disorderly, that he could come to no other conclusion, but that the dead in body had been committed to the dust in that place from generation to generation by the dead in feeling.

The church was itself a fine old building, but

a dirty exterior is a great enemy to beauty of all descriptions. His new friend, the clerk, was pulling a rope connected with the tinkling bell above in a very business-like way in the vestibule, but desisted the instant Marten appeared, and went before him to open the door of the reading-desk. Within the church there was nothing to shame the slovenliness without. The clerk assisted the curate to put on his surplice, and then Marten took his place, having first ascertained that there were two straw bonnets in one pew, a green one in another, a bald head in a third, a wig in a fourth, and three grey cloaks and two coats of the same colour on benches in the centre aisle. He waited a decent time for recruits and additions to this small company, and then commenced the service; which, to do him justice, he performed as reverentially as if every seat had been occupied; not a little to the annoyance of the clerk, if it were fair to judge him by his frequent short impatient coughs.

The churcing and the christening, as the clerk termed the parties who came in for the benefit of these offices, did not arrive till the first lesson; and the child screeched and destroyed the effect of the second. When the prayers and the christening were over, the clerk admonished Mr. Marten, that if he had not sent no order to the contrary, the folk at the poor-house would be a waiting for him, and it was already later than the usual hour.

By the desire of Marten, a boy was fished out of some cellar-like apartment under one of the old houses, to run before him to the poor-house, and perplexed and dirty in the extreme were the short cuts by which the child brought the young

man out of the town into the smoky fields, in which the poor-house stood, in all its sordid inhospitable extent.

Marten had scarcely yet asked himself what he was to do there, leaving it to circumstances to explain. He was received by a hard-featured woman at the door, and without a comment upon his being a new person, led into a wide comfortless hall, where understanding the hint of a bible and prayer-book set on a desk at the higher end, he took his place; taking it for granted also that he was to read and expound if he pleased, and also to use some of the Liturgy. This he prepared himself so to do, whilst the room was gradually filled by the inmates of the house: a few seats being provided for the oldest and most infirm. As Marten looked round on these people, his worst feelings were excited by disgust, and his best with pity. There was every variety of corporeal and mental deformity, with a general air of dogged dullness and hardness, cast over the whole assembly, with few exceptions that he could observe. The appearance of many of these poor creatures was too strongly indicative of vicious habits to be mistaken, and the young curate, perhaps, made no mistake, when he supposed that of these destitute people, the worthless outnumbered the ignorant.

"The very people," Mr. Dalben would have said, "to whom the gospel should be opened, in all its truth and loveliness; the very people who, having nothing else, might be most prepared to receive the glad tidings of salvation as their only hope, their only resource; but Marten, in judging them to be for the most part hardened, unprincipled offenders, thought it best to give them a

view of the purity of the law, and to bring them to conviction, by informing them of its penalties, and showing them that bad conduct was as little profitable in the world to come, as they had found it in the present. He soon selected a passage of Scripture which suited his purpose, and being very eloquent, he succeeded not only in fixing the attention of many who had half slept, when his predecessor had held forth, but in frightening some to a great degree, and in convincing others, especially the master and mistress of the house, that their fellows and their people were in a bad way, and had but bad hopes for the life to come.

It was hinted to the young curate, that he would not be expected to read and pray more than an hour, accordingly, at the expiration of that time, he withdrew, rather pleased than otherwise with what he had done, and called in his way back on the sick man, Luke Birley, where he gave another edition of his address to the paupers, not doubting but that as this same Luke lived in a dirty house, in a most abominable alley, and had been, as his little guide told him, one that smoked and drank a power, a little of the same application might be good for him. Two funerals protracted Marten's dinner till five in the evening, and before he could return to the composition of his sermon, his mood for it was gone; he was weary, depressed, and filled with regrets, and why he should have left the Fair Holmes, was a problem which he could not solve, his angry and resentful feelings having all left him in the lurch.

We have given one day of his gloomy life at Bickerton, and as *semper eadem*, which we will take the liberty of translating by worse and worse, by an interpretation on which all such *semper*

eadems as that presented in this new curacy, are very capable of bearing, expresses the character of each day as it passed, with few, very few variations, we will not stop to make many comments on what passed.

Marten preached two sermons on the first Sunday to crowded audiences; and though he was admired by many for the same qualities which had obtained for him the good word of the ladies at Steeple Lawford, yet he could not but perceive that his audience gradually fell off, till it sunk to the average of what his clerk told him had been usual in the time of Mr. Crosby. Marten was not aware where the deficiency in his discourses lay: he had fallen altogether into a legal style of preaching—in telling his people what they were to do for God, instead of what God has done for them; and he actually drove away many of the steady church-goers, by causing them to bear, or at least to hear, continually his censures on those who never attended his discourses; in fact, partaking more and more of the bitterness of his own mortified feelings.

He was honoured by calls from some of the gentry of the town, but he had set them all down in a mass as inferior persons, and was so cold and reserved, that they, with few exceptions, soon gave him up; or, if they invited him, as they now and then did to a dinner party, the invitations came so late, that he failed not to suspect that his company was never solicited, but to stop a gap caused by some disappointment of another engaged guest.

This suspicion being once suggested, was met by an invariable rejection of such unceremonious

invitations. His Rector, as we said before, was residing at his country living. Marten never even saw him; all their communications being by letter.

Constant urgent demands on his purse was another grievance of the poor curate. It was not in him to visit destitute and sick persons, without giving some little aid; and then there were subscriptions for schools, and soup, and coal, and this and that, as the winter advanced, in all of which his name was expected to appear. He would not—could not plead poverty—but he felt that he was actually labouring almost without pecuniary reward.

He allowed many months to pass before his dignity would suffer him to make his situation known to his friends; but he at length, however, poured out his troubles in a long letter to Mansfield, and waited his reply with no small impatience, almost resolving to cut and run, at all events, before the second winter fairly set in. With this view, he was on the look-out for any stray disengaged pastor in the neighbourhood, who might find it convenient to take his flock off his hands, if only for a time, till his Rector got a new curate. His eyes soon fell upon one who taught a few pupils in the town, and received a few guineas now and then for a sermon; and keeping this same reverend Mr. Minchall in a corner of his memory, he awaited Mansfield's answer.

Since Marten's residence at Bickerton, he occasionally attended the vestry meetings, for there were some matters to be settled at times, in which his presence and voice were absolutely requisite. He had never returned from any of these, except-

ing in a state of extreme irritability and disgust; but he knew not which of the two churchwardens, who were each at the head of a party in these meetings, he most disliked,—Mr. Gregg, the Conservative, who was against every kind of change, because it was a change, or Mr. Jobson, who promoted every resolution which could be suggested.

The one of these was a dry, dull, positive, prosing old man, rather spare, very sallow, and wrinkled and puckered like an ill-made glove. He was conscious of an independence, and thought himself, though his calling was behind a counter, quite competent to speak his mind before any man in the town. He was never actually rude to Marten, but received all his propositions with such a reference to older authorities, that he plainly showed him that he did not think them worth attending to.

“That won’t do on no account Mr. Marten,” was his most common reply to what the latter said. “You young gentlemen don’t understand business; that won’t suit no how; that can’t pass by no means.”

Mr. Jobson, the other churchwarden, had not even the respectability of Mr. Gregg. Though a churchwarden, he was no favourer of the church,—this Marten soon saw,—and no other than a tool of the party in the town, who hated, and would have pulled down all authorities to make room for them; the man whose motto was—*Otez vous de la que j’y me mette.*

Mr. Jobson was a stout man, with hanging cheeks, an oily complexion, and a bald forehead. When in good humour, or in other words, when he had his own way, he was disagreeably fami-

liar, and would clap a neighbour on the back or take hold of his button: but when crossed or rebuked, he would become white as chalk, his lips would tremble, and his eyes would flash, and he would neither spare high nor low among his fellow creatures. On such occasions, all his bitterness against the Established Church often appeared, even contrary to his intentions.

There has been a secret antipathy from time immemorial, subsisting between the clergyman and his churchwardens, with an often struggle between the parties for power, but probably no two churchwardens were ever more distasteful to a clergyman than these two were to Marten.

Narrow-minded, stupid, and obstinate, as was Mr. Gregg, Marten, however, respected him more than he did Mr. Jobson, though he found the one quite as impracticable as the other; and feeling that he had been betrayed to undue heat by these persons on one or two occasions, he desisted from attending these vestry meetings, until just about the time that he was waiting for Mansfield's letter, when he had a call which he thought it his duty to attend.

The meeting was for the consideration of a church-rate. We will not enter into a discussion of this rate—it is a low charge on householders for the repair of churches; but not the war of the little and big-endians among the Lilliputians ever excited more inveteracy among the small authorities of Lilliput than this unfortunate rate has done in our own land.

Marten, when obeying the call to the meeting, went forth, armed cap-a-pie with contempt for the whole assembly he was about to encounter. He resolved to say little, and that that little should

come with authority. He would not enter into a wordy war with a parcel of low fellows, who were, in fact, stickling for the non-payment of a few pence. When he spoke, he would be heard, and he would use arguments which should silence every man of the malcontents; he would speak as a gentleman and a clergyman ought to do in such a cause.

But he who puts his head into an oven cannot keep himself cool by calling upon the north wind to fan his cheeks. Nor could our young curate retain his self-command when he got into the vestry, where a crowd of heated, violent, low persons were speaking at once and in the rudest style.

He commanded silence, and obtained it for an instant; but had scarcely spoken, when he was insolently interrupted by some demagogue, who declared himself a disapprover of the church, and that he thought it very hard that he should be forced to pay for what his conscience condemned.

Marten's blood immediately began to boil, all his prepossessions were wounded and irritated. He failed not to give a Rowland for the Oliver: one party took him up, and the other his assailant; and before a wheel could have made twenty evolutions, the contest was become general, and the young curate found himself exposed to language which it was injurious to his dignity to have heard addressed to himself, his profession, or to his brother clergymen.

More angry with himself for having spoken in such society, he made his escape as soon as possible, and hastened to his lodgings, in the full determination that, come what would, he would

leave the odious place as soon as he could engage any one to come in his room, and secure the approbation of his Rector.

But was this place so utterly wretched—was there nothing in it or belonging to it, which might not have interested a young minister, whose heart was in his profession? Was there nothing in the dark and wretched condition of many of the persons there which would have excited the interest and compassion of one who, through divine favour, partook of the mind of God?

If the Almighty Father had looked on the sinful human race with the disgust with which Marten looked on the people at Bickerton, where now would man's hope be? Where would be the lovely prospects which now extend before him, far beyond the ken of human apprehension—or even of that of the spiritually enlightened child of Adam?

But according to mere man's estimation of the divine character, it might be expected that the next divine dealing with Marten would be, to afflict him farther, rather than to relieve him. What did that proud young man deserve? surely not an alleviation of his condition; but the question arises from a misapprehension of the divine object under the present dispensation.

Were the most virtuous of men in this world dealt with strictly according to justice, and every one of their offences visited with the severity they deserve, the world would resound with wailings only; for who amongst us, who has been brought by God to appreciate himself aright, but must feel that he has been spared many a retribution which he has most justly incurred?

But we are not under the law but under grace, and the divine object is the restoration of that creature whom God in Christ is reconciling unto himself; and the Father of all men, the prototype of all natural parents, the source and fountain of all parental love, never uses severity for the improvement of an individual, where his infinite wisdom judges that gentleness may be equally effective—God doth not willingly grieve the children of men.

The few foregone passages are to prepare the reader for a letter from Mr. Mansfield, which was placed, a few mornings after the vestry meeting, in the hands of Marten.

The first lines confirmed a hint which Marten had already received, that his friend was about to take a wife; but the writer did not enter largely on the subject, he only said that the event, he hoped, would take place in a few weeks.

The next paragraphs set Marten's spirits in a ferment; the information they contained was, that he, the said Mansfield, had just come into possession of a living of moderate value, agreeably circumstanced, with a good house, a neat and even elegant garden, a few miles from the town of ———, the parishioners few, and all agriculturists, &c., &c. "And now, Marten," continued the writer, "for a proposition. Your last most doleful epistle encourages me to make it. Would it suit you to take possession of my vicarage for one quarter of a year, and do my duty at Altonbury, whilst I take my wedding tour, understanding that you are afterwards to take up your quarters with us, till you can discover something that will suit you? If this plan meets your approval, signify as much by return of post."

It is wonderful how soon things are arranged when all parties concerned are of one mind.

In a very short time from the receipt of this letter, Marten was set at liberty, by the establishment of Mr. Minchall in the curacy, and a place taken in the coach which was to convey him to Altonbury.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE snow was on the ground when Marten left Bickerton for Altonbury, but he took a place inside the coach, and got on very successfully till within a mile of the vicarage; he then walked on, being guided by a man carrying his valise. They passed several cottages before they reached the gate of the vicarage, and it was so nearly dark when they arrived, that he could only see that the house stood in a shrubbery, into which most of the windows opened, but he was cheered by a bright light issuing from one which looked towards the road. He had scarcely knocked before the hall door was opened to him by his friend, who welcomed him with a heartiness which reminded him of their school-boy days, and their meetings after vacations.

"Most welcome, my dear friend," said Mansfield, as he ushered him into a parlour on the left, where the fire blazed, of which the light had cheered him on the road. I would not have the shutters closed, in order that your first view of us should be a bright one: there is nothing like first impressions. But now shut up, he added, to a countryfied sort of serving man, in a black suit, who had been looking on when the master

opened the door, and set on with all speed. "I flatter myself that you are perishing with hunger, Marten," he added, "or my hot supper will be thrown away, and all the labours of Mrs. Betty fruitless. Come, deposit yourself in the old vicar's chair; put your feet in these slippers, and on the fender, and tell me how you are."

The appearance of John, with a couple of boiled fowls and oyster sauce, a chine, and a huge piece of cold beef, with all necessary garniture of vegetables, &c., caused Marten to break off suddenly in the account he was giving of his journey, and to turn quickly to the table, not being at all displeased with these first specimens of the agreeableness of Altonbury.

Though Edward had dined very early, yet was he the first to find leisure to renew the conversation after they had sate down.

"Here I am, Marten," he said, "fallen upon good ground; the whole of the place is much in the style of this room; neat and convenient, though in a small way, as you see.

"My predecessor, Mr. Ricketts, was a neat, well-meaning, charitable old man: he left the house in such good repair, that I was saved the vexatious business of dilapidations. I took the furniture as it stood, on a fair valuation, and for the present the two old servants—the said John, who, in Mr. Ricketts' time, was gardener, groom, and waiter, and valet on occasion; and Mrs. Betty, an ancient spinster, well skilled in all culinary arts, and other domestic matters. I expect, however, that Mrs. Betty will calcitrate when a mistress is introduced, especially as she has a little gathering in the savings' bank; but till these symptoms appear, even if they do not

appear these twenty years, we will not disturb her, for may be she is attached to her old larder and poultry-yard. She is duly informed that you are to be her master with full powers till I return, and John is to bow to your dictum—all that is settled; and I shall send down from London, sundry large packages of books, and you will find shelves ready to receive them in a little book-room up stairs. I know that you cannot live without books."

John had been sent out of the room as soon as he had brought all that was needful, and Edward, as if anxious to get the matter over, mentioned terms so handsome, that Marten was inclined to refuse them, and indeed endeavoured to render them less favourable to himself; his friend, however, seemed hurt.

"I am well off in a small way, Marten," he said; "I have calculated my plans under my income. I am of one mind in this respect, as I hope in all others of importance, with the friend I hope to secure for life; and I only wish that I could do more for one whom I have loved from my days of boyhood. It is impossible, Marten," he continued, "ever to be too grateful to those who were made the means of restraining one from evil in our school and college days."

"You owe me no gratitude on that account, Mansfield," said Marten. "What example have I ever shown to you, but that of pride and self-sufficiency? We both owe much, I know, under God, to the beautiful and pure example of Henry Milner: if gratitude is due by you to any of your school and college friends, it is to him, not to me."

"Of course," replied Mansfield, "I must ever

give the highest place to Henry, as the first, who, during our time, was enabled to sustain, without pretension or cant, the extremely difficult character of a boy of religious principle in a public school; but you have a right to the second place in my esteem, as his supporter and champion—your arguments being such as the enemy could not resist nor gainsay. I am certain, Marten, that I should never have stood consistently by Henry as I did, had not you set me the example. I might have braved fisty-cuffs, black eyes, and bloody noses, but I should never have stood the sneers of Wellings and that set, if you had not shown yourself on the other side.”

The two young men then recurred to many an exploit of former days, and Mrs. Turley, in the kitchen, said more than once to John, “Well, to be sure, how they does but laugh! I question but that the new young gentleman is but a wild sort of sprig. Our young Vicar never laughed in that sort afore, all the days he has been here.”

“Would you have had him sit and laugh by himself, Turley?” said John, “where would be the sense of that?”

“I don’t see any sense at laughing at that rate,” replied the spinster. “Worthy Mr. Ricketts never did so, even as far back as I can remember.”

“May be so,” replied John, “but yet, for all that, it be the nature of some young folks; but now they has done, I suppose they has fallen on graver matter.”

And this was the case, for Marten was asking Mansfield about parish concerns.

Edward said, he had been at Altonbury so

short a time that he knew little of it, but that it seemed to be a decent country place, and farmers were the highest persons in it. There was a Sunday-school, and a clothing club, and also a day-school, where the bettermost children received their first rudiments of literature, the mistress of which wore yellow ribbons, and would favour him with her company every Sunday after church, if he particularly wished it.

"Probably," said Marten, "I may be disposed to spare her the trouble. I shall avoid all intimacies, as I do not expect to stay here long."

"And I shall endeavour to do the same," returned Edward, "because I do expect to stay here a long time."

It was then settled between the friends, that unless Marten saw strong occasion, he was to make no changes and attempt no innovations, but carry all things on as nearly as they had been in the time of Mr. Ricketts, "which," said Edward, "I should myself have attempted to do for a short time, had I come directly to reside."

Marten was sorry to learn that Mansfield found it necessary to leave him the next day, though, as he did not depart till noon, he had full time to take him over the house, to introduce Mrs. Betty Turley, and the old dog to him, to deposit all keys in his hands, and to beg him to make every use of the old horse then in the stable—an animal who had had the honour for some years past of bearing the venerable burthen of the Reverend Mr. Ricketts.

Marten walked with his friend to where he met with the vehicle in which he was to proceed to town, and came back with only one wish—that he had some fellow-creature to return to, whom

he might invite to occupy a seat in his parlour; a fall of snow becoming heavier every minute, precluding the possibility of a journey of discovery about the premises.

When the young man entered his parlour everything looked so comfortable, the fire burned so brightly, and certain new periodicals which Edward had left on the table, so inviting, that having changed his shoes, he sat down, in the anticipation of a literary feast, with little disturbance from without.

He had scarcely got into the pith of a controversy in one of these periodicals, respecting the exact meaning of a certain passage which had hitherto always seemed to be perfectly plain and simple to him, but which he was beginning to *understand* was not to be *understood*, when he became aware of a tap at the door, followed by the entrance of the housekeeper, a pale spinster of undefined antiquity, but with a manner which seemed to say, "How could the world get on without me?"

Marten thought that this vision portended some questionings respecting his dinner, whereupon not waiting till she spoke, he said "Anything you please, Mrs. Turley—anything but a shoulder of mutton."

"Sir!" exclaimed the astonished housekeeper.

"You came to speak about my dinner, did you not, Mrs. Turley," returned Marten.

"No, sir," she replied, "Mr. Mansfield apprized me that I was to do for you as I did for him, so I did not come to trouble you on that account. I came to inform you, that Miss Hippesley is called to speak with you."

"Hippesley," repeated Marten; "Miss Hip-

pesley, where is she? What can this mean?" The title of Miss suggesting the idea, of course, of something young, if not refined. "Where is she?" he added.

"In the kitchen, sir," replied Mrs. Turley; "she just came in before the snow began to fall, and how she is to get back I can't say."

"Tell her I will wait on her this minute."

"Oh, sir!—Mr. Marten!" returned Mrs. Turley, drawing herself up, whilst she smoothed her apron with one hand, "Miss Hippesley a'ant used to be spoken to in the kitchen. She was a parlour guest in dear Mr. Ricketts' time, and was invited to dine with the family whenever there was anything better nor ornary, and no company."

"Well, but," said Marten, "I am differently situated, having no Mrs. Marten."

The housekeeper interrupted him by saying, Mr. Mansfield received her in this very room when she came on the business she wants to speak to you about, sir; and he then said she was to come to you, as he had not time to enter into the matter just then; so, if you please, sir, I'll bring her in."

"In other words," murmured Marten, "as the housekeeper left the parlour, "you will have your own way, but this Miss shall not sit down here;" and he walked to the window, and stood looking out at the falling snow, summoning that which with him was always obedient to his call,—a most determined cold and haughty air, as the best defence he could use against any improper freedom.

At the sound of a shrill female voice within the room, he turned round, and stood a moment gazing at the figure which presented itself, just within the

door-way. This figure was that of a small elderly woman, visibly deformed, with an elongated, and extremely pale face; the eyes dark, and no otherwise expressive but from their depth of colouring, and with a pair of eyebrows so thick and decided, as to have fitted them to match with the beard of a Polish jew; though, to do the lady justice, there were no symptoms of even a *barbe naissant* on her chin. Men have frequently a very correct taste in the whole effect of a lady's dress, though they do not enter into the minutiae of female apparel. Marten, however, was struck with the multiplicity of colours exhibited by this figure, and was able to form a very apt conjecture respecting who this person might be, from the very deep yellow ribbons on her head gear.

The lady was not at all at a loss for any form of introduction; she was not the least put out because there was no one to say—Mr. Marten, Miss Hippesley; or with less attention to courtesy, Miss Hippesley, Mr. Marten. It was enough that she knew who he was; and that he should not know who she was, was an idea quite beyond one of her circumscribed views of the world. Without ceremony she, therefore, advanced and offered her hand, a motion which he was half disposed not to meet; he, however, thought better of it, and submitted to the clutch with stoic fortitude, whereupon the lady opened.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Marten," she said; "I meant to have called before our new vicar went, but was impeded by domestic matters;" then looking round the room, "I am glad," she continued, "to see the old room so little changed, and there is worthy Mr. Ricketts' chair—you have tried it, no doubt, Mr. Marten—it is the most convenient

easy seat for an infirm person I ever met with;" and down she dropped into it, laying her arms on the cushioned elbows, and congratulating herself upon being once again in the dear parlour," adding, "but don't let *me* keep you standing, Mr. Marten."

"You do not, ma'am," was the young man's answer, "I stand by my own choice."

"Young legs—young legs are never tired," she added. "It is a fine thing to be young, but you *must* sit down, for I have a great deal of tedious business to transact with you. Mr. Mansfield said that you were the person to whom I must explain everything, and that when he returned, you could explain the business to him, or to his lady, as might be. By-the-by, Mr. Marten, they have got it up here that Mrs. Mansfield as is to be, is an only child, and very high, and that sort of person. You can tell me, no doubt, something about her."

"I have not seen her," answered Marten, drily, "and know nothing about her."

"If she is as they say, a fine lady," said Miss Hipplesley, "she will never go down after dear Mrs. Ricketts. What a person that was! We were as intimate as two sisters. She would run over of a morning without her bonnet to tell me any bit of news; and few were the days that I did not come in here, if it was only for five minutes at a time."

"You hinted at some business, ma'am," said Marten, "will you please to explain what it is?"

In reply to this demand, Miss Hipplesley brought forward an ominous looking canvass bag, which she emptied on the table, of many coppers, a few sixpences, and an ill-favoured twopenny

account book, which various objects she explained by saying, that dear Mrs. Ricketts had a clothing club, to which the members, being cottagers, subscribed twopence a week per head, and that when Mrs. Ricketts went, she had been asked to receive the money, and keep the book, till the new clergyman came, and now she was come to deliver up her account.

All this was straightforward, yet was Marten still at an incalculable distance from getting to anything like a settlement. Miss Hippesley had her own method of proceeding, and it was not very unlike the host who, having supplied a customer with a portion of ale every day for a year, to the value of twopence three-farthings, had no other mode of discovering the total, but by writing the twopence three-farthings three hundred and sixty-five times down on his paper, and then adding them up. Miss Hippesley had been treasurer of this charity for five weeks, and her method was to take each person's subscription for each week, and lay it aside, till she had arranged that head of the account, and thus she began and proceeded with her book in her left hand, whilst her right hand fingered the money.

"Jenny Higgins," she began:—"First week, twopence—no, one penny halfpenny; second week, threepence farthing; third week, twopence halfpenny; fourth week, one penny farthing;" and so on till she had gone over the five weeks, with only the mistake of a farthing. She had got through another name with equal success, when Marten, who had, at length, condescended to sit down, became chafed beyond endurance. "Do, ma'am," he said, "suffer me to take pen and ink, and carry out what is due to each name, and run

up the sum total, and see that it tallies with the money on the table. I can do it in five minutes."

"Oh, Mr. Marten," replied the schoolmistress, "that would never do. You don't know the people here; the cottagers, poor ignorant creatures, can never be made to understand a sum total. Dear Mrs. Ricketts always calculated as I do, and she gave full satisfaction. I must, my dear Mr. Marten, proceed in my own way."

"Of course," replied Marten; "but whilst you are calculating, you will perhaps permit me to read;" and he took up his book.

"Read, Mr. Marten—read, whilst I am settling an account with you! How are we to get on in that way?"

"Give me the account-book," said Marten, "and the money; I will give you a receipt for the sum; there will not be much wrong either way, I am certain. I am engaged at present, ma'am, and it is utterly impossible for me to give the time to this affair that you seem to require."

"Oh, I suppose," replied the lady, "you wish to be writing your discourse for next sabbath morning. If so, I will be off at once. Worthy Mr. Ricketts—good man—was always put about when he was writing his sermon; and that reminds me, Mr. Marten, I have some of Mr. Ricketts' sermons, given me by dear Mrs. Ricketts before she left, and should you at any time want any assistance, I should be so glad to lend them you, to make extracts from them for yourself."

"I can write my own sermons, ma'am," replied Marten, in his most insolent tone, "but I require time and solitude to do so. I cannot write whilst any one is in the apartment."

"Well, I suppose you mean to say I must be off,"

she replied good-humouredly ; “ so I will go, and chat with Mrs. Turley till the weather holds up for a bit ; but I will come again, and see how you do, and whether there is anything I can do for you. You must be dull here without a friend.”

CHAPTER XV.

MANY a lofty unbroken spirit has found pleasure, if not in actual personal torment, yet in all and every species of persecution which fall short of it, particularly if such persecution come in a dignified form, and cause the sufferer to appear in the character of a hero in his own eyes, or in those of his fellow-creatures. But when troubles come in the likeness of insects, that hop and buzz about, and bite and sting, they chafe the spirit, without bringing with them any such soothing unction as proceeds from the consciousness of being an object of the public regard, and may-be of its admiration. On the Saturday afternoon, the snow still lying on the ground, and the cold being great from the prevalence of frost, as Marten sate by his fire, meditating an examination of a heap of sermons, which lay near to him, with the view of selecting one for the morrow, he was startled by a pert familiar rap on his door, and had hardly said, come in, when Miss Hipplesley entered, followed by the housekeeper with the tea-tray.

"Well, Mr. Marten, how are you?" said the visitor; "how comfortable you look!" and she walked on to the large chair, adding, "the way is pretty well beat between this and the village; but I have been telling John he should sweep the

snow from about the gates, they will be broke down otherwise by their great weight." So speaking, she dropped on the great chair, adding, "So you have not taken tea yet, Mr. Marten. Worthy Mr. Ricketts used to say, 'Miss Hippley, you have the secret of making the very best tea that ever was drunk;' and dear Mrs. Ricketts used to laugh, and say, 'That is a pretty compliment to me, my dear;' so when I was here, I was always tea-maker. Suppose, Mrs. Turley," she continued, "that I now show Mr. Marten what I can do in that way; do you bring me the tea-chest and the kettle; young gentlemen are but poor hands; I well know the business, and I have a mind Mr. Marten shall, for once, have a good cup."

The utmost that could be said of Marten was, that he did not emit steam; on the contrary, he drew up his lips as closely as if he were preparing to duck his head in the sea. But the lady who could come uninvited to drink tea with a strange gentleman was, of course, not very sensitive to the appearance or non-appearance of welcome. She advertised her host that she had some business to open to him after tea, and with some gossiping histories of her neighbours in the village, and certain addresses to Mrs. Turley, when she came in, she so filled up the time, till the tea was made, and handed to Marten, that a third person, if such had been present, would have had no means of knowing whether his silence was from determination or necessity. Of course, when Miss Hippley took her place at the teaboard, she assumed to herself the other privileges of the mistress of the teapot, called for more toast, and pressed it hot on Marten, making herself comfort-

able and welcome, and more at home than any well-bred lady, even in her own drawing-room, that is, if being at home consists in being familiar."

"You must be thinking of the flannel petticoats soon, Mr. Marten," she said; "now is the time, if they are ever wanted. Nanny Hicks was about this very day, and I told her everything was to be done as in Mr. Ricketts' time, as Mrs. Turley told me. The petticoats used always to be given out on Christmas Eve in Mr. Ricketts' day; I always came over to help dear Mrs. Ricketts, and I can tell you who is to have them; not the same as had them last year; that was Mr. Ricketts' rule, dear good man; because, as you know, Mr. Marten, a good flannel petticoat ought to be little the worse for one year's wear, if it was not washed over often."

Marten was almost desperate; he looked round for something whereon to spend his indignation, and nothing else offering, he rang the bell, which same ring produced Mrs. Turley before he had quite recollected himself. So long did he look at her without speaking, that she was obliged to ask what he pleased to want.

"Is the carrier come, and the letters?" was the only question that occurred to him in this dilemma.

"The carrier, sir," replied the housekeeper, "he was in before dark, and brought no letters; I thought I had told you."

"Stop, stop, Mrs. Turley," cried Miss Hippesley, "you can tell, for I quite forget; did dear Mrs. Ricketts use to get the flannel for the petticoats from Pigeon's or Gosling's. Pigeon's you say—then I suppose you will be for having it from Pigeon's, as Mrs. Ricketts did, Mr. Marten; but

the clothing club will be to be supplied by both. Some prefers Pigeon to Gosling, and some Gosling to Pigeon, but I suppose Mrs. Ricketts preferred Pigeon's flannel, dear good woman — she always did everything for the best."

"You forget, Miss Hippesley," said Mrs. Turley, "as Mr. Pigeon gives in the tapes, which Mr. Gosling refused to do."

"See to light a fire in my bed-room, Mrs. Turley," said Marten, "and tell me when it burns up. I have some hours' work to night."

"Have you not yet done your sermon," put in Miss Hippesley, "ah, I suspect that you will have to come to me to help you after all, but you must give us plain practical discourses of course, Mr. Marten, as good Mr. Ricketts used to do. You must not carry us into deep doctrines, for the people here are very simple, ignorant folks, and I wish I could add innocent too; but we have too many——"

Here Marten interrupted her short, and begged if she had any particular business, she would hasten to explain it, as he had little time to spare. "I am come about that weary body, Jenny Higgins," she said. "Do, Mr. Marten, please to turn to the clothing account-book. She was with me last night, and again this morning, and she stands me out as bold as brass that she paid me up twopence halfpenny the first week, and so she makes the total of what she paid to me elevenpence halfpenny instead of tenpence halfpenny; and when I stood her out she was wrong, how she did give it me, — you might have heard her as far as the church. Now, sir, do you please to see by the book if I am not right."

"By the book, you certainly are," was the answer.

"Well, Mr. Marten, then, shall I send her to you when she next comes, and will you set her right?"

To this Marten agreed, resolving to have no quarrel with a poor woman about a penny, and at the same time determining to give a ticket to the poor person as a check.

This matter being settled, Miss Hippesley relieved Marten of her company to go and chat with Mrs. Turley, even before the fire in the bed-room was announced as burning up, and he was left to recover his equanimity whilst he selected a sermon for the next morning.

Multitudes of villages in England would present nearly the same scene, and show nearly the same state of things, as Altonbury did on the following Sunday morning. Whoever would see the established Church of England in her fairest form, should see her in a decent village, where her influence appears so far more benignly and beautifully than in a crowded city, even where she is not most explicit in her voluntary exhibitions of the gospel, which, alas! is but too frequently the case. Yet should it never be forgotten by those who are seeking arguments to use in her behalf, that probably without her aid, thousands of the people of this realm, especially in the rural districts, might have lived and died without ever hearing the scriptures fitly and clearly read, if at all; and if these scriptures are the word of life, is nothing due to the dispenser of them?

Marten's mind had certainly hitherto obtained but passing glimpses of the whole truth as it is in our Lord; and notwithstanding all that had

been said to him by his enlightened friends, he still thought that it might prove injurious to morality, to represent salvation to an ignorant congregation, as being clear of conditions on their part, or to attempt to satisfy those conditional views, which belong to all men naturally, by showing them that every conditional duty required of the sons of Adam had been fulfilled by Christ.

Of course, his first, and indeed all his sermons at Altonbury, partook of the indecisive nature of the preacher's own principles—one passage, may be, declaring the completeness and fulness of the Saviour's work, and the next eating it up, as Pharaoh's lean kine devoured the fat ones, being in no better case after their feast than they were before it.

Discourses of this description seldom produce any other result than to confuse thinking people, and to leave others where they find them.

There was nothing to find fault with in the church; everything was neat, decent, and respectable, even to the singing men and boys, who lilted an old Sternhold and Hopkins with good effect, and in the style of Queen Anne's reign. Everything was smooth and proper, and the frost being established, and the heavens above clear, no one had been hindered by weather from coming to hear the new curate.

Marten was well pleased; and was coming out from the porch in a satisfied mood, when Miss Hipposley, in her usual brilliant head gear, came up so closely to him, that he verily thought she was going to take his arm. He, however, avoided the infliction by a rapid manœuvre, so skilfully managed as to bring an old woman in a grey

cloak between his own person and that of the enemy, keeping himself on the other side of this moving screen until clear of the porch.

"Well, Mr. Marten," said the governess, as soon as they were in the open air, "we are all highly pleased, very much gratified indeed, were not we, Mr. Smith, Mr. Brooks, Mr. Jenkins?" turning to three of the principal agriculturists of the parish. And then not to be behind in politeness, she extended her left-hand towards the young clergyman, and her right hand to the others, and went through the form of introduction, though with the unfortunate mistake of introducing the higher to the lower; an error perceived by none but Marten.

Other introductions, much in the same style, followed, and if the mistress of these ceremonies had been quiet and let things take their course, all would have passed with due decorum; but the good lady was so excited, and presumed so much upon being the first to have known the new curate, that he thought it best to cut the scene short, and with a general bow, hastened through the gate of the churchyard, and took what he supposed to be the shortest way to his home, by a narrow lane which intruded itself on the open road.

This treacherous way, however, led only to a few cottages, and proved to be that which is most hateful of all ways, to a man in haste, namely a *cul de sac*. At the end of this he might have soon reached the parsonage, by climbing an awkward stile, scrambling through a hedge, and leaping a ditch, but he was in his full canonicals, and there were people about in all directions, so he had nothing for it but to march back again—

which he did, not doubting but that he should find what was called the Church-lane, abandoned. Scarcely, however, had he come in sight of the gate of the churchyard, when he beheld the yellow top-knots again, amid a cluster of old women, and what was worse, the sharp eyes caught his figure at the same instant.

"Oh! there you are," she screamed; "I called after you. I knew you would be obliged to come back, and I have been waiting here to set you right."

We must give Marten credit for the fortitude with which he endured the company of the brisk governess, as she walked by his side to the gate of the parsonage, bestowing, during their progress, many little items of good advice, respecting what he ought to do, as the follower of dear, worthy, Mr. Ricketts, but we are not able to decide whether his unbroken silence arose from ineffable scorn, or some more discreet and amiable feeling. The only token by which any judgment can be formed, is the exclamation with which he relieved his swelling heart, as he marched up the gravel walk to the house-door.

"Disagreeable vulgar woman! to think of her presuming to dictate to a clergyman of the Church of England, and one who has taken honours at Oxford."

The packages of books from London arrived in a cart, early the next day, and behold Marten in his most venerable attire, and John and Mrs. Turley, all unpacking in the hall, and carrying the books up to the book-room: and see again, after a little while, all the volumes ranged on the floor, and Marten alone, looking on the catalogue of what should be, with the eye of an

alderman of the old school contemplating the bill of fare at a Lord Mayor's feast.

He had just formed his plan of arrangement, and was beginning to act upon it, when Mrs. Turley appeared, with an "If you please, sir, Jenny Higgins wants to speak with you."

"Tush," cried Marten, running down after the housekeeper, who led to the kitchen.

The unwelcome visitor stood in the form of a tall, sharp, hawk-eyed, middle-aged woman, dressed in peasant fashion, with something on her head, partaking of the double nature of hat and bonnet, in black felt.

She first bobbed a curtsy, and then breaking out in a voice strongly affected by passion—"I wish, sir," she said, "as you would please to see me righted; there is that Miss Hipposley—I wonders how good Madam Ricketts should have thought of employing such a one as she, for every body knows——"

"Hold your tongue, Jenny," cried Mrs. Turley, adding several nods and winks from behind Marten.

"Well," said the woman, "it don't matter for that; only this I knows, that the very first money I gave her was two-pence halfpenny, and my husband knows, and I knows it myself, and would stand to it if this was the last day I had to live, that I put five as good halfpenny pieces into her hand as ever was kindled—neither more *nor* less."

"What then," said Marten, "do you calculate the sum total due to you to come to?"

"Not one farthing less than eleven-pence halfpenny, sir; and you may look at the book," she answered.

Marten fetched the little greasy volume, and proved to her that, by the book, Miss Hippesley was right.

"Ay," said the woman, "according to her own dotting down, who was to hinder her scoring what she chose?" and the business seemed to be as far from being settled as ever, for she was beginning the whole tale over again, adding not a few rather vivid and extraneous expletives, when Marten withdrew to the parlour, wrote himself down as debtor eleven-pence halfpenny to Jenny Higgins, and sending the card to her by Mrs. Turley, returned to his labour, well pleased at having got rid of the vulgar squabble, as he termed it, at the cheap rate of four farthings.

There is an old saying, "Don't crow till you are out of the wood." We shall see in the sequel how far our young curate served himself by the application of the receipt so generously devised.

Not an hour, which seemed to Marten scarcely five minutes, had passed away, when it was again, "Mr. Marten, if you please, you are wanted—Betty Sharpe wishes to speak to you."

Marten remembered the name in the list of subscribers to the clothing club; and on Mrs. Turley saying she thought she was come to get a ticket such as he had given to Jenny Higgins, he ran down to the parlour, summed up by the book what was due to this woman, and having duly entered it on a card, and added his name, he bade Mrs. Turley take the voucher to the same.

He had scarcely settled himself again to his work, when the housekeeper appeared in the door-way, saying, "If you please, sir, Betty a'ant quite satisfied, she wants to speak to you."

"Tell her I'm busy," answered Marten.

"They be used, sir," replied his tormentor, "to be spoken to, themselves either by dear Mr. or Mrs. Ricketts; they was never used to be put off with a messenger. There was not a cottage in the parish where Mrs. Ricketts especially worn't as free as she was in her own kitchen, and worthy Mr. Ricketts, good man—"

"Well, well," returned Marten, "they were old people, and, at any rate, two to one with me; if the woman has anything of consequence to say, let her send it through you."

"La, sir!" replied the housekeeper, "but that won't satisfy. In dear Mr. Ricketts' time—"

Rather than hear any more of dear Mr. Ricketts, Marten laid down a book which he had just taken up, brushed by the housekeeper, cleared the stairs in three steps, and stood at the entrance of the kitchen almost before the housekeeper had recovered from her surprise.

"Well," said Marten, to the woman, "what do you want? Do you not understand that the card in your hand entitles you to receive from me the money which you have paid into the hands of Miss Hippesley, on the clothing account?"

"Yes, sir," said the woman, turning the card about, "I knows that much; good Madam Ricketts was used—"

"Never mind Madam Ricketts," interrupted Marten, "if you have any business with me, let me hear it at once."

"Why, sir, I come to speak with you about a mistake as Miss Hippesley has made; you has put the money down on the card to come to tenpence, and I dare say you has done it all in innocence, for it a'ant likely that a gentleman like you should go for to come over a poor woman

like me, for the valley of a penny; but certain sure it is, that one of the five weeks, I can't justly say which, I gave Miss Hippesley three-pence, and Sally Jones was a standing by at the very time, and it was in the lane, by our gate, I seed her passing, and I said to my daughter Kitty, says I, 'I has always paid my description regular,' as good Mrs. Ricketts used to say."

"By the book," said Marten, taking alarm at this good Mrs. Ricketts, "Miss Hippesley is right; but it may be possible, that amongst so many small receipts, some trifling blunder may have arisen." And he tossed her a penny, which he fished out of one of his pockets, and ran up the stairs so quickly, as to be in great danger of capsizing Mrs. Turley, who was coming down in full sail—that worthy dame having only delayed a little to ascertain if the volumes already put up stood in anything like the order in which good Mr. Ricketts' old collection were wont to be arranged.

When this discreet dame understood how the affair with Betty Sharpe had been settled, she ventured upon a prognostic which manifested more of her knowledge of the womanhood of Altonbury, than any very decided power of ratiocination. In truth, it needed not the inspiration of a Cassandra, to be able to foretell a very serious commotion in the village, as certain to take place within a short period; the contending parties being on one side Miss Hippesley, who, in herself standing singly, was a *multum in parvo*—and on the other, all and every one of the fair members of the clothing club, of whom it could not be doubted but that they would bring Marten's concessions to bear in their full force on the enemy.

In the mean time, our young curate had quite forgotten Jenny Higgins and Betty Sharpe, and Miss Hippesley, and if the truth must be spoken, dear Mrs. Ricketts herself, in his contemplation of the exquisite feasts which he anticipated in the varieties of new publications which he was arranging on the shelves; neither did he take any note of time, for the clock had struck the hours of eleven, and even twelve, whilst he pursued his occupation; neither did he regard certain tones of objurgation, which now and then arose in the otherwise still air. He set all these down to certain oracular, and somewhat decisive addresses, with which he had already learned Mrs. Turley sometimes favoured John. At length that worthy dame broke in upon him with something less than her usual ceremony.

"Well, to be sure, Mr. Marten," she said, "you have not done fairly by Miss Hippesley, and you have raised the whole place—would you believe it?—but there has been no less than six of them here, at the back door, for I would not let them come no further; but I have told them my mind, the ungrateful bodies! I wonder how many gallons of skim milk and good thick broth they has earned out of these gates; the broth was not common dish-washings neither, for dear Mrs. Ricketts saw it thickened and spiced her very self, and she used to say——."

"But," cried Marten, in impatience, "Do be so good as to explain what brought you here just now, Mrs. Turley; you see I am engaged."

"Did not I tell you, sir," replied the dame—"did not I say that as many as six of them have been at the back door to see you; and all with the tale, that Miss Hippesley had not dotted

them down, that is, their payments, fair in the book, and that they hoped you would see them righted. They say you have righted Higgins and Sharpe's wives, and when I driv them back, what did they do, but go down the village, and to Miss Hippesley's door, and there, as John says, they are at it still, screeching like hens in a roost when a fox is looking in. Oh, Mr. Marten, you did not know what these folks are when you gave in to their extortion. Why you did just for all, as if you believed that Miss Hippesley had over-reached the poor creatures; not that they deserves my pity—I abominate such distortions."

What could Marten say? he felt convicted of impolicy, and was the more provoked, because his mistake had involved him in a business which he thought beneath the notice of a gentleman,—what he called a vulgar squabble.

There were two ways which he might have taken—the one which pride and undue sensitiveness might suggest; the other being such as a proper sense of his own duties and condition as a minister of the parish would dictate. The one which pride and a morbid horror of low quarrels and contests, was that, however, which he adopted.

Turning again to his books, "I am very sorry to hear all this, Mrs. Turley," he said, "but I should be obliged to you, if you would not trouble me any farther with any of these village quarrels. If these women disagree, they must settle their discords in their own way—I cannot interfere."

The tone and manner in which he spoke caused the housekeeper to leave the room instantly, but she was far from being satisfied. She

felt, however, that as it did not suit her plans to quarrel with the young master, who would be there only for a time, it would be better for her to say no more, though she thought that her gossip, Miss Hippesley, was not fairly used.

Had Marten been less hot and haughty, he must have seen that he had, by the donation of his few halfpence, given occasion to the low receivers to boast, that even the parson had his doubts of Miss Hippesley's honesty, and he would have felt that he ought to take some prompt measure to clear her; probably it would have been best for him to go at once to her house, and there to do her the justice due to her in speaking to the viragoes still said to be collected about the street and the door, and there was no fear but that had he appeared and spoken with calm and gentlemanly firmness, he would have incurred no risk of insult; and if he had, the penalty of excluding the offender from all benefit of the clothing club was in his power. Had he not fallen into the unfortunate measure by which he implicated Miss Hippesley, his own plan would have been the best, as it was, his refusing to interfere was unjust to her.

The affair, however, was settled by the villagers in their own way. Miss Hippesley was very well able to fight her own battles, nor was she very sensitive with respect to the nature of the language used to her, nor the epithets bestowed upon her; and as the assailants were all perfectly aware that she had not dealt dishonestly by them, whatever they might pretend, the storm went down as suddenly as it had risen, and a new subject began to occupy the minds of the people.

It was flannel petticoat time, and the day of de-

livery was near. Would Mr. Marten give the petticoats as they had been given in dear Mr. Ricketts' time? and Mrs. Turley was requested to investigate the matter. The petticoats had always been given the first week in December, and the clothing tickets in the second; the plan for the last was, that the individuals themselves were to go to the mercer's, Mr. Gosling, or Mr. Pigeon, and select their articles to the amount of their tickets.

This period of the year had ever been one of great enjoyment to the benevolent lady of the former Rector. She was one of the old school, who delighted more in the humblest domestic duties than in the pages of the finest volume genius ever penned: her happiness consisted in performing acts of kindness to her fellow creatures, and if she made the most of each benevolent work by gossiping over it, she must not be blamed,—she might have done worse, but she had prepared no small annoyance for those who were to come after her.

Mrs. Turley, after certain preliminary speeches of indeterminate character, at length ventured to tell her young master “that if the petticoats was to be given, it was time to think of them, as dear Mrs. Ricketts—”

“Yes! yes!” exclaimed Marten, “everything is to go on as usual—you know what measures are to be taken; and will see to them.”

“Measures, sir?” replied Mrs. Turley; “dear Mrs. Ricketts and I always measured the flannel, and allowed three yards to each petticoat; you would not think that too much, would you, sir? though Mrs. Scrimpage, that is our tailor's wife, says she never puts more than two and a half into any petticoat.”

Marten's foot, at this moment, unfortunately came in such forcible collision with the leg of the table, for he was at breakfast, that he made everything shake and rattle on the board.

"Bless me, sir," exclaimed the startled dame, "I hope you has not hurt your foot; but I was thinking that the flannel must be had before we can measure it; and I was always used to go myself every year to choose it, Mrs. Ricketts used to say."

"The sooner you go the better," cried Marten; and after much more had been said by the housekeeper, and endured in silence by Marten, it was agreed that Mrs. Turley was to go the next morning to the neighbouring town in the carrier's cart, with due powers to select all things necessary for these said petticoats. She, also, during the same hearing, got Marten to write down the list of the ancient wives and widows who were best entitled that year to the benefit of new flannel, and informed him that these would be admonished to come on such a day, on such an hour, to receive these flannels from his own hand.

"Why can't *you* give them, Mrs. Turley?" asked Marten.

"Sir," said the housekeeper, "sure you don't mean no such thing. What would be thought of it? Dear Mrs. Ricketts always gave them herself."

"Oh, very well, I will give them," cried Marten, "if Mrs. Ricketts did: you see to the rest, Mrs. Turley, I will not detain you any longer: indeed I must go out"—and he rushed through the hall, and took a turn of considerable length over the beaten snow, longing for the time when he should see the lawn and beautifully-arranged shrubbery,

and fair encircling fields, in the green clothing of the opening spring.

Being quite alone, and feeling the bracing animating breath of the clear frosty morning, the young man's mind endeavoured to throw off the recollection of all the petty annoyances to which he was subject in the house, and began to solace itself in deep meditations on many things,—as, for example,—Wherefore the condition of man on earth is what it is?—and wherefore, with aspirations, and intellectual powers, such as he has, he should be perpetually lowered down to one grovelling set of ideas, by the circumstances into which he is thrown?

“Wherefore,” thought he, “am I placed in situations in which my powers are utterly cramped, and where I am so frequently compelled to associate with inferior minds, and to hear nothing but the details of common things? In this last respect, this place is peculiarly unfavourable, and the means of usefulness particularly narrowed. There was a wider sphere at that hateful Bickerton. Well, I am not to remain here long. However, whilst I stay, I must endeavour to do what good may be in my power; but I must not suffer the precious hours which should be given to study, to be consumed by the eternal irruption of gossiping old women. I will, I am resolved, begin a course of Hebrew; there is every facility in Mansfield's library for carrying it on; and if these people persist in attempting to interrupt me—why, I must try to teach them better.”

There is nothing in theory which young irreligious persons dread more than common-place life; and no condition in which even the well-meaning more often fail. In severe and strong trials, and

arduous situations, a mind with any sense of piety seeks the divine aid, and God is ever found by those who are led to seek him; but a young person not being convinced that he needs divine support in sustaining small inflictions, walks in his own strength, and never fails to walk amiss. Yet it cannot be questioned by the believer, that every condition of man is ordained by God; nor is there a doubt, but that, when in ages to come, or in that period when time shall be no more, and when our divinely-enlightened intellects and unclouded memories shall enable us to look through the whole course of past existence, we shall then be enabled to see that every, even the smallest event which was appointed to us, was ordered for some especial cause of good; for some counteraction of a certain peculiar tendency of character; for some peculiar point of needful instruction; or for the establishment of some salutary and healing principle.

Many a one has lived long enough to be able to reason coolly and calmly on the events of his past life, and to discern the benefit of what, at the time, appeared to be vexatious, painful, and perchance, unnecessary dispensations.

If such are often the convictions of the aged Christian, whilst yet only we see through a glass darkly, what will they be when we see all things through the mirror of everlasting and infinite love?

Marten's disposition was naturally haughty; if the germ of the new life had been implanted within his breast when he resided in his three first curacies, the immortal plant had not yet broken through the sods of the carnal nature above it; the season of such exhibition had not

arrived when he resided at Altonbury, and as he then was, he would probably have been less subdued by any severe, or what he might have thought, dignified trial, than by the petty inglorious teazings which he there encountered, and which, it may be observed, would have been nothing, had he met them in a milder spirit, and coolly studied how to obviate them.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE petty details of life, many of which are extremely vexatious at the time, are forgotten in our reviews of the past, and not calculated upon in our anticipations of the future ; yet these, like the pence in a daily account, run up a large total in the year ; and to be perpetually putting the hand into the treasure-bag for such small sums, is perhaps more irritating than occasionally to pay twice their value in one large amount.

All Marten's expenditure, and all the demands made upon his time and temper at Altonbury, were in this small way. He wanted not a sense of the importance of his duties as a clergyman, but was baffled in every attempt, and made to feel that he could bring nothing to bear. When called to visit the sick, he found that it was almost impossible to gain a hearing ; not that the persons were rude, far from it, they agreed at once to everything expressed in the prayers which he used, or the chapters he read, evidencing their assent by deep groans or sighs, and exclamations, of no definite meaning ; but whenever he attempted to explain a text, or to instil a doctrine, the sick person was sure to break in with a detailed, and not always very refined, account of his

or her ailments, and not unseldom to tell what dear Madam Ricketts had said about them, and what she had recommended, frequently pressing these subjects, till the young curate put on his hat, and walked away.

When he visited the Sunday-school, he found the room so full, so close, and so noisy, and the old master and dame so wrapped up in their own good opinions, that it seemed to him almost absurd to attempt doing good in that province without making a total reform, but of course such reform was not for him to undertake.

It occurred to him that he might sometimes say a word in season on a casual meeting with any of his parishioners when walking out, and this he tried with several of them. He was always heard civilly, and as invariably believed that he was heard without profit, as his auditor, after having said, "Very true, sir," or something to the same purpose, always turned to some other matter in which, with the poorer people, the name of Ricketts was always brought forward.

The pulpit alone was left undisturbed; *there* was a door open to Marten for declaring the truth; but he was afraid, or, in other words, he wanted the faith which would have compelled him to cause the glad voice of salvation to go forth fully, through this open door. Had he done so, he would soon have found that the voice would have been acknowledged, if only at first by a few; but every real child of God in the ministry feels himself no longer quite alone, when one, if only one, of his congregation arises from the state of death in which all are in Adam, and gives evidence of that new life which is the gift of God in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

We must do Marten the justice to say that he really desired, and tried, whilst at Altonbury, to do good, and to make the best of his time, in the various ways mentioned above; but if his labours without doors were not crowned with much success, his studies within were most grievously interrupted, though he abandoned his parlour, and shut himself up in the book-room, when anxious to read, for thither Miss Hippley did not presume to penetrate.

But who shall say how often, during the active hours of the twenty-four, Mrs. Turley presented herself at his door? For as the time drew on, the poor women of the village became more and more importunate with respect to the affairs of the clothing club and flannel garments.

One would come, first for a voucher respecting the sum paid to Miss Hippley; again the same would appear with another weekly payment; then with a payment for some neighbour lying ill; then to beg that a great-aunt or some other might be set down for the next year's *description*; and thus may-be making four visits where one might have done, and losing more time than the whole gain by the club would be worth to a careful woman.

If Marten did not see each of these visitors every time, he was obliged to hear all they said from Mrs. Turley, with the addition of various notes and comments by that sapient dame, and the more than twice-times-told tale of good Mrs. Ricketts's management of this same very troublesome business.

But the crisis of the flannel garments was to precede that of the clothing club, and in consequence, for two days before, a certain little red

spot, the symptom of conscious importance, became stationary on the cheek of the spinster.

One day, it was that before delivery, she actually waited on Marten, with a huge pair of scissors, suspended by a piece of blue list from her apron-string: and that very day, as he sat in his little room, which was over the kitchen, he was startled every second by a noise not unlike the rending of a sail in a gale of wind. He took great care, however, not to ask what this might portend, lest he should hear that it always was so at this season, in good Mrs. Ricketts' time.

At length, on the morning of delivery—indicated by a particularly bright ribbon on Mrs. Turley's cap—that worthy dame informed her victim that the women was coming at noon, and that she hoped he, Mr. Marten, would be in at the time, "as it was very ill convenient to have twenty-four of them in the kitchen all at once for a long while together, talking and peering about as such people is sure to do, as may-be don't see the inside of a gentleman's kitchen once in twelve months."

"Very well," said Marten, shortly, "I shall be ready."

"Good Mrs. Ricketts" returned Mrs. Turley, "always had something to say to each of the old souls, when she delivered the garments. I have heard them say that her *discouraging* words came as warm to their hearts as the flannel did to their old bones—dear good lady as she was."

Mrs. Ricketts was really a kind and excellent person in her way, but if any of her friends should read these memoirs, they must please to carry this with them, that in the praises lavished on her by Mrs. Turley, there was, with some

sterling sincerity, a very considerable alloy of that spirit with which a woman, when in anger with her second husband, thinks that she cannot touch him more closely than by magnifying the merits of her first good man.

It was a little before twelve, when Marten's ears were first invaded by indisputable symptoms of the coming interruption.

He very soon distinguished the shrill tones of the school-mistress's voice, and remembered that she had said she was always used to be present at the delivery of the garments in good Mrs. Ricketts' time, and he soon afterwards heard the back gate strike on the posts several times, and then the chattering below him became, if not louder, more confused and multifarious.

Had Lord H— been with Marten then, he would assuredly have said, "Let them enjoy themselves, let them make the most of it; there is no harm in all this gossip and parade if they like it; have we not our parades in higher life? But Marten had no sympathies of the kind, he thought the whole affair of these flannel attires utterly inglorious; it was well enough amongst women; and it was quite proper that the old and poor should be supplied; but really, it was too ridiculous to make *him* come forward in such a matter. What would Wellings and that set have to say, if they got hold of the story? There is nothing I abominate so much," he added, in audible words, "as being made ridiculous."

Not more true than the clock was the appearance of Mrs. Turley at the study door, at the last stroke of twelve: and no court beauty could have affected more indifference than the worthy dame did on this, one of her brightest anniversa-

ries, in which she was complimented and caressed by every old woman in and on the parish, who pretended to anything like good breeding.

Most gracious was the smile with which she announced the presence of the party below, adding, "Now, sir, if you please," standing aside at the same time, to let the young gentleman pass.

The kitchen, though tolerably large, was quite filled up at one end, by the four-and-twenty old women, in their various costumes of grey and red and grizzled cloaks; in the centre were as many bundles of flannel ranged on a long table, and last, though not least in the power of annoyance, stood Miss Hippesley, with her back to the fire, and in so great a state of excitement, that a stranger might have thought that the whole merit of the affair was her's, and that none of the old women present would ever feel the comfort of the garments then to be bestowed without saying, "We owe this to Miss Hippesley."

"Good day, Mr. Marten," were the first words she addressed to him; "you see how punctual we are. Dear Mr. Ricketts used to say—"

Marten broke in at this place, and taking council by a list of names which he had brought with him, he called the first, and immediately the oldest of the women came hobbling out from the mass, saying, "That's me, if you please, sir."

"Stop, Sukey, stop," cried Miss Hippesley. Stop, Mr. Marten, Mrs. Ricketts was always used—was not she, Mrs. Turley?"

"Yes, miss," replied Mrs. Turley, "dear Mrs. Ricketts used—"

But not waiting to hear what they had to say, Marten went on with calling the names, and

giving the garments away so rapidly, that he was actually handing the last to the twenty-fourth old woman before Mrs. Turley and Miss Hippesley together could find any argument sufficiently strong to arrest his progress. He was then actually meditating a retreat from the kitchen, when his ear was caught by a sort of general groan from the four-and-twenty women, the indistinct sound becoming distinct and articulate in one or two instances only.

The words which attracted his attention being, "Well, Sukey, say no more, say no more. It warn't to be expected that it should be all as if good Madam Ricketts was here; we ought to be thankful any how."

"What is that?" said Marten, "thankful any how—what are you saying?"

So general was the groan, or the sigh, or the little fretful noise in the throat which issued from the mass of cloak-bearers, all huddled, as they were, together, that Marten saw that something was wrong, and looked for an explanation, first at Miss Hippesley, who was choosing, it seemed, to be silent, and then at the housekeeper, who opened at the first glance, delivering herself to the following effect, her words pouring forth like steam from a safety valve:

"The ungrateful old creatures!" she exclaimed. "Sure am I of this, that had I anticipated such behaviour and such ingratitude, I would have been the last, and not the first, as I was, to take the trouble to go all along to Pigeon's, and to toss over every bale of flannel as he had in the shop, and you to be going for to be expecting that with one pair of hands I was to be doing what two, let me tell you, could not do, without

sitting late and early. Dear Mrs. Ricketts would not believe it, if she were told of your conduct."

In this place, Marten interrupted the housekeeper, and addressing the old Sukey, who, notwithstanding her palsied frame, seemed undoubtedly to be the leader of the malcontents, he bade her come forward and say of what she and her companions had to complain.

The old woman advanced into the middle of the kitchen, and with a spiteful and discontented twinkle of light lack-lustre eyes, she said, in a puling shrill tone, "The garments was used to be made for us, in Madam Ricketts' time, they was."

"Tush!" cried Marten, turning on his heel, and leaving the kitchen.

Miss Hippesley called after him, but he would not hear her, nor did he ever inquire how the amiable females settled the matter, after he was gone; and as Mrs. Turley had her own reasons for not agitating the subject again, the young curate was left at peace henceforward about this notable affair of the flannel garments.

Possibly, he owed some of his relief from this matter to the excitements which arose, as it were, on the back of it, respecting the clothing club, and sundry observances enacted in the time of Mr. Ricketts, which were required to be attended to, on the general plea that no change was to be made from what had been in the time of the late Rector.

Now had it suited the worthy housekeeper to state at once to Marten that the clerk and his wife, and Betty Holt, and Sally Marston, two decent lone widows, and old John Hoskins, and little Jack Tomkins, who was an orphanless child,

as she termed him, all dined at the Rectory in the good times of Mr. Ricketts, on Christmas Day, and that a plum-pudding must be added to the beef, and that a large mince-pie was annually sent to Miss Hippesley, and old Kitty Hart, who was bed-ridden, and that James Dick always supplied the holly for the rectory, and was used to receive a halferown for his trouble; and that Lawson's, and Prince's, and Hill's, and the widow Smith's boys had silver for their carols, and all others who came only pence, with sundry other matters of the same description. Had she stated these things at once under the head Christmas Day, the studies and sermon writing would have been greatly benefited thereby; as it was, she contrived to make these various matters serve for interruptions and discussions so successfully, from the period of the delivery of the garments, until Marten was actually prepared to set out for church on the Christmas Day, that with the aid of the incessant business of the clothing affair, the young man had almost as little time to himself as the man who keeps a turnpike on a frequented road.

As Marten was only a lieutenant, he had no power to remedy these evils; he felt himself compelled to bear them, and he did not actually break out, although it was not always with the utmost courtesy that he drove away the house-keeper, or helped her to an end to her stories, which were naturally interminable,—like the sailor's line, who, because he was tired of pulling at it, or for it, rather gave it up as a bad job, in the supposition that its end must be cut off.

Nor was it always in the most adroit and least abrupt way that he avoided Miss Hippesley, that

worthy dame being so utterly unconscious of delicate feelings, and being, probably, so well used to have persons run away from her, that she was no more sensible of the young gentleman's disinclination for her company on the last day of his residence at Altonbury, than she was on the first.

Marten hoped for some relief when Christmas was over; but alas! New Year's day comes only a week after Christmas; and then came the re-opening of the clothing book, and settlements with the Sunday-school keepers, and people bringing contributions, and coming to say they would bring no more; and the clerk, and the churchwardens, and the overseers, and all, and everybody, came to furnish a little gossip, according to the long-established custom of good Mr. and Mrs. Ricketts. Then there were one or more of the agriculturists who called on Marten, in neighbourly civility, as he supposed, and being seated in his parlour, sate there an hour or might be more at a time, without even attempting to keep up the ball of conversation, and not in the least annoyed at any long silence which might ensue, when their host was tired out by attempting to furnish the whole expense of the intellectual entertainment.

Most determinately did the snow retain its position on the surface of the ground till after New Year's day; it at length gave way, and Marten was then able to ascertain that the place in summer would be very lovely; but he had only a short time to stay there, and he was not sorry that it was so, for he had formed no attachments to any one, nor had he made any acquaintance in the neighbourhood.

From the time of his residence there, he had

been making inquiries amongst his friends, by letter, for another curacy, and it was on the same day two letters were placed in his hands, which together settled the point of his next removal.

The first was from Henry Milner: it was dated from Lord H—'s house in town, and it mentioned a curacy which might be had very soon, at no great distance from Woodville, the stipend good, being determined by regulation, according to the value of the living, and there were some other circumstances attached to it which Henry mentioned and Marten liked—for instance, the promise of good, or at least, polished society, a large field for exertion, and an excellent public library, and above all, the rector was a personal friend of Lord H—.

The second letter was from his father and dated Lucca.

Of course, he had had several epistles from his parent since that of which we have given the copy in the beginning of this volume.

The elderly gentleman, it seems, had not yet obtained the long desired situation, and had, in consequence, been in a state of irritation for the last three years. He had been very angry with his son for throwing up Steeple Lawford; and this present letter was to press him, under all circumstances, to keep close to young Milner, repeating the reasons for so doing, which are detailed in the epistle which we have given at length.

The letter concluded with complaints of shortness of money, and the ill-usage of friends, through whose neglect, as the writer asserted, he had hitherto failed of the preferment which he had a right to expect.

The consequence of these paternal communications was that Marten wrote forthwith to Henry Milner, to beg him to secure the curacy of which he spoke.

As we trust that our young reader has already had enough of the minute troubles which Marten encountered at Altonbury, and that he has been sufficiently benefited by the example of our hero in the science of making the most of small evils, we shall use the privilege of authorship, and pass over a certain period marked by nothing but changes rung on the same querulous dull notes, in perpetual succession, by the housekeeper and other members of the community, to the day in which Mansfield was expected to return to relieve his friend from his charge.

The hour when Mr. Mansfield and his lady were expected was six in the evening.

Mrs. Turley had been so much agitated all the day, and in such a perpetual bustle, that it was almost impossible to observe her movements without feeling some sympathy in her excitement.

Everything in the parlour and about the tea-table had scarcely been supposed to be all ready, when the carriage was heard, and Marten rushed to the hall-door, to welcome his friend and hand out the lady, which last he had no small curiosity to see.

As a married man, Edward was not in the least changed; his wife, as sometimes does occur, had not stepped between him and his former friends, and during a few minutes, in which the lady had gone with Mrs. Turley to take off her travelling attire, Marten thought Mansfield more cordial and warm than ever, and it was almost

with tears in his eyes, that he congratulated him on his prospects at Northfield under such a rector as Mr. Enfield.

Mrs. Mansfield was not absent long ; she had made the housekeeper's acquaintance, and already won her by her kindness. When she appeared in the parlour, her husband introduced Marten formally to her as one of the dearest friends of his youth.

The smile with which she received him would have pleaded imperatively in her favour, had she not also presented the appearance of all that is lovely and desirable in a young married woman—youth and elegance, simplicity, and the promise of considerable intellectual powers and attainments.

There was a playfulness also now and then betrayed by an occasional glance of her very bright eyes, which, however, seemed to be under considerable check for some time, after the first meeting with her husband's friend.

She was very young, and seemed quite delighted with the possession of such a place ; and when Mansfield hinted something about new furniture, she answered, " Let us first get acquainted with the old, and if we find it will serve us, we shall be richer for keeping it."

Marten was confirmed in his approbation of his friend's wife by this moderation, and tea coming in, he was proceeding to assist her with the tea-kettle, (no clergyman prefer urns to tea-kettles,) when a well-known, but then little expected female voice burst on his ears, probably from the farthest end of the kitchen, and becoming louder and louder, hardly giving him time to say, " Miss Hippesley," before it was heard within the parlour itself.

That "extremes meet" is a very old adage, but though they meet, they may be very dissimilar. The perfect ease of high breeding may, in some points of view, be very similar to the vulgar ease of those who know not what good-breeding is, and yet nothing can be more different in other points than the one is to the other.

Now Marten had the opportunity of observing how the new-married lady met the forwardness of the intruder, and he believed that she would not be able to extricate herself from the rude assault, without implicating her own good manners, or subjecting herself to what even he had found intolerable.

He saw at once, however, that she, in a sweet, wife-like manner, was resolved to follow as her husband led, for he saw her look to him more than once.

Miss Hippesley came forward, shook the hand of Mr. Mansfield, and then of his lady, and congratulated them, in her usual unmodulated tone, on their marriage, and the termination of their journey, hoping that they had found the roads good from France; then hinting that she had supposed their tea would have been over, or she would not have come so soon, she turned to Marten, who was in the act of introducing the water into the teapot, and said, "What, are you tea-maker, Mr. Marten? well, that won't do, Mrs. Mansfield must have a good cup this first evening. Let me put in another spoonful, one for each person, and one for the pot, as dear Mr. Ricketts used to say. Now, a little water—the kettle, if you please, Mr. Marten. You will not find an urn in this house, Mrs. Mansfield. Dear Mr. Ricketts used to say, 'There is never good tea where an urn is used.'"

Whilst Marten was setting the kettle down, she slipped into the tea-maker's chair, congratulating herself in having come at the precise moment to secure a good cup of tea to dear Mrs. Mansfield. "Not," she added, "that I should have come, had I known that you were going to tea ; I have had mine two hours since, but I was resolved to be the first to congratulate Mrs. Mansfield on her coming amongst us. I am sure that since there has been no lady in this house, I have been like one lost. In dear Mrs. Ricketts' time, there was not a day that I was not in here once or twice, and the dear, excellent woman would be running over as often, without her bonnet, and may-be with her shawl over her cap. Mr. Marten," she added, with a nod at the young gentleman, "I suppose, did not think it altogether the thing to be always admitting me, not that any one would have thought or said anything about it, me being so much his senior ; but now that there is a lady, as I tell Mrs. Turley, now the thing will be quite different, and much more comfortable. It will be as it was in dear Mrs. Ricketts' time."

Here was a pause, in which the speaker handed the tea from her board, and made sundry inquiries respecting its agreeableness: and there might have been some hope that the visitor, finding herself unassisted, would be forced to allow other people time to speak, if Mansfield had not put a question to Marten in a low voice, which, being overheard by her, started her again.

"Yes," she said, "Mr. Marten can tell you all about that, Mr. Mansfield; you were speaking about the attendance on a Sunday; it has been

near about the same as in good Mr. Ricketts' few last years. The people complained that he was getting slow, and kept them too long from their beef and pudding. They are an ungrateful set at Altonbury; and those who get into the way of not going to church don't easily get out of it; so I think we may say, Mr. Marten, that we have not experienced much increase of auditors since you came amongst us."

"To be stung and irritated by such an insect!" thought Marten, who was conscious at the same time that his whole face was becoming crimson.

For an instant or more, he could not look up, till perceiving that Mansfield was suppressing a laugh, he raised his eyes, and meeting those of his friend, they both laughed, and so heartily too, that Miss Hipplesey looked about her to discern the subject of their mirth.

"We are laughing at your compliment to your young minister, Miss Hipplesey," said Mansfield. "You really do think that his preaching was equally attractive with that of good Mr. Ricketts in his latter days, when, as you well know, his faculties were failing him."

"I meant no disparagement to Mr. Marten, sir," she answered, "though you young gentlemen are so full of your fun. But as I was saying to Mr. Brooks and Mr. Jenkins, Mr. Marten's words are too high for poor country people, who know no more of their religion than heathen Greeks, and Mr. Jenkins was of the same mind; says he, 'Our old vicar's discourses were much better suited for the ears of country folks than such as come from a university man, like the Reverend Mr. Marten:' we meant no offence, gentlemen, only we said, we thought Mr. Marten too high for

the congregation, being such ignoramuses as they are."

"But, Miss Hipplesley," said Mansfield, "if Mr. Ricketts' discourses were so well adapted for their profit, and if he had the ear of these people for forty years, even granting that his mind was somewhat weakened—"

Here Miss Hipplesley broke in—"If his mind was weakened toward the last, and his voice became thin, and he was troubled with a cough in reading," she said, "yet these infirmities did not affect his doctrine, for he gave us the very sermons he had preached afore time, and excellent plain practical discourses they were, just suited for the poorer sort."

"Granting which," returned Mansfield, "how happens it, Miss Hipplesley, that this same people, who for the last forty years have had the benefit of these discourses, should be, as you say, ignorant as heathen Greeks?"

"It is the nature of them," answered the dame, feeling herself a little in a puzzle, "and as you yourself said, Mr. Mansfield, the first Sunday you preached in our church, 'No man can change the heart, or enlighten the mind of another.'"

"But he may instruct the head of any one possessing his due share of natural intellect," replied Mansfield, "and there certainly must be a defect somewhere, when a minister, after forty years, leaves his congregation without head-knowledge, ignorant, as you say, as heathen Greeks."

"Sure, sir, you don't mean to infer anything against good Mr. Ricketts," exclaimed Miss Hipplesley.

"I know nothing of Mr. Ricketts," returned Mansfield. "I was only judging him by your

own remarks, Miss Hippesley, I don't fancy," he added in his usual jesting manner, "from your own account, he could be a very skilful teacher, my dear lady."

"Well, sir," said Miss Hippesley, nothing abashed, "you young gentlemen have a great deal to say, and should have, as you have been at college, which good Mr. Ricketts, as he told me many times, never was; it not being a thing required in his younger days."

Mansfield then endeavoured to turn to some other subject, and began to speak of his late travels, hoping thus to get beyond the reach of the pragmatical dame; but he had hardly uttered the word France, when she informed him that she had a first cousin once removed, who had been there, and forthwith led off, by detailing certain marvellous adventures with which this said first-cousin had crammed her, for his own private amusement, no doubt.

It would have been utterly vain to attempt to set her right, or to weaken her credence in her travelled cousin-german, so she was suffered to rattle on till the tea-things were removed, and then, Mansfield having screwed up his courage to do an ungracious thing, which, in a polished person, is always, however needful, a painful effort, hinted, at first, in ambiguous, and afterwards in plainer terms, that as he had much business with Mr. Marten, he was sorry that he could not press Miss Hippesley to stay.

"But," said she, "can't I do anything for Mrs. Mansfield? I see Mrs. Turley has lighted a fire in the best parlour—could we not withdraw there? Mrs. Ricketts, dear good lady, and I have spent

many happy hours in that best parlour, when Mr. Smith, or Mr. Jenkins, or may-be Mr. Brown was with the vicar. You will find any of these gentlemen very pleasant neighbours, Mr. Mansfield. There was scarce a week in which one or another did not drop in and sit an afternoon with the vicar, as they have done, may-be with you, Mr. Marten."

"Yes," said Marten, with a deep breath, not quite sufficiently developed to deserve the title of a groan, "they have sometimes sat with me."

"Well then," resumed Miss Hippley, "shall we withdraw, Mrs. Mansfield?"

The young lady looked alarmed, and her husband fled to the rescue. He pleaded that his wife was weary, and must have rest, and having driven the enemy from this, her last covert, she took her leave, retiring with the view of concluding her visit in the kitchen.

The instant in which she was heard to close the kitchen door behind her, Marten opened out with the energy of the thundering winds at the touch of the wand of Eolus, and ceased not till he had exhibited a very animated picture of all the torments he had been subject to in Altonbury, adding, "What can you do, Mansfield, to terminate these persecutions?"

Mansfield heard him throughout so quietly, and the young lady so anxiously, that he met not with a single interruption, till he came to the climax of the flannel concern, when the young rector burst into an uncontrollable laugh, in which, *nolens volens*, he was joined by his lady, though in a softer form, and as if more than half afraid of giving Marten pain, Mansfield's mirth being greatly increased by the sensitive and offended

air with which his friend asked him, what he could find, wherewith to be so much diverted?

"How could I be otherwise than amused?" replied Mansfield, "by the lively representation which you have given us of the collision of such incongruities as yourself, one whose dignity was never yet called in question, and a parcel of antiquated village gossips discussing the merits of Welsh flannel? Who is it says that the very essence of wit is the finding and forming associations with incongruous objects? Why, Marten, your scene with the old wives was an instance of practical wit."

"Rather of practical torment," replied Marten; chafing, as he ever had done, under his friend's raillery; "I can assure you that that solemn old housekeeper of yours is enough to drive any one mad, without the aid of Miss Hippesley, who is a legion in herself."

"I don't dispute the powers of either of these ladies," replied Mansfield. "Turley has very superior capabilities, but Miss Hippesley is a graduate also in the art of tormenting; and to be more serious, I am truly sorry, Marten, that you should have been exposed to their inflictions."

Mrs. Mansfield seconded this last remark of her husband with so much kindness and softness, that whilst Marten looked at her and listened to her, all his irritation took wing, and he felt himself able to smile with his friend at the petty evils of which he had just before spoken with so much bitterness, and was able to tell the remainder of his story, if not less graphically, far more gaily, than he had told the former part.

He was to remain at Altonbury till after the Sunday; a delay which gave him the advantage of many quiet conversations with his friend.

The unavoidable troubles of life in all and every condition afforded a subject of one long discourse.

Mansfield remarked that there were some dispositions which, from natural indolence, took no account of small evils, but oyster-like, lie quietly in their places, though continually assailed with the spray of the tempest, and others, which are kept in a perpetual fever, from the irritation excited by the common chances of life, both of these being, from extreme causes, equally ill-suited for carrying on the affairs of this world to advantage.

Marten asked his friend whether he were not thinking of him in his last description?

"I certainly was not," replied Mansfield; "but far be it from me, not to give you every credit which is your due. I think that you certainly do possess a very superior talent for magnifying small evils, and perhaps no very eminent adroitness in dealing with them."

Mrs. Mansfield, in common with many a delicate young wife, was often in fear lest her husband should go too far when conversing with his young friend, with whom he had been familiar in his school and college days, and now she was not slow in observing certain symptoms about Marten, which in a spirited steed, ought certainly to have put the rider on his guard—for example, an expansion of the nostrils, and a tremulous motion of the upper lip, which looked somewhat ominous.

She thought it right, accordingly, to put in her gentle word, remarking that small inflictions were very different in any one's estimation, when felt in a man's own person, and in that even of

his best friend, adding, that she had heard her father say, that no one can endure the smallest affliction with a proper temper, in his own strength, though with the divine support, and in the power of a new nature, there is no trial which can overcome him.

Many other important subjects were discussed by the three then met, whilst Marten remained at Altonbury, and each one was sorry when the moment of his departure arrived.

CHAPTER XVII.

Now might Marten say, with the poet—

“To new fields and pastimes new ;”

but whether these fields were to be those of Enna or of Phlegethon remained to be proved.

Some hours of rapid travelling brought our young curate within sight of Northfield, whilst yet it was light, on an evening early in March. Marten had written to engage the lodgings which had been occupied by the curate his predecessor, and having told the coachman where to set him down, he had no cares to prevent him from contemplating his new abode, as he was whirled along with the sound of the horn, from the commencement of the village towards the other end, where in its very busiest, gayest part were his lodgings that were to be.

The houses, many of which were handsome, and all neat, stood asunder, in rather extensive gardens—the ancient gothic tower of the church, in the background, appearing behind them, in ever varying points of view. As the coach proceeded, the houses stood closer, and symptoms of shops made themselves manifest. The representation of a red and rampant lion, which no imagination could suppose to be a dog, swung over

the street in one place, and the fac-simile of a huge bell presented itself on the other. Next came a neat, double gabled, black timbered house, flanked by the stiffest, neatest garden which could be imagined, and there the coachman drew up, calling to Marten, "Now, sir, if you please."

Marten descended from his elevated position, and was received in the porch of the double gabled house by a widow, who looked as neat and antique as her house, and as closely trimmed in her weeds as her own pleached hedge.

The first observation which Marten made on his hostess was, that she used very few words, and said as little as possible whilst she introduced him to his apartments. These consisted of a sitting room, which filled up the front of one entire gable, and had a window projecting towards the street; and a bedroom behind opening over the garden, into green and lovely fields, beyond which, in the far distance, were certain hills, clearly defined in high relief against the glowing western sky.

Marten was pleased with the appearance of everything, and by no means deaf to the suggestion made by Mrs. Linton respecting her readiness to serve up a few mutton chops and some hot potatoes, as soon as the young gentleman should require them.

"That is immediately," answered Marten, who had not dined. And thus matters being settled, he was left to look about him, and enjoy his own meditations, which were by no means disagreeable.

When people have nothing to do, and they have the use of their limbs, they walk to any window or windows within their reach, and

always remain longest, not at that from which the finest natural view is to be seen, but where most may be observed of the movements of living creatures.

Of course, then, Marten, having looked at the hills and the garden, repaired to the front window, and observed what figures walked below, and who went into and out of the Bell inn. Perceiving that, late as it was, there were symptoms of a large population, he began to solace himself with the idea that he was got into a situation where he should find a wide sphere of usefulness.

The sphere at Altonbury had been extremely limited; the people being agriculturists, were never to be found at home on week days, and they were so excessively ignorant, that there was no teaching them from the pulpit; but here things would be different.

Lord H—, when he recommended him, had known, no doubt, that this was a place where he would not be thrown away. Lord H—, knowing him as he did, must have felt that he was not suited to deal with unlettered people.

Mr. Enfield was undoubtedly a very excellent, serious man, but he had never heard that he was a man of superior talents, and at all events, having completed his academical career, years before, he could not possibly be expected to have the light and learning which men may acquire now at the university, if they avail themselves of their privileges.

How far these speculations might have proceeded, if they had not been broken in upon by the odour of the mutton chops, we cannot say.

A few books which the widow contrived to produce from her own parlour, together with the refreshment of some tea in the place of supper, occupied the remainder of Marten's evening, and sent him to bed in very good humour with his new situation. The first thing to be thought of in the morning was a call on the rector, for which Marten prepared himself with great care, and everything in his attire being strictly orthodox, he waited only for a proper hour, and then walked forth. He had little difficulty in finding the house;—a venerable mansion, standing in a well-ordered garden, which opened into the churchyard. He was immediately ushered into the family sitting-room, where he found Mrs. Enfield encompassed by her children, most of whom were in and advancing towards their teens. They were all occupied in different ways, and all promised to become pleasing young people, when arrived at the perfection of their growth. The whole young party arose when Marten entered, but when they had acknowledged his bow with beaming smiles, they resumed their seats, and left Mrs. Enfield to entertain him.

He was much pleased with her; her manner was cordial, and perfectly lady-like, without pretension. He felt at once that she was no ordinary person in mind, and he could have conversed with her some time with great pleasure, had not Mr. Enfield soon appeared.

Let every enlightened gentlemanly-minded young curate picture to himself what he would wish his principal to be, and he could not fail of forming some idea, if not of the person, assuredly of the mind and manners, of Mr. Enfield.

So high an opinion had Lord H—— of this

gentleman, that he had rather pressed a point to get Marten under his influence; not that Marten was to enlighten him, or to give him new views of what was going on in the professing world, but that his preaching, conversation, and example, might tend to amend that which was amiss in the young man himself. Lord H—— had not deceived Mr. Enfield in Marten's character and principles, as far as he knew them, but he had not the means of knowing them as well as we do. As Mr. Enfield was engaged to go out on some particular business, he did not detain Marten long, nor did he enter into any conversation with him, but engaged him to their family dinner, at four o'clock that day, which invitation Marten gladly accepted.

We shall now, if you please, accompany our young curate back to his lodgings; nor must we be greatly astonished if we find that more may depend upon this his first movement from the rectory to his own abode than we may have yet anticipated.

It was a little after mid-day, and a bright morning, and all that sort of thing, when the young curate stepped through the churchyard gate, and came forward between two high garden walls into the street, as that portion of the high road which ran through the village was denominated.

Precisely at the angle of one of these walls he met two young ladies, very smartly attired. Had he not started back, he must have come in rude contact with them, but he recovered himself well, and passed them immediately afterwards with a bow which might have done credit to the admirable Crichton. Of course none of my young

readers will believe that he was by any means conscious that he had managed the whole affair well, or that he could suppose that these young ladies should give themselves the trouble of inquiring who this very superior young stranger might possibly be. Nor do we assert that they did make this inquiry; in truth it needed not, for they had heard that the new curate had arrived the evening before, and even that Mrs. Linton had said to some one, who had told their lady's maid, that the young gentleman was not in the smallest degree like the late curate, but was a very genteel young man. That the gentleman at the angle of the wall was this same curate there could be no question with them, and as they passed on, for it would not have been expedient for them to have turned round and followed him abruptly, they congratulated each other on such an addition to the society of the place.

"We must make Tom call immediately," said the elder sister. "We must get hold of him in our set before he gets in with the prosy party."

"But," said the younger, "suppose he should not be the person after all; let us watch where he turns in. Turn about now, Caroline—there he is, not a hundred yards forwards—come on slowly."

A small shop, professing to sell stationery, had arrested the eye of Marten, and just as the young ladies had faced about, he turned into it.

"Move slower, Caroline," said the younger, "he will come out presently."

"Suppose he should not be the curate after all, Juliet," said the elder, "but some travelling bagman seeking orders."

"Then I say that it would be a pity and a shame for such a fine young man to be a bagman," replied her sister.

"As good a bagman as a parson," said Miss Caroline. "If this young man is one of the latter, he will be the first of the species I ever thought worth looking at; but there he is again: now come on, and we shall see where he enters next."

Marten went from the stationer's to his own door, where he knocked, and just as Mrs. Linton opened it, the young ladies passed, but Marten did not look towards them.

Marten greatly enjoyed the dinner and the society at the rectory; and he was excessively pleased by the conversation of the elders, and the cheerful deportment of the youngers. The subject of religion was never once brought forward decidedly; but its spirit seemed to be infused in every remark which was made. Mr. Enfield could not have been less than fifty, for he had been at college with Lord H——. His hair was more than sprinkled with grey. He had seen much, very much of various people and countries; he was full of anecdotes, many of which were beautifully simple, showing that he had observed life with the eye of a child as well as with that of a sage. He had his little jests, which made his children laugh; but not one of these jests were without the tincture of that holiness of heart which exhibited them. Of Mrs. Enfield little more can be said, than that in conversation, as probably in all other things, she was her husband's helpmeet, sometimes quietly aiding his memory, or endeavouring to make his meaning clearer, or pointing an anecdote, but never interrupting him.

After dinner he invited Marten to go with him to his study, and there, as they sate before a

bright fire, he entered at once on the subjects which ought to be most interesting to ministers of all ages and conditions.

This was the subject of preaching, with a discussion of the truths which ought to be exhibited to every audience, without exception, which a preacher might have an opportunity of addressing; Mr. Enfield being quite settled in the assurance that the exhibition of the Divinity, as he has manifested himself in Christ, is the topic which ought always to take the lead, and fill up the body of every discourse, and that every preacher should declare the whole truth as fully and as freely as it is foreshown in the narratives, formularies, and prophecies of the Old Testament, and as it is stated more directly in the New.

Of course Marten had nothing to object to this proposition; he thought it right that every faithful minister should state the truths of scripture in the full light in which he discerns them; but he hinted that many learned and good men had differed in their views of these statements of scripture, as they respected some very important doctrines. Some of these persons apprehending the attainment of salvation to be conditional, to a certain extent, on the part of the creature, and others affixing no condition whatever to this salvation.

He confessed, for his own part, that there were passages in the New Testament which seemed to him to hint at some conditions, alleging the sermon on the mount, in which the necessity of a pure life, to render a man acceptable to God, was wrought up to a tension of which no philosopher nor expounder of the law had before conceived an idea.

"And which was therefore calculated," said Mr. Enfield, "to show the doctors of the law and all other men, that the purity of the moral law is unattainable by mere man, though it has been exemplified and fulfilled by God in the flesh. And in this view only is the sermon on the mount, in whole or in part, eligible for subjects of preaching." When its pure precepts are held up as attainable by mere man, the auditor, if humble, and believing what is asserted, must be driven to despair,—if self-sufficient, puffed up with vain conceits."

The discourse between Mr. Enfield and Marten branching out in various directions, continued till they were called to tea. Mr. Enfield showed him his valuable collection of books, and offered him the use of them; he gave him some little insight into the state of the parish—some account of the schools, then in active operation; and expressed a hope that Marten would interest himself in them: and it was evident by his manner, that he was not dissatisfied with him. He thought him, though not highly enlightened, seriously desiring to do rightly.

The remainder of the evening spent with the family was particularly pleasant; the young ones worked, Mr. Enfield brought out books, and read as much aloud from one of them as led to a subject on which the family interest was excited. It was some historical inquiry; and other books were brought and consulted; and the evening was only too short for coming to any satisfaction on the subject. The last half hour before supper was spent as it should be in all pious families, and the supper was as gay as it might be expected to be when such a family was met after the business of

the day, and the young ones having got over their little alarm at Marten, began to manifest that playfulness with their father which showed that perfect love had gone a long way to cast out fear.

How often have pious parents and instructors mourned, when the world has broken into some sweet retirement from which, with holy watchfulness, they have been striving to exclude it from every apprehension of their loved ones, and yet, could they have succeeded, would it have been better for these little ones? Are not difficulties appointed that man may be taught his utter weakness and entire dependence on God; in which knowledge all wisdom of the creature consists, for the Saviour is never fully admitted to the heart and understanding till man is made to know himself.

We shall presently show how this remark refers to Marten.

He returned to his lodgings much pleased with the last few hours and the company he had left, and giving himself *great* credit for the manner in which the conversation had been sustained during his visit, and also *a little* to his rector as a perfect gentleman, a man of superior and improved intellect, and of indisputable piety, though he did not feel that he could quite adopt all his sentiments in their fullest extent.

Mrs. Linton walked up stairs before him, and was lighting two mould candles duly arranged on his table, when he perceived a card lying on the board, and snatching it up, read, "T. Stephens, Esq., Junior, Grove House, Northfield."

"Yes, sir," said Mrs. Linton, answering an inquiry expressed by the eye, "you was scarce

gone out, when young Mr. Stephens called and left that card, apologising for the old gentleman not being able to come, on account of his being not recovered from his late attack of the gout, but he hopes you will please to excuse it."

"And who are these persons?" asked Marten.

Mrs. Linton, with some astonishment that such an inquiry could be needful, or that any one could have been more than twenty-four hours at Northfield, and not have discovered that the Stephenses, of Grove House, were the first persons in the place, proceeded to inform him that this was the leading family in Northfield, that the old gentleman had made a great fortune and retired upon it, that Mr. Thomas was not brought up to any business, and had no needs to be, and that the two young ladies was entitled to very pretty fortunes, and were accounted very highly of in the neighbourhood; and she concluded by asking her lodger if he had not seen two young ladies pass, when she opened the door for him, when he came in from his walk, about noon, that day?

Marten said that he had.

"Well, sir, that was them. The eldest Miss Stephens is taller than Miss Juliet, and those who visit in the family say, they are both very agreeable. You will find the acquaintance very pleasant, no doubt; but they never did Mr. Williams, that is, the gentleman who was here before you, the honour of a call."

So saying, she walked away, evidently thinking more of her lodger than she had done before Thomas Stephens, Junior, Esq., of Grove House, had called upon him.

We will leave the young reader to make out

what Marten thought of the affair, but probably it did not occupy his reflecting powers very long.

The next morning he went again, by appointment, to Mr. Enfield's, and borrowed some books, which he took home, and it was arranged that he was to wait in his room till his rector should come and take him out with himself, to show him the schools and the church; in short, to make him acquainted with some of the lions in and about Northfield.

Mr. Enfield's eye fell on the visiting card, which Mrs. Linton had stuck, very ostentatiously, on a card-rack, on the mantelshelf, as soon as he advanced into the room, and Marten did not quite like the tone with which he exclaimed, "What, has young Stephens called already? As a man of etiquette, he ought to have known that he should have delayed his visit till one Sunday, at least, was over."

"Who, and what is he, sir?" asked Marten; "Mrs. Linton gives such a high-flown account of the family, that I suppose them to be, at least in her eyes, the representatives of the whole aristocracy of Northfield."

"I do not answer you directly," replied Mr. Enfield, "because I cannot do it to my satisfaction; but silence is sometimes a very comprehensive figure of speech."

"You do not, then, think—" began Marten.

"What I think is this, Mr. Marten," said Mr. Enfield, in a lively way he often used, "that young men, and old men also, can never be too careful what acquaintance they make; and I do most earnestly advise you to be very slow and cautious before you form any intimacies in this place."

One who knew Marten well, might have been aware by his manner, when he quietly acquiesced with his rector's remark, that he thought the good man might have spared this very commonplace piece of good counsel; he had not lived so long, he thought, without having discovered that there is always danger in evil society, to inexperienced persons especially; but he having been through a large school and graduated at the university, and stood alone in more than one curacy, with some credit, he trusted could not be subjected to be entirely governed in the choice of his acquaintance. Neither did he quite like the exclusive system, which, he was aware, prevailed in all religious societies, and by which many means of usefulness to those kept without were cut off. Such was the course which his thoughts took at intervals during the whole of his progress that morning with his rector, in consequence of which he said but little. Mr. Enfield, however, having much to say to him, either did not remark his silence, or set it down to a pleasing and modest desire of acquiring all information needful for the future fulfilment of his duties.

Though every man's first week in all new conditions appears exceedingly long, whether tedious or otherwise, as circumstances may affect it, still such weeks are always found to come to an end sooner or later, according to man's apprehension, so that week which brought Marten to Northfield, at length died a natural death, and the jingling of the bells early the next morning proclaimed to all whom it might concern, that the new curate was to appear, and probably to preach at the first service.

And many there were whom it did concern,

and, in consequence, many who looked at the sky as soon as their curtains were withdrawn. For, as Miss Caroline Stephens remarked to her sister, "To church I am resolved to go this day, and how provoking it would be, if my hair should hang like rat's tails, when I get there!"

Mr. Enfield performed nearly the whole of the first part of the service.

One or two cursory glances sufficed to show Marten that the congregation was a genteel one; but he was by no means so excited in addressing it, as he had been when he opened his ministry at Steeple Lawford.

When he left the pulpit there was not a dissenting opinion respecting the pathos, elegance, strength, and harmony of his delivery, nor of the beauty, and flowing eloquence, and purity of his style, and the superiority of his appearance.

With far the larger portion of the audience, these personal gifts carried the day, as he was set down as one quite above the common run of clergymen. Another party, but of those not the most discerning, admired his doctrine, mistaking his earnestness and beautiful language for an exhibition of the truth. Whilst a third, and a very little party, went home lamenting that where there was so much talent, eloquence, and, to all appearance, so much deep feeling, there should be such a discrepancy of doctrine, that one half of the discourse should wholly annul the other.

Mr. Enfield, himself, preached in the afternoon; and Marten was very attentive to his discourse. He could not refuse him his approbation; his preaching was above the ordinary stan-

dard, and was certainly most interesting, but his voice wanted many of the fine tones of which he was conscious in his own ; and the doctrine was precisely that which had been pressed so often upon himself, but to which his own mind was not made up. He could neither follow him in his views of the freedom and completeness of salvation, nor, supposing that freedom were established, in the expediency of proclaiming it to sinners in general.

His rector had made no remark on his sermon in the morning, and Marten might have felt himself wounded by this circumstance, which he was assured was not accidental, had not self-love provided a protection. He had heard of rectors who did not relish a too brilliant assistant—might not Mr. Enfield, though a most excellent man, have some little weakness of the kind? This thought, which had only at first glanced across the mind of Marten, was afterwards rendered stationary in it, for a time, by other circumstances tending to confirm it.

On the Monday morning, at the hour esteemed proper for a formal call, Marten set forth to return the visit of Mr. Stephens, junior, at Grove House.

Not to know the site of Grove House, was to prove himself unknown, so he set out on a voyage of discovery ; and having proceeded to the very end of the street on the way by which he came into the place, he came to a stand before a very respectable pair of iron gates, beyond which, in a formal pleasure-ground, amid a rather extensive, though very young plantation, stood a large new brick house, with all the appurtenances of verandahs, balconies, and venetians.

Hothouses and greenhouses in the background amid the young plants which were to form the groves by which the house was already denominated, spoke of well-replenished desserts, perfumed drawing-rooms, and a deep purse, in the interior of the establishment.

Nothing daunted with all this magnificence, Marten walked on, though his approach was somewhat concealed from the lower windows and wide porch and verandah, in the front of the house, by a hillock or tumulus, formed in the centre of the coach-ring, and planted with evergreens, from the very centre and apex of which arose a marble statue of Flora, elevated on a pedestal.

Having made half of the circumference of this mound, Marten came in full view of the verandah, and saw that it was already occupied by a figure, which, as it had its back towards him, somewhat puzzled him to make out. Was it that of a servant, or a member of the family itself?

The figure was that of a young man, of slender proportions, wearing slippers, large loose trousers without straps, and a dressing gown of Indian materials of prime cost. He stood with his hands in the pockets of his gown—a cap of Highland plaid, of an uncouth form, just covered his crown, beneath which, his hair, which was rather sandy and inclined to curl, formed a sort of *cheveux de frise*.

After looking at him for an instant, Marten came on, and was actually ascending the steps of the portico, when the specimen turned round and displayed a glass fixed over the right eye, and a cigar in full action in the mouth, the face or features to which these were attached, being pre-

cisely such as could only be described, by saying, that they presented a very ordinary sample of a very common sort of physiognomy.

For an instant the youth stood still, and fetched, or rather emitted, a long puff; then by some wonted motion, ejecting the eye-glass without the aid of a hand, from a position between the cheek and the forehead bone, and disembarassing his mouth from the cigar, which he placed in a side pocket, he stepped forward, extended his hand to Marten, and dashed so suddenly into the familiar, that our young curate was, for an instant, almost taken aback.

"Here I am," he said; "I must have my cigar, and those girls, would you believe it? won't let me enjoy it in any room in the house. Have you any sisters, Mr. Marten?—Well, then, you are a lucky dog: mine are the plague of my existence.—So you were formal, and would not return the visit till you had been at church. Well, may be I should not have called so soon, but the ruling powers would have it so. But," he added, "I shall never be forgiven if I appropriate you all to myself. I believe the ceremony of particular introduction is now out of vogue, but I must show you where to find the girls. As to the governor, he is just wheeled out in his Bath chair; but the old lady and the nymphs are at home, and I doubt not have been on the look out for you ever since the canonical hour for visiting is arrived. I hope you are not given to blushing, Mr. Marten, for I can tell you, you will be duly inspected by many pairs of eyes. By-the-by," he added, as he led his visitor through an extensive hall towards a somewhat ostentatious flight of stairs, "do you happen to know anything of the

exceedingly perplexing and recondite art of knitting? or are you learned in the natures of lambs' wool or German wool, or worsted, or the various modes of turning a reel?"

Marten was not the man to take a joke until he had examined it in all its bearings, and ascertained that none of them touched upon himself; therefore, if young Stephens had waited for a reply, or even a smile, he would not have added what he did.

"If you are not an adept in making labyrinths in woollen and worsted," he said, "you will never be able to hold a conversation with the old girl. The young 'uns won't let her meddle with the housekeeper now; so, as she cannot prove herself to be a human being by giving her aid in the cooking department, she is become an inveterate knitter; and as she never in her life could entertain two sets of ideas at a time, she thinks, speaks, and, I suppose, dreams of nothing but her knitting. She is a good, hospitable, kind creature, only she certainly does indulge the girls abominably."

All this was thrown out off hand, as the young men mounted the stairs and crossed a large lobby, into which several doors opened. He advanced to one of these, and threw it wide open, displaying the whole extent of the large and showy room beyond. So sudden had been the opening of this door, that every person within the room sate fixed with their employment in their hands, and their eyes on the visitor, for several seconds, whilst the visitor himself remained equally unmoved; the brother, in the mean time, being delighted with the idea that he had disconcerted his sisters, whose plan it had been, he knew, that

Marten should be conducted to the library—a room which had been furnished in great style, and that they and their mother should meet him there. They did not wish for him the very first day in their boudoir, for they wished to be his first acquaintance in the family; and they well knew that their three cousins, two of whom were visiting, and the third living in the house, would be quite as ready as themselves to make much of the smart young visitor.

We have said how the obliging brother arranged these plans, though he did not succeed, as he had wished, to disconcert his sisters for more than a few seconds. The coup-d'œil which presented itself to Marten, who stood in the door-way, was that of a large room, the furniture of which, supposed to be very splendid, was covered with brown holland; an immense cloth of some economical or carpet-saving description, was also spread on the floor. Every moveable piece of furniture in the apartment was not only in a state of confusion, but covered over and littered in the most inexplicable manner with an infinite variety of objects, whose use and connexion with each other, and assemblage in that place, no one could have comprehended who had never seen young ladies occupied in several of the idle fashions of the day.

A little withdrawn from the centre of this chaos sate an elderly, very stout, heavy, rubicund dame, in a large chair, her occupation of knitting making it at once manifest to Marten that she was the *mère de famille*. He bestowed only one glance on her, for there were five young ladies sitting in full view in as many parts of the room. These he afterwards knew, as, first, my cousin Dolly,

who, though Marten acknowledged her as very pretty, was too slovenly to attract a second glance; secondly, my cousin Hetty, who was scarcely less pretty, but absolutely without education; thirdly, my cousin Fanny, who had been reared in Paris, and looked sharp and foreign.

On the whole, Martin thought, even at the first regular view of the party, that the daughters of the house were the most presentable of the set; though no beauties, they had animated countenances, and Miss Stephens had very bright eyes. Neither were these two young ladies liable, whenever they walked out, as he afterwards discovered, to snap the strings of their shoes like Dolly, nor to commit any of Hetty's gaucheries, nor were they stereotyped in Parisian concerts like the fair traveller, Fanny.

The silence arising from the surprise of both parties, however, lasted not many seconds, but was suddenly interrupted by the attack of the elder sister on the brother. "So, Tom," she said, "I suppose you thought to disconcert us by bringing Mr. Marten up here. To be sure, none but you would have used such freedom with a gentleman on his first visit; but as the rudeness all lies at your door, and not at ours, we have nothing to do but to tell Mr. Marten that we are truly glad to see him in our room, and to introduce him at once to our mother, our cousins, and ourselves.—Sit down, sir," she added "when we have cleared a chair, and tell us how you like our works. Tom says our flowers have the merit of the pattern of a Turkish carpet, being like nothing in the earth or under the earth. If they are pretty, then I say they have more merit from their originality."

"I don't say they are original," replied Mr. Tom; "I say, they are composites put together without the smallest reference to any of the rules of botanical science."

"Much *you* know about botanical science," retorted Miss Caroline. "You, who scarcely know a China rose from a China aster."

"Then I must be something like cousin Hetty there," answered the brother. "Would you believe it, Mr. Marten? she heard some one talking the other day about the aurora borealis, and she asked me if we had any in the hot-house."

"La! cousin Tom," said the young lady in question, "how was I to know it was not a hot-house plant, till you told me it was seen oftenest in snowy countries?"

There ensued a general titter through the room, and it may be supposed that there were not more than two persons who did not understand what they were laughing at; and Mr. Thomas raised the laugh again when it was about to expire in a natural way. Marten felt exhilarated by this prolonged laugh. He had been long separated from the society of persons of his own age, and he enjoyed the mirth without speculating on the merits of its origin.

Mr. Tom had not taken a chair when Marten had done, but had manœuvred his way through the chaos towards his mother, meditating the perpetration of an offence which the most placid knitter does not easily forgive; but the old lady was aware of him and of his mischievous propensities, and was shuffling her work into a bag, when he caught the end of one pin, drew it out, and made his retreat beyond the reach of her arm. Then stooping, he poked the pin into the

side of a little porsy Blenheim which lay on a cushion under the centre table, having hitherto been hidden from Marten by the accumulation of rubbish on the floor. There are few creatures less disposed to put up with any personal inconvenience than the fat pet dog of a young or old lady; the better they are fed, the more inclined they are to make the most of the evils of life; and though the joke of the knitting-pin would hardly have caused a dog of humble pretensions to have stirred a muscle, Chloe thought proper to elevate her voice in such harsh howlings and snarlings, that her mistress fled instantly to the rescue, and having detected her brother in the very act of slipping away, she was thrown off her guard, and forgetting the presence of Marten, treated him with a specimen of a little sisterly discipline of so decided a kind, that he almost wondered at the perfect nonchalance with which the brother bore it, actually turning it off with some witticism, or rather quizzing expression, which set the cousins laughing, and forced the offended young lady to be silent.

When Marten took his leave, Miss Stephens expressed her hope that they should soon see him to dinner; and young Stephens accompanied him as far as the gate.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DURING this week several of the gentlemen of the parish called on Marten, and in returning their calls, he perceived that the society of the place was very much separated into two sets. This is always the case where there has been for some time a minister in earnest to do good.

The one set the world in its most complacent mood would denominate serious in preference to some more contemptuous epithet; the other was more or less gay, and conformed to present fashions and modes of acting.

Amongst the latter, Marten saw none who particularly interested him in their pretensions and appointments; all these families were inferior to that at Grove House; but on the other hand, he saw much to admire and respect in the serious party; nor was he surprised to find that many of them had adopted their rector's opinions.

Though this party acknowledged that they considered their salvation complete in their Redeemer, yet it could not be disputed that they did more, and used vastly more self-denial, than their neighbours, who maintained the necessity of good works to ensure their future happiness.

This anomaly has often been remarked, and did not then come for the first time under the

observation of Marten; but what was more strange, it did not bring those convictions to his mind which it seemed calculated to do. Those religious persons of Northfield who had sought Marten's acquaintance, had so done under the persuasion that he would not have been advanced to a curacy under Mr. Enfield, unless he had been decidedly one of their own way of thinking.

A very few had indeed been staggered by his sermon; but the larger portion of them had been carried away by certain beautiful addresses to their feelings which had occurred in various parts of the discourse, and in consequence of which they failed not, when introduced to him, to address him at once as one of themselves, and as one who, as a matter of course, would avoid all gay company, and make manifest to all the young people of Northfield that high religious principles belonged not to any particular period of life.

Marten was not a little embarrassed when he observed what the opinions formed of him were. He was yet very far from having made up his mind as to what concessions he ought to make to the customs of the world, and where he ought to make the stand; he had never been called to decide on this point in any of his former situations as a curate, and he did not like to be forced into any line of conduct by the suppositions of a parcel of old people, who could know nothing of the world in the present day, or of the best means of being useful to those living in it, and according to it.

Mr. Enfield had been watching for several days for a propitious moment for opening his mind to his curate on the subject of his sermon. He felt that he must be sincere with him; but

whilst resolved on the *fortiter in re*, he was most anxious to use the *suaviter in modo*.

Happening to meet Marten one morning in the fields, he turned back with him, and then and there opened the subject.

He commenced, as most people do, when they meditate an attack on a friend, by saying all the agreeable things which he could do consistently with truth; he commended his style and the arrangement of his composition; his voice he spoke of as singularly fine, and his manner excellent. Indeed Marten could not fail of being gratified by this very decided approbation of his principal as to these points; though he felt certain that something not so agreeable lay behind. It might be tedious, were we to repeat at full length all that the rector said, but we will give the substance in as few words as possible. He began with apologizing for the charge which he was about to bring against him of inconsistency.

"Your text," he said, "was well selected, as including much in a very small compass, and you opened it well, without any attempt to shape or force it to any private opinions, or to weaken the strong assertions which it contains;"—the text was from Acts xiii. 38, 39:—

"Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

"And," continued Mr. Enfield, "you brought many well-selected passages to confirm the great truths asserted in your text, and I was almost ready to cry out, *Io triumphe!* from my desk, when a sudden change came over the spirit of

your dream,— or, in other words, a cloud came over the face of the day.

“ You had arrived, in the course of your sermon, at the great stumbling stone of many preachers—the application—and as if the looking down to man on earth instead of up to God in heaven had darkened all your views, you suddenly, I may say, flew in the very face of your own text, and every assertion which you had made in the former part of your address, and drew your conclusions just as they should have been, had you asserted that Christ’s works were unfinished, and remained to be perfected by man in the flesh ; and that human beings were capable of justifying themselves, in part at least, by their obedience to the law.”

Marten was silent ; he dared not trust himself to speak, for he was angry, though not prepared to answer the reasonings of his rector ; he also thought he had cause in his rector’s manner. A very forcible truth suddenly presented, sometimes will appear to assume something of the form of bitter satire.

Mr. Enfield almost feared that he might have pushed Marten a little too far in his last remark ; he therefore suddenly dropped the subject, and introducing others, continued to discuss them so long, as to give the young gentleman time to recover his self-command.

The immediate effect, however, of Mr. Enfield’s admonitory discourse, did not seem to be good. It did not tend to make Marten desire or enjoy his society, but probably no mode of conduct could have succeeded at that time in rendering the presence of one in authority over him congenial to him.

Mr. Enfield took both sermons on the following Sunday, by which the young curate felt himself disconcerted again to such a degree, that he did not recover himself during the whole evening.

What time is more propitious for the tempter than one in which a man is at odds in his own mind with his best friends? Such was precisely Marten's state when he found a very ostentatious card on his breakfast-table, denoting, from its very early appearance, its having been prepared in all probability the day before, and inviting him to a family dinner at Grove House on the following Wednesday. Before he took his tea, he answered the note, accepting the invitation; and when he had sent it off, sate down to endeavour to convince himself that, notwithstanding the silence of his rector respecting the character of the Stephenses, there could not possibly arise any inconvenience from his once dining in the family. If there he saw anything worse in them than deficiency of breeding, it would be quite time enough then, either to fight shy with them, or to consider whether it might not be possible to be of some service to them by example or precept. He could not think the exclusive system so prevalent amongst religious people either charitable or profitable to the cause. The vast power which Marten took to convince himself that he was right in his sentiments, may serve to convince us that he had pretty strong misgivings of being wrong.

Those who attribute all the events of life to chance or fortune, so far from making the goddess blind, must suppose her to be a most cunning and malicious dame—so opportunely and artificially does she often weave and lay her nets.

It was an hour after noon that same day that Marten walked out into the fields, and was returning through a piece of pasturage, at the farther end of which he saw many cattle feeding, when just at a stile which he was preparing to pass, he met the whole herd of the Grove House girls, to adopt an expression of the accomplished Mr. Thomas.

It seems that they had called a council on the farther side of the stile, the subject being, whether they should venture on a path which offered no defence from the cattle at the other end of the field; and so busy were they with their discussions, that they did not see Marten till he was close up with them, and had heard several opinions of the different parties issued in no very delicately-modulated tones.

"It does not signify, *j'en mourerai*," screeched one of the fair company.

"Dolly may throw her shoes at them, they are always loose," said another.

"And how should I have lived all my life in a farm house, and fear cattle?" said a third.

Whilst a fourth, who was Miss Stephens herself, having seen Marten, applied to him with great glee, said he was like one dropped from heaven; and told him that he must go back, and protect them through the field.

"But if you are afraid, why must you encounter the danger, ladies?" replied Marten.

"Because we must, or we choose, or something of that sort," she answered. "Here are five of us, and not one of us, as Tom says, capable of rendering a reason to satisfy a gentleman for anything. Come, sir, your hand," she added, as she sprang like a bird upon the top of the stile; and

with the help of Marten vaulting lightly down, she took his half-offered arm, and looking on those she had left behind her, "Follow the convoy," she said—" *sauve qui peut.*"

Fanny and she stepped lightly and gaily on with the young curate, the others coming as they could, on behind them.

And so she began, as soon as they were fairly under weigh—"So, Mr. Enfield would not let you preach yesterday. Tom said he would not, though I did not believe him. Tom said, from the first, that we should not hear you often. Old Enfield, though he is become even duller than he used to be, would not like to be extinguished altogether. Oh! how often have I wished that that cone-shaped thing which hangs over the pulpit, the sounding-board I believe they call it, would fall down, and extinguish him in the midst of one of his harangues; but he is better than that horrid specimen whom you have had the honour of succeeding—bad's the best, however."

"Surely you do not deny, Miss Stephens," said Marten, "that Mr. Enfield is a very superior preacher."

"I would not be at the trouble of arguing the point for a purse of untold gold," she answered. "You don't suppose—you cannot suppose for one instant, that I ever attend to one word he says. Tom says I should not find it out if he were to give for his text some Sunday, 'There is but one God, and Mahomet is his prophet.'"

"If such, then, so small your attention to the preacher, Miss Stephens," replied Marten, "I do not understand that it can concern you

much who the person may be who mounts the pulpit, nor exactly what he says there."

"As to what he says there, I assure you it does not concern me the least," replied Miss Stephens; "indeed, I know that when you took orders, you all bound yourselves to tell somewhat of the same tale, whether believing it or not."

There was a levity in that remark which startled Marten, and ought to have put him on his guard, connected as it should have been with Mr. Enfield's silence, when asked the character of the family to which the young lady belonged; but Marten fancying himself strong in his own strength, only felt himself called upon by it to come forward as the champion of the truth; and accordingly, he set himself to defend the reverend body, against which the young lady had discharged the broadside, with much seriousness, and with what he considered a very proper display of his regard for his profession.

The young lady suffered him to proceed till they had reached the end of the field—then laughing outright and boldly, "Very good," she said, "that will do for the present. You have uttered all that could be required of you to say, in defence of your cloth. No doubt, you clergymen are a most exemplary self-denying, unambitious set of men; but you must excuse me for saying that you are, with few exceptions, the most *ennuieux*—but I beg pardon, I hope you don't understand French. Tom says, very truly, 'If a clergyman is a good agreeable fellow, it is in spite of his being one.'"

Really, Miss Stephens," said Marten, "you—you speak your thoughts somewhat freely."

"I always do," she answered, with perfect non-

chalance; "it is my way—I am sorry if you don't like it; and if you are offended because I confess that you are the first man who ever mounted the pulpit at Northfield, to whom I could listen for two minutes, why then you must be; but at the same time, as Mr. Enfield would say, are you not throwing away a talent, when you refuse to cultivate the ear which you have opened?"

"Are you serious, Miss Stephens?" asked Marten, endeavouring to catch a view of her face under her bonnet.

"I never was more so, on these subjects," she answered, in a voice, the tones of which were so inexplicable, that Marten doubted whether she was or was not quizzing.

Being arrived at the opposite stile, he was bowing and taking his leave, when the whole party opened upon him. They were going to a farm-house a few fields beyond, and he must go with them and bring them back safe: and what was the result? Why, of course, that he went on, and becoming one of the young party, soon found himself joining in their merriment, whether it glanced on Miss Dolly's shoestrings, Miss Hetty's ignorance of the fashions, or Miss Fanny's affected intimacy with them, the tricks of Tom as practised on Miss Julia, or, worst of all, the half-insinuated and covert attacks of Miss Stephens on those she termed the saints of Northfield.

Amid these wild girls marched our young curate, superior by the head to all of them, and though still retaining that gracefulness of manner which was natural to him, and from which he had not departed, even when assisting the elevation of the candle to the sleeping apartments at

Clent Green, yet being secretly abandoned in spirits to the enjoyment of his condition, for youth is as congenial to youth as age is to age.

When a young person is suddenly restored to young society after a long exclusion, he experiences a mental intoxication, which, of course, weakens his self-command, and gives force to every temptation which such company may offer.

Knowing, then, the natural influence of young society on young minds, every young person should, as he regards his peace and principles, provide, as far as lies in his power, never to bring to bear upon himself at one and the same time, the excitement of society and the influence of bad example—for by so doing, he becomes himself the instrument of weakening his defences at the very time he exposes himself to the greatest dangers.

And so it was with Marten; the young companions by which his spirits were exhilarated were not safe for him. Of this he had been cautioned, and he should have left them after accompanying them across the first field, but he was persuaded to go on to an old-fashioned hospitable farmhouse, where he took refreshments with them, and afterwards escorted them back, and would have accepted their invitation to dinner, had not an engagement to tea at the house of another new acquaintance prevented his doing so.

The party to which Marten repaired that evening, was diametrically contrasted with that of the morning, for the spirit that presided in it was simple and pious.

It was taken for granted again, that Marten was decidedly of their own sort, by his entertain-

ers, and it was again supposed that he had wholly given up the world, though it was not clearly defined what this world thus denounced might be.

He returned to his lodgings after a light supper, but being full of thought, he did not immediately retire to rest. He could not prevent himself from making comparisons between the first and second party with which he had been engaged that day; and it was with distaste that he recalled the many light expressions and sneers of Miss Stephens.

Marten dined by appointment at Grove House on the succeeding Wednesday, and was hospitably and luxuriously entertained. He handed the old lady to dinner, and assisted her to carve, beyond which his attentions were not required.

The old gentleman looked plump and complacent at the bottom of the table, and would have bestowed much dull political gossip on Marten, had his children allowed his voice to be heard.

As he sat at dinner, the young guest scanned all the young ladies critically—despising the two pretty harmless cousins, hating the foreign one, thinking the younger daughter of the family scarce worth observation, and dwelling on the elder, as the only one who manifested any mind, or as being worth arguing with. But he could not like her, for he could not conceal it from his own mind, that she was a contemner of religion, and even scoffers, like Voltaire and others, acknowledge that to despise religion, takes a grace and a safeguard from the otherwise loveliest of females.

As to Tom, he amused him much whilst they sat at table.

This son and heir of the family was a pattern

card of a very inferior set of young men, chiefly to be met with about town, his discourse being compounded of cut and dried jests, which he uttered with great self-complacency.

He was not actually vulgar, but exceedingly far from gentlemanlike; mistaking the *outré* in dress for the very *acmé* of elegance.

Whilst they sat at table, he acted as a showman would do, who, having a quantity of wild beasts, was always stirring up one or another to show off their qualifications; setting one cousin to scream by one practical jest, and another to laugh or exclaim by another, exciting Miss Fanny into airs of scorn, and to the display of her large eyes in their least pleasing phases, by abusing Paris and the Parisians, and rousing his quiet mother by some attack on any old prejudice which he knew she entertained. These were only occasional efforts of his jocose faculties, only skirmishes in the intervals of an almost perpetual running fire with his elder sister, where he had the advantage, from having much more command of temper, and less vulnerable feelings than she could boast.

Many of his most provoking jests were, however, inexplicable to Marten, though apparently not so to the young ladies present. He doubted not that some of them were very rude and teasing, by the manner in which they were received, and the retorts which they incurred.

As there was no need whatever for Marten to encourage an intimacy with this family, there was no occasion for his indulging so much disgust as he did against his hospitable entertainers. A more modified feeling might have served quite as well, perhaps better, for guarding him against any

mischief which might arise from the casual intercourse—but Marten was not a man of modified feelings.

Though Miss Stephens had hinted to him several times that he would not be often required to mount the pulpit, yet till several Sundays were past, he could scarcely give credence to her prognostication. Every Sunday, therefore, brought increase of dissatisfaction; and such was his irritation, that he was never able to listen to his rector with the simple desire of improvement. He could not, however, conceal it from himself that he had never seen so much attention in a congregation in general as he saw at Northfield, and he was fully convinced that Mr. Enfield's preaching excited an extraordinary interest, although the younger part of the Stephens family denied it. Mr. Enfield's preaching had operated in almost entirely annihilating that party of hearers of which congregations are generally principally composed—these are the lukewarm, or the half awake—for the attendants of the church at Northfield were with few exceptions all awake, though I regret to say, not so in all cases to that which is right. Some were all anxiety to hear more for the highest purposes; and others, that they might find new occasion for hardening themselves in their infidelity: but be it observed, that no person who believes himself in the right, is anxious to augment his defences.

In the mean time, the days lengthened, the natural beauty of the country unfolded itself, and whether by accident or design, on one side at least, Marten was constantly met in his walks by the young people from Grove House. These meetings happened principally in the evenings,

and most often when he had been visiting the boys' school, which Mr. Enfield had committed almost entirely to his management; and when they occurred, he was seldom permitted to escape, but was induced not only to accompany the young ladies in their walks, but was generally taken with them to Grove House. There he was entertained with music, singing, supper, and last not least, with multifarious skirmishes of wit and ill-temper between the brother and elder sister, the wit being all second-hand, and of the low kind, much in use in the third and fourth classes of London society; and the ill-temper being the contribution solely and exclusively of the young lady.

The parents who, as Mr. Tom said, had both been noted bores for some time past, never joined in the rough play of their son and daughter; whilst the younger portion of the family applauded, blamed, chorussed, or condemned the disputants, just at it might happen, or their capricious inclinations might suggest. In the mean time, Marten was unconscious of any feeling for the household, but some sort of approval of its display and hospitality, and of different modifications of contempt for its members.

No one was ever heard of who could be in two places at once, unless he were canonized, a ceremony which seems, by all accounts, to have conferred ubiquity on many of its objects. Accordingly, when Marten spent several evenings every week at Grove House, or with the family in other places, he could not possibly be at the rectory at the same time, though there were merrier and more innocent young faces there than at the

Grove; and no family skirmishes, and no sneers against religion, and no breaches of good manners. But there was one very strong attraction in one place, which was wanting in the other; an attraction which Marten felt, though he would have scorned to acknowledge it even to himself. At Grove House he was the object of attention, and of the homage of many persons; and at the rectory, all which was offered him was the place of a son, supposing the right of paternal counsel, and all that was there needed was that he should be ready to be received; and it was intended he should be received, but this readiness being wanting, the kind intentions of the rector, and the benevolent feelings of his lady, were frustrated, and there was no advance in the exhibition of them on Marten's occasional visits.

Of course, the great intimacy of the young man with the Stephens family could not be hidden from Mr. Enfield; and as he considered it to be his duty to be sincere with his curate, he resolved to take the very first opportunity of cautioning him plainly on the subject. The opportunity he desired was one evening after tea, when, taking him to his study, he opened the subject at once, and candidly admonished the young man that he was acting imprudently, by encouraging so great an intimacy as he was known to do with the family at the Grove.

The rector was aware that he was administering a potion at which the spirited young man might perchance take offence, and therefore he endeavoured, at the suggestion of his christian feelings, to offer it in the mildest, most affectionate manner.

Marten being wholly unprepared for this at-

tack, reddened to the very roots of his hair, but dared not to speak, fearing his command either over his face or words.

Mr. Enfield proceeded without waiting a reply. He gave his reason for objecting to any intimacy with the young people of the family, from their known contempt for serious things and serious people; adding, that the bad taste of their manners and general deportment were the natural consequence of their contempt for all authorities, whether natural, political, or religious. Then, as if pursuing his own reflections, rather than the actual state of the case before him, he said something in reference to what a man might expect if he united himself to a woman who did not scruple to acknowledge her contempt of all divinely and humanly appointed authorities.

Marten raised his person and opened his eyes, for he had been looking down ever since the subject had been opened; and using strong exertion to command his voice and look unconcerned, "Surely, sir," he said, "you do not attribute such folly to me, as to suppose it possible that for one instant I should think of involving myself for life with a woman like Miss Stephens—a woman I neither admire nor respect, though I am obliged to the family for their attentions."

"I am glad to hear you say this, Marten," said Mr. Enfield. "You have undoubtedly seen some specimens of what a woman of the rank for a clergyman's wife ought to be; and I candidly confess, that it would have greatly lowered you in my esteem could I have seen you admiring or approving such a woman as Miss Stephens. But," he added, "let us examine the question on the other side. If you are quite clear of not fa-

vouring Miss Stephens yourself, is it not possible that, by your constant attendance at the house, you may be encouraging her to like you? at least it is a risk which, as a man of principle, you ought not to incur."

"Every advance to intimacy," replied Marten loftily, "has been made by these people to me, and not by me to them."

"By which," returned Mr. Enfield, "should any inconvenience to themselves arise from the intimacy, they will have themselves to blame; but as you would not, I suppose, allow yourself to be wholly without freewill (humanly speaking) in worldly matters, their indiscretion does not clear you. You cannot assert that, however they might have pressed you, you had not the power, had you possessed the will, to have checked the intimacy. Had you seen it right to have done so, you could have done it without giving gross offence; your professional duties were always a ready excuse for not going abroad."

This last hint, as Marten took it, angered him more than all that had gone before, but his natural pride would not allow him to attempt to justify himself. He therefore remained sullenly silent, aware that Mr. Enfield could not continue long upon the subject without meeting with a reply; and such proving to be the case, the rector shortly proposed a return to the ladies, and the rest of the evening, as might be expected, passed off heavily, without any assistance on the part of Marten.

CHAPTER XIX.

MARTEN went to bed, highly indignant with Mr. Enfield; but when the morning came, he was sufficiently calmed down to be pleased with the information that young Stephens called to give him, which information was, that his father had been recommended by his physician to go to Cheltenham to try the waters for awhile; and Caroline and the girls have settled," added Mr. Tom, "that Cheltenham is good for their complaints; and as I think it may suit me in my delicate state, we are all going, and shall be off to-day after an early dinner."

The proud spirit of Marten congratulated itself upon thus being able to satisfy his rector, without the shadow even of an appearance on his side of being improved by that good man's paternal reproof.

The party at Grove House had scarcely given their farewell bows to Marten as their travelling carriage drove rapidly through the street, when Mr. Enfield's youngest boy was ushered into the room by Mrs. Linton, with a message from his father, to say, that he should be obliged to call upon Marten to prepare the two sermons for the next Sunday, as he was threatened with symptoms of relaxation of the throat with which he had before

been troubled, and it made it desirable that he should refrain from exercising his voice as much as possible for a little time to come.

Thus was Marten required to use all his powers in assisting his rector, at the same time that he was set free from the temptations to neglect his duties. His spirits arose at once when he felt the need of exertion, and with these his self-complacency, which had been slightly disturbed by the admonitions he got the evening before. It was his very last thought that he might not be able, not merely to do all that was required of him, but to do it well, and even better than his rector had ever done. He visited the schools daily and called on the sick, and as far as human power could go, was decidedly very active in his parish; the more so, as Mr. Enfield's health kept him entirely at home; Mrs. Enfield giving him, upon the whole, great satisfaction in his reports of what she heard of the proceedings of the curate.

There was, in a cottage in a very retired nook of the parish, an aged man, named James Bar, an old soldier, who lived on his pension, and being very infirm, had spent many of his past years in cultivating his small garden, and reading his Bible. This old man was, as Mr. Enfield used to say, blessed with clearer, simpler, and brighter views of religion, than any other person he had ever known; and scarcely a week had passed in which he had not called, when in health, to converse with him, not, as he would add, when speaking of these conversations, to teach him, but to learn from him.

This poor man had been ailing all the winter, and fell off so rapidly in the spring, that it be-

came certain that he must soon enjoy that change which he had anticipated for some time, in the perfect assurance of the benefit which would thereby accrue to him. When confined to his bed, and no longer able to drag himself to church, he sent to request Mr. Marten to visit him; and Marten went many times, and was even interested in these visits, and in the discussions which often ensued on any passages which might have been read.

There were undoubtedly many differences between old James's and Marten's views of these passages, and these differences were much the same as those between Marten and his rector; and probably this added evidence on that side on which all Marten's most respected friends were ranged, was in after-time not wholly without its influence, through the blessing from above.

But Marten's castle of natural self-righteousness stood strong, and if he did not actually assert that he had himself always acted up to his natural powers of producing good works, yet, at least, he held firmly to the opinion, that there were some human beings who had succeeded in so doing. For nearly two months few interruptions occurred to disturb the even, peaceful, and, we may add, profitable tenor of Marten's existence at Northfield, during which the most unpropitious circumstance was, that he was gradually getting better pleased with himself—a symptom which too often goes before an occasion for a person's finding reason to be very much out of humour with himself.

In the mean time, Mr. Enfield had been seriously ill, had passed the crisis of his attack and was getting better; and the report was gone

abroad, that Mr. Stephens and his family were returning, with the addition of a brother of Miss Fanny, commonly called Dickson by his cousins, and Mr. Richardson by strangers. This young man, as Marten afterwards saw, was not very unlike the younger Stephens, as to his grade of polish and education, though decidedly in advance before him in the coarseness of his jests and the freedom of his carriage.

In short, there was to be a sort of family gathering of young people beneath the easy going and hospitable roof of Grove House; and if Marten, when he heard of it, considered that he would have nothing to do with it, Miss Stephens, on the other hand, calculated that he was to be heart and part in every scheme of amusement which was to be enacted.

It needeth not to prognosticate whose calculations proved to be most correct.

Veni, vidi, vici, would have suited Miss Stephens, for a boast in the case of Marten, quite as well as it served him from whom we quote it.

The party assembled one day at the Grove, and met Marten the next evening in the street, and so managed matters, that they led him home in triumph to supper, not so much to their own astonishment as to his, for he had been resolving that very day, that he would never again go to the Grove House in that sort of familiar way. Neither could he conceive how he could have been weak enough to break these resolutions; but he determined that it should never happen again.

We are now about to favour our reader with a paradox, which term, be it observed, is defined by the learned, as a proposition only seemingly absurd.

This paradox is—That a resolution against any thing formed in a man's own strength, if analyzed, exhibits, *in primis*, a desire and tendency to do that thing determined against, and in *secundo*, the existence and secret consciousness of some inability of resisting the influence of the thing resolved against.

None but a thief in heart resolves that he will not steal; and no one resolves to avoid any society to which he does not feel himself by some means attracted.

Our paradox, then, is, that the individual who, in his mistaken views of his own strength of resistance, has been working up and confirming his mind by resolutions, has increased, by this process, the power of the temptation, and is more liable to fall by it, than one who meets it unpreparedly. Such is natural strength, and of that only we speak at present, when mentioning Marten.

A very little time sufficed to establish his intimacy at the Grove House, on the footing which had subsisted before the absence of the family, with this variation only, that Miss Stephens, having discovered that Marten would not bear any sneers against religion or religious persons, as such, ceased entirely from them, whilst he wholly avoided these subjects, from the fear of incurring such sneers, not perceiving that he thereby cut off all chance of saying anything which might possibly benefit her, or others of the family.

Mr. and Mrs. Enfield observed this renewed intimacy with the more pain, because they had lately been indulging better hopes of the young curate; and such was the state of things, poor

Marten having entirely lost that degree of peace of mind which he had lately enjoyed, when a crisis occurred in his affairs which no one had anticipated, and which was not welcome even to those who had precipitated it.

One evening, Marten being walking in the street, was suddenly encompassed by the whole of the young party from Grove House, with the exception of Mr. Richardson.

"We have found you at last," said Miss Stephens; "where may you have been hiding yourself? But you must now go home with us; we have a very particular subject to consult you upon; we have a scheme which we cannot possibly carry without you."

"Very true, Marten," said Mr. Tom; "Dickson put a notion into the girl's head to day, at dinner, which, would you believe it? actually excited the governor to utter a *veto*, a liberty which he does not often presume to take, for the old boy is in tolerable training. However, as we are not in the habit of considering his words as infallible as the laws of the Medes and Persians, we made him concede just so far, that if Mr. Marten, upon being consulted, saw no objection, why, then, he would consider the matter again. Whilst he is considering, we shall take the liberty of taking our own way."

"But what is this scheme?" asked Marten; "something very imprudent, no doubt."

"Something very astounding, or the proposition would not have disturbed the old gent, you think," returned Tom; and he was going on, when his sister whispered, "Be quiet, Tom, here comes old Enfield; there he is, just issued from the Church-lane."

"And so he is," cried the brother: "*au revoir*, Marten," he added, "we shall see you again in less than no time;" and in a minute afterwards Marten found himself alone, though his companions had not escaped so rapidly as not to be seen by Mr. Enfield.

The rector, however, made no remark on the circumstance, but being met half-way by Marten, said that he was come to seek him. He had just heard from James Bar, who was evidently drawing rapidly to the close of his pilgrimage. He expressed his sorrow that he could not go that evening to him, his medical attendant having forbidden him to be out after sunset; but he added his wish that Marten would go to him. "And tell him," he said, "that I will, if possible, be with him in the morning." Having expressed this wish, he was turning back, when he added, in a manner, in which more was meant than met the ear, "Don't forget that when you feel to want company, Marten, you are welcome to us, and the oftener you come the more so; let us see you soon."

Mr. Enfield's figure, as he turned the church lane, was hardly out of sight, when Marten was encompassed by the Stephenses.

"Now, now!" they cried; "come with us;" and the next minute, though how it happened the deponent sayeth not, the hand of Miss Stephens was hanging on Marten's right arm, and that of Miss Juliet on his left. Mr. Tom was walking before with Miss Fanny, and Mr. Richardson, who had sprung from nobody knew where, was bringing up the rear with a cousin on each side, like the lion and the unicorn in the royal arms.

There was a way, though may-be a little round-

about, by the Grove House, to James Bar's cottage, and we cannot suppose that Marten would have suffered himself to have thus fallen into this line of march, had he not remembered, that if he accompanied the ladies to the Grove, when there, he should be nearer the cottage than he was in the centre of the village. Then if he were only to cross the garden and the young plantations, he was further aware that he might cut off a very considerable angle in the remaining distance.

So far, we have accounted creditably for his rather easy acquiescence in the first movements of the party.

They were hardly in motion, when Miss Stephens said, "What did the rector want with you?"

Martin told her.

She laughed, and exclaimed, "What a goose you are, Mr. Marten."

He insisted on knowing what she meant, and how he had deserved the compliment.

"Did he not see you with us?" she answered; "and was not this tale of the sick man made on the spot, think you, that he might separate you from us? He is as jealous as fire of your attentions to us—he considers that all your devoirs, as his curate, are due to himself and his milk-and-water family; and if I called you a goose, it is because you cannot see what stares in every other person's face. Even that silly fellow Tom regrets that—" Here she thought proper to hesitate, but almost instantly adding, "Well, it must come out—that such a fine young man as you are, should be the obedient servant of such an old puritan."

Marten insisted that he did not consider him-

self any man's servant—he was independent, he asserted, and never had submitted and never would submit to any man's humours.

“Very right, and I dare say very true,” replied Miss Stephens; “but I suppose we do not pass the entrance of the Church-lane, lest the man to whose humours you would not submit on any account, should get a glimpse of you in your present company, and should take some liberty which might try your gentlemanly feelings.” Then calling to her brother before her, “File down the Mill-lane, Tom,” she said, “we wish to go by that way home.”

“What for?” asked the brother; “do you know how far round it is?”

“May-be half a quarter of a mile,” she replied.

“Very well,” he said, “in such delightful company as the present, no way could appear long to me—eh! Fanny, don't I improve? Have I not said the exact proper thing? Don't I get on? Have I not spoken just as they do in Paris?”

Down the Mill-lane, accordingly, the whole party enfiladed, and might have reached the Grove in less than half a mile of added walking, if they had crossed a field at the bottom of the lane, but when they reached the turnstile by which they were to enter this field, Miss Fanny discerned in the quickly thickening gloom, a white face and a pair of horns, which she insisted must belong to a male of the cattle kind, and thinking this a proper occasion for exhibiting delicate feelings, she shrieked, and backed from the stile almost into a hedge, and as the weakest generally do, in a contest of this nature, carried

her point, which was, not to go through this field.

Thus she led the party as much as a good mile about, with such expenditure of time, that the moon had risen, and the night was perfectly established, before they entered the Grove House domain.

Marten proceeded with the young ladies into the verandah, where a most agreeable flavour from within the house—a flavour of delicate dishes ready to be served up hot for supper, met that of the flowers from without; the less refined attraction prevailing for the time being over the more refined.

Marten paid no attention, however, to this symptom of good fare; he was anxious to be gone, and waited only to inquire whether a certain wicket at the end of the plantations was likely to be found open.

Of course, Miss Stephens understood the motive for the inquiry, and then came the brunt of the warfare in Marten's breast, between a sense of duty on one side, and the effects of female influence, or rather, we should say, female eloquence and female perseverance, on the other.

The leader of the female host, for Marten was attacked by all the young ladies, was not, however, so far without tact, as to press on him the total abandonment of his purpose; she only required a short delay—he must just go in and sup. Sick and dying persons take no note of hours; probably a visit from him a short time hence might be as acceptable to James Bar as at an earlier hour; it might help to serve him through the tedium of the night; and that she might strengthen her plea, she gave orders that some

one should be sent to open the plantation gate, and then to proceed to Bar's cottage and bring back word how the old man was.

This message she gave in Marten's hearing. She added some other direction which he did not hear.

CHAPTER XX.

THOUGH not quite satisfied, Marten resisted no longer, but suffered himself to be drawn to the supper table, where, for a little while, the affair of James Bar receded to the rear of his mind, standing behind the gay objects in front, like an ill-omened thing always ready to come forward.

Whilst the party were recruiting themselves with the various delicacies before them, young Stephens opened the subject on which Marten's opinion was required; and this it was—that the young people should get up some little play or pantomime amongst themselves, to the representation of which a few favoured friends might be invited.

Mr. Stephens, senior, appealed to Marten as soon as his son had opened the case—asking him whether he did not think the proposal a very imprudent one.

But before Marten could reply, the whole pack of sons, daughters, nieces, and nephews, opened upon the elder with such a flood of rapid and noisy eloquence, that he must infallibly have yielded, had not the torrent met with certain obstructions in its right forward course, which compelled it to separate into various streams, and

thus either broke its force, or caused the one column to act against another. In plain language, it seems that the young people had taken up different views of the sort of entertainment which should be enacted.

Mr. Richardson was for something burlesque, in which line lay his own wit; Miss Fanny was shrill for something *à la mode de Paris*; Miss Hetty was eager for something pastoral, in which she fancied she should shine; Miss Dolly for something easy and funny; Miss Juliet for the romantic; and Miss Stephens, who had her own private views, was not for any one of the objects proposed by the others, though not less noisy than her fellows; Mr. Tom, on the contrary, affected to adopt the ideas of each, and proposed that something should be hit upon which should display every person's peculiar perfections and capabilities in high relief.

"Actors are not now made to adapt themselves to plays, Dickson, are they?" he said, "but plays are written for actors; so I propose that we shall compose a piece for ourselves, in which Julia shall be the sentimental heroine, and Caroline her strong-minded friend—Fanny, the lady's maid, from Paris—Hetty, a milk-maid, the under plot—Dolly, a romp, with a slit in her apron—Dickson, the valet—mama, the nurse or cook—papa, the butler; and as the family so constructed must stand in need occasionally of a little good advice, we will dub Mr. Marten the father confessor."

Marten was preparing to say, that he must beg leave to be excused, when as many voices as there were young ladies burst upon Mr. Tom, with the question—"of what he meant to make of himself."

"Why," he replied, "that is putting a modest man to the blush—suppose I say the fine fellow of the piece?"

But enough of this; the excitement continued so long, that Mr. Stephens, having tried several times to make himself generally heard, whispered to Marten, "I shan't give my consent to no such doings, I promise them—though I have no objection to let them talk;" then leaning back in his chair, and placing three fingers of his right hand between four buttons of his waistcoat, he closed his eyes, and presently became oblivious of all things, excepting, at short intervals, when he betrayed a consciousness of a beaker of hot brandy and water, and, as if instinctively, lifted it occasionally to his lips.

The mother, at the head of the table, appeared equally passive, though if she slept, it was bolt upright.

With young people, in lively company, time slips on rapidly. During the last hour and a half, for so long it was since he had sat down to supper, Marten had forgotten that the man who had gone to inquire after James Bar ought to have been back some time; when he recollected himself, he begged leave to ring, and make the inquiry. He did so, and got an answer from the footman, that John had been returned only a few minutes, and that the nurse at the cottage had spoken to him out of an upper window, and had told him that the old man was very comfortable, and gone to sleep for the night, and could not be disturbed.

Very well, thought Marten, I shall go early in the morning. The young people then proposed a move to another room, for some musical or

dancing purpose, when Marten, watching his opportunity, slipped away, knowing of old how difficult it always was to escape from Grove House.

"Where is Marten? where is that fellow gone?" cried Mr. Richardson, as he entered the room where his sister was playing the last new waltz, preparatory to some of the party beginning to make their circumvolutions.

"Off! off!" exclaimed Mr. Tom, "off, as I live. What a fine fellow he would be if he were not in trammels!"—and then came the proposition that he and his cousin Dickson should be after him, and bring him back *nolens volens*.

"Do, do!" cried the female chorus; one and all of whom ran out with the young men, and taking advantage of a soft night and lovely moon, they went as far as the gates, being scarcely able to muster prudence sufficient to restrain them from a farther progress.

"There he is—there he is!" cried Mr. Tom; and he raised his voice till the very birds at roost were disturbed with the cry of "Marten—I say, Marten, you shabby fellow—I say, parson, come back."

Marten heard these calls, but was admonished by them to fly the faster, rather than to return.

By favour of a bend in the road, he was quickly lost to the view of his pursuers, though they were following him at full speed: but catching a glimpse of him, when they had themselves made the turn, and arrived where the road or street was quite straight to the end of the village, they called to him again, giving the inhabitants of the houses on either side the advantage of knowing that something was going on in which the reverend John Marten was con-

cerned. In consequence whereof, some raised up their blinds or curtains, and looked out from their upper windows; and others cried, "Wonderful!—strange!" from their very beds.

In the mean time, Marten reached his own porch, knocked hurriedly, and was admitted, and whilst his landlady barred and locked the door, went up to his sitting-room, but he had scarcely reached it, and was lighting his mould candles from one he had brought up, when he was startled and annoyed by a most tremendous rattle at the street door.

He next heard Mrs. Linton open the door; and some discussions in loud tones from below: then steps were heard on the stairs, and immediately afterwards young Stephens and his cousin entered, crying, "Out upon you, Marten!" much as sportsmen do when they have run down their game.

Marten asked his unwelcome guests somewhat coolly, what had made them follow him at such an hour?

"Such an hour," repeated Mr. Richardson. "Come, now don't play the parson over us." Then turning to his cousin, he added, "I say, Stephens, suppose we stay here for awhile, and leave the girls waiting for us."

Mr. Thomas laughed, and without appealing to Marten, they both seated themselves with vulgar ease.

And now I would willingly draw a veil over what passed, but it is necessary to continue the subject as being intimately connected with the fate of Marten.

It seems that Mr. Richardson had once or twice been exceedingly mortified at the manner in

which Marten had reproved him, for some jest he considered not only profane, but unfit for ears polite. This the young man could not forgive, and having discovered the sensitive points in Marten's character, he now determined to play upon them, as a revenge for past mortification, and Marten was severely punished through his means.

Accordingly, having persuaded his foolish cousin to give in to his plan of remaining where they were, he first complained of being very thirsty, and asked Marten if he could not give him a glass of something to satisfy his thirst; under that pretence he brought up Mrs. Linton into the apartment, so timing his movements, that the very instant her step was heard on the stairs, he had lighted his cigar, and was actually engaged in the act of smoking it, when she entered. As might be supposed, Mrs. Linton instantly informed the young gentleman she could not allow smoking in her apartments; and she spoke with some heat.

What Marten might have done if left to himself we cannot say, had not Mr. Richardson sarcastically congratulated him on the care that was taken of him by the good people of the town.

"What a precious youth you must be, Marten," he said. "What a good lad they will make of you presently; and so this good lady is your nurse, I presume; and she is to see you do not disobey orders when out of the governor's sight. The leading strings are handed over to her by the kind parson." Then turning to his cousin—"Come, put up your cigar, Tom," he added, "I see Mr. Marten is afraid of breaking rules."

We have said Marten could not bear to be laughed at, and hardly knowing how to restrain

his anger, he turned it upon the person who least deserved it: and having once spoken harshly to Mrs. Linton, she returned it in the same manner, till Marten, quite carried beyond himself, said passionately.

"You call this apartment yours, Mrs. Linton, and while I pay for it I call it mine; and I beg leave to inform you, that I do not suffer my visitors to be interfered with, and therefore permit me to request that you will withdraw to that portion of the house where you have a right to interfere."

"Bravo, parson!" cried Mr. Richardson, slapping Marten on the back: but he drew back the next instant, on the young man's turning round, and facing him with a look of anger the like he had never seen before. So he contented himself with winking, and making signs to his cousin, congratulating him on strong symptoms of a row; and now it was wholly the fault of Mrs. Linton that there the affair did not end, for seeing some of these winks and nods, her voice actually rose to a regular scolding, and she became exceedingly rude and provoking, not only to Mr. Richardson and his cousin, but also to Marten, threatening Marten with complaining to his rector, and using other freedoms of speech, for which, had she been a man, she would have been turned out of the room without ceremony. Having, however, been told by Marten, that he should certainly leave her lodgings as soon he could make it convenient to do so, and that till he did so he would not suffer any interference, she left the room with a muttered "Very well, sir—the sooner the better;" and was saluted before she shut the door with a loud laugh from the two visitors.

These soon afterwards took their leave, abandoning Marten to his thoughts, which were anything but most agreeable.

His first object in the morning was to repair to James Bar's. He found the old man so far advanced, as to be insensible of what was passing about him; he had become so, he was told, soon after he had sent to see Mr. Enfield.

Marten came home, and had breakfasted some time, when Mr. Enfield entered; and had not Marten been pre-occupied by his own feelings, he must have observed such an expression of tender grief in his countenance, as a Christian only can feel for an offending fellow creature, who is loved, and has been more or less esteemed.

He came forward with a moist, if not a tearful, eye, and sate down, hardly answering Marten's inquiries after his health.

A rather distressing pause ensued, after which he spoke at once, saying, that his errand that morning was a painful one; and that he trusted Marten would take all in good part if he assumed the privileges of a father, and gave him such advice as a father would give to a beloved son, in all sincerity, and without disguise. It was both coldly and stiffly that Marten replied, begging him to use all sincerity, and at the same time feeling that this sincerity was only another word for impertinence.

Mr. Enfield commenced by saying, that Mrs. Linton had been with him that morning, and was adding what had been the purport of her visit—of course, to complain of himself—when Marten interrupted him, saying haughtily, “I cannot suppose that you, sir, can possibly pay any attention to the babble of a woman of that kind; nor can I

suppose that you can be disposed to take cognizance of anything which may pass between me and my landlady. The woman has been excessively impertinent, and I shall leave her apartments when I can suit myself with others. We will, if you please, waive that subject, and not suffer it to interfere with anything else you may have to say to me."

"I merely mentioned Mrs. Linton's visit," answered the rector, "from the circumstance of its being connected with a vastly important subject."

Mr. Enfield then explained this to be Marten's intimacy with the Stephenses; stating, from the circumstances of the past night, most of which had come to his knowledge, either from James Bar's nurse or Mrs. Linton, the very baneful effects which such intimacy must produce on his character—hinting, though most kindly, that Marten was by no means an exception to the general rule which assumes the universal influence of bad example—and proceeding to point out, in very decided terms, the various prejudicial ways in which this influence had operated the evening before.

Were there not an over-ruling providence which directs the smallest circumstances of man's life, we might say that the whole of Marten's future existence depended on the manner in which he should answer the serious and affectionate address of his rector.

Had he confessed, what he felt to a certain degree, that he had some reason in what he said, it is probable that the whole colour of the affair would have been changed; but all the proud blood of old Adam was up in the young

Marten, exciting in the brain, to which it rushed, strong and distorted views of the injustice and impertinence of the man, who presumed to find such fault with merely trifling indiscretions, under the plea of his superiority over the offender.

"What," thought he, "have my indiscretions been, in comparison with those of many young clergymen? Who can charge me with a single vice? Is it such a vast sin to love young society? Must I be treated as a bondman? Must I not even spend an hour with a friend without asking leave? Is every old woman's testimony to be received against me?—this is paying too dearly even for Lord H—'s patronage."

We may easily suppose what Marten's reply to Mr. Enfield was, whilst under the feelings and impressions described above. It was, indeed, haughty and cold; and not to dwell on this, the most painful part of our young man's experience of himself, his rector left him not till it had become apparent that the best thing which could happen for his own peace and his curate's good, was that the tie between them should be broken as speedily and as gently as possible, and with as little injury to Marten's reputation as could possibly be managed.

An hour afterwards, Marten deeply deplored what had passed, but was still too high to make any concession, by which the evil might be rectified.

The first act of Marten after this unfortunate affair was to write to his father.

During his residence abroad, this latter gentleman had adopted the name of Martini, which had been given him by foreigners, and by which he was generally known in such places in Italy where he resided.

To distinguish him from his son, who, as our hero must take precedence with us, even of his father, we shall now avail ourselves of this circumstance to distinguish the two from each other, and to avoid confusion of persons in our narrative.

Signor Martini had been much pleased when informed that his son was in a situation to which he had been recommended by Lord H—; and Marten, therefore, was fully aware that he would be much hurt when made acquainted with his intention of leaving Northfield.

Whilst writing this letter, therefore, he felt more and more convinced that he was in a dilemma, and more and more perplexed by the inquiry, of what he could possibly do next? The only thing his mind would turn to was the situation of a tutor; and as his father had hinted that such things might sometimes be heard of abroad, he hoped that in the answer, which he begged might be speedy, he might be able to suggest some prospect of this kind.

Under the irritation of his present feelings, Marten thought he could bear anything but the dependent situation of a curate, and the petty torments inflicted by parishioners, lodging-house keepers, and gossiping neighbours. He overlooked other and far worse inflictions to which the man is subjected, to whom the care of youth in its most wilful season is entrusted, who is liable to be blamed by parents if he does not control his pupil, and to be detested by that pupil, should he even attempt to do so.

Having sealed his letter, he took it himself to the post-office; and from thence proceeded to Grove House by the most open and direct road,

wishing Mr. Enfield to see that he was quite indifferent to his cautions or censures.

It happened that he found none of the family at home but Miss Stephens and her mother; the latter being supposed, by the general consent of the household, to be of the value of a cipher on the left side of a numeral.

The young man's manner at once proved to Miss Stephens that something unusual had happened. She instantly asked him what this was, and thus obtained a full account of the occurrences of the morning, with no more colouring than was the absolute effect of Marten's excited state.

Of course, he expected that she, who had always professed her dislike of Mr. Enfield, would enter into his feelings, and render him her sympathy in the most cordial manner—but he knew her not. She felt what had happened full as painfully as he could have expected—she felt that the loss of his company would be a severe one to the society of the house, and she felt that she had forced on this loss; but hers was not a gentle mind; everything which caused grief to her excited anger, and though it was natural for her to be angry with Mr. Enfield, it was not so evident wherefore she was to be angry with Marten, unless it is understood that she thought he owed more to the friendship which she and her family had shown him, than to be so very ready to throw up his situation at Northfield.

But without looking more deeply into her feelings, they were certainly such as prompted her to speak in such a way as proved to Marten that he had altogether erred in judgment when he had attributed any ladylike qualities to her.

"And do you really assert," she said, "that in a fit of passion, you have had the folly to throw up your curacy, knowing, as you must have done, that Enfield could not have made such trifles as are alleged against you the pretext for dismissing you? Could you not see that out of jealousy for our family, he was trying how far he had the influence to force you to give us up, and that if you had only been cool, and used a little self-command, the struggle would have ended there and then, and you would have been left to use the liberty which is the right of every gentleman, without its being possible for Enfield to have touched you, so long as you attended to the forms and observances of your calling."

Marten uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"You may be surprised," she added, "knowing how I detest the whole set of them, to hear that I regret your having flown in their faces—but do you not see that you have gratified them by yielding them the victory? You should have retained your position, keeping strictly to the letter of the law, that is, to all your ecclesiastical formularies, and taking your own way in everything not involved in those punctilios, you would have baffled them all completely."

"But," replied Marten, "might not the interests of religion have suffered by a protracted discord between the rector and the curate? though I think myself ill-used, yet I could not think of bringing such scandal on the church."

Miss Stephens laughed at the last word.

"There you are," she said, with ineffable scorn. "Though I believe that you churchmen, for the most part, do deadly hate each other, yet,

let some one of laity but touch one of your privileges with the point of a needle, and you all unite in its defence as close as the Macedonian phalanx."

"Because," replied Marten, "that, however we may be led by human weakness to disagree amongst ourselves, we have better feelings, which do not permit us to abandon the interests of religion."

"Say your own interests," returned the young lady, "and may-be you may be nearer the mark."

It was not probable that Marten should be soothed by this sort of language, neither was he, —he declined an invitation to dinner, and returned to his lodgings under the painful conviction that he had forfeited Mr. Enfield's respect and patronage for a family not worthy of such a sacrifice. He could not comprehend how it happened that he had never before appreciated Miss Stephens nor her set, as he did that day; for he was not aware that he had offended her, by showing her how easily he could abandon the place where she resided.

If we follow Marten for the two next following weeks, we shall find him avoiding all society, giving his orders in his own interior as shortly and coldly as possible, rejecting every invitation from which he could find the smallest excuse for freeing himself, and, in fact, avoiding many from being constantly out of the way when persons called.

Mr. and Mrs. Enfield exhibited on several occasions a desire for reconciliation far beyond what Marten deserved; but the young man's pride was not come down, and though he ought to have been ready to meet the rector and his lady more

than half way, yet he was even better satisfied that the disagreement should not be made up, than that he should be supposed the offending party.

It was a glorious period of the year, the latter end of August, when the harvest moon rendered the nights as pleasant for being out of doors as the day. Marten spent many of each twenty-four hours in the fields and woods, taking books out with him and reposing on the grass, reading and thinking in solitary places, his thoughts rather running forward to the future than lingering over the past; for he was too full of the prospects before him, and the hopes and fears attending his wishes, to be in a state to reason profitably on the various circumstances of his career hitherto as a minister. If this career had not been a very glorious one, he set his failures down to any causes rather than his own indiscretion: either that the situations which he had filled were not suited to him; or that he was such as the people had not capacity to appreciate; or that he had either been interfered with or counteracted; or that the people had been set against him; or that he had not appeared among them with sufficient authority; with sundry other ors and ands, which strung together so many reasons for his not having achieved any very eminent successes:—so that we cannot wonder if he came to the conclusion that few curates—with his pretensions, be it observed—ever had been more unfortunate than himself.

One continued system of rude banter which was carried on by the younger members of Grove House, from the time in which it was known that he had proposed to leave Northfield, rather than

remain there and assert his independence as regarded his private actions, had the effect of completely driving him from their society, and he had formed no intimacy with any other persons in the place.

He felt it awkward to write to Mansfield and Henry Milner, and hence he perpetually had the solacing sense of being alone in the world, and not being cared for by any individual of his fellow-creatures, unless it might be his father; but he much doubted whether this paternal interest would manifest itself in anger, or in some attempt to farther his advancement.

Before he received an answer from his father, Mr. Enfield informed him that there was a gentleman ready to take his situation, at the same time referring in the kindest way to his convenience, as to the period in which he might wish to leave Northfield. Marten did not receive this kind reference as he should have done, but assured Mr. Enfield that it was quite the same to him when he quitted the place.

The paternal letter arrived very soon after Marten had filled up the measure of his ungracious behaviour to Mr. Enfield, and gave an entire change to the whole current of his thoughts. He anticipated nothing, whilst opening the letter, but strong expressions of displeasure; on the contrary, his eye was first addressed by expressions of almost puerile delight.

The Signor Martini had at length obtained a situation: this situation was under the Austrian government, in no less distinguished a place than Venice.

He spoke of apartments appointed him in a marble palace on the principal canal; of his gon-

dola, his establishment of servants, and other matters of the same kind, which failed not to open out the brightest visions of ambition, and remain in the mind of the ex-curate, and rendered him almost proof against certain passages which ensued, indicative of displeasure at the manner in which he, his son, had thrown away Lord H—'s patronage.

If these few lines might cause a slight irritation, all was more than set right when the last page of the letter was arrived at, and he found not only the desired permission to join his father directly, but an order for drawing a sum equivalent to the expenses of his journey, on a banker in London, with a direction to call on a gentleman there, who had just returned from Venice, and could give him all necessary information as to his proceedings.

And now we are sorry to add, that Marten's pride was perhaps even more strengthened than diminished by his father's letter. He experienced no humbling sense of the divine goodness on the occasion. He thought he need no more be dependent upon the favour of others, and it was still in this frame of mind that he left Northfield and hastened to London, waiting till he had crossed the channel, before he wrote to inform Henry, Edward, or Lord H—, of his disagreement with Mr. Enfield, and total change of his prospects.

CHAPTER XXI.

IT is not our intention to describe Marten's journey from England to Venice; we shall only say, that at Geneva he found a letter waiting his arrival: it was from his father, and we shall take the liberty of an historian, and copy a portion of it for the benefit of our readers.

“ Palazzo Torino.

“ MY DEAR JOHN,

“ Having so many other pressing matters to attend to, I have not mentioned, I think, that somewhere about the period in which I received information of your leaving Northfield, I became acquainted with a young Italian gentleman, the Signor di Romano; not a mere nominal gentleman of the order of Sans-terre, which abounds, you will find, on the continent, but one who owns a principality as wide as one of our largest English counties, with a castle in the mountains, and a palace in this city. In short, if his property is to be judged by his style of living, it is what is considered princely in Venice. This young gentleman seems scarcely eighteen, and from the excessive delicacy of his complexion, he appears either to be in bad health, or to have been brought up in too effeminate habits, probably a little of

both. He took rather a forced step, one a little out of the routine of punctilio, to get himself introduced to me; and of course, when he informed me who he was, and I found he was speaking correctly, I paid him every possible attention, and we conversed together almost the remainder of the evening. Without being *gauche*, for he was singularly elegant and refined in his manners, yet he exhibited occasionally embarrassment and timidity, perhaps not unsuited to his tender years, and the absolute state of independence in which he seems to be placed. I fancy he has no companion nor friend that suits him, for he seemed, I speak only to you, my dear John, to take so great a liking to me, that on the second time of our meeting he asked me many questions, which proved he had interested himself in my affairs. These questions were, 'Had I a son? Where was he? Was he likely to come to Venice? Was not his name John, and was he not a Protestant priest?'

"Once, indeed, it did occur to me, that it was possible that this young signor might have been a school or college fellow of yours, and I was led to this conjecture by his dropping a hint that he had been in England. But surely, John, if ever you had met with a youth of so distinguished an appearance as this, you must have mentioned him to me. At all events, either for my sake or your own, I rather think the former, he is prepared to cultivate your friendship whenever it shall be feasible, and who knows what may not accrue from the connexion? The signor is so far younger than you are, that he might be glad of you as a half companion or half tutor and a pru-

dent man should watch these little openings, and know how to serve himself of them.

“The signor has been for some weeks past at a house he has at Monselice, which place you will, I trust, know in due time, and there I have not seen him since his second visit; but I have called at his house in Venice, and shall call again as soon as I hear of his return. He is, I hear, a papist, which of course we must have expected, and under the charge of his mother’s confessor, to whom he pays great deference, which in the present liberal days is not usual with independent young men,” &c. &c.

Though the Signor Martini had filled his paper as full as it well might be, all that we have not quoted touched on matters so small, that even his son could hardly give them any attention. Annoyed about these little minutiae, all of which were so trifling that he could not lay hold of any one as a cause of offence, his still irritated mind vented itself upon the affair of the Italian signor. “My father,” he thought, “as fathers are wont to do in his situation, has been full of my return to him after a separation of many years, and he has probably been worrying this young gentleman with the perfections of myself, until no doubt he was glad enough to escape to Monselice. How is it possible a papist and a foreigner could care about one who cannot have two ideas in common with himself? But I must put a stop to this at once, if it does not die away of itself. I cannot, as a clergyman of the Church of England, enter into partnership with a Romish priest to take charge of an effeminate youth. My father might surely allow me to take what steps I

consider right in my own affairs, and not be in such a hurry to dispose of me with or without my own consent." So thought Marten, and such continued to be his sentiments, as we shall see, even after his arrival at Venice.

Having spent the night in the renowned and most erudite city of Padua, where, as in duty bound, Marten thought of Antenor, canonized in the dark ages under the cognomen of Saint Anthony, our traveller set off by dawn to Maestre, moving all the way in a line with a black canal, amid houses discoloured by damp. In short, the scene was altogether Dutch, without the Dutch cleanliness.

Arrived at Maestre, he procured a gondola and embarked for the city of the sea, of which he had already caught many distant glimpses. These gondolas struck Marten as having a most funereal appearance, with their awnings of black cloth and their black tassels hanging from them. He still had a considerable way to go before he reached the open sea, by a channel between crumbling banks covered with rank vegetation.

Every person knows that Venice is built on certain low islets of the Adriatic, in a part of that sea, called the Lagunes, the buildings being supported by piles driven into the earth of the islands, and the principal passages between the houses being by water, which renders this city, as far as I am aware, unlike any other on the face of the globe.

Of the many persons who have described it, very few have informed their readers or hearers, that there is a connexion between the different parts of the city by narrow

streets, alleys, and bridges, behind the houses; though they all speak of the great square of St. Mark, and some mention the public gardens. But we must now endeavour to look at Venice with Marten's eyes.

After a certain time, as the gondola proceeded, our traveller came to where the canal began to open, and its banks to recede to the right and left, whilst directly before him, rising, as it were, from the ocean, appeared the towers of Venice, looking, at first, like a town built on the margin of the sea, yet having detached parts which already showed that it arose from the sea itself. The watery way was marked on either side by stakes rising out of the sea, as we have seen poles fixed in the snow to designate the road. On these were fixed lamps, which were lighted at night to prevent vessels from leaving the line.

The first building by which the gondola passed, was a castle with a little platform before it, and the next a private house, near which the family carriage, being also a gondola, was moored under a shed.

Unfortunately for effect, the entrance on the side of Maestre is through a very inferior part of the city, where the houses are mean and ruinous, the tendency to decay being very strong, on account of the damp arising from the water.

In this street also are trottoirs on each side, which makes the part of the city to which it belongs appear more Dutch than Venetian; but still, the scene, though not yet meeting Marten's expectations, was unlike anything experience had ever shown him; the feature which struck him most being, that wherever other streets diverged from the main passage, instead of a paved road, there was a branch of a canal.

As they glided on, the trottoirs, with their decaying parapets, disappeared, and the water washed the walls of the houses, from many of which were steps, for the convenience of passing to and from the gondolas.

The gondolier at length announced to Marten that they had entered the grand canal, and the young man was forthwith on the alert, and in the very agony of expectation, for he had not seen his father for several years; and so filled was his mind with anticipations of various descriptions, that the numerous striking objects which seemed to glide past him on each side, formed only a general impression, of which the strongest characteristic was wonder.

The great canal is enclosed on either side by palaces, built by the most eminent architects of those ages in which the barks of Venice were paramount from the Black Sea to the pillars of Hercules. Yet over these once stately edifices, damp, desertion, and neglect, had cast so deep a shade, that it required more attention than Marten had to bestow, to enable him to form any idea of what they had been in their more fortunate days.

The gondolier had just pointed out a single arched bridge in the distance before them, and pronounced the magic name, Rialto, when he drew up at a flight of steps, descending from the lower chambers, or rather arched vaults, which supported one of the many marble palaces which lined the canal.

This was the residence of the Signor Martini; and our young traveller stepped from the boat, paid the sum demanded, and was left, almost the next minute, alone on the steps.

Having walked a few paces inward, he found himself in a gloom so deep, that for some seconds he did not dare to advance; but when his eye had a little accustomed itself to the obscurity, he found that he was environed by arches of immense strength, probably themselves erected on piles, and supporting on their huge backs the whole of the heavy building above.

On one side was a gondola moored in a place sunk for such purpose, and shut out by flood-gates from the canal; and had he proceeded rashly before he saw his way, he might have had the satisfaction of walking into this watery bed of the gondola—which would by no means have suited his ideas of the decorum with which he wished to make his first acquaintance with his father's household.

By another careful look around him, he espied a wide flight of stone stairs tending upwards. It required no vast discernment to conjecture what they were for, and he immediately made for them, and after considerable ascent, issued forth into a large hall, feeling that he was coming into the house much in the style of a visitor who had entered by the cellar, rather than the front door above ground.

A servant whom he saw as he first stepped forth, expressed no manner of surprise at his appearance, but addressed him as if quite prepared to see a stranger, a traveller, and an Englishman also; for the Signor Martini had been looking for his son for several days, and had actually gone to Maestre the day before with the hope of meeting him.

The lacquey, footman, serving-man, or whatever else he might be called, for his appear-

ance was of a very indefinite description, welcomed him warmly, and said that the signor would be in ecstasies. He was then at dinner with a friend, above; and requested that the young gentleman would ascend the next flight of stairs to the dining-room.

Fashions differ in different countries. The ground floors of Italian houses are seldom used by the heads of families; and occasionally, the state-rooms are nearest the roof. The Signor Martini, however, had not chosen his sitting-rooms, in the immense house which he partly occupied, quite so high, but on the first floor; where, at the moment of the arrival of his son, he was taking his early dinner, or noon-tide meal, with his friend, in an uncarpeted marble hall, which had a balcony hanging over the canal; the hall being partially darkened by green latticed doors.

Marten requested the servant, when they had reached the ante-room, to go first and announce him; and whilst he stood without he heard his father's voice saying, in English, "My son arrived—where is he?"

The next moment Marten came forward, and was met with a burst of paternal feeling, such as he had never before beheld in his parent.

After various questions, broken sentences, and often-repeated congratulations, in which last the Italian guest, to whom Marten was introduced as the Signor Dorale, eloquently mingled, the party became more composed, and the young traveller was able to recollect that he was excessively hungry.

The table was supplied with several made dishes, and some sort of small birds, delicately

served; and though Marten might have preferred a leg of Welsh mutton, yet he made his father smile at the earnestness with which he attacked the dainties.

The repast was concluded by some fine fruits, and the servants being dismissed, much conversation ensued, tending to open the son's eyes to certain features of his father's character, which hitherto he had understood very imperfectly, and of which he had till then scarcely felt the annoyance.

The conversation was carried on in English—which language was understood and spoken very fairly by the Signor Dorale, who was evidently in the confidence of his host, for he entered into all which the latter said, as if he had been one of the family. He was a middle-aged man; but had not the fine appearance of our Marten's father.

This last was still a very handsome man; and if great attention to dress sometimes denotes a consciousness of personal excellence, this evidence was not wanting, for though the Signor Martini wore an undress coat, suited for ease and coolness, yet the arrangement of his hair, his waistcoat, and black satin stock, were faultless. Several superb jewels also blazed in his brooch and rings, and his hands were white and delicate as those of a lady. He lay back in his chair, in an attitude of graceful ease, whilst the discourse we are about to relate, held its smooth, and maybe somewhat light and apparently inconsistent tenor.

"You are improved, John," he commenced, "since I last saw you—not grown—but fallen more into form. What say you, Dorale, does he

resemble me? I fancy he does—but a man knows not his own appearance.”

The answer required to this question came from the intimate friend in the form most acceptable. He spoke so decidedly of the father's good looks, and of the son being the very image of that father, that Marten, who was not accustomed to compliments of this description, looked intently on his grapes, and blushed double deep—once for his father and twice for himself.

The Signor Martini having uttered a sentiment, for the originality of which we are not disposed to be captious, on personal excellence being a mere accident of nature, and very liable to perish, suddenly asked his son where his luggage was, and when it would probably arrive: and being satisfied that all was right as far as it regarded that matter, he added—“Well, there is no haste, your present dress, John, is in good style, very gentlemanly, requiring little change. The grade of a clergyman of the Established Church of England is that of a gentleman, and such a dress as is thought proper in one of that profession in the superior circles in England is always sufficient abroad. Nothing is in worse taste than a mixture of costumes—is it not so, Dorale?”

The Signor Dorale echoed the sentiment, and paid his friend a compliment on his universal good taste.

The Signor Martini waved off the compliment with a patronising smile; and proceeded to ask his son several questions respecting his general habits, and manner of spending his leisure. Was he fond of reading? and of what kind? He must study Italian without loss of time; he would lose a great deal if not well versed in that lan-

guage. He had learned drawing, he knew—could he sketch from nature? He hoped he had a taste for music—he knew that he had a fine voice for speaking; had he ever tried it in singing? He should advise him to have a master—he was in the land of harmony. No place like Venice in that respect—he must learn to take a good second. No introduction to a foreign, or even an English lady, like that of taking a song in parts with her. He next asked if he ever played? and Marten supposing that he referred still to music, answered, a little on the flute.

The Signor Martini shuddered at the mistake, as denoting an ignorance of the world, which he considered the very worst form in which ignorance could manifest itself—but having explained that he meant games of chance, he seemed pleased when his son told him that he had no taste for them. Dancing was next mentioned—did he dance?

Marten replied that he had no taste for it, and that he had seldom had an opportunity of trying it.

“But you have learned?” exclaimed his father, in alarm; “dancing was an item in your half-year’s bills, at Clent Green, for some time, I recollect.”

“I learned for many months,” replied Marten, “but I have forgotten what I learned.”

“Unfortunate,” exclaimed his father.

“Perhaps not so,” remarked the Signor Dorale; “I have heard you say that they cannot dance in England—though they can hop and flounder to the sound of music. The young gentleman will profit all the more from his instructors here, if he has forgotten what he learned in England.”

"Lessons!" here exclaimed Marten, "lessons; do you mean in dancing?" "How monstrous," he thought, "for a man, who has been an acting clergyman for two or three years, to be learning to dance!" He did not, however, express this thought.

His father had already dismissed the subject of learning to dance, by saying, "At present we can decide nothing; we shall see what will open: we shall see how the English take you up, John. There is a very steady, though may-be, a somewhat exclusive set, of our own country people at Venice—our English consul at their head. No doubt, your acquaintance will be sought by them, and much must depend as to the line you ought to take on the openings in that quarter."

The younger Marten had never been so much puzzled, when at school, with the lines, and circles, and points of Euclid, as he was to understand the points, and lines, and circles of his father's hints: and he was actually meditating an inquiry into the meaning of some of these dark sentences, when, just at the moment in which, like a birdcatcher, he thought he might throw his net over his bird on one side, in less than a twinkling of the eye, the creature was chirping beyond his reach on another.

"*Apropos*, John," were the next words of his father, falling in so quickly after the mention of the English serious set in Venice, as to show that they were connected somehow with that set in the senior's mind. "*Apropos*—John, do you adopt cigars?—you do not, I understand by that negative shake of the head. Well, all very well, the cigar is not admitted everywhere; there are some sets in which they are absolutely interdicted.

I am glad to find you are independent of them; remain so till you are quite clear of your line. It is easier to adopt them than to give them up."

"I doubt, my dear sir," replied Marten, "that I should not find it easy to adopt them."

"Well," replied the elder, "at present there can be no necessity to decide on this subject. I am sure that you will be prepared to do anything which may make you acceptable,—always, I suppose, of course, in an honourable way,—to those who are likely to advance your interest; but John," he added, "I see that you have neither brooch, nor chain to your watch. Have you nothing of the kind? surely you have not left them with your heavy baggage. Nor have you even a ring."

Marten confessed, in the first instance, that he never possessed any things of this description; and in the second, that had he even desired them, he had never had the means of procuring them.

"This must be remedied," said the signor; "and, John, though an artist would delight in the arrangement of your hair—for it is free and fine, and natural—yet it is not—not exactly as it is worn. What think you, Dorale?"

The Italian signor smiled on being thus applied to, answering, "I think, my friend, that we should be slow in interfering with a work which dame Nature has done so well; and so critically as to time, as the modern fashion of wearing the hair is but an imitation of what your son's is without art; but if I might suggest a little improvement, it should be here," and he drew his hand across his upper lip.

"Ah! very true, the moustache," exclaimed the Signor Martini, "a well arranged moustache on

the upper lip, with a curl at each corner of the mouth, would be a decided improvement; but before we cultivate the moustache, John, we must weigh all points. This very manly and beautiful ornament on the upper lip of youth is not adopted in the serious party, at least by clerical persons. We must not give offence in that quarter until we have seen how other views may open to us. By-the-by, Dorale, have you heard anything of the arrival of Signor Romani, from Monselice?"

At this name Marten's attention was instantly awakened, and he was preparing to speak, when a look from his father admonished him that what concerned this affair, as relating to himself, was a matter to be spoken of apart. The word siesta was then uttered, Signor Dorale withdrew, and the Signor Martini proposed to show his son the apartments prepared for him.

"You have an immense house here, sir," said Marten, as he accompanied his father through a long gallery, richly painted in fresco, and furnished with windows, the frames of which were most delicately wrought in the finest marble, though the beauty of the marble was impaired by the damp rising from the water, and the careless habits of the Italian household menials.

"We have space abundant now in Venice," replied the Signor Martini; "our most splendid palaces are, in many instances, occupied by paupers; and on the roofs of houses, formerly trodden by princely merchants, we may often see long lines of linen exposed to dry: but here are your rooms; you will find them cool and airy. Remember, my son, that you are at home, and have a father ready to supply all you need,

to the extent of his ability ; you know, of course, our Italian custom. We shall all be more quiet presently than you may perchance find us at midnight. You cannot do better than do as they do at Rome——adieu, *au revoir* ;” and shaking his son’s hand, he left him, and not without more new ideas than the young man well knew what to do with.

We have given on all occasions a very accurate account of every location in which Marten was settled for any time. We have described little parlours, and snug studies, &c. ; and surely as it lies equally in our power, it would be a very great neglect if we omitted to describe the rooms of which his father gave him possession in the Palazzo Torino, at Venice.

These apartments consisted of a range of three vast chambers, with lofty ceilings, most richly painted with groups of figures from the heathen mythology ; the walls themselves being of stucco, with moulding and ornaments of gilding, which, when fresh, must have been superb.

A line of windows, in frames of delicate tracery, wrought in marble, ran along the whole front of each room ; and before them was an open gallery and balustrades, supported by the colonnade of the first floor.

At each end of the line of windows, was a small circular closet, which hung clear over the canal, being composed of delicate and richly fretted marble ; and within these closets were a few chairs and a table, showing that these had been favourite recesses for those who had formerly occupied these apartments.

The pieces of furniture in the three rooms were few and far between, though more than their pre-

sent tenant required; but he was glad to see a sofa amongst the other articles, and soon extended himself upon it, being weighed down with heat and fatigue, and above all, a multiplicity of new ideas, than which nothing makes a human being more heavy.

When awakened by the step of his father in the room, he saw, by the shadows, that the evening was far advanced.

"Come, my son," said the Signor Martini, "you have rested well; I am come to propose to you an airing in my gondola before we sup. We will have this evening to ourselves; the fresh air, first on the water, and next in the balcony, will give you new life."

Nothing could have pleased Marten better than this arrangement; and as he descended with his father to the canal, and stepped into the gondola, he could scarcely identify his present self with the curate of Altonbury, distributing garments to old women.

So often has a progress through the city of the sea, at the cool hour of evening, been described by persons well skilled in the art of description by the pen, that I can do no better than refer my readers to these; begging them to understand, that Marten looked on all he saw in the true spirit of romance, and that as he passed under the Rialto, and saw the towers of St. Mark, and the Campanello in high relief, first against the glowing evening sky, and next in the pale moon beams, the common-places of his parent, though exhibited in much variety, were totally unable to withdraw him from the classical and romantic visions in which he was indulging.

The Signor Martini was too much a man of

the world to converse on private matters, even in English, in a gondola; though the ample space of the Giudecca, when entered therein, far exceeds the grand canal in breadth, full well he knew the uses of common-place subjects, where there was the least chance of being overheard; and a gondola might steal upon them unheard, and bearing English ears.

It was, therefore, not till after supper, and when the father and son were sitting in a balcony open to the water, that the subject of the Signor Romano was brought forward; but little more was elicited by Marten, from what his father then said, than what he knew before.

The Signor Romano was not yet come to Venice, but was daily expected, and when he did arrive, every imaginable attention was to be paid to him; at least so said the Signor Martini.

“Whatever may be the cause of this supposed interest of the young nobleman in you, John,” he continued, “you must take hold of it, as what may prove an important opening. The young man’s rank and fortune are very superior, and if he, on acquaintance, takes a fancy to you, as he seems prepared to do, and you follow it up prudently, it is difficult to say what an advantage it might not prove; but you will be guided by those who know the world better than you can possibly do.”

Several lengthened admonitions followed this last remark, one and all of which were so strongly tinged with what the haughty son considered to be the genuine spirit of toad-eating, that his whole mind rose against them, and it was not amiss that he happened to be seated in the shadow of one of the pillars which supported the gallery,

or he must inevitably have betrayed his indignation, by every silent demonstration of which his outward man was capable.

His nostrils expanded, his upper lip worked, every limb became agitated, and he actually clenched his teeth to prevent the escape of any expression of the firm resolution he had already made, never to become the mean sycophant of any man living.

How this conversation might have terminated we cannot say, if certain exquisite musical strains had not stolen on the ear of the young man, just as his forbearance was at the last gasp. The musicians and singers were in a gondola, and as the boat approached along the still waters, the sound became more distinct, and Marten thought that he had never heard music sweeter, or more appropriate to the scene.

It had not quite died away, when he requested permission to withdraw ; and when he had made his escape, he hastened to his room, determined more than ever to be the sole disposer of his own future career in life.

CHAPTER XXII.

As Marten and his father took their chocolate next morning together, the elder said he had been consulting his friend Dorale, who had been with him whilst dressing, and they had come to the conclusion that it would be best for Marten to remain for the present unIntroduced into other families, seeing only those who visited in the house, till the Signor Romano arrived from Monselice. "Lest, John," he added, "the serious English party, which is now the highest of our people in Venice, should take you up, and bring you forward in the chapel as a preacher, which I think them very likely to do. Then should you become popular, and talked of in that line, which all things considered, person, voice, manner, &c., without flattery, I think, more than probable, the young signor, or the young people about him, would take alarm, and thus any prepossession he might have in your favour, might be disannulled, and all our expectations closed in that quarter.

"What expectations, dear sir," asked Marten, "can we have from an Italian and a papist, however high in rank?"

"Give *me* credit, John," replied the father, "for knowing what *I* am about. *I* am not ad-

vising you without some solid grounds whereon to build my advice. You will not be sorry, I presume, to be put into a way in which you may advance yourself in life."

Marten felt that it had ever been a strong desire within his breast to raise himself in life; ambition had ever been his leading passion, though, like all human instincts, it had had its hot and cold fits, and other modifications. At the University, and at Woodville, it had often stood at fever heat; and under Mr. Dalben's roof had sunk sometimes below zero. Since he had been ordained, it had somewhat changed its character. He had since then aspired to turn many to the true faith; to be called the light of his people; the giver of sight to the blind; and it ended in the ardent hope of being richly rewarded, not in the world to come, but in this more especially.

Marten desired to be pointed out as an eloquent preacher—a man whose pleadings few could be found to resist; and so cunningly was this ambition interwoven in his most secret thoughts, that he himself was deceived by it; no wonder, then, if he deceived others into the belief that it was a love of publishing God's word. Now, however, his father's advice to keep well with the Signor Romano seemed to attack his religion, whilst, in fact, it only attacked his natural pride, and fancying he was fighting the cause of his church, he considered a resistance to his father's wishes his necessary duty as a clergyman of the church of England. Marten had already determined he would not pay any court to the Signor Romano; he sought, therefore, an excuse to justify himself to his father, and he made, therefore, their diverse faiths his plea.

Such was the ambition of the son, whilst that of the father was of the common-place sort—the every-day kind of worldly men in general. Signor Martini, therefore, was taken a little by surprise when his son flamed out, and declared that he never could submit to take any steps which were not entirely consistent with the character of a clergyman of the Church of England, and that if it were necessary to the success of any undertaking, that he should suppress the expression of any of his religious principles, he must beg leave to withdraw from all concurrence with it.

In the expression of this sentiment Marten did but what was right, but the motive that influenced him, and the manner in which he acted, could not have met with the approval of any true Christian.

But the Signor Martini had quite recovered from his little disconcertment before his son had concluded his speech; and smiling in that sort of indulgent manner with which a mother contemplates the impotent anger of the babe on her knee—"My dear boy," he said, "why this ebullition? there is not a man on earth who has a higher respect for religion than I have. If such had not been the case, why should I have brought you up to the church? You must, indeed, John, you must overcome this impatience of temper, by which you lose old friends and repel new ones. You ought to know my situation—there should be no secrets between us; permit me to be sincere with you. Though now my income is better than it has been, and I am living handsomely, as my rank in this place requires, it is not in my power, after having given you an expensive education, to support you in idleness—

you must exert yourself in one way or another, and I think myself entitled, as you have failed in your efforts—permit me to speak, do not interrupt me—and through the impatience I complain of, thrown away Lord H—'s patronage, to expect that you will pay due attention to my words—that is, as long as you remain under my roof. Your immediate object must be to work, with Italian. I have engaged a master, and trust you will have made considerable proficiency in the language before our new friend arrives.”

Marten, of course, could make no objection to study the language and give his whole powers to it. He would, he said, accommodate himself to his father's wishes in all things which did not implicate his religious principles, or imply any mean time-serving concessions; it was not in his nature to submit to any man's caprices, and contrary to his sense of rectitude, to conceal his religious sentiments.

The kind-hearted father, instead of using any terms of disapproval, as might have been expected, launched out in high commendation of his son's attachment to religion, and noble and honourable feeling, finishing his subject by speaking of his own deep respect for religion.

Then suddenly looking at his watch, as if recollecting himself, he started up, apologised for being obliged to leave—spoke of the Italian master, whom he had appointed to come within the hour, and had glided out of the room with a march as smooth as the few last sentences which had flowed from his lips, leaving his son and heir swelling with indignation, and quite undetermined whether he should make up his mind to try Venice a little longer, or go back to England

—with the proviso that he could get money so to do.

Many lengthy paragraphs have been written upon the advantage of having the pecunia always at command; probably as many might be composed with equal truth and more novelty, on the advantages which as often accrue from the want of the command of this pecunia. What Marten might have lost had any one bestowed a bag of gold upon him at the instant that he was wishing himself back in England, remains to be proved.

He was still meditating on his ill-fortune and present embarrassment, with his eyes resting on the small pieces of marble in the pavement at his feet, when a small voice in a high key, saluted his ears, with an “*How do you do, saar—Santé bon—*”

Not Satan touched by Ithuriel’s spear could have started more decidedly than Marten did at this unexpected sound—nor could the arch-fiend have looked much more haughty than the young man did, when having sprung from his chair to his full height, he saw before him a diminutive yellow youth, with large black eyes, white teeth, and black moustaches, standing behind where he had been sitting.

Marten did not say, but looked—“Who are you? What brings you here?”—he had forgotten the threatened Italian pedagogue.

The little man had been told that his future pupil required to be taught the language from the first rudiments; he was prepared, therefore, to address him in what English he could muster, and seeing a need of some opening compliment or address of some kind, he repeated his “*How do you do, saar?*” then adding, “*health good—*

I am your most humble servant for to teach read and speak. Can you read? Can you speak little? Have you got book?"

Marten scarcely knew what to do to get rid of his irritation. But feeling the man was not to blame for being, though small, an immense bore, and for speaking bad English, and coming when he was supremely unwelcome, he sat down, books having been produced, took a lesson, was very sullen and dry, received many high compliments, and dismissed his master with the impression that he was a most displeasing specimen of the haughty Englishman.

At length Marten found himself at liberty to withdraw and meditate, in one of his little cabinets, where everything was suited for calm meditation, excepting the mind itself in which the meditation was to go forward.

We cannot question but that Marten was as anxious at this moment, as at any other period of his past life, to raise himself to some eminence or distinction; his principles and good taste, not to say his pride, being sufficient to induce him to wish that any inducement or success which he might obtain might be, at least, consistent with his profession. He saw, he thought, that his father had stronger reasons than were acknowledged, for wishing him to meet the advances of the Signor Romano, and in the deepest recesses of his own heart, he felt this was precisely the sort of adventure which he should like to follow up.

He had always sought the society of the great, bearing many things in Lord H— which he should have denounced as utterly contemptible in an unlettered man, overlooking the dulness and inanity of Lady Anne, accommodating himself to

principles in Lord H— which he would have disputed vehemently with another, and finally submitting himself to caprices in Lady Alicia, which from a person of lower degree he would not have tolerated for an instant. All this he had borne with the secret wish of advancing his interests—but with this ambition, the young man had much pride and sensitiveness. With an extreme horror of the ridiculous, and withal an obstinacy of character, which made it most difficult to guide him, even in the way in which, had he been left alone, his natural propensities would have led him, he was extremely jealous of interference, and though he himself had often gone farther in propitiating the great, than his father had required him to go in the case of the Signor Romano, yet he chose to think his parent mean and time-serving, and looked anxiously round him for some other opening by which he might obtain independence.

Nothing occurred to him but to write and state as much of his case as he judged prudent, to his old schoolfellow, Lord F—, who had acquaintance, he recollected, in Venice, and other parts of Italy: so to him he wrote, and dispatched the letter immediately; and then settled down with the determination to remain quiet at present and await the turns of fortune or fate.

We are sorry to add that no wish of pleasing his father, influenced the young man in forming his determination.

When next he appeared before his parent, he was more than ever settled in this determination, yet he was so quiet and reserved in his manner, though not negligent of any of the common forms of politeness, that Signor Martini believed that all was right with him—that he would do all

he wished, and that they had only to await the arrival of Signor Romano, to place all things in a desirable train, as related to this affair.

It was, as we before stated, the plan of the father, to keep his son in retirement till matters should open respecting the young Signor Romano; and Marten fell in very quietly with this arrangement, the retirement agreeing well with the sullen discontented state of his mind, for he chose to think himself an unfortunate ill-used man. He seldom saw much of his father during the mornings, but he found full employment in visiting various parts of the city, in making short excursions to the continent, and in studying Italian, in which he made such rapid progress, as to meet the praises of his father, who, after a while, always addressed him in that language. During this period, the Signor Martini never mentioned the affair of the young Romano to his son, for he considered the matter as settled between them; but though taking no active measures to promote the views which he had formed on this subject, he was keeping the way clear to his object, as might have been seen on one occasion particularly, on which he sent his son out of the way to avoid introducing him to an English gentleman.

Thus six weeks or more had passed, when one morning, after breakfast, Signor Martini said abruptly to his son, "The Signor Romano is come, he arrived two days since; this morning it will be necessary for us to pay our respects."

Marten was preparing to speak, and, of course, to suggest some difficulty, when his father proceeded to tell him the hour when he should be ready to accompany him. "We go in the gondola to the

water-gate of the palazzo—till which time adieu! I have pressing affairs to expedite. I shall, of course, find you ready;" and with these words he withdrew, leaving his son to make up his mind as to whether he should do as desired, or come to an open rupture with his parent; and though he spoke not, he thus argued with himself:—

"As to the whole affair of this said signor, I fully believe that it has no foundation but in the imagination of my father, who expects to find a patron in a youth who asks him casually if he has a son; and it is so absurd, so ridiculous, to be acting and pushing one's self forwards on such vague prospects. I would not have the story get wind amongst the old set in England, on any account whatever. Of course, I can't blame my father for wishing to advance me in life. But really, the methods which he proposes are so absurd, so fanciful, so visionary—but I am giving too much importance to the whole ridiculous affair by quarrelling with my father about it. I must go with him, but I will not let it appear that I expect anything from the young man but the commonest civility, even grant that he, for some strange whim, desires to make my acquaintance. What could I possibly get by him? He is a papist, and could never become the patron of a clergyman of the Church of England.

At the hour fixed, Marten joined his father in the gondola, and they proceeded to a palazzo on the Guiadecca, where, entering in by the water-gate, they were received and ushered by several richly-dressed serving men to a superb saloon on the first floor—a saloon into which only a chastened light was admitted through the folding

lattices, and where the air was perfumed by aromatic blossoms, and pictures and sculptures manifested the affluence of their possessor.

On a sofa in this saloon sate the young signor, with several books spread before him. He looked hardly so much as eighteen, and was evidently in feeble health, excessively pale and delicate, with a countenance singularly expressive and interesting. A faint flush arose in his cheeks when he saw the Signor Martini, and mantled still fuller when the elder gentleman presented his son, which he did with strong manifestations of the pride which he felt in having such a son to introduce. The Signor Romano looked eagerly and somewhat anxiously at Marten, and in a gentle tone, though evidently with some little embarrassment, expressed the pleasure which he had in seeing him at Venice.

Marten bowed, but his father having waited a few seconds in vain, in hopes that he would give a suitable answer in the language spoken by the young Italian, took on himself to supply the omission; accounted for his son's silence from his perchance being afraid to try to express himself in a foreign language; hoped this difficulty would be got over when he saw more of the young signor; and expressed the mortification it had been to himself not to be able before that day to introduce his son to the signor; adding, how earnestly his son had been studying the language, that he might converse with him.

Marten was too polite to contradict his father, but the young signor, scarcely giving him time to speak, but addressing the father, said, "I take it for granted, signor, by this early and most welcome visit, and your kindness in bringing your

son, you have received the note I sent immediately on my arrival. I must now thank you for your attention to all my former communications, and hope that I shall very soon be able to induce your son to pay me a visit of some length." He then hinted, that he feared he might not have much time to himself for the two ensuing days, but if, after these, Signor Marten would favour him with his company for a few hours, he should consider it as the greatest favour that could be done him.

"So," thought Marten, "my father has been carrying on a private correspondence with this youth, denying me his confidence in an affair in which I am principally interested. I cannot conceive what his plans and projects are, but such, I imagine by his closeness, as he thinks me not likely to accede to, without some little management."

With this amiable view, after having first thanked the Signor Romano for his attention, without saying that he meant to avail himself of his invitation, he said, that his stay in Venice might, he feared, be short, and should anything offer in England which might suit him as a clergyman of the establishment of that country, he might return at very short notice.

The Signor Martini seemed to be so amazed at this declaration, that he could only open his eyes and gaze at his son; but the young signor, instead of manifesting displeasure, answered, that he only wished he were well enough to go himself to England, in which case it would be his greatest pleasure to have the signor John Marten as his companion.

The father caught at this hint with evident

pleasure, and, without referring to his son, he made an unconditional offer of his services in attending the young Italian to England, or any other part of the continent.

Marten could not conceal it from his mind, that nothing would please him more, circumstanced as he was, than such a scheme as was proposed, supposing that there was nothing which he did not comprehend, out of sight, in the character or condition of the Signor Romano; but he did not at all like being disposed of so unceremoniously by his father, and he was resolved not to implicate himself by any promise till he heard from Lord F—. He therefore drew himself more into himself, leaving his father, who seemed to be quite elated by the last proposition of the Signor Romano, to supply all the expense of the conversation, and to cover what he supposed to be the awkward bashfulness of his son as well as he was able; and in matters of this delicate kind he conceived himself to be an adept.

Having made their visit of some length, the Signor Martini, hinting that he had just then a pressure of business on his hands, withdrew with much ceremony, of course taking the lead in going out, and leaving his son for an instant in the rear.

The young signor, who had followed him nearly to the door, availed himself of that instant to beg Marten to excuse his not returning the visit on account of his ill health, and to renew his entreaties that he would come to see him; again saying, however, that for the two next days he should be engaged, but after that most anxiously hoped to see him. Marten acknowledged these last advances with a smile, the first

he had bestowed on the young man, and with a speech, which, though short, did honour to his Italian tutor.

He then hastened after his father, not being by any means able to make out what all these things might mean, though rather believing that there was some scheme of ambition of his father's at the bottom of it, which he chose to suppose mean, though wherefore it should be more so than his own late step in applying to Lord F—— to push him amongst his acquaintance in Venice, he did not take the trouble to ask himself.

When fairly launched on the canal, the elder gentleman suddenly turned to his son, and addressed him, under the influence of strong irritation.

"Really, John," he said—"really, after the education you have received, and the superior society which you have occasionally kept, I could not have believed it possible, had I not seen it, that you could have conducted yourself as you did this morning."

"How, sir?" asked the son.

"How sir, do you say?" replied the father. "How, sir, indeed!—had you come straight from the plough into the presence of nobility, you could not have exhibited more *gaucherie* than you did to-day; no boarding-school girl could have showed more *mauvaise honte* in bringing forward her few scraps of bad French, than you did in expressing yourself in Italian. Grant that in doing your best you had made some mistakes; what then?—you would have shown your wish to please, and your very blunders would have been as so many proofs that your gentlemanly and polite feelings outran your powers. In-

deed, John, I blushed for you; with the air and person of a gentleman, let me tell you, you have shown yourself grievously deficient in the manners of one. Excuse me, you have annoyed me—I cannot recover myself. Depend upon it, John, you will never make your way in the world till you acquire more command of manner. Be assured, young man, that you need a teacher of courtesy, if such could be had, far more than you have ever needed an Italian master.”

Marten was utterly thunderstruck at this charge. He felt that his father had not understood his manner in the presence of the Signor Romano, and he was prepared to be censured for pride and stiffness; but to have been thought, and to have appeared awkward, shame-faced, and overpowered by greatness, was most mortifying, and what he could not suffer in silence.

“Really, sir,” he said, “you are the first person who ever attributed these defects to my manner. You well know, sir, that Signor Romano is not the first gentleman, I may say nobleman, with whom I have associated; and it was never before even hinted that I was deficient in gentlemanly bearing.”

“You may have associated, young man,” replied the father, “with persons who have been too polite and delicate to tell you a truth,—a forbearance which, as a parent, I do not feel myself required to observe; and I now, on seeing more of you, think it highly probable, that the various failures which you have attributed to other causes, may be accounted for by the defects of manner of which you have given such strong, and I may say offensive proof, this morning.”

Our friend, the younger Marten, had never be-

fore seen his father really angry; and there is something in the anger of a parent, when experienced for the first time in adult years, before which the stoutest heart must quail. Even Marten's spirit was quieted, though not subdued; he made no answer, and did not look up till his father, who was really a good-tempered and kind person in his way, which we should call shallow as opposed to penetration, spoke again, and spoke kindly, though he did not recall anything he had before said.

He told his son that his official affairs called him to the opposite coast of Dalmatia for a few days; that he should leave him in Venice; that he hoped, if he did not return till after the two next days, he would call on the Signor Romano, and show him every kindness, and added, that it would depend on what he heard when he got home, whether he should set out that evening or the following day. As it proved, he was obliged to go off immediately; and Marten felt it agreeable to be relieved from his presence for a short time, for his late rebuke had sadly deranged his self-complacency; and he was more than ever anxious that some way might open to him in which he might act independently of paternal admonitions.

Who is able to set a boundary to the extent of ill-doing, to which the spirit of pride and self-dependence may and does carry the creature? As yet, all Marten's experiences of life had only tended more and more to develope this spirit which, from childhood, had been the leading motive of his actions; and though a principle of gentlemanly honour, and such views of religion as may be acquired by habit and study, had been

grafted upon it, yet, as the original stock gained strength, the graffs became shrivelled, and almost ceased to put forth the earnest of fruit.

The society of Henry Milner, and the conversations of Mr. Dalben and others, had exercised a sweet restraining influence on the young man for a time; but there were no gentle influences operating upon him in the city of Venice; and all that he there saw and heard, and even the paternal reproofs, tended only to foster and encourage the worst parts of his natural character. Nothing occurred during the two days after his father left him, but that he found each morning in the saloon a fragrant present of fruits and flowers from the Signor Romano; with what was more acceptable, several volumes of English books sent by the same obliging hand for his perusal. These he acknowledged by polite but cold notes of thanks; and had almost resolved to leave his card on the young gentleman on the third day; when other things came across him, and changed his purpose, leaving him in the state in which we shall all assuredly find ourselves when entered into the fruition of future happiness; that is, totally without the smallest pretensions for saying, "This good, have I obtained by my own efforts."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Soon after the Signor Martini's departure, a packet from Lord F—— was placed in the hand of Marten. The enclosure contained various letters of introduction to Italian and English residents in Venice, the former being persons of considerable consequence in the city, already known by name to Marten; and the latter persons of the gayest, and perchance not of the most desirable description.

Lord F——'s letter was kind, and even warm, professing strong desire to serve an old school-fellow, but written in the usual off-hand style, full of allusions, which none but the old Clent Green set could have comprehended, which, and had they proceeded from an ignoble hand, Marten, perchance, might have called stale and flat.

Amid much irrelevant matter, there was one passage which Marten caught at with eagerness.

"There is," said Lord F——, "an old couple, a stupid peer with a dowdy wife, who have an only son, who is a right booby nobleman—they are now in Venice, or should be so about this time. They have actually inquired of a friend of mine, and of myself, if perchance we knew of any accomplished young gentleman who would un-

dertake to lead their cub farther, by field and flood, than they can find nerves to go with him.

“Of course I thought of you, surmising that you would have no objection to receive a handsome salary for seeing foreign lands in the best style; and if you bring the cub back safe, and as stupid and quiet as he went forth, a tolerable assurance of a good living.

“I have sent off an exquisite delineation of you to overtake the venerables, and if they have not yet appeared in Venice, you have nothing to do but to cultivate the good opinion, and obtain the good word of a young gentleman, whose name you will find on one of the enclosed envelopes. He has apartments in St. Mark's Place, and fills an office under government; and he is neither more nor less a person than Ralph Leeson, whom you might remember as spending a few days with me at Oxford.

“He is nephew of the old lady, the mother of your proposed travelling companion. Get Leeson's good word, for he has influence with his aunt, and passes for a pattern card with her; but mind, you must not play off the clerical with Leeson. He hates—can't you understand me?—a word to the wise.”

We will not trouble our readers with Marten's lucubrations and cogitations on the letter of his noble friend; nor say how pleased he was in having a scheme of his own, which, in his opinion, was very much more promising than that of his father could possibly be. He did not, however, take it into his calculations that his father's bird was, to all seeming, already in hand; whilst that held to his view by Lord F—— was still in the bush.

His first object, however, was to present the

letters of introduction, for which purpose he set out as soon as he could hope to be admitted to the various houses; and in less than three hours, had seen more of the gay society of Venice than he had done in the many weeks in which he had resided there before. He found few of the gentlemen at home to whom the letters were addressed, but several of the ladies; and was by these not only kindly, but flatteringly received, and he felt sure that they all thought him a fine young man.

Ralph Leeson was among one of the absentees from home, but Marten left his card, and Lord F——'s introductory letter, and he had hardly returned an hour, before a note from that young gentleman followed him, saying how sorry he was that he had not seen him when he called, and lamenting that he was off that moment for the terra firma, and could not be back till that day week. He begged Marten then to waive all ceremony, and dine with him at six o'clock on the day of his return, which invitation was accepted. Marten received at the same time information from his father, that he should be detained some time longer than he had at first expected; in consequence of which, he felt himself at liberty to accept other invitations which poured in upon him, from the various families to whom he had presented Lord F——'s introductory letters.

In these houses, which were chiefly English, he was received with distinction, though he met only with every-day circumstances, and every-day people; yet the notice taken of himself, and the small successes which he achieved in conversation, and now and then singing a second with applause, tended to confirm him in his resolution

of pushing his interests in his own way, and not in that pointed out by his father. In the mean time, he daily received the same elegant testimonies of attention which had been his unmerited tributes from the morning he had first seen the Signor Romano; and we trust that he would have felt more shame for his neglect, had not he still obstinately nourished the idea of some underhand plot between his father and the young Italian. The only effect, therefore, of these attentions, was to make him more anxious to follow up Lord F——'s plan for himself.

Such was the state of his mind, when on the evening of Mr. Leeson's return, he repaired to St. Mark's Place.

This is a vast square, which is asserted to be the grandest in Europe; the cathedral church, dedicated to St. Mark, fills up one side of it; on the left side of the church is the Doge's palace, with the campanella before it; the rest of the area of the square being occupied by noble houses, a piazza or corridor running the whole length round three sides of the area.

This being the only open space on dry ground of the city, it is in the evening, and after night-fall, a place of general concourse, and one in which probably more follies have been committed, more crimes perpetrated, and more characters blighted, than in any space of equal dimensions in the whole earth: yet the scene is most gay and various, and most inviting to those who see only the surface of things, as well as to those who are epicures in those things which are evil, who delight in high play, and all those appliances of vicious pleasures, which shun the eye of day, and the observation of general society. Marten found

a gay party of young men, some English, some Italian, awaiting him in Mr. Leeson's apartments. He was received with the utmost apparent cordiality by the young gentleman himself, but had no opportunity of entering with him on the subject uppermost in his thoughts.

Those who have dined with gay young men, where delicacies both solid and otherwise are amply supplied, and where there is no wise or honoured person present, to check the overflowings of inexperience, or the sallies of what may justly be called licentious wit, will need no description of this scene; and we will spare it, as not being particularly beneficial to those who have never been introduced to any scene of the kind; so we shall only say that Marten, although he endeavoured to avoid all expression of his best feelings, for the reason Lord F—— had given him in the postscript of his letter, had too pure a taste, and too high a sense of the beauty of virtue, to be quite at his ease. He ate little, and drank less; yet, from the noise, the heat, and his habit of general abstemiousness, he was flushed and excited even by his few glasses, and could hardly restrain himself towards the end of the repast, from giving his discordant opinions on the subjects of discussion as noisily as the persons about him.

On coffee being served, Mr. Leeson proposed a remove to one of the casinos in the square, and the proposition was received as a matter of common custom. The party arose at once, and descended into the open square, which was already crowded with all sorts and descriptions of persons—jugglers, thieves, pickpockets, improvisadores, bella donnas, as the young men called them, some

of them of real or supposed respectability, and military men, together with a promiscuous multitude, male and female, only partially discernible by the lights in the windows of the shops and houses of public entertainment which opened upon the piazzas.

The young party had hardly reached the open air, when a few turns in the environs of the palace and campanella were proposed before proceeding to the casino, with which Marten gladly acquiesced, with no other object than that of the pleasure he found in the freshness of the air, for his head was considerably heated.

During this progress, however, he found himself soon separated from his companions; but though he had lost sight of them, he believed that they were going towards the Doge's palace, and followed them in that direction. As he turned out of the piazza, chancing to look behind him, he observed the figure of a tall young man, who had the air of a servant, following in the same direction he was himself taking. He did not, however, bestow a second thought on him, but pushed on towards the campanella, where there was comparatively much less light than in the square. The night was starlight, and the outlines of the palace and the tower looked solemnly dark against the heavens.

There was, however, a dense crowd between Marten and the campanella; some sort of juggler or buffoon, an animal indigenous in Italy, was playing his tricks in the area, and the idle people were gathered round him. In attempting to make his way through the crowd, he came in contact with certain persons, such as there are in all assemblies of mixed persons at night, who

make it their business to excite confusion in order that they may pilfer the more conveniently, and probably Marten might have found himself minus of some of his father's glittering presents in a very short time, had not the serving-man whom he had observed a few minutes before, suddenly appeared, and taken summary and very powerful means to clear the people from around the young gentleman; saying at the same time in Italian, "Come out, signor; do not mix with these people in this dark corner of the square. You had better get more in the light."

Being arrived at a more open part of the area, the light served him to see the full outline of the young man's figure, which was tall and finely formed; but still he could not discern his features. Though not fully aware of what the stranger had extricated him from, he certainly thought he owed him thanks, and failed not to express them in very tolerable Italian. The young man answered in the same language. "Really, sir," he said, "you might be doing better than spending your evenings in this way. It is not like—it was not the company you used to keep. Those half-tipsy gentlemen, with whom you came here, always attract the Ladrones. I saw one with his hand very near to your pocket. You ought to take better care of your pockets, though money is more plentiful with you just now than it used to be."

"How do you know, sir," asked Marten angrily, "that money is more plentiful with me now than it used to be?"

"Nay, now, Signor Marten," replied the other, jestingly, "to say nothing of my often having had my hand in your pocket before this, who can deny that the same identical pocket has

served us both, an honour of which I was not a little proud."

Marten was much irritated, not merely from the reply which certainly appeared extremely familiar, but also from his having taken more wine than was customary with him, and turning fully on the stranger, he tried by the dim light to see his countenance more distinctly, which the other as quickly avoided by standing with his back to the light. More annoyed by this movement, Marten laid his hand on the young man's arm, saying, "Who are you, sir, that call me by my name, and speak so openly of my affairs? I am astonished at your impudence."

The serving-man drew back as he replied, "Ah, Signor Marten, now you must have seen me, I am sure, at the Signor Romano's. I locked myself up out of sight in the signor's bed-room, in the floor above the saloon all the time you were there with him, and I only ran down stairs now and then to see if you were gone, all the rest of the time I was behind the curtains. I would not have had you seen me for worlds. But now that it is all out, surely it is not on my account you won't come to see my signor. Why won't you come to see him, sir? Your father wishes it, I know. What in the world, then, keeps you away?"

"I cannot think it by any means necessary," replied Marten, in his very loftiest tone, "that I should explain my motives to you, young man."

To account for this speech of Marten's, the last remark of the stranger had confirmed him in an idea which had previously glanced across his mind, that this young man had been set to watch him by his father, and he was thinking how he

could best free himself from his presence, and evade his observation when he spoke again.

"It can't be because he is a papist. You were not always so averse to the company of papists."

"What do you mean by that?" exclaimed Marten; but without noticing the question, the young man went on.

"Many of those you now keep company with," he said, "are papists and gamblers too, which last my signor never was. Now, Signor Marten," he added, in an entreating tone, "do not, I beg of you, be offended and angry; you were always hot, that is certain, but a kind word was not lost upon you, and surely my signor has most winning ways. Your father entreats, my signor courts, and yet for all that days pass and you never come near us."

"Is there no means of getting rid of this impertinent fellow?" thought Marten; but before he could decide on any other measure more reputable and dignified than knocking him down, the youth was addressing him again, and in a style even more irritating. "To be sure," he said, "we, that is, the servants, never thought you to have the same tender heart as our dear young master, though ill is the return that I have made to him for all his goodness; but I did not expect to find you so determined and so unkind as you have proved to be in neglecting my poor signor, dying, as I fear he is, from downright grief of heart, and looking to you here as the only one who could give him comfort. He would have been glad, and so should I too, if I could have managed it another way; but after all that has passed, it can't be, though

we thought you would help us out of our difficulties; but now you are come to Venice, you not only turn out better than nothing, but you even seem to go against us. But, sir, why does your displeasure of me make you unkind to my signor?—my poor signor, who has done nothing to offend you?" Marten was about to reply, when Mr. Leeson and his party came up, and he was glad to see the serving-man walk away, as he did not desire the conversation to be carried on in the presence of witnesses.

Having been led by the party to the casino, he soon saw one of the assertions of the stranger verified, for he found that he was in one of the haunts of gamblers and sharpers; and probably this assertion was not without its influence in deciding him at once to refuse all solicitations to enter into any kind of game, and to induce him to make off the instant that he was unobserved by Mr. Leeson.

It was some little time after Marten had been in his own apartments before he could reflect calmly on the strange events of that evening, amongst which his adventure with the stranger pressed forward to his attention. The more he thought of the manner in which that young man had taken upon himself to protect and admonish him, the more fully he felt convinced that he was employed as a spy upon his actions by his father, and he became more and more convinced that his father had some project in which the Signor Romano was concerned, which he had some reason for not fully avowing, probably because he foresaw that he, his son, would not fall into it without some little manœuvring or management. Of course, then, there were some very disagree-

able, he hoped not dishonourable conditions annexed to the affair; and the result of these cogitations was to confirm his obstinacy, and make him more anxious for the success of Lord F—'s proposition. Probably he might have thought differently of the affair of the stranger, had it not been for two or three circumstances; primarily the state of his head at the time of the meeting; secondly, the darkness and confusion of the scene; and lastly, his being not so thoroughly skilled in Italian as to be able to follow completely all the young man said to him.

The first business of Marten the next day was to obtain a meeting with Mr. Leeson, but that young gentleman was one of those persons who was apt to be everywhere but where he ought to be; and this desired meeting was still unaccomplished when the Signor Martini returned to Venice. "And so, John," were the first words which the father said—"so I find you have made some acquaintance since I have been out. You have had several visitors, I hear."

"Yes," thought our Marten, "no doubt you have been duly informed of all my movements;" he, however, restrained himself from expressing the thought.

"Have you called on the Signor Romano?" was the next question, put in a tone which Marten chose to interpret significant that he knew he had not. Of course the young gentleman acknowledged his delinquency, which he did without attempting an excuse, so thoroughly angry was he at the idea of being watched, and by a servant too.

The Signor Martini was really angry, and startled his son by the strong expressions of dis-

pleasure which he used ; but Marten was so little used to the tones of apology, that he was by no means ready to avail himself of them, and he could think of nothing to say but to mention Lord F—'s proposition. To his surprise, his father treated the whole affair lightly ; told him, that young Leeson was not a man to be depended upon, and as to Lord F—, if he remembered some of his son's old school and college stories aright, he was not greatly Mr. Leeson's superior.

" My school and college stories," said Marten, reddening to the roots of his hair.

The signor smiled more, as his son thought, contemptuously than cheerfully. " Why, is he not the very person you called Ape Appleby ?" he said, " a pretty fellow that young lord indeed to fix the ladder of your hopes upon. But now, John, you know my opinion : you are aware that you have displeased me, and if not too late, you will rather take steps to manifest your obedience, or expect to forfeit my protection. I require no answer. I expect some friends to dinner, and you will thus have time till to-morrow morning to make up your mind how to act." He walked out of the room as he uttered these last words, for he was going to take his siesta, and the sound of his step had scarcely died away through the ante-chamber, when the son relieved his own mind by pouring forth to the walls of the saloon such a series of broken exclamations as proved that he thought himself the most unjustly treated son that ever owned an unreasonable and unaccommodating father.

In that unhappy moment he felt more and more assured that he was watched, that a spy had been set upon him in his father's absence, that

words had been put into that spy's mouth to excite his attention, and above all, that his father had some motive which he would not acknowledge, and that it was in downright malevolence that he threw contempt on Lord F— and Ralph Leeson. In short, he was under precisely the same sort of obstinate fit which had held him so long at Northfield, and self-sufficiency was the root of the disease. Marten had not recovered his equanimity, when a servant came in and placed a note in his hand. There was a certain want of air in the folding of this note which struck him immediately, and he asked him from whom it came. A boy had brought it, but the lacquey could not say from whom.

It was written in Italian, the hand not amiss, nor the style vulgar, yet the contents were strangely puzzling: it was as follows:

“SIGNOR MARTEN,

“It is very unkind, and not like a Christian, in you not to come. My signor is getting worse; he asks for you continually, and I have made excuses for you till I can find no more. Now I beseech you come; the poorest wretch that ever breathed would not have had to ask my dear young master twice to come to him. Who could have thought that you were so hard, Signor? Don't be longer than this evening in coming, I beg you. I don't put my name, because it goes for nothing I see with you, or, may-be, goes against the thing I wish; so I think it best that you should not know who I am, for I am sure that knowing me has gone contrary to what I want to bring about;”—and here the epistle broke off.

Marten read the last few lines several times in the endeavour to understand what the writer meant to say. "He will not tell his name, because my knowledge of it has already gone against the object he wishes to bring about. He supposes I know it already, and yet thinks he can hide it from me by not putting it at the end of his note. What a puzzle-brained fellow he must be, if it is not a piece of knavery to affect the fool. Of course, this is from the serving-man. I shall not call on the Signor Romano to indulge him. If my father insists upon it, however, I suppose I must go in the morning; but it is altogether a strange business, a piece of Italian hocus-pocus, and possibly, after all, I may have acted foolishly in being so emphatic about the affair; but I cannot endure nonsense."

"By-the-by," thought Marten, his cogitations having brought him to the word nonsense, "I wish I had never told my father any tales about Lord F—. What signifies what they call a man at school—who ever went through a school without a nickname?"

Several gentlemen dined, or rather supped, that evening with the Signor Martini; it was not necessary for Marten, therefore, to enter much into conversation; and when, after supper, public affairs were introduced, he withdrew to his apartment without giving himself the trouble of carrying up a light with him. He might have saved himself a vast number of harassing feelings had he followed where Providence led, and not obstinately resisted his father's wishes; but nine tenths of the cares of life are created by man's self-will, and as large a portion of these dissolve

and disappear as soon as the will is brought under subjection to that of the Almighty.

A thoroughly irritated man always, if possible, keeps in motion, and as there was an ample promenade from the one end to the other of Marten's rooms, he had paced it once, and had again reached the last or sleeping-room, which was the darkest from the lattices being closed, when he was suddenly aware of a quick step in the outer apartment, and on turning round, of a figure moving rapidly towards him.

The person bore in his hand a small dim light, such as the servants used, but the light was so partial, that it scarcely served to give the outline of the figure of him who carried it.

Marten hoped that this person might have brought some message from Mr. Leeson, and made some steps forward to meet him.

As he approached he saw a note in the man's hand, and extending his own to take it, was addressed by the well-known voice of the serving-man, who, speaking with his wonted familiarity, said, "There, signor, you know that writing, if you did not know mine; may-be it is the last my poor signor may ever put his hand to—indeed, it may be said that he did not write what is there, for I was forced to guide his hand, and it is not the least in the world like his usual hand. Much I fear that he will never rise from the bed where he now lies; and if he dies before you come to him, how will you ever be able to make any excuse to him for your cruelty—for it is nothing else? and if I have offended you, and behaved very ill, why were you to revenge it on him? But I have brought the gondola, and it waits below. You know the badge of our gondoliers;

do please hasten down, and get into the boat, for I must run by the back streets for Dr. Blake, the English doctor. If any man on earth can save him, it will be an English doctor; there are none like them here."

Whilst the young man poured out these and other sentences, in rapid Italian, Marten was perusing the note. Touched, at length, to the heart, by the feeble staggering lines, and the few words, "Do come. O come at last, Signor Marten!"

"Is he then so ill?" he exclaimed.

"He is dying, I fear, sir," cried the young stranger, with such a burst of grief, that Marten could no longer believe that the youth was playing a part, by the order of his father.

"He is dying; and oh! Signor, though I can't regret it on his account, I fear it is me who has brought him to this. Oh! sir, come, come, pray come to him! If you would not have his young life to answer for, come to him now."

Marten felt that he could resist no longer; the earnest manner of the youth quite subdued him; and thinking this no time for questioning, he said, "I will go: the gondola, you say, is at the water gate."

He was then only considering where he had left his hat, when he was perfectly astounded by a wild burst of joy, still expressed in Italian, from the extraordinary servant, who, at the very same instant, made off with the rapidity of a Mercury, taking the lamp with him.

Marten did not stay to wonder at this exclamation, but was after him the instant he had secured his hat; but the youth had already disappeared before he got to the head of the stairs, and was

quite gone after the English doctor before he reached the ground floor.

It is next to impossible to trace the workings of the human mind, or to account for its inconsistencies; but certain it is, that Marten, as he descended to the water-gate, was as impatient to get to the dwelling of the Signor Romano, as he had been before determined to keep away from it.

Whether his fit of obstinacy had worn itself out, or that his compassion was excited by the pitiable lines and the very manifest affection of the blunt servant for his lord, or whether we may not look to a higher influence than any human one for the change in Marten's conduct, yet certain it is that he descended swiftly to the canal, and was received as one expected by the gondoliers who waited, and whom he knew to be the servants of the Signor Romano by their badges or peculiar liveries.

A very rapid transit brought the party to the water-gate of the palazzo inhabited by the Signor Romano, in the Guiadecca.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IF the measurement of time were to depend on the passage of thought through the mind, minutes might sometimes be protracted to years, and years to ages.

Short as was the period of the transit of the gondola from one house to the other, it served for Marten to think over the whole concern of the Signor Romano's unaccountable partiality for himself, and his own cold withdrawal from his advances. In his own mind, he was well contented to be forced, as it were, thus amicably to settle the contest with his father, as he began to be ashamed of his conduct; and the more so, as the earnestness of the young servant, in their late conference, convinced him that there was more in the affair than he had hitherto believed, and he was still in this frame of mind, when the gondola stopped at the palazzo.

This palazzo was one of the few in Venice which was kept up consistently with its original magnificent design, in which the marble was pure from stain, the gilding bright, and all the appointments in high perfection. The servants, also, were numerous, and there was something almost English in the neatness and taste of their attire.

Marten was received with a sort of earnestness which appeared in every face, though there were none to welcome him so loudly as the signor's own man would have done; but this extraordinary youth had heard of the arrival of a certain Doctor Blake, and had worked up his imagination to believe that he only could save his signor, if he were to be saved by human ingenuity; and having, at length, and with some difficulty, got permission to seek this gentleman, he was gone after him, according to what he had told Marten.

"I will lead you to my signor immediately," said the major domo of the establishment; "he calls anxiously for you, sir."

"Rather," answered Marten, "tell him that I am come, and ascertain whether he wishes to see me without delay."

Marten was then led into a magnificent saloon on the first floor, of which all the ornaments, whether of painting or statuary, were classical, and of the finest order.

He was not kept waiting many minutes; but being informed that the signor was most anxious to see him, he requested the servant to walk forward, whilst he followed in a state of no ordinary astonishment and excitement. He took no account of the various chambers and galleries through which he was ushered, until, on the withdrawal of a rich quilted curtain, he found himself at once removed from all the gay, the light, and the elegant imagery which we have just before denominated classical, to a scene which was altogether of another age, and belonging to the prevailing religion of France and Italy.

In one vast oriel window was displayed a

splendid crucifix of alabaster, and in another a Madonna, of marble, whilst lamps, in silver sconces, blazed before each of them.

Marten was fretted and disturbed by these objects, and began again to feel some jealous apprehensions of his father's schemes. As a clergyman, was he not out of his place? But it was too late, had he actually wished it, to draw back then.

He had soon traversed the more public suite of this wing of the palace, and at the end of this another curtain was raised, and he was introduced into a large chamber hung with some sort of dark drapery. At the further end was a bed, in the form and fashion of one of those tents seen on ancient tapestry. The rich hangings drawn at the top of the tester through a burnished ring or coronet, trained in ample folds on the pavement, and the chased silver candelabra, burning with wax on marble sconces, on each side of the bed, showed the figure of the young signor, reclining, and supported by satin cushions, and half covered with a drapery of the same material.

Sickness or sorrow, or both, had made wild work with the young man since Marten had seen him last; there was that in his appearance which seemed to threaten a speedy termination to his life on earth. His complexion was transparent as alabaster; the tracery of every vein was visible on his temples; his eyes, of the deepest hazel, gleamed with an unnatural restlessness; a hectic spot glowed on each cheek, and his lips were of so deep a dye, that they seemed as if almost inflamed by the breath of the fever which burned within. His hair which was of dark auburn, and

curling naturally, partook of the disorder of his frame, and fell wildly and loosely over his temples; the dark and pencilled eyebrows showing distinctly on his pallid forehead.

He looked confusedly and anxiously at Marten, as the young man stepped forward towards the side of the bed. He did not seem at first to recognise him, but the instant he did so, a change passed over his countenance, and as he raised his eyes to where Marten had come to a stand, a little in advance of the foot of the bed, he smiled; but what a smile was that! it was such as has been sometimes seen on the face of a dying child of God, in moments of mortal agony, for which, those who behold it, can only account by believing that it was called for by some glorious vision—such as was vouchsafed to the martyr Stephen.

But the view of this smile shot arrows to the heart of Marten, and called forth, as a wordling would say, all that was kind and compassionate in his nature, bringing into action many of those qualities for which Mr. Dalben and Henry had loved him in former days.

It was necessary that Marten should say something, and he began by murmuring some apologies for not having come sooner, and was proceeding to say how sorry he was to find the signor so ill, when the latter interrupted him, but in a manner so wild, so unconnected, so mixed up, as Marten thought, with circumstances with which he himself could have no concern, that the only conclusion at which he could arrive, was that the signor was delirious, and that he actually did not recollect whom he was addressing.

The first subject to which he referred, was the

cruelty—as he did not fail to call it—of Marten's delay in not coming to him. He spoke of this in exaggerated terms, as his hearer thought, as if his present condition was the consequence; and as he proceeded, he became more confused and inconsistent in appearance, his countenance expressing strong suffering, whilst he almost gasped for breath. He spoke of Marten as if he had known him long; not defining whether by person or report—said, if he would not be his friend, he could not count on any other, but must die, and suffer, if not for ever, assuredly for ages. From this point he became so thoroughly wild and excited, that Marten thought he must lose no time in endeavouring to soothe him, thinking that whatever else might be mysterious in the case, there could be no doubt but that the youth was suffering under religious doubts and superstitious alarms; and in this confidence he was assisted by the arrangements and appointments of the suite of apartments through which he had passed to the sick chamber. He therefore drew a chair so close to his bed, that he could lay his hand on those of the young signor, which were burning with fever, but they were consigned to him without a struggle; and then Marten used his most soothing tones, and the most encouraging words, with which his recollections of scripture supplied him at the moment, though he hardly knew himself what he said; and assuredly the sick youth was not in a state to weigh or to understand his words. He found, however, to his satisfaction, that, in measure, as he spoke, and endeavoured in every way to quiet and soothe the signor, he became less excited; and after a short interval he closed his eyes, so that Marten, hoping he

was sleeping, withdrew his hand, and leaned back in his chair.

Not knowing what next should be done, he resolved to wait till the servant should return, as he hoped, with a physician; but in the mean time, he was aware of one or two persons gliding through the room, though he could not see who they were, without displacing the drapery of the bed, which might, he feared, disturb the sleeper.

Whilst thus situated, he heard the deep tone of a clock striking the twenty-third hour, or one hour before midnight, and soon afterwards the murmur of music, as the musicians floated in some gondola along the Giudecca. Whilst this last sound continued, the young signor started from his short slumber. "Music," he said, "of angels, but they are going, going far away. I shall never hear the songs of the blessed again." And he called for water, which Marten was able to supply from a provision close at hand.

After having drunk, he became more calm than he had yet been, and saying, "Are you sure that there is no one in the room?" he added, in a low voice, "Mr. Marten, though you came not when I implored you, yet I know you will never betray me; and that now you are come, you will be faithful and gentle, whatever you may think of me. I know that your word has never yet been doubted, nor your honour impeached; to you, then, have I looked to confess a secret, which would, if known, be a signal to my mother to renounce, and perhaps to anathematize me, and to every relation I have in the world to disown me."

Has this young boy committed some horrid crime? thought Marten; and the hand which he

had laid again on those of the signor, seemed as if instinctively to shrink from the contact. He, however, did his utmost to restrain all expression of strong feeling. The signor spoke again, though slowly, and with effort: "I am," he said, "a Protestant at heart; I have been so for some time; I have not yet had courage to confess it. I know not what I might have done had you come to me alone, when first I entreated your presence; but now—now I fear it is too late, and I can only anticipate, in death, the doom of the hypocrite, which is outer darkness, wailing, weeping, and gnashing of teeth. Here again the poor invalid was becoming wild and excited, but he seemed to exert himself to overcome this excitement, and to preserve sufficient composure to hear Marten's reply.

There were, however, several circumstances which rendered Marten a very incompetent adviser in the case so suddenly brought before him. In the first instance, he had to contend with such a sudden, overwhelming, and acute sense of his own misconduct in the whole affair of the Signor Romano, as he had certainly never experienced in the whole course of his life. He was suddenly made to feel, we believe, through the operations of that divine Spirit which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart, (Heb. iv. 12,) that he had offended as a son, as one man to another, and, above all, as a minister of the divine word; and he was made sensible at the same time that the same pride, which had brought him to the commission of this heavy

offence, had been his leading motive of action through life, and the cause of all his miscarriages in every parish in which he had exercised his ministry in England. And secondly, before he could give clear advice to the signor, it was necessary for him, he was made aware, to be quite settled as to his own religious opinions, which had ever been wavering and vacillating between those texts of scripture which on one side assert salvation to be unconditional, and those on the other, which lay a stress on works as being absolutely requisite to salvation.

Hitherto, undoubtedly, he had used his reason only to reconcile these difficulties, without any consciousness of the insufficiency of that reason for comprehending the things of God; but at this crisis, in which divine light blazed on his mind, the pride of reason was suddenly confounded, and thus another obstacle was raised to his being such an adviser as the poor signor required.

Something, however, it was needful for him to say; and after some hesitation, he attempted, by common-place remarks, to sooth the signor.

"God is merciful," he said; "he is compassionate, he knows our weaknesses, and he will not punish us as a severe judge. You must not alarm yourself thus—the Almighty willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness, and live."

As Marten was still speaking, he was aware of a step approaching towards the bed, softly and stealthily, and he hoped it might be a servant to announce the arrival of the doctor. He had extended one hand to remove the curtain, that he might see who this person was, when his attention was recalled to the signor.

"Ah!" he cried, "that is but *too* true—that verse—that very verse which *might* bring comfort to others, is *death* to me. I have *not* turned from sin. I have been a hypocrite—a miserable wretched hypocrite. Oh, God!—my God, have mercy—have compassion—I am lost, undone without thee. Oh, spare me!—spare me!"

The poor young man, as he spoke, attempted to rise from the bed—now wringing, now clasping his hands in the wildest agony, whilst he continued repeating, in the excited tones of delirium, the earnest prayer of—"Oh, God! oh, God! Have mercy!—Spare, oh spare me!"

Marten was about to lay his hand on him gently to press him down on the bed, when the curtain was quickly pulled aside, and the same servant appeared whom Marten had met first in the square of St. Mark, and afterwards at the Palazzo Torino.

The youth went to the head of the bed, taking the signor in his arms as tenderly as a mother would her child, and holding him back, he spoke to him with gentle though earnest voice, saying, "God loved us, my signor, before we loved him; and even when we knew him not, he redeemed us; for, before the foundation of the world, he had chosen us for his own. But let us think only of his goodness just now. We have a cause of joyfulness. Mr. Marten is here—Mr. Marten who knew Mr. Dalben. Mr. Marten, the dear friend of my own Master Milner. He will tell you of them. He will read to you the book he loved, and you shall get well; and some day we will go to him in England—and his God will be our God, and his Saviour our Saviour. As the youth spoke, Marten gazed

upon him with an amazement far beyond any expression by words.

The light from the candelabra shone full on his face as he bent toward the signor; and though time had changed the boy to the man, yet the countenance, now for the first time distinctly seen by him after many years, fully exhibited the well-known physiognomy of Maurice O'Grady; the long-lost and long-lamented humble friend of Henry Milner.

He was become a fine tall young man, with speaking eyes and clustering hair; and being attired in fine broad cloth, and linen of good texture, and speaking a foreign language in good style, it was no wonder that Marten had not recognised, in the imperfect light of the square of St. Mark, or in that of his own apartment in the Palazzo Torino, the Maurice of his memory—the inveterate enemy of Mrs. Kitty—the slovenly, the tiresome, the blundering, the meddling, and the mischievous.

But Maurice had by this time so far soothed the invalid, that he had once again laid himself back on his pillows, and then his servant informed him that Dr. Blake, the English physician, was waiting in the ante-room. Whatever Marten's feelings were, however great his astonishment at seeing Maurice then and there; however his mind seemed to be striving to put all the strange things together which had lately happened, there was now one paramount object, and this was, attention to the invalid. The young signor, when Maurice had explained to him who Dr. Blake was, submitted himself passively to his examination, leaving it to him to answer all the physician's questions, which he did with clearness and precision

When Dr. Blake had thoroughly examined the case, he addressed Marten, saying—"You, sir, are a friend of this gentleman; are you staying with him? My young countryman here," looking at Maurice, "gives but an ill report of the nurses who have hitherto attended him, and much will depend on what is ordered being duly administered. May I trust to you, sir, to see that it is?"

"Certainly," replied Marten, "I will not leave the signor till you dismiss me. This young man," he added, turning to Maurice, "is an old friend of mine." (Maurice bowed). "And we, together or apart, will keep guard on the signor; he shall never be left till he is able to take care of himself."

Dr. Blake then requested Marten to step with him into the ante-room; there they conferred some time; and Dr. Blake informed him that there was great danger in the case of the young signor; that he was under the influence of fever; that this fever would take its course, and that the result was doubtful; that much, under Providence, depended on care; that he must be kept quiet, and, if possible, easy in mind. He would go himself, he added, and see after medicines, and would return in an hour or less if possible; and telling Marten what was to be done in the interval, as it regarded cool clothing, bathing the temples, admitting of air, refreshing drinks, &c., he withdrew, leaving Marten, to his own infinite astonishment, in high authority over the sick bed of the Signor Romano, with Maurice O'Grady as his ally, counsellor, and assistant.

Before he could return to the sick man's chamber, Maurice came for him. "Mr. Marten," he said, "the signor calls for you. I can't appease

him any longer. You must come to him, sir. He thinks his mother and grandmother are here; he fancies they are coming to his room; and he wants you by him, to speak for him, he says. Ah! Mr. Marten, why have you left him so long? But now why do we stand talking?—I hear him calling us.”

“I come,” replied Marten, “I will not leave him; but by what miracle are you here, and why did you not tell me who you were, when I met you under the Campanella?”

Maurice paid not the smallest attention to these questions, his whole heart was with his signor, and to get Mr. Marten back to his side. Neither was Marten slow to obey the call.

He waited only to write a short note to his father, and to give it to a servant to take to him, and then returned to the young signor, who was looking and calling for him with all the impatience of fever. He became more calm when Marten assured him that he would not leave him, and submitted to all the arrangements which Doctor Blake had suggested with that sort of patience which indicated perfect confidence.

“Has he not before had any medical assistance?” whispered Marten to Maurice.

“Not very lately,” he answered, “he is afraid of them all. He raves about all sorts of horrors.”

The young sufferer caught parts of these whispers, and began again a sort of rambling and confused discourse, alluding to things which Marten did not understand, though Maurice did, and answered to them.

“We shall both stay with you, signor,” he said; “we shall let no one come in—we will give you what you are to drink—we will fetch the water

ourselves—the doctor himself will mix and prepare the medicines.”

“What does he fear?” asked Marten, speaking in English, and in the lowest whisper.

“Speak to him himself,” replied Maurice, “and speak in English, Mr. Marten; but don’t ask him any questions about what he is afraid of—you’ll make him only ramble the more.”

English! thought Marten. More and more strange. But the next time he spoke to the youth, he used English; he merely recommended him not to talk; asked if he should bathe his brow again with vinegar and water, which had been recommended, and added that it was a pleasure to him to do anything which might contribute in the smallest degree to his ease.

It is by a natural instinct and without reflection, that persons who speak various languages, answer in any one of these in which they may be addressed. The young signor, accordingly, made his reply in English, though with some little of a foreign accent and foreign idiom.

He seemed pleased to have Marten near him, and when he had bathed his brow he extended his burning hands for the same refreshment.

But as the time advanced towards midnight, he became more and more restless, turning from side to side, and seeming to become more and more unconscious of what was passing about him; constantly saying to Maurice, “Don’t let them come; are you sure that they are not in the room? Don’t let Mr. Marten leave me. Will he speak for me?”

But there was no time for Marten to answer him; the signor had heard the distant sound of Doctor Blake’s footfall; he had heard it with the

morbidly sensitive ear of fever, and made an effort to throw himself forward to Marten.

"Hold him, hold him! speak to him!" cried Maurice; "I know what he thinks, and what he fears;" and coming forward, the affectionate Irish boy soothed his master, as if he had been an infant, assuring him that no one should come near him but those already with him, and the doctor.

"But," replied the youth, "you cannot stop her—her step becomes louder and nearer; already her veil floats before my eyes, it covers me—it covers me."

"No, no!" cried Marten, "no one is near you. No one touches you but myself, John Marten."

"My master's friend, Mr. Milner's friend," put in Maurice, "him as I have so often told you of; who, through God's goodness, is come to this desolate place just now, that he may be your friend. It is the doctor's step you hear, and he is come to make you well."

It is not always the deepest thinker that best knows how to console the sick, or to deal with such as may be reduced by bodily infirmity to the mental weakness of childhood.

Marten would have found it difficult thus to address a grown man, whilst Maurice went straight to his object, which was to give the most suitable consolation in his power, without considering what his master, in health, might have thought of his mode of speech.

The illness of the Signor Romano had been coming on for weeks, nay, months; great distress of mind had been both its cause and its effect. Languor and depression had, at length, been superseded by fever. This fever, as Dr. Blake

apprehended, would have its course, and might either terminate in death, or in the renewal of the constitution ; but he saw that it was then progressing, and would do so until it arrived at a perilous crisis. The symptoms had become more alarming during his short absence, for the youth was perfectly delirious when he came in again.

It was providential for the young signor, that he was at that time with real friends and well-wishers only, for in this delirium the most secret feelings of his heart were laid open. Sometimes he uttered terrible hints, inexplicable to all present but Maurice ; and again he referred to fearful struggles of conscience, better understood by Marten, and to violent discords with family connexions, leaving no doubt with his hearers that religion, or rather superstition, had furnished the subjects of these discords.

There was no leisure for Marten to obtain any explanation of any of these mysteries from Maurice, for from midnight till dawn of day they were both occupied about the patient, in moving him to give ease, if possible, under circumstances where ease could never be, in bathing his burning limbs, in preventing his springing from his bed, and in those thousand little services which compassion dictates in the alleviation of sufferings.

Doctor Blake stayed some hours with the patient, and promised to return early in the morning, and Marten being himself occupied in keeping the signor from springing from his bed, could not but admire the patient, judicious, affectionate bearing of Maurice.

No mother's attentions to a feeble wayward infant could have been more unwearied than his

attentions to his master, nor could that strongest of human instincts, maternal love, have been more ingenious in devising expedients which had the smallest chance of affording an instant's relief. Every sharp complaint or irascible retort from the sufferer, if it had any effect at all on him, was to bring out some apology to Marten. "He is not so when he is well, Mr. Marten," he would say, "he is as gentle then as Master Milner was. Oh! Mr. Marten, if you had but known him when he was well, or even before the fever came on. It breaks my heart to see him so—"

"And this," thought Marten, "is the Maurice, whom all but Henry gave up as an ungrateful, heartless blackguard. We spared no term of reproach, we condemned Henry for having thrown away much kindness to the dogs. And how often has he assured us that he believed no single act of kindness, however small, had been thrown away on Maurice; from the principle that love is never without its fruits, and that these fruits never perish.

Such were the thoughts which glanced across the mind of Marten several times during that night, or rather morning, though the incessant painful interruptions suffered him not to follow them out as far as they might have taken him in a calmer scene. We will not dwell longer upon the particular circumstances of the sick room.

Two more miserable nights and as many days passed before Doctor Blake could entertain any hope.

During that period, the Signor Martini, who had come to the Palazzo Romano early on the

first morning, took his turn once or twice in relieving his son for a few hours, the signor either not perceiving the change of persons, or making no objection. It was thought for as much as twenty-four hours that he knew no one but Maurice, but this was a mistake; for when the family chaplain presented his solemn person, his appearance produced so violent a paroxysm in the patient, that he was compelled to withdraw in all haste.

Of course he was hurt, and immediately set himself, by letters and in other ways, to inform the connexions and friends of the signor, far and near, of the heretical influence under which he had fallen; adding his surmises respecting other matters relative to the affair, with which we will not trouble our reader.

Doctor Blake called in the physician who had been accustomed to attend the signor. Though Maurice thought nothing of him in comparison with one from England, Doctor Blake found him an intelligent man, and was by no means embarrassed by any improper interference—in truth, as the Venetian doctor augured the worst result to the signor's illness, he was quite as well satisfied that the Englishman should have the credit of the manslaughter as himself.

It was the divine will, however, that this sickness should not be fatal, though it seemed it must have been so had not human skill and human kindness exerted themselves to the utmost. But although these aids had been procured through the warm affection and shrewdness of Maurice, neither the faithful youth himself, nor his auxiliaries, could have been brought to bear upon this point, if an all-wise and omnipotent

Providence had not arranged all things long, long before, so that they should thus fit in for the accomplishment of this among many other purposes of love.

O that men would delight in tracing the operations of divine love in their discourses with each other, rather than following and tracing, as they appear to delight to do, the works and the effects of human passions, endeavouring rather to constrain each other by fear, than by a motive which scripture declares to the believer to be omnipotent.

CHAPTER XXV.

A WEEK had passed since Marten had been in the Palazzo Romano; the scene was entirely changed, peace had succeeded perpetual alarm.

It was morning—a bright and balmy morning. The signor was sleeping quietly and calmly; the Signor Martini sate near his bed with a book. The old major-domo waited in the ante-chamber: Marten the younger had enjoyed a deep sleep since four o'clock; and Maurice had totally forgotten himself for as long a measure of time on a sofa of the ante-chamber of his master's room. All within and without the palazzo was perfectly still, when Marten opened his eyes, and saw Maurice, who was creeping to the side of his couch with a tray laden with the materials for supplying an ample breakfast.

"There, Mr. Marten," he said, speaking in English—"there, I thought you would be hungry, and so you see I come provided; and arn't you wanting to hear how I turned up in this place, after my bad behaviour, which I am ashamed to think of? and if my dear signor had died, I should have thought it a judgment upon me for leaving Master Milner and Mr. Dalben as I did. But, Mr. Marten, if it was to come to judgments, and to every man's receiving what is

his due, it would be a bad case with all of us—let alone such a fellow as me.”

“You cannot believe,” said Marten, “how I have longed for the moment in which all these mysteries might be explained; yet we had all, till almost this hour, stronger interests to attend to than the satisfaction of curiosity.”

“I don’t think,” replied Maurice, “that if our poor signor had died, I should ever have been able to stand to the telling of all these things. Is not it a mercy, and a great favour, and a blessing, that he is spared? You don’t know, Mr. Marten, how I prayed for him; and I could not lay myself low enough on the floor when I woke up this morning, and had to thank God that he was alive and doing well. I always put him together with my young master. There was not a thing that he would not do for me. Many and many is the time that he has stood a breakage or other mischance to shield me from the indignities of the kitchen people.”

“How you confuse the two,” said Marten; “no one could know of which of your masters you are speaking.”

Maurice went on without heeding this remark, and was soon in the high road for telling his history.

“And so, Mr. Marten,” he began; “you know how I ran away, and was no more heard of till I turned up here; and was so grown, that you did not know me, though I thought, to be sure, you must have known my face when I stood opposite you under the palace walls, and my tongue, which you were so well used to years back; for many is the time that you have reproved me for putting in my word when it was not called for.”

"Well, get on," replied Marten; "your expectations would have been reasonable enough had it not been very dark under the walls; and if you had not taken care to keep your face turned from me, and if you had not got a new tongue; but waving these considerations, do, my good youth, get forward, or rather backward, with your story. Where will you begin? when you left Mr. Dalben's or before? Did you leave in sudden anger, or according to a plan?"

"Do you remember Mr. Marten," said Maurice, as he seated himself, by the young gentleman's desire, at the foot of the couch—"do you remember going with my young master, to get bits of rock and moss for a grotto in my Lord H—'s grounds, and taking me and James with you? Well, sir, you and master went on to the Elminton woods, and left me and James to come after."

"I do," answered Marten, blushing from some feeling which he did not explain.

"Do you remember the chapel on the rock there, sir? and the hermitage, and the priest, the father Carlo Rolandi? But," he added, "why should I ask that question, for you used, I know, to visit him often at the hermitage when we were at Woodville."

"He was showing me some curious experiments in natural objects," said Marten.

"Ay," replied Maurice, with one of the arch smiles of his native country; "but are you quite sure, Mr. Marten, that whilst seeming to show off one set of experiments to you, he was not trying another upon you?"

Marten coloured, and was half inclined to resent the remark; and then, as if rather to satisfy

his own mind than that of Maurice, he said, "We certainly had a few conversations together on the subject of the divine right of the church, and the regular succession of the ministry."

"That was not where he began with me," replied his companion, who, to Marten's astonishment, seemed perfectly to understand what he referred to; "but I shall tell you.

"I was young when I left Ireland, but not so young but that I remembered clearly being taken somewhere to mass, and being taught to bow and cross myself, and repeat a short prayer before the figure of the Virgin; but since I had been with Mr. Dalben I had scarcely ever recollected anything about this habit of my young days. I had heard nothing of papists or their practices, and never doubted that my father, of whom I remembered nothing but kindness, believed and thought just as my friend Thomas did.—You remember Thomas, Mr. Marten?

"Well, sir, you can't have forgotten how I was took to when I saw the image over the door of the hermitage. I crossed myself without a thought, as I had been used to do when I saw the image in the chapel where my parents took me to mass; but I was ashamed when I had done it, and hoped nobody had seen me, nor did I think any one had but the priest. He was standing by you and master, though a little behind, with his hand on the hermitage door; and the look he gave me was as much as to say, 'You are fair game, my lad; I'll have you by-and-bye; never fear, my darling—'

"Talking to you in this way, Mr. Marten," added Maurice, "makes me talk just as I have

not talked these many years. I forget my present situation out and out, and how I am called the young master, the signor's gentleman, by the inferior servants, and wear broad cloth and gold lace, and sometimes a feather perked in my bonnet. I fear, after all, Mr. Marten, there is not the stuff in me to make a gentleman of; but don't be impatient, sir, I will get on. Well after this I saw no more, and thought no more of the priest for a day or two; when one morning a gipsy woman—those vagrants are ready for all mischief—came into the stable-yard at Woodville, where I was staying with the boys, and must needs tell me my fortune, for she said, by the look of me, she knew I was born for great things, and that she was sure I was come already to preferment. Was not it so?

“Of course I told her, or rather she wormed out of me, the whole history of my past life. My father's name and my master's name, and all I could tell her in a short time; and she finished by saying, that she had seen a gentleman who had taken a great fancy to me, and would like much to see me again. You will expect to hear, Mr. Marten, that this gentleman was no other than the Signor Carlo Rolandi, and you will not doubt but that I paid him him a visit when I heard his name, and wanted not the cunning to do it slily; his having seen me cross myself before the image being the secret cause of my doing so.

“Now, Mr. Marten, as I see you are impatient to the unravelling of the whole hank of what I have to say, which must seem tangled enough to you till I get a little farther on, I will not enter at large and at length into what the priest said to me. You know what blarney is—

no fellow who was ever dipped seven times in the Shannon had more than this Father Rolandi, as I then called him.

“I was just at that time so set up with my travels, and the new livery I had, and the praises I used to get in the stable-yard and kitchen at Woodville for my fun, and the stories I used to tell of Mrs. Kitty, that my head was as light as a feather, and empty as the oysters I served to Master Wellings at Spirehill,—you remember that, Mr. Marten; so that I was in a manner prepared for all kind of mischief, and made little or no resistance, nor had a word to bring forward when the priest told me, that having been brought up in the one only true church, that is, the Roman Catholic, that if I continued to live with heretics and think with them, I must be lost, and that for ever and ever. I could not say how far I believed him, but most surely he frightened me; and when he held out that it was most likely he should go abroad and come to this country, Italy, it might be in a few months, and that he would take me with him if I would renounce my heresies, promising me a good service and other things which I thought agreeable, I became so irresolute, that he did not fail even then to make quite sure of me, though why he should have taken all that trouble about me I could never understand, unless I give him credit for really wishing my soul good. May-be, it would be hard to say he did not.

“Before we left Woodville, I almost promised to go off with him when he left for Italy; and it was settled that he should send me word of his going by the same gipsy woman, and let me know where to meet him. After I had made this pro-

mise, I was taken one evening after dark, whilst the family were at dinner at Woodville, to a place which many in that country had desired in vain to see—I mean Elminton Hall.

“Mrs. Howard, the old lady, had heard of me, and desired to see me.

I have seen many a fine place, Mr. Marten, gloomy and grand, with large dark rooms, and old tapestry, and gilt chairs, and all such sort of things; but I never saw a finer old lady than Mrs. Howard. She had the look and the manner of a princess; she sate in a large chair; and on the other side of the fireplace sate her son, a fine man, but with a proud and melancholy aspect. He was then a widower, and he was going immediately to Italy, which was his wife’s and mother’s country, and where they had some possessions.”

Marten felt his interest increasing as Maurice went on, though he did not yet bring the past and present to bear on each other so closely, as in fact they did.

“Beside this son, Mrs. Howard,” continued Maurice, “had four daughters, three of them nuns in Italy; and a fourth, who had married a foreigner. This last is a widow, and mother of my signor.”

Marten could restrain himself no longer. “How wonderful!” he exclaimed, “and this young man, the Signor Romano, is the grandson of Mrs. Howard.”

“Not only the grandson,” replied Maurice, “but the only living male descendant of the family, inheriting, by some will or writing which I do not understand, all the lands in England, in preference to his mother, with some of his father’s

houses and estates in this country ; but I shall come to this by-and-by, Mr. Marten.

“Well sir, the old lady spoke so sweet and flatteringly to me, that to be sure I did not think small things of myself. Friend Maurice, I thought, how is it you meet with so much approbation and such great friends ? Why, to be sure, because there is something about you more than ordinary ; it can’t be riches, because you are poor ; it can’t be birth, because you may be said to have none ; it can’t be wisdom, for may-be you come short there. Well, then, it must be wit, and thereupon, that is, after I got out of that solemn house and solemn woods, I set up my pretensions to be more clever in that way than ever I had before, as poor Mrs. Kitty found to her cost.

“The old lady gave me a gold piece, and plenty of fine words, which all went to the same point as what the priest had said, and so we parted.

“When the time at Woodville was out, we came home, and things fell much into their old course ; and, barring my quarrels with Mrs. Kitty, I was quiet enough, and contented too, for it would have been quite unnatural if I had not felt that there was nothing in the wide world which could pay me for leaving the dear old gentleman, and he too going on fast to his end ; and as to master Milner, why, Mr. Marten, I would then and now, face death for him ; and so I ought, and no merit in it ; for it is nature—the nature of every human creature as God ever made—that love works stronger upon him than fear or anger, or anything else.

“So, though I forgot not the Father Roland, and his fine promises and his threatenings about heretics and heresies, and the pictures he had shown

me of souls suffering in torments of all sorts and descriptions, yet my mind was made up to stay where I was; and there I should have staid, if one of Mrs. Kitty's most violent quarrels with me—in which, to be sure, I was just as much the digressor as she was—had not fallen in with the coming of the messenger from the father.

“A little sly puss of a gipsy girl came in at the back gate, and whilst Mrs. Kitty was driving her off the premises, she contrived to show me a small ebony cross, tipped with silver, which was to be the token to me, that the person who brought it, came from Father Roland. This was enough; I looked to see which way the girl went, and I watched my opportunity, and taking the same way, found the woman I had seen at Woodville, with an ass, in the lane; and there, after much talk, much palaver and blarney, it was settled that I should make off in the night, and follow her to a place called the cross roads, which mayhap you may know, Mr. Marten, and from thence through —, where, at that time, was an election, and on to a place called the Friars' Lea, an ancient house, the ruins of a monastery, on Mr. Howard's estate. I saw two or three persons I knew in passing through —, but was, I hoped, seen by none who knew me, excepting Mr. Walter Wiggins, who came into the public-house where I was taking some refreshment with two or three other gentlemen; the sight of him made me make off towards Friars' Lea, over the fields: and I got there a little before Father Roland arrived, for he had waited to see the chairing.

“When I first left master's, I had not quite resolved not to go back, and even thought of some excuse to make for my absence, and so many

another beside myself, when he takes the first bold step in wickedness, has thought that the second shall be back again. But, though the French will have it that it is only the first step forward that is difficult, I say that the first step back is far more so; and as for me, when I had put myself in the clutches of the old jesuit—for sure enough Father Carlo Rolandi is a jesuit, and a deep one—I had no more power to help myself, than poor Sally had when she set my fireworks all in a blaze. Oh, Mr. Marten, that was the very best fun I ever knew. Fun always comes best when it is not planned, but falls in in a natural way.”

“Well—well!” exclaimed Marten, “I will grant this and anything else you please, if you will not digress. What happened after you met the jesuit at Friars’ Lea?”

“What you might expect, sir,” replied Maurice. “He was starting for Dover that evening: he was to meet Mr. Howard there; and what could I do but go with him? So I was perched in the back of the postchaise, for we travelled post till we got into the line of the mail, and then we both got in, for I think my gentleman was half afraid lest I should give him the slip; and truly I was half minded to do so once, especially when, on a sudden turn of the road, I caught a view of the whole line of our own hills—as Master Milner and I used to call the Malvern—standing out clear against the sky. But now I am thinking, Mr. Marten, and perhaps you can tell me how do those hills stand with the Apennines?”

“Stand with the Apennines?” asked Marten, repeating the question.

"That is," answered Maurice, "are they nigh upon as being as high? though I should think they hardly can be."

"Not quite," replied Marten, drily; "but I beseech you leave the mountains, and get on."

"So I will, sir," returned Maurice; "but such a number of things rise up, when I am telling these old stories, that I cannot keep the clue in my hand. I snap it every minute, as might happen to an old woman spinning with a rock and distaff. Where was I?—just got into the mail to go to Dover. Well, sir," he resumed, "so we went on right an end, through darkness and light, and was packed on board ship as soon as we got there; for Mr. Howard was only waiting for the father, and there we were, tossed about some hours, and I was desperate sick. We landed at Calais, and went to a grand hotel, and there I found that we was as many as ten or more servants, chiefly Italians, though there were some French; and Mr. Howard's gentleman was an Englishman; but I was to count myself the servant of the Signor Rolandi, for he changed his name, and was Rolandi no more after we crossed the water; and my name also suffered a change, for from thence I was always called Maurizzio.

"We travelled in two coaches, besides those that rode on horseback. Mr. Howard went with my master in his own coach; and the rest of us got over the ground pell mell, as it might happen. The place allotted to me was in the coupée of Mr. Howard's carriage, with the gentleman; but I often managed to make an exchange with any one tired of going on four legs; and if I did not thereby see more of the country, I got some pretty lessons in jockeyship, and learned how to get tumbles without breaking my bones.

"But I was not altogether happy then, Mr. Marten, though, as they used to say among the servants, I was the very Zany of the company, with my queer Italian and all that, for I dashed at it, right or wrong, and was never better pleased than when I made some monstrous out-of-the-way blunder. But, as I say, I was heart-sick at bottom, thinking of old master, and how he got on, and how he took my going off, and whether he missed my arm when he walked about, and such things—and as to the young master, I don't like to think of him to this day. I hope, Mr. Marten, that he don't think that all his kindness was thrown quite away on me. Does he look as he used to do? Is he the same as he was?—but what signifies it, I fear he won't look on me, if ever I goes back, as he once did."

In speaking these last sentences, Maurice seemed to be more affected than he liked to have seen. He changed the theme abruptly to that of religion, and said that the father had taken much pains with him during the journey, when he attended him privately, to bring him to confess himself converted from the heresies in which he had been instructed; "and that I did," he continued; "not that I gave myself the trouble of looking into the rights of the case, but that I might get rid of his preachments, which all, as far as I saw, went to prove that certain forms and penances, fastings from flesh-meat, and the repeating of Latin prayers, were all necessary for salvation. Whether they were so or not, I did not inquire; I was far too unsettled just at that time to be putting two and two together on these subjects: in truth, whenever I began to think, I felt myself sick, and out of sorts with everything and every-

body. I was just then in that state in which a young lad might have taken to drinking to drown care; but I never could bear their sour wine, and that saved me, Mr. Marten."

"Through God's goodness, Maurice," said Marten.

"Yes, sir," he returned; "his goodness has followed me wherever I have gone through all my life. But now, to make a finish, we came over the mountains, and staid at Milan several weeks, in a palace which Mr. Howard had there, it being a part of the old lady's property. There the rest of the family met us. Mr. Howard, a fine elderly gentleman, may-be of about sixty or seventy, and the Signora Romano, Mr. Howard's sister, with her son, my present master, and along with him his tutor—they called him the Padre Grimaldi. The Signora Romano struck me as one of the most awful women I ever saw—take one of the white marble figures from the saloon, and dress it up in black silk, and you would have the very representation of the signora; so cold, so stiff, so white she was, and never smiling on no account whatever. My master, the Signor Carlo Rolandi, told me that she was the very pattern of what a woman ought to be—being as much of a saint already, as any now in heaven. But saint or no saint, I never saw a more sour, haughty, or melancholy person. Her husband had died some time before, and she had made him some sort of promise that their only son, the young signor, should be devoted to the church; and he was being educated accordingly, though his visit to Milan was a sort of interruption, I heard it said, to the regular course of his edication. I was several days at the Albano

Palace, before I was brought into the presence of this lady and her son, and Mr. Howard. There was some great religious festival at Milan, and my master had persuaded me to be confirmed and to receive the wafer with many other young people, and it was after I had come in from the Duomo, that I was taken up to the room where the family were assembled. The lady was sitting in great state, and the gentlemen standing about, when my master handed me in as you would a lady, and presented me as one would some strange animal which he had caught in the woods, making it out that he had snatched me from the heretics as a brand caught from the fire, and complimenting himself on the great work, as if he was not only my maker, but my redeemer also. Mr. Howard, senior, said little; but the younger spoke several kind encouraging words, and the lady made a lengthy speech, in which she mixed up a pretty good spice of flattery to the Padre Rolandi—telling him that he had obtained the right to I know not what immense reward for the good work he had done in me. Then I found that there was a sort of question among them as to what was to be done with me, the Padre Rolandi being about to return to England; and then it was that my present signor stepped from behind his mother's chair, where he had been standing all the while. He was then a boy, for he is two or three years younger than I am, and he looked even younger than he was, for he was even then pale, and delicate, and slender as a girl, with the complexion of the Howard family, which is fair, as well as the hair; and whether he had taken a liking to me, or that he was wishing for a young companion, I know not,

but he proposed that I should be made an attendant upon himself, to do whatever he might require of me, which, to this hour, Mr. Marten, I should be troubled to specify, as he keeps a valet. The elders seemed to be taken somewhat aback at this proposition, and I was sent out of the room whilst it was talked over. After a little while I was called in and told of my preferment; I gave a look at my young signor, which he answered with a smile, as bright and as gentle, I thought, as one of Master Milner's. Whereupon I made a bow, lower than I had made for many a long day; for there is nought but kindness, Mr. Marten, that could ever make me bend my back, though I should not say this as any good for myself, but as showing the uncommon obstinacy of my nature, as Mrs. Kitty always said of me. Well, the next thing was to furnish me out as if I had been a page: and I did not think sour wine of myself when I found myself in my fine linen and broadcloth. I promise you, I complimented myself on my luck, with hearty good will, saying to myself, 'Fall as you will, Mr. Maurizzio, you come down on your legs—your head always comes uppermost, like that of a Dutch doll with a weight at its feet.' In all this, Mr. Marten, there was not a grain nor a jot of that sort of thankfulness which is due to God whenever any good falls to our lot in this life, or is made sure to us in the next. So we passed a few days after that at Milan, and then and there we parted from the two Mr. Howards—I never saw them afterwards—and I came on with the Signora Romano, her son, the tutor, and a parcel of servants, to the Castello Palmoso, which is in a valley of the Apennines, lying many miles south of this. I had never seen a wilder, grander, place, except-

ing when I came over the mountains into Italy. Though the castle seemed to be down in a deep valley, amongst rocks and woods, yet it was miles above the plain country by the road, and it was all cut in the living stone, and there was no house near to it but a monastery, just across the valley, and a few cottages. But the woods and the brooks, they were wonderful. Terni is nothing to the cataract that runs down between the abbey and the castello, and the bridge from rock to rock over the fall would make a goat giddy to look down. So here we were settled. I had a little room given me in a bit of a tower perched up in a corner of the castle wall, where I had only a few steps to run down, before I was in my signor's rooms; and there, if I did not live like a prince, I lived like a prince's page, which is one step better."

Here Maurice stopped to take breath; but Marten was not going to give him much time for resting.

"Well, Maurice," he said, "I must allow, that when you took possession of your tower, you had attained high preferment."

"I had, sir, I had," he answered, "and that through no great merit of my own, you may say, and tell no lie neither. I got my place for no good in myself, and I kept it for no good in myself, and yet good came of my being there. I am sure you will think so, Mr. Marten, when you hear all; and if things turn out as I hope they will. But it is wonderful how God works out his own will, not only with blunt-edge tools, but often with tools that have their edges turned and seem to cut the contrary way to which they ought to go?"

"Very true," thought Marten, "I may well

number myself with this last description of tools," but he spoke not his thoughts.

Maurice went on—"Few monasteries," he said, "could ever be more dull than our house must have been, Mr. Marten, before I came there, at least, so the signor told me. He said, that the very best thing that had ever happened to him was his falling in with me—which was what I could not say, you know, Mr. Marten."

"I know no such thing," replied Marten, "for if ever a scapegrace obtained what he did not deserve, it was yourself, Maurice, when you became a servant in this house."

"However, Mr. Marten, I still hold that it was not the very best piece of luck, though I don't count any good that ever came to me, good luck or good fortune, nor any bad luck or bad fortune, but just the gifts of God. The bad, may-be, being as wholesome for me as the good. But you can't deny that the first and very best thing that ever happened to me, or ever can in this world, was my being taken to by master, and that along of my poor father's saving Master Milner from the bull, and I always said as much to the signor, and he said, 'So it is.' But I was telling you what he said, and how he described his manner of living till I came. His mother, for some cause, I don't know what, had vowed him to the church. He had had an elder brother living when she had done so, but she stood to her vow after the child died. No doubt but the priests kept her to it: they are up to all these things. So she withdrew to Palmoso, and there lived like a nun; and my signor's education was carried on at the monastery, his tutor being one of the monks, and he went there every day, and was there for hours in

the morning, and was propitiated in all their learning and all their forms and ceremonials. Just about the time I was made his servant, they were all upon him to take the first steps towards becoming a priest, that they might make quite sure of him, as Thomas used to say, when he had got the halter over Mr. Nash's mare, which is an obstroporous beast at being caught. Do you remember how I used to race her round the field? Thomas said I made her worse than she would have been."

"I wish Maurice," said Marten, "that I could throw a halter over your recollections, in order that I might keep you to a straightforward story. So, leaving the mare, these priests, as you say, were trying to make sure of your signor; and I suppose as he is not now a priest, that he calci-trated—that is, kicked ——."

"Why, Mr. Marten," resumed Maurice, "I believe he had resisted a little, before he was brought to Milan to be lectured by his uncle and Father Carlo Rolandi, on the part of his grandmother, but I promise you he was much more steady when he got back to the Palmoso. I put him up to a trick or two may-be, though all I tried at was to persuade him to put off his ordination for a year or two, and so he did. But his education went on, and he and the priests, seeing how he took to me, were always persuading me to become one of their sort myself, so that I might not be parted from my patron, that if so be he became an abbot or a cardinal, I might always stand by him—much as the clerk stands by or under the parson; and so far I gave way, that I used to go with the signor when he attended his tutor, and got lessons along with him in some of his learning.

"They never had me much in the dogmatics and mathematics, and the metaphysics; I had no calling for them, Mr. Marten, though I took readily to the singing and chanting, and was told that I should be an ornament in that line, and no doubt the bait caught.

"But for some cause or another, the signor and I were not encouraged to linger about the monastery after we had had our lessons. One of us was very sententious, Mr. Marten, and the other somewhat keen in seeing through stone walls, and so perhaps they thought we were best away. So when our lessons were done, we were seen over the bridge, and had the rest of the day to ourselves, excepting just the dinner time, for the Signora was so given up to her forms and ceremonies, and the reading of dull old books, that she could spare no time to her son; and before I came, he had no companion but an old serving-man, or some such person.

"Well, Mr. Marten, but those were many, nay, most of them very sweet times, when we were together, strolling about the hills, and forgetting, as we did, that he was a gentleman, and I only a servant. They had ruined his health by not letting him have his run as a boy should have, and frightening him with their terrible tales about evil spirits, and such things; so that I was obliged to lead him about, and defend him, and tender him, and help him, as if he had been a girl, though he got better of that after a bit; but somehow, I liked him the better for his very helplessness, just as I have loved some poor harmless animal—only that I could not have helped respecting him too, for I soon found that he was one who desired as much to do right as Master

Milner did. There was nothing which pleased him more than to sit as we often did, in the shade in some retired part of the valley, whilst I told him stories about England, and how Master Milner treated the poor Maurice O'Grady as gently as a brother would do. We were used to go over the ground again, again, and again; and after a time, he was used to reason about this and about that, and to ask me how a heretic, such as Master Milner was, could be so good, and have such a fear of God.

"I never was so surprised in my life as when he told me that he had never seen a Bible, and that he would give all he had to get one. What would I then have given for my dirty old dog-eared Bible, which I used to keep in my cupboard in the kitchen, in Worcestershire; but as I could get neither at that nor another, what could be the next impediment but for me to rub up all I had ever learned of the Bible, and to repeat it to him? As he had a good notion of English, which his mother commonly spoke to him, we had no difficulty there, and so I began to repeat one bit of the Bible, and another, and another, and to tell him such histories as I did not just remember, word for word, till I had made him not only as wise in bible matters as myself, but through God's blessing, a far deal wiser. I remember once, when we were at the abbey, that the tutor showed the reflection of the prospect in a glass;—there it was—the face of the mountain, and the waterfall and the bridge, and old castello—much smaller, but all looking blackish or blueish, as one sees things at the coming on of night; and then he turned the glass to another side, and showed us the same

again as bright as gold—like as it would be at sunset. Well, sir, and these two glasses might be set against the words and stories I told from the Bible to my signor.

“With me they were all dim and black; but no sooner were they set before him, but they became bright as gold, and he would keep crying, “Is this there, Maurizzio?—and is that there, Maurizzio? Say that again—oh! do say that again;” and he was always trying to make me see things as he saw them; and you cannot think, Mr. Marten, how my mind worked round, and how I wondered I could have been so dull as to have been learning the Bible by rote, that is, parts of it, year after year, without another thought than how the words followed each other.

“But I did feel thankful when I found what delight my young signor took in the words of scripture, that I had been made to do as much as I had—though, as poor Mrs. Kitty used often to say, teaching of me was little better than throwing pearls to swine, and she had good reason to say so.

“Well, sir, but I have made an uncommon long story, and am still at some distance from the end of it. I could tell you as much more about the time we lived at the Castello Palmoso, and how my signor, having me at his back, put off, and put off his ordination; and how I held back too, saying I would stick to my master, and not be made a priest of sooner than him, being, as I used to say, that I would never consent to become his superior, which would be, to be sure, as soon as ever I took the lowest degree in the church. So there was a bit of blarney which they sucked in very kindly, though I can’t say whether I

meant it for flattery or for truth—may-be it was a mixture of both—and as to what I was then in heart, a papist, or what they call a heretic, I can't say; or how I settled the matter with my conscience when I was taking lessons from the priests, I cannot tell, though certain it is, that after I had begun to repeat the Bible, and the things that I had been taught at Mr. Dalben's, to my signor, that God caused me to think of religion as I had never done before."

In this place Maurice looked at his watch, for he was furnished with all things to the top of the bent of a page of the olden times; and then added, "I can stay only to speak two or three more words.

"We remained at Palmoso year after year; the signor putting off his ordination continually; and when he had no other excuse, he asked leave to travel first, which being allowed, his tutor and I went with him.

"We went to Rome and Naples, and lingered out the time till his mother got quite impatient, and sent peremptory orders for him to return; but we were hardly come back, having secretly brought a Bible with us, when that horrid business fell out, in which the younger Mr. Howard and his father, the old gentleman, dying soon afterwards, he became possessed of all the lands in England, and heir to those of his grandmother in Italy."

"What!" exclaimed Marten, "is he possessor of Elminton?"

"Yes, sir," returned Maurice, "bog and all. But he is only just of age, according to his grandfather's will, and is still much under the influence of his mother in Italy, and she was still driving,

after her father's death, after his going into the church, thinking, to be sure, that he had money enough to buy the pope's crown. And sad work there was with her; and when she could not conquer him, she renounced him, and went off, and threw herself into a convent in Rome, and there she is now, and all the better. She was desperately angry when she found that her father had slipped her by in the will he wrote, when his son's corpse lay unburied, by which he fixed everything on his grandson—but he knew her, no doubt, and that she would give all she could to the priests.”

“What is the history of Mr. Howard's death and that of his son?” asked Marten.

“The younger Mr. Howard,” replied Maurice, “was lost in a felucca, between Sicily and Malta; the vessel was broken to pieces in a hurricane, and every soul perished but two sailors. Mr. Howard's body was cast on shore, and sent over for burial to Elminton. The shock, it was supposed, was the cause of the death of the old gentleman a few months afterwards. I wonder you never heard of it, Mr. Marten.”

It had happened, Marten thought, when he was at Altonbury, and scarcely ever saw a newspaper.

A servant at this instant came from the signor to summon Maurice; and Marten was left to prepare himself as speedily as possible to relieve his father from his watch.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DURING the short time in which Marten had been dressing, a current of bewildering thoughts, of which Maurice's narrative had opened the sluices, were rushing through his mind; the rush continuing after he had taken his station at the foot of the signor's bed, with an unopened book in his hand.

The leading subject of these thoughts was the wonderful and inscrutable arrangements of Providence, by which all things are made to bear upon the object which divine wisdom is bringing about. In one point of view, he had, of course, considered this matter before; every reflecting mind must be often compelled so to do; but now he saw it in another light.

It must be allowed that in this material world, the Almighty works by means in producing all the effects which come under the cognizance of man's natural instincts, not excepting such spiritual works as are made cognizable to man's apprehension. These means, though to a certain extent, inscrutable to human apprehension, which sees but the surface of things, are yet subject to such laws as may be calculated upon with some certainty.

When any work is wrought in independence of these laws, the work is miraculous—such were many of the cures wrought by our Saviour, by which he manifested his omnipotence to the understandings of the persons around him, who had no other apprehension of things but that which is merely fleshly. But in calculating the power of means, many have grossly erred; and amongst these, Marten.

They attribute to their influence much higher power than they possess, and suppose that they can so affect human minds, as to raise them from their natural grossness, and inspire them with feelings contrary to that grossness; and in order that they may produce these effects, they suppose that these means, or rather those who administer them, must be conformed to their own ideas of fitness, and that unless they are so, they must needs prove ineffectual.

Hitherto, Marten had thought himself possessed, in a superior degree, of that fitness, as an ordained clergyman of the Church of England,—as a graduate in the first university of the island, (we beg the Cantabs to excuse him,)—as a man of superior talents, of unimpeachable morality, of gentlemanly bearing, and no mean personal endowments, of considerable scripture erudition, and finally, of the soundest orthodoxy. What young minister was ever otherwise in his own opinion? and yet he had hitherto achieved only a succession of failures, whilst a low-born creature, whom he had been in the habit of despising, first, as a rough-haired, puzzle-brained, blundering boy, and secondly, as an ill-principled youth, had been made, *nolens volens*, of the highest benefit to a young man of the first conse-

quence in the neighbourhood, of all others where he, Marten, would wish to possess interest.

If the Signor Romano should escape the thralldom, both spiritual and temporal, of popery—should he ever take his place at Elminton as an avowed and sincere protestant—should he ever use his influence in that character amongst his dependants—to whom, or what, according to the world's opinion, would this be attributed to? Marten felt that the thought was almost nigh unto choking him—to whom but to Maurice O'Grady? and he himself, if he came in for any part of the praise of the world on the occasion, must be content with Maurice's leavings. As to any reward he might expect from his own conscience, it was neither here nor there, like the Irishman's park: his obstinacy had cut him off from all hopes from that quarter.

The immediate danger of the young signor was past a few days before, but he remained for some time longer, excessively weak and requiring incessant care.

The young man must have been very different to what he was had he not felt the unremitting kindness of Marten, and he seemed to cling to him as to a brother, and was always uneasy whenever he could not see him near him.

About this period, Marten got a note, written in haste, from Mr. Leeson, dashed off with many scratches and worded with affected familiarity: this said note utterly knocked the speculation of Lord F— on the head, giving Marten no other pain than a slight twitch of mortification in finding that Leeson had known the whole affair from the beginning, and had probably avoided meeting

him that he might not talk of it. Marten tore the epistle to pieces, and committed the fragments to the winds, which are, by-the-by, the depositors of many highly valuable and honourable documents of the same description.

Before the Signor Romano, from corporeal weakness, was able to leave his couch, his mind again became excited on the subjects which had certainly brought on his illness.

The awful circumstance by which he had become possessed of the property of his mother's family seemed to have produced a strong feeling of superstitious terror; and though he believed himself to be a protestant, yet he was by no means clear of the principles in which he had been educated. His knowledge of scripture had just aided him to throw off some of the grosser errors of popery; but, as Maurice hinted to Marten, he was sure he was not quite right yet, though he could not just say where he was wrong, and he hoped that Mr. Marten would encourage his opening his mind, whenever he was minded so to do; "and don't let him bother himself about the church, sir, don't, if you can help it."

It was not in the nature of Marten, now that the excitement was past, to endure patiently the familiarity of Maurice, especially when he addressed him with the elegancies of his half-English, half-Irish style, of which no instructions in the parlour had ever been able to divest him, so long as there was a counteracting influence going on in the kitchen, under the auspices of Mrs. Kitty.

Moreover, in this last address, Maurice was encroaching, as Marten thought, on his own par-

ticular province—religion and the church; he therefore had some difficulty in so far commanding himself as not to say, “I wish, Maurice, you would mind your own affairs, and not be intruding your advice;” and as the Irishman was not very sensitive on such matters, he was quite satisfied when Mr. Marten gave him no reply at all.

The hint of Maurice, though thus ungraciously received, was not without its influence; and when the Signor Romano next touched upon religion, Marten drew him on, Maurice being present, but of course we can only give the heads of what passed in many conversations.

The Signor Romano first stated the persuasion under which he laboured—that the deaths of his uncle and grandfather were judicial dispensations inflicted on them, probably for some secret sins; and that he felt the infliction of death would be extended speedily to himself if he did not boldly come forward to declare his belief.

“Of course,” replied Marten, “you are called upon so to do.”

“Stop a bit, sir,” said Maurice, “he must be quite sure what that belief is, first and foremost, before he declares it; and that was what I wanted you for, when I came after you. I wanted you to sound him, and prove the rights of things, as master would have done. He don’t know what he is rightly, and I am sure I could not tell him; for, do you see, he mixes one thing with another so, that though I know he is wrong, I can’t say justly where.”

As the signor did not admonish Maurice to be silent, Marten could hardly do so, but he was too angry to speak, and the signor went on.

“I sometimes think, he said, “that the Al-

mighty, under the christian dispensation, does not take immediate vengeance on man, as he did under that of the law, but gives the sinner time to repent and make himself a fit object of mercy. Even my mother allows thus much."

Marten hesitated—"Must he grant," he asked himself, "that God's mercy acts independently of man's merits or demerits? if he did so," he considered, "though it might be true to a certain extent, he might be admitting too much, considering the present state and circumstances of the Signor Romano, of whom it certainly was required that he should act decisively as soon as his restored strength should enable him to do so." So, after some delay, he said, "We certainly have no right to expect the divine mercy whilst we hold back from a decided duty."

"Ah! Mr. Marten," said Maurice, who seemed to be perched by his master's pillow for the express purpose of disconcerting the dignity of the young minister, "you do not speak there as Master Milner used to do. When I was obstinate, as I was, I grieve to say, many a time and oft, and when I would do anything but what I was bid, and was in the garden, or maybe somewhere else, he would come to me so gently, and with such a look, and would say, 'Maurice, do you know that God loves you and ever has done, and that even, with all your wickedness, you may be assured that he always will do; not that he does not hate your wickedness, and that he does not know that you can never do anything really good in your own strength so as to deserve his love; but still he loves you for that dear Saviour's sake who died for you.' So you see, Mr. Marten, he did not

make out God's mercy to hang upon aught I could do to please him; and so, many is the time that he has made me ashamed of my stubbornness by setting it aside the love of my Father which is in heaven. And to this day, whenever the thought of God's love comes over me, which it sometimes would do when I was at the very worst, it makes me hate my own evil nature more than all the roundabout arguments which ever were, and I have often repeated this to the signor, but he don't take it in; may-be, because I cannot bring all the reasons from the Bible; and for another thing, because he thinks I am saying comfortable things to make him easy. He says, that if Master Milner taught me the truth, why then religion is quite a different thing to what he ever supposed."

"And so it is, Maurice," remarked the signor; "but, my good youth, suffer Mr. Marten to speak. I can hear you at all times, but have not always the advantage of hearing him, and I have much to ask him." He then, under favour of the silence of Maurice, put a few questions, which it has puzzled many a more experienced man than Marten to answer.

These were—"What is the church? Is it one? If one, where is it? In what form does it manifest itself? What is its authority? From whence is that authority derived? Is it derived through a succession from the apostles by the laying on of hands? and if so, whence do the protestant churches obtain their authority?"

The young signor did not propound these questions from the spirit of disputation, but from the earnest desire of obtaining satisfaction—these being the points on which his mind had been

chiefly tried, and they the stumbling stones amongst which he had been involved, and amid which Maurice could give him no helping hand from any reminiscences which he could lay hold of.

When Marten began to answer these questions, like many other disputants, he was little aware of the force of his own concessions, and how in the end he should find himself so involved and overcome by them, as to be almost as much baffled and confounded as the young gentleman whom he was endeavouring to enlighten. He lost himself at first setting out, by not making the signor define whether he intended his questions to refer to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, or the church as defined in the nineteenth Article of our Liturgy; and he failed to do so from the distinction not being clear to his own mind, he having, ever since his ordination, been in the habit of mingling the characters and prerogatives of these two in his imagination. Neither did he discover the concessions which he made through the want of accuracy, until, when he had arrived at the answer to the last inquiry, he found himself advocating the cause of popery, and of its assumed rights, in a manner which would have won him the warmest applauses of the Padres Rolandi and Grimaldi, and all others of their way of thinking. He had proved that the Church of England existed on the authority of the more ancient Roman Catholic Church; that it was only a modified and reformed exhibition of the same thing, instead of being radically opposed to it; and he felt that his hearer was even more bewildered than before the commencement of the conversation.

In fact, he was thoroughly dissatisfied with himself, and confounded and perplexed with his own arguments, and was running them over again in his mind with more than a suspicion that he was wrong somewhere, if not everywhere, when the pert Irishman broke his forced silence, saying petulantly, and much in the manner of a spoiled child, "Did not I ask you, Mr. Marten, not to get talking about churches; they are so over set up with their churches in this country, as if it signified where one is praying; whether the walls about one are marble or wattle and dap, or whether the roof is covered with gilding or simple tile; or whether the man that officiates has three tiers to his cap, or a wig like good Mr. Nash's. Master Milner used often to tell that the outside and the form was nothing to the purpose, and it was but the very first time that he came from the university, that he said to me, when I maintained that I had no time for praying, 'If you have the heart given you, Maurice, you can as easily do it, whilst you are rubbing down a horse in the stable, as in the best church in the land;' and he would have said the same, had our church there been as grand as St. Peter's at Rome."

"Maurizzio," replied the signor, "we are not speaking of churches made with hands, of perishable stone, wood, or earth; we give the name of church to congregations of holy christian men with their faithful teachers."

Maurice smiled, and answered, "I understand my signor, and you and Mr. Marten are inquiring where such are to be found, and where the wisest shepherd and the most spotless sheep are to be met with.—Good! good!" he added, "and

Mr. Marten can't say where! Master Milner could have told before he needed two figures to tell his age. Why, almost one of the first recollections I have after I came into Worcester, is sitting beside him on a green bank, whilst he talked to me of the Shepherd King, and the sheep he had made white in his blood. You may travel long and far, my dear signor, before you find a flock of such sheep as these in this world. Master used to tell me, that they never could be gathered together so as to make an unmixed multitude, till their Shepherd comes to call them to be with himself."

Thus finished the first conversation, leaving Marten utterly annoyed and dissatisfied with himself, his very anger against Maurice being swallowed up in his stronger dissatisfaction with himself.

The signor was still unfit, from weakness, to converse for any length of time; Marten, therefore, had many hours to spend in silence by his couch, for he would not suffer him to leave him.

And now, for the benefit of Marten's friends, we will assume our privilege, as his biographer, to open out particulars respecting him which are known to us in that character only.

The besetting sin of Marten, as it is in a greater or lesser degree of all human beings, was pride. Pride caused him to think that he could save himself, and administer to the salvation of others, where not counteracted in the measures he adopted for that purpose, and thus he had hitherto rebelled against all the teachings he had received. His eyes had first begun to be opened by his various failures in his ministry in England, these being used for the purpose by the Spirit of

truth itself, though at the period of his arrival at Venice he still clung pertinaciously to the persuasion, that the failures of which he was conscious were attributable in a great measure, if not wholly, to the persons with whom he had to deal. Then came his determination to depend henceforward on his own judgment and opinions, and to act for himself without reference to the counsels of others.

There again he had failed, and was now made conscious that whilst he had been pursuing his own devices he had obstinately refused to obey a manifest call of duty, for he could no longer hide it from himself, that he had rejected the advances of the Signor Romano for no other motive than obstinacy, though he had tried to persuade himself that he had others.

Again, Maurice having been made an instrument of such wonderful usefulness, though the youth's conduct had been bad in the first instance, being contrasted with his own total failure, convinced him more and more that the instrument was nothing, and God all in all. This last and most comprehensive truth worked deeply and continually on his mind during the long hours which he had to watch, and his spiritual pride gave way under the effectual operations of the divine Spirit. He found that he was so far wrong, that he could not even presume to teach, he could not hope to teach aright; and when the signor would have drawn him out to explain religious subjects, his manner betrayed so much embarrassment as to draw the attention of Maurice. "May-be, Mr. Marten," remarked the brisk youth, "you don't just know what to say to my signor. May-be he has puzzled you, as he has done me, many

is the time; and so to quiet him, I have often turned him over to reading the Bible since we have got one; and that, you will say, is not turning him over from better to worse, sir, but from worse to better, which is a good turn, at all events, and may be such a one as you might like to give him." With that Maurice handed the Bible, which they had procured in their travels, to Marten.

It was no slight proof of the improved humility of the young minister, that he gladly adopted the proposition, though coming from a quarter which a little while since would have rendered it wholly unacceptable.

The Bible which Maurice put into Marten's hand was an Italian one, and was found by the young clergyman to be a translation falsely rendered in many passages to suit the opinions of the papal church. Here again was an occasion of great self-blame to himself, that by his wilfulness and opposition to his father, he should have prevented himself from making this discovery whilst the young signor was in tolerable health. He had his own English Bible with him, and a correct Italian copy, which he had brought with him from London, at his father's house; so he lost no time in sending for this last, and placed it in the signor's keeping immediately. It was an assistance to the young signor to look at the Italian version whilst the English was read aloud.

Being thus furnished, the curiously arranged trio spent many hours in reading, and talking over what they read.

Maurice's reminiscences occurred not unseldom, and were not discouraged either by his signor or by Marten. The latter was now enabled to see and to admire the comparative purity of the sort

of instruction which had been given to him in his childhood, and to acknowledge in this instance the fulfilment of the promise, "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth, it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."—Isa. lv. 10, 11.

The object of these readings and conversations was not now, as at first, so much to ascertain what was required of the signor to do next, as it regarded any overt act of renouncing his church, as to ascertain and trace the work of salvation from its predetermination before the commencement, through all that was passed of time, in its progress towards the grand result declared by our Lord himself to be the salvation of his own.

As the instructions given to Maurice had been laid up in an inactive state in his memory for several years, like seed sown in the earth, not springing into life until the moment of quickening by the divine Spirit was fully come, and then in breaking forth and blossoming, contributing varieties of beauties to rejoice the senses of those before whom they were displayed, so was it with Marten, when the sweet and vivifying influences of the divine Spirit had once descended upon him, all the pure, the refined, the learned and eloquent ideas which he had ever received from books, conversation, or natural objects, on the subject of religion—ideas which hitherto had lain