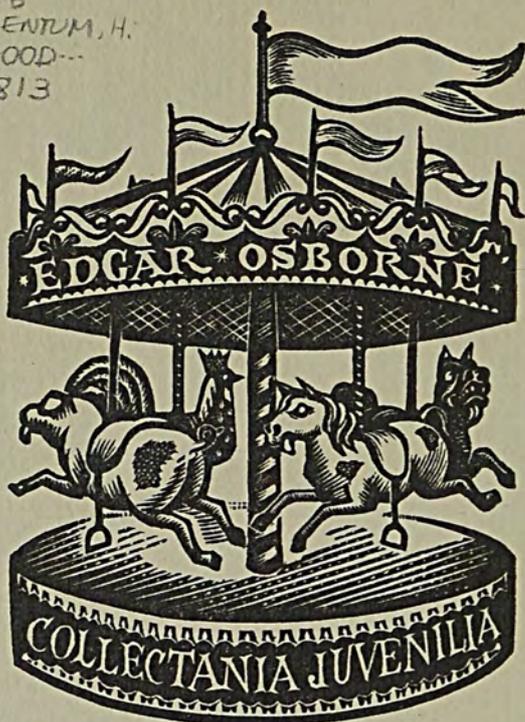
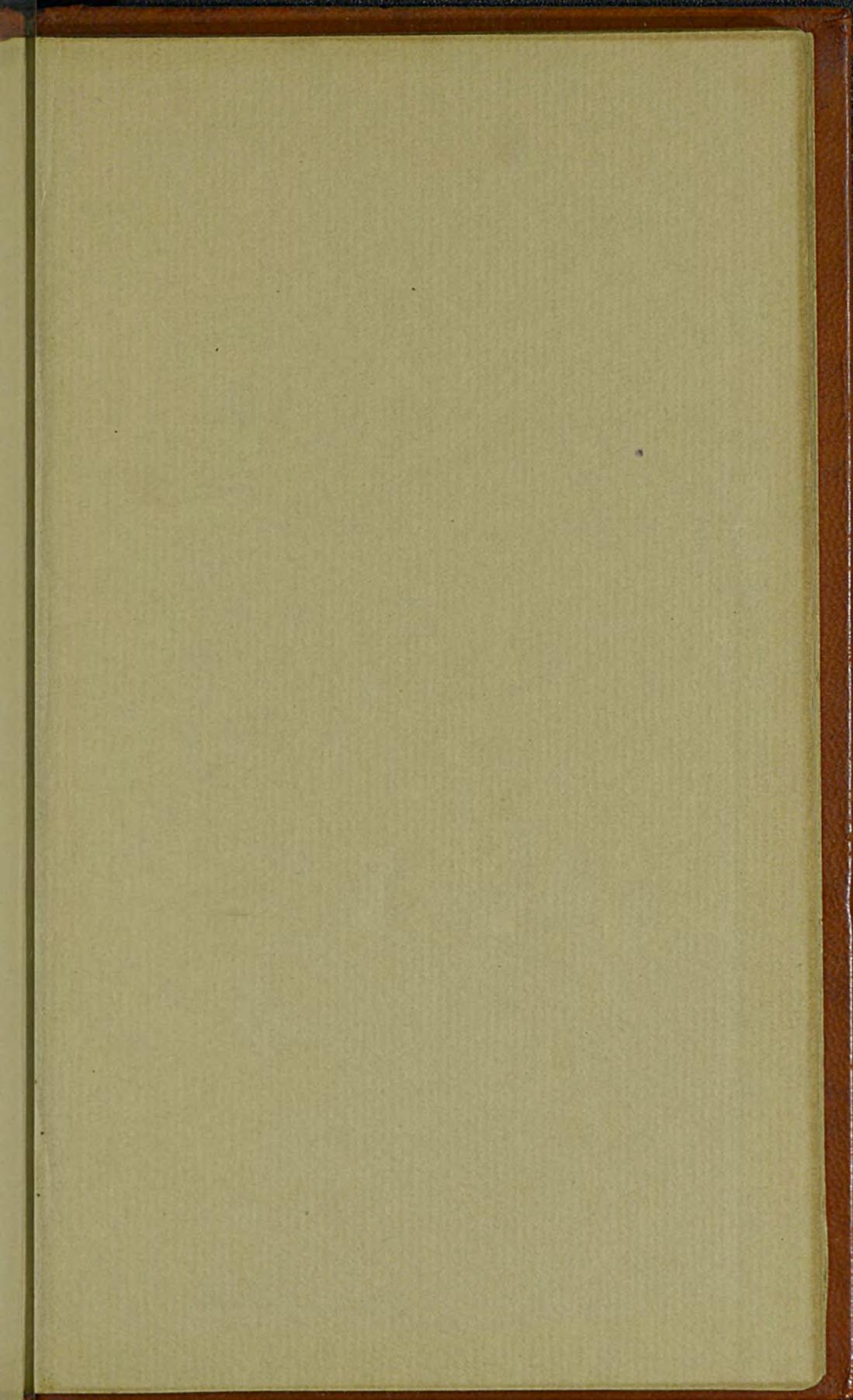


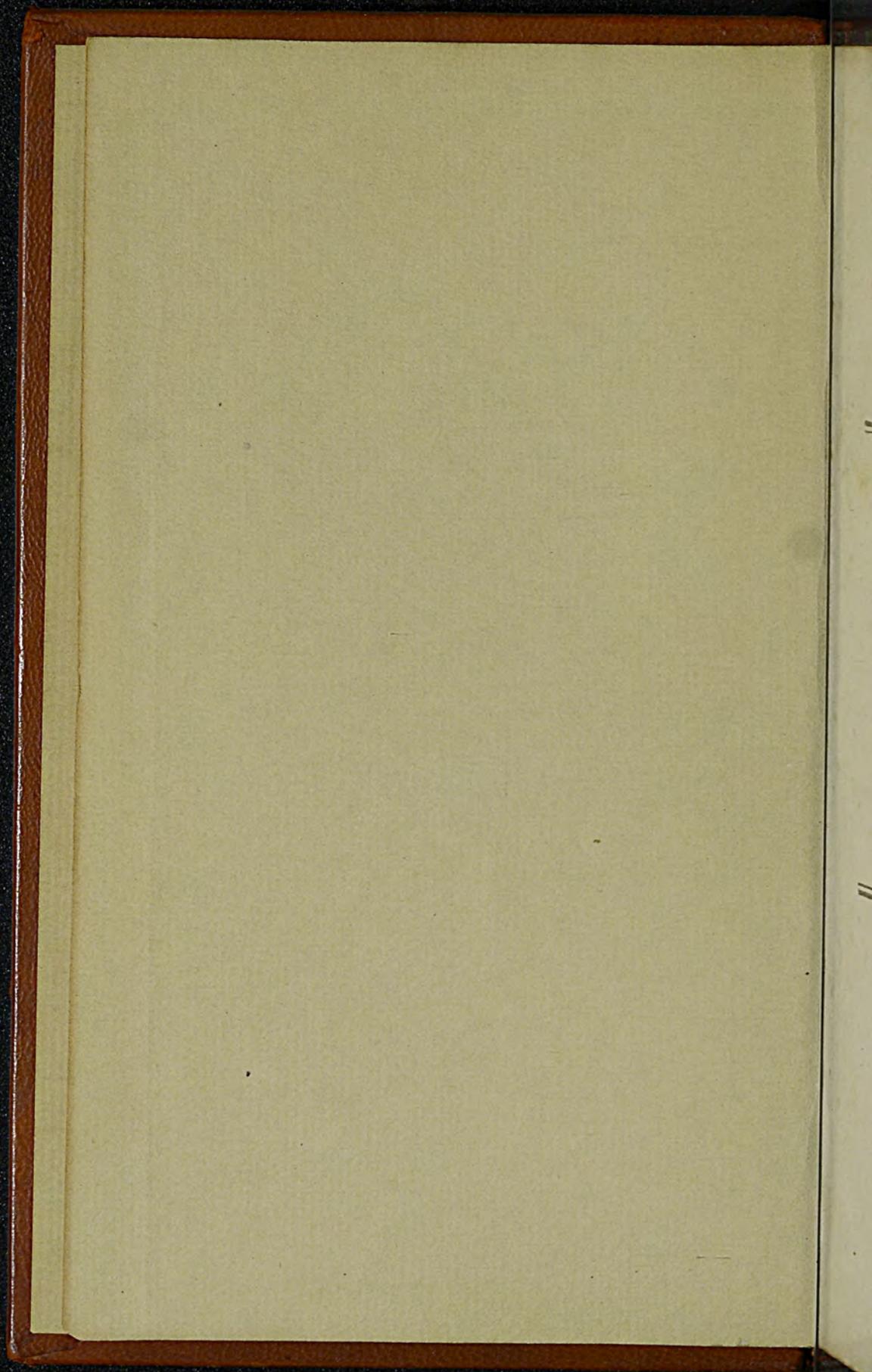
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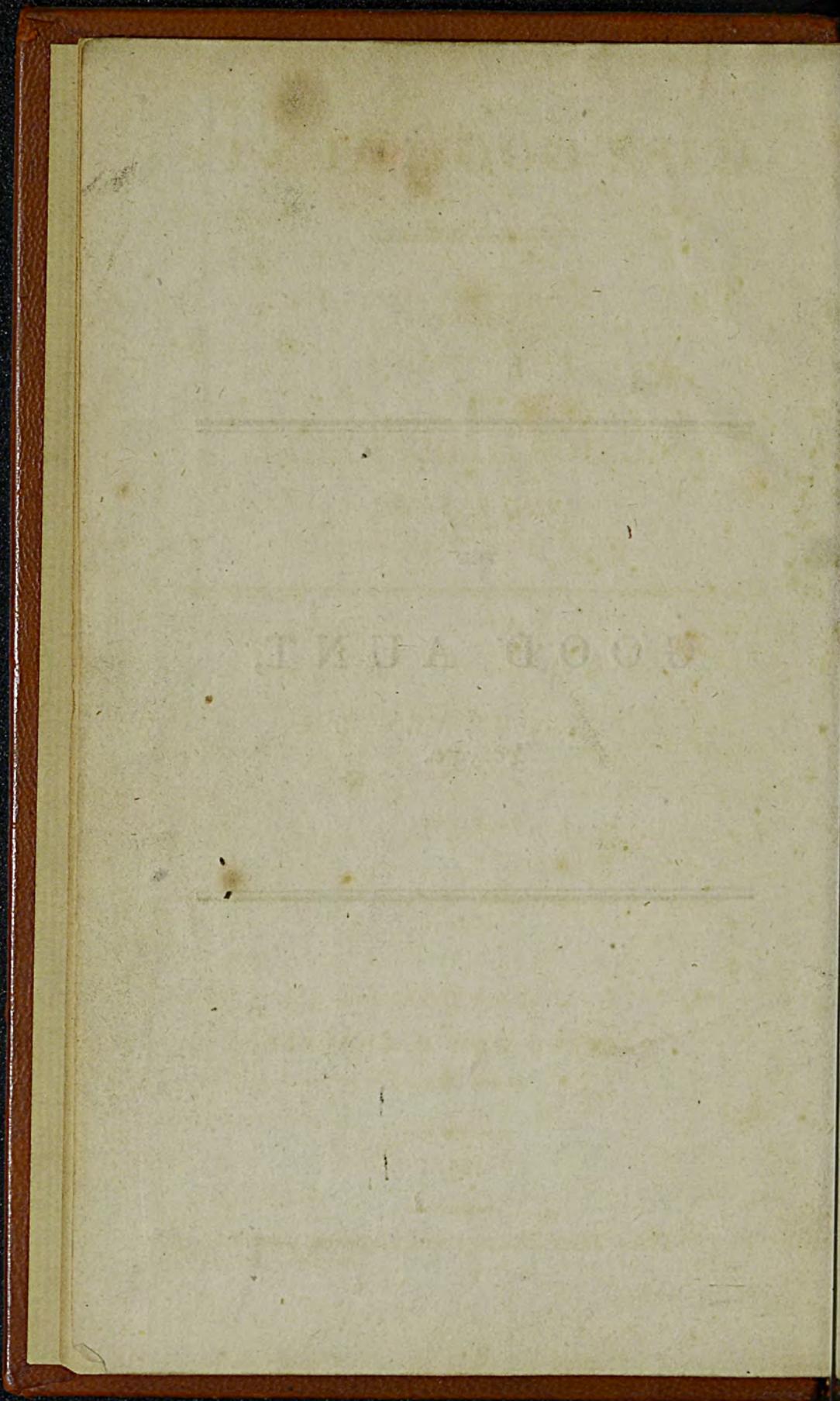




THE

GOOD AUNT,

&c. &c.



THE GOOD AUNT:

INCLUDING
THE STORY
OF
SIGNIOR ALDERSONINI,
AND HIS SON.

BY
HARRIET VENTUM,
Author of "Charles Leeson."
&c. &c. &c.

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THE GOOD AUNT.

MATILDA AND EMMA HOWARD had the misfortune to be left motherless, before they had attained the age of five years: their father possessed a large private fortune, besides a place in one of the public offices, which, by demanding his closest attention, left him little leisure, and less inclination to devote those hours he could spare from the fatigues of business to the instruction of his children; he therefore placed them under the care of Mademoiselle Tourville, a young woman, whose principal recommendation was a grammatical knowledge of the language of her own country; a tolerable proficiency in music, and taste for drawing. The culture of external accomplishments had alone been considered by those to whom the charge of her youth had been intrusted: the cultivation of her mind,

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minds: the more she saw, the more she regretted that such girls, with such expectations, should have been thus cruelly mismanaged; and her affairs were no sooner settled, than she proposed to her brother taking his daughters to her country seat, which was situated near the sea coast in Dorsetshire. Mr. Howard willingly consented, but proposed their taking their governess with them. "By no means, my dear brother," said Mrs. Althorpe; "the place of instructress to my nieces I shall gladly supply; I flatter myself I am equal to the task, and I promise you I will neither be negligent in my duty, nor remiss in the performance of it. I do not wish either Matilda or Emma to look upon me absolutely as their Governess only, but as their friend—a character I shall endeavour to fulfil, and am anxious to prove myself such. I shall have an opportunity of witnessing their growing virtues, and correcting their errors. Authorized by you, I will instruct them to take an affectionate leave of Mademoiselle Tourville, and inform her you are satisfied with her services; and by way of variety, on the first emancipation of her pupils from the school-room, have

indulged me with the promise of their company for a few months."

The young ladies were soon informed of the new plan adopted for them, and with all the eager desire and wish for variety, so natural to youth, anticipated the pleasure their new system of life would afford.

Mademoiselle, who from the first hour of Mrs. Althorpe's coming to Portland-place had foreseen, and indeed felt the diminution of her authority, had taken no small pains to instil into the minds of her pupils contempt for their aunt and her sober plans. Always upon her guard herself, in the presence of those to whose authority she was subject, or whose influence she feared, she strove by gross flattery and the most servile humility, to ingratiate herself with Mrs. Althorpe; but the veil was too thin for the piercing eye and penetrating judgment of her whom it was meant to deceive. Blessed with a strong and highly cultivated understanding, with a mind enriched by knowledge, and adorned by virtue, she saw that her brother had been deceived in his choice of a governess for his children; and she felt more than a common anxiety, lest

their minds should have imbibed so strong a portion of their preceptresse's sentiments, that all she could do would be ineffectual to their reform. Matilda, she observed, gave way to frequent and irregular starts of passion, which would manifest itself upon the slightest offence and most trifling occasions; she was revengeful in the extreme, nor till she had found an opportunity of exercising this bitterness of spirit, could she be at all satisfied. Emma, naturally much milder and more even tempered than her sister, had yet a species of envy in her disposition, and secret jealousy against many, that demanded attention and prudence to eradicate. They had many and severe quarrels between themselves; Matilda pleading the right of eldership, as a defence for the authority she frequently assumed; and Emma alleging the difference between them being too little to allow of any.

Mrs. Althorpe had frequently witnessed and noticed these unpleasant dissensions, so unsisterly and so unfriendly, and resolved, when once they should be committed to her care, to leave no means untried to make them agreeable and useful members of society.

Mademoiselle Tourville, receiving a present beyond her expectation from Mr. Howard, as an acknowledgment of his respect for her, took leave in better temper than was expected. Her pupils, who for so many years had been accustomed to, felt a sincere grief at parting with her; but that sorrow was soon eradicated by the prospect of being for the future no more subjected to government, and in being in some degree mistresses of themselves. The separation from their father, and its attendant pains, were speedily forgotten, in the novelty of a journey of near an hundred miles.

Mrs. Althorpe, who always endeavoured to blend instruction with delight, pointed out the beauties of nature to her nieces; led them to admire, and from admiring, to enquire the properties of plants and animals.

In high spirits they arrived at Ash Park, to which they were welcomed by their kind aunt with all the warmth of maternal affection. After partaking a little refreshment, she shewed them the room she had destined for their use; and, kindly desiring them to arrange their books and ornaments as they thought proper, left them. Inured to sloth, habitu-

ated to command a group of servants, whose whole business was to serve them, they felt themselves fatigued at the idea of sorting their library. After an absence of near three hours, which had been chiefly spent at the glass, they returned to the drawing-room to tea. With a countenance fraught with friendly affection, Mrs. Althorpe casually enquired how they had spent their time? "In just doing nothing, my dear Madam," replied Matilda; "indeed I have not stepped a yard beyond the glass; you can scarcely imagine how excessively shocking I looked; so fatigued, so tired; I protest I am not yet recovered."

"And you, Emma," said Mrs. Althorpe, "what has been your employment?" "I can scarcely tell you," returned she, indolently; "much the same as my sister's, I believe."

"Doubtless," returned Mrs. Althorpe, "you have arranged your books." "No, indeed, Madam," replied Emma, "we cannot tell how to do it: if you will allow your woman to help us, we will direct her." "How can you direct another, my dear," said her aunt, smiling, "to do that you profess yourself un-

able to perform?" "We could tell her how and where to place them, Madam." "Then could you not do it yourself? and would it not be an agreeable amusement and exercise for your fancy, and an employment that would relieve you from the temporary lassitude of which you complain? You shall have Matty's assistance whenever you are really in want of any, but a little employment is necessary even for yourselves.

"Do you not think, Matilda, (and she addressed herself particularly to her) that some green ribbon, tied in bows at the corner of those boards, would look tasteful and relieve the weight of the other ornaments?" "Dear Madam," returned Matilda, pettishly, "I do not think about it; I leave those things to mechanics, and such as make their livelihood by adjusting and ornamenting them: I think people of fashion have enough to do, without attending to trifles of that kind."

"Pray, my dear," said Mrs. Althorpe, gravely, "tell me whom or what you denominate people of fashion?" "Indeed, Madam," replied her niece, with increased ill humour, "you quite worry and perplex me with ques-

tions. People of fashion, I imagine, are those whose whole study is amusement, and how to kill time." "To kill time, indeed," returned Mrs. Althorpe: "in truth, my dear child, I should think, that, instead of having just emerged from your school-room, you had employed all your faculties in finding the way to kill time, as you call it; and, to do you justice, you have amply profited by your study; for I much question whether any modern belle, in all the vicinity of St. James's, could have contrived to have murdered three hours more effectually than you have this afternoon done; but as we shall, in all probability, pass some months together, I shall briefly inform you how and in what manner I expect you to allot and pass your time. You will rise at six; after the first duties of your closet are over, you will devote your time, till eight o'clock, to the perusal of either ancient or modern history; you will then attend the breakfast table, where I shall expect each of you to inform me of the subject of your morning studies. We will, after breakfast, devote an hour each to music and drawing; by way of variety, we will then read either English,

French, or Italian, for another. Geography will afford us at least an hour's amusement: this, with a walk round the grounds or garden, or to the green-house or aviary, will bring us to so near the dinner hour, as not to leave more than three-quarters of one for the purpose of dress. I expect you will be always ready to appear with the first bell. The afternoon we will devote to amusement; either walking, riding, visiting our poor or rich neighbours, according as the weather and our inclinations permit. Our evenings, when not engaged by company at home or abroad, we will employ in reading, and in making extracts from the best authors."

Matilda and her sister interchanged looks not altogether agreeable to the feelings of their aunt, who however passed over in silence, for one afternoon, that which she resolved hereafter to attend pretty closely to; she affected to consider they might be fatigued with their journey, although they had come but twenty miles: for no consideration less than life and death could induce Mrs. Althorpe to travel post; she could not bear to see a noble animal run off its legs, and beaten by a driver to per-

form a task in a stated time, to which its strength and ability were inadequate.

Talking on this subject to her nieces, as they travelled onwards, she lamented in strong and feeling terms the life of the post-horse. "I know not," she said, "any animal whose situation is more to be pitied; he is generally purchased from the stables of the rich and great, where he has been fed and housed well, attended with the greatest care, and pampered by indulgence; some trivial sprain or complaint prompts the owner to part with him at a cheap rate; he is purchased by an innkeeper, who, alive only to the calls of interest, suffers him to be worked till his poor legs are scarcely able to sustain him: no sooner in from the performance of one job, than a fresh demand for horses makes it necessary to employ him in a second: night and day frequently elapse, without affording sufficient time to the poor jaded beast to stretch himself upon his litter, and lose in sleep the memory of the day's fatigue." "Memory, Madam," said Matilda, carelessly, "do you suppose a horse has memory?" "Yes, my dear, and gratitude too. I have seen instances

to convince me that a horse is endowed with both. Your uncle had a favourite mare, which carried him for many years, until, from age, it was unable to do so longer; she was then turned into the park, in which her master never walked sufficiently near for the poor old creature to be sensible who it was, than she would advance to him: if he stopped, toy her head on his shoulder, and strive by a thousand ways, peculiar only to her species, to make herself noticed by him; she would follow him round the park like a child; and all the joy and sorrow of which she was susceptible, I am convinced, she felt at his appearance and departure." "And is she still living?" Emma enquired. "No, my dear; your uncle, about a week before his death, being well enough to be taken into the air, in a wheel chair I had had made for the purpose, was drawn into the park, one particular spot of which was, when in health, his favourite walk; his mare, as usual, saw him, and essayed to rise to meet him; the attempt, for a length of time, was vain; but what will not perseverance effect: with much difficulty she got upon her legs, with more she attained the spot where for a

few minutes her master was stationary. 'Poor Jenny,' said Mr. Althorpe, as he saw her slowly advancing, her head bent almost to the ground; 'poor Jenny, thou hast, like me, almost run thy race; like mine, thine is a life of pain.' The faithful animal was now within a few paces of her master; the effort she had made to reach him had been too much for her feeble frame to support; she gently stretched herself upon the soft grass, looked up for a few minutes, as if she would have said,— 'I have striven to come and die at your feet, but am unable.' One or two painful heavings of her heart only passed, before her eyes were shut in death. Mr. Althorpe was so much affected by the circumstance, that it drew tears from his eyes; he ordered, what is seldom done, that her remains, instead of being flayed and sold to the hounds, should be buried; and as she was equally a favourite with the servant as with their master, his commands were obeyed with alacrity, and she now lies under the great oak on the western side of the park, close by the rising hill which overlooks the village."

Miss Howards were by no means pleased with the plan their aunt had chalked out for their improvement: they had flattered themselves that they were to be left to follow the bent of their own inclinations — unfettered and uncontrouled by any authority. Matilda openly expressed her surprise and dislike at it, pertly saying, “ That she imagined when they were taken from under the care of Mademoiselle Tourville, they should no longer be pestered with lessons and exercises; that for her part, she should act as she pleased, and not be treated as a child all her life. The only difference she could at present find was, that they were under government at Ash Park instead of Portland-place.”

Her aunt, however, determined to pursue the plan she had adopted; and not to suffer her niece to think, that when once her will was made known, any objection or dissatisfaction she might betray could set it aside. Willing, however, to learn the ideas they had formed for their future conduct, or the plan they might have intended to pursue, she enquired how either of them would fill her time if left to her choice. Matilda looked

at Emma, and Emma at Matilda: it was a puzzling question: they had neither any idea of arranging time so systematically as to make every hour of importance. "We would," at length, she hesitatingly answered, "just follow the bent of our inclinations, to either read, work, or play, as we felt inclined." "And do you not think, my dear, it would be better to devote a particular time to these pursuits, than to drive them off. It is probable you may have no inclination to either read, work, touch the instrument, or take up the pencil during the morning. In the afternoon it is a chance if we do not either go out, or have some friend: you cannot, then, out of politeness, follow the bent of your inclinations, if it led you to either. Thus, a day would be lost; probably, many more in the same way; but if you arrange your time properly, you will find it not only well occupied, but also, that you will have much to spare."

Neither of the sisters could oppose any argument sufficiently strong to combat their aunt's reasoning; and they passed the evening in a kind of sulky dissatisfaction, very unpleasant to their kind relative.

The weather being fine a few evenings after, Mrs. Althorpe proposed a walk to some cottages, the residents of which were fed and supported by her bounty: she invited her nieces to accompany her. Emma was, in a minute, ready to comply; but Matilda again objected, saying, "she had no notion of visiting such low creatures, and she wondered at her sister's folly in complying with the whims of Mrs. Althorpe: that for her part, she was resolved to resist them, and convince her she would not be dragged about as she pleased,—but maintain a will of her own."

This speech was uttered in the absence of Mrs. Althorpe. Emma, influenced by the example of her sister, and unwilling to be behind hand with her in striving for prerogative, took off her bonnet and tippet and sat down in a chair by the window, indolently leaning her head upon her hand. Mrs. Althorpe returned in a few minutes, equipped for her walk; and, opening the parlour door, was surprised to see her nieces just as she left them. "Are you not ready, my dears?" said she, in a voice of kindness: "come, be quick, or we shall lose time." "We do not mean to go

out, Madam," said Matilda, who was generally spokes-woman. "Not mean to go out!" replied her aunt; "Why, what do you mean then to do with yourselves this fine evening?" "I don't know," Matilda returned; "but we shan't go out." Mrs. Althorpe shook her head. "You have been ill taught, my dears, and are even deficient in the common rules of politeness; but come, I expect, and I insist upon your immediate compliance: I shall admit of no demur or hesitation: you have had little or no exercise to day, and it is necessary you should take it to preserve your health; therefore, put on your bonnets and be ready."

There was a firm decisiveness in the character of Mrs. Althorpe that forbad trifling; and whatever repugnance her nieces might feel, they found it necessary to comply, though their compliance was given with a very ill grace. The evening was mild and placid; nature exhibited her most lovely colours; and glowing and rich tints of the warm and luxuriant landscape around them, insensibly harmonized the spirits, and tranquillized the mind. Of this, in spite of themselves, the sisters became sensible. The beauties of creation (to

which the most unfeeling cannot help being at some time sensible), by engaging their attention, drew from them observations, by which their aunt was gratified; and increased in her bosom the wish of being instrumental to the improvement of their hearts.

Mrs. Althorpe, who, by a thousand acts of kindness, had endeared herself to her poor tenants, was received by them, after her short absence, with the most heartfelt joy: she listened with the most patient attention to all their little complaints,—soothed them, prescribed and administered to their wants. The little children ran to her,---some bringing their books---some their work; all brought a little recommendation to her notice; and all were received with affectionate sweetness. This was a scene so new to her nieces, that they could not but express their astonishment; at the same time that it was blended with contempt, at what they termed her meanness. “To be handled by a parcel of ragged, dirty children,” said Matilda, indignantly; “to have one’s clothes soiled by their grubby fingers, and give up one’s time and attention to their

complaints. My aunt may make a rout about waste of time, but I am sure this is a waste indeed: for my part, I think all the water in the Thames would be scarcely sufficient to clean me after being handled by them."

This conversation, which passed as they were returning home, was overheard by their excellent aunt; who, unwilling that any opportunity should be lost of conveying instruction, or rectifying their errors, advanced towards them:---"I am concerned, my dear Matilda, to be under the necessity of always finding fault; but I should conceive myself deficient both in duty and affection, if I suffered your errors to pass unnoticed. It must be pride that dictated the last speech I heard you utter: it could not, I will not believe it could possibly be your real sentiments, but that influenced by a little resentment, you have suffered your temper to overcome your real feelings. One of the most important of our duties is Charity: when Providence blessed one with more of this world's good than another, he did not design it wholly for the gratification of luxury; but to be of service to others, whom he has pleased to place in a

more humble sphere: prosperity then was given us as a blessing by the Almighty, who meant by this partial good to enable us to relieve the wants of those, whose distresses call for our assistance to mitigate their pains---to soothe their sorrows, and, as far as possible, to heal those wounds the griping hand of poverty inflicts. By doing this, we deserve the good which Providence has so bountifully bestowed upon us. By a different conduct, we frequently call down the vengeance of heaven upon ourselves, which often deprives us of that good we know not how to use.

“ The richest reward of a good action, is the consciousness of having performed our duty, and the feeling it conveys to the heart of having acted conformably to the divine will, is the sweetest reward we can obtain: for supreme goodness, my dear, is as much interested for the lowly inhabitant of the meanest cottage, as for the splendid owner of a palace. So far from thinking it a disgrace to visit my poor neighbours, I feel double pleasure in it. The little tales of their sufferings I attend to, to soothe, if I can, either by counsel or assistance, given in the way it is most wanted. If

they have pleasures to communicate, I participate them also. The infantine caresses of their children I receive with delight ; because I know they are sincere ; and I am interested in their improvement, because I have put the means in their power, and am, therefore, happy to find they are not misapplied. Believe me, my child, it is not in the splendid apartments of the rich and luxurious I find pleasure ; so very little sincerity dwells among the inhabitants of the great world, that after a short residence among them, I sigh for the peace and tranquillity of my own home. Here I see nature unwarped by fashion : here the glow of real pleasure animates the countenance at my approach ; and the voice of sincerity gladdens my ear. It is also both politic and necessary, my dear, that the owner of landed property should be well known and well respected by his tenants : by keeping an eye over them, he sees his estate is taken care of ;---and, the love of his tenancy is certainly the best security for himself and property. Let me ask you, my dear, were you never instructed in the duties man owes to man ? Do you not imagine, that those poor people, who labour

hard for a maintenance, and bring up a family of children serviceable to their country, are more useful members of society than those who indolently pass through life immersed in dissipation, which finally terminates in ruin, both of themselves and their families? -- In my opinion, the common day-labourer, who earns his bread 'by the sweat of his brow,' is by far the most respectable character of the two. And shall we not, in the hour of distress, when perhaps sickness, bad seasons, or accidents, may prevent him from following his usual occupation; shall we not assist him with some portion of the superfluity with which we abound? certainly we should: it is but our duty. We should not deserve the talent committed to our care, if, in the hour of need, we withheld a portion of it from our fellow-creatures. But in truth, my dear children, we are really the dependant creatures we believe them to be. Without the assistance of the labourer, where should we be? we can neither plow nor harrow, sow or reap, thresh or grind: what then, would become of us? without the assistance of the peasant, our money would be of no value; and our land produce only thorns

and thistles :---thus then, in fact, we are the obliged. It is true we pay them for their labour; so we ought; for without it, wretched indeed would be our situation. It is from the hands of the humble all our necessities, comforts, and superfluities are supplied; and we shew little gratitude to them, and less to the Almighty, when we permit the most serviceable of his creatures to be unrelieved in the hour of calamity."---" Ah, dear aunt!" said Emma, " I wish we had been taught to think as you do."---" My dear girl," replied her affectionate relative, " that wish inspires me with the hope that the little errors I see in your disposition will be soon amended."

Matilda, who felt her pride hurt, at what she termed being so repeatedly lectured, walked home in sullen silence; while her sister, on whom the discourse of her aunt had made some impression, walked by her side, asking a thousand questions on different subjects.

Miss Howards' had been used to lie long in bed of a morning, and they therefore felt their aunt's command to rise early a task very difficult to perform. One morning in particu-

Far after they had been at Ash Park about a fortnight, the breakfast was delayed a considerable time before they were ready to attend it; and when they made their appearance, their dress was completed in so very negligent and slovenly a manner, that their aunt took notice of it, and enquired at what hour they rose. A deep blush overspread their cheeks at this question: they felt ashamed of having already disobeyed their aunt's repeated commands, and hesitated in replying.

“Judging by your appearance, ladies,” said Mrs. Althorpe, with an uncommon severity in her looks and manners, which increased their confusion, “you have not risen a sufficient time to allow you making yourselves even commonly neat.” “We were not called, Madam,” said Matilda, in a hesitating voice. “Not called! why, I ordered Martha, after she had been in my chamber, to go to your's. I must tell her of her negligence: she is not used either to disobey, or be forgetful of the commands given her.” She then rang the bell, and ordered Martha to attend. “How came you, Martha,” said Mrs. Al-

thorpe, in a mild and gentle tone of voice, "not to call my nieces when I told you?" "I did, Madam," returned the girl in evident surprise; "I went up to the bed side of the ladies, and wakened them thoroughly:---Miss Howard must recollect it; because she spoke to me." "There is some mistake," said Mrs. Althorpe, as she cast her eyes upon the countenance of her nieces, whose cheeks were dyed with blushes: "you may retire, Martha; I am satisfied."

The tone in which Mrs. Althorpe pronounced these words, implied, that she was convinced her nieces had uttered a falsehood, to cover a fault; and no sooner had the servant withdrawn, than she taxed them with it. "You have done wrong, very wrong children," said she, in the same tone of voice in which she usually addressed them, "you have not only broken one of the most sacred commands of the Almighty, but you have exposed yourselves to a servant. You have drawn upon yourselves her contempt, for nearly subjecting her to undeserved reproof. You are now of an age to consider the value of truth. You surely need not now be told

that a fault is trebled by a falsehood, and that one draws on many others. For shame! for shame! I thought and said, with justice, that you had been badly instructed in the material parts of education, such parts as are necessary to fix the character, and add dignity to the mind. But I could scarcely imagine that the danger, folly, and extreme wickedness of uttering falsehoods, had not been pointed out to you. Suppose I were of a hasty and passionate temper, impatient under contradiction, and apt to take offence upon trivial causes, I might have been influenced to give Martha her dismissal. She has no father or mother, no relative, that I know, upon earth, nor friend to whom she could go; as I took her an orphan from the Foundling Hospital in London, into my house, where her conduct has insured her respect; brought her up to the present hour, and have hitherto found her the most obedient, attentive, and grateful of human beings. Suppose, under the influence of fancied offence, I had discharged her, whither would she have gone, or what would have become of her? the chance of her being able immediately to get another place, would be very doubtful, she

would then be living on the past savings of her place, and when they had been exhausted, what might not have been the consequences? Believe me, children, as you advanced in years, the idea of having been the means of driving a helpless young woman shelterless into the world, would have been a load on your hearts not easily shaken off. Learn then the value of truth; a lie, uttered even in jest, often does much mischief: how many characters have been sullied, how many reputations blasted, and how many have been involved in the deepest and heaviest calamities, by the vice of lying. I intreat you then, if you value yourselves, if you value your family or fame, to guard carefully against the commission of it, and by no means be prevailed upon to utter an untruth.

Shame and remorse were visible on the countenances of the young ladies; the admonition of their aunt, and the full conviction of the consequences that might have been the result of the falsehood they had adduced, made a strong and lasting impression on their minds; for several days their conduct was such as could not but give pleasure to Mrs. Althorpe,

who founded upon it hopes, that the task she had undertaken would not be so difficult as she at first imagined. Reading, drawing, and music, were each undertaken and executed with good will; and her nieces frankly owned, that the time thus employed passed away quicker than they wished; they attended their aunt in her evening walks to the cottages, and if they did not express any pleasure from these visits, they at least forbore to express any dissatisfaction or impatience; thus smoothly, both to themselves and entertainer, passed a week; but Sunday being arrived, and their ordinary pursuits of course impeded, it became a day of restlessness and ill-temper. Even the time passed in church was evidently against their inclination; and the uneasiness and inattention they betrayed during divine service, shewed with what little importance they had been taught to regard the performance of their sacred duties; Mrs. Althorpe remonstrated with them on this neglect, and pointed out the extreme impropriety of which they were guilty.

In the evening of this day it had ever been Mrs. Althorpe's custom to call her servants

together, and as they were at some distance from the parish church, to read over the service, and conclude with a sermon and hymns. Martha, who had, as has been said, been brought up under the eye of her mistress, usually performed this service; but, being indisposed with a pain in her mouth and teeth, Mrs. Althorpe requested her niece to undertake the office; she did, but with so ill a grace, and read in so careless a manner, that her aunt took the book from her hand, and herself performed the service. Miss Howard, not devoid of sensibility, felt the rebuke thus publicly given; nor lifted up her eyes again during the service. After the servants had retired, Mrs. Althorpe rose to retire to her chamber, where, for an hour before supper, she usually passed her time on this day;—“I will spare your feelings, Matilda,” said she, as she passed her; “I will not wound them more, for I perceive them already hurt; you will do well to be more observant in future, nor thus subject yourself to public reproof.”

“What a parade,” cried Matilda, as soon as her aunt had quitted the room; “I am sick of the fuss there is constantly made about

duties: such a Sunday as we have passed; for my part I shall dread its arrival, if we are thus to be preaching and praying all day. I wish we were again in Harley-street; I am sick to death of Ash Park."

"But my aunt is very kind to us, Matilda," said Emma, "and although it is tiresome to be so long shut up, yet, certainly we ought not to complain of that, since she studies to make us happy in other respects: for my part, I think the life we lead here very pleasant; and I own, I feel sorry when I have offended her, by pettishness or frowardness. I do really believe, Matilda, she loves us, and that all she says and does is for our good." "Fiddle faddle," replied Matilda, with increased ill-humour, "you will soon be as bad as Mrs. Althorpe, and fit only to hum drum with her, in this dull place; I wish papa would send for us home; I am confident, if he does not, I shall die of the vapours."

Thus passed the evening; the hour of retiring being arrived, freed Matilda from the restraint which she felt in the presence of her aunt; discontented and vexed, she retired to bed.

On the following morning, Mrs. Althorpe seemed to forget the occurrences of the day before, and treated her nieces with the same tenderness and affection as usual. Matilda, who expected another rebuke, for the conduct of the preceding day, sat in fearful expectation of its being given; she applied herself to her different occupations with redoubled diligence, and astonished her aunt by the prompt and ready manner in which she performed them, striving by her diligence to obliterate from the mind of her aunt the faults she had committed.

The afternoon of Monday, being remarkably fine, Mrs. Althorpe proposed a ride to a village about five miles distant, which was situated on the sea-side; the ride was pleasantly diversified by the alternate prospect which land and water, hill and valley afforded. At the entrance of the village, Mrs. Althorpe alighted, and ordered the carriage to be driven back; saying, "that as the evening promised to be fine, they would walk home across the fields." The village they entered was but an obscure one, inhabited chiefly by poor fishermen, whose subsistence was drawn from the

ocean ; Mrs. Althorpe, who was the unwearyed benefactress of the deserving and poor, was soon surrounded by its simple inhabitants, whose artless expressions of respect were received with kindness by her to whom they were addressed : the ample view of the ocean, which this little village afforded, was new to Matilda and Emma, who had never yet approached it so near ; their aunt indulged them with a walk on the beach, while she visited the resident of a cottage, confined by sickness to it. The bold expanse of waters, which rolled majestically at their feet, and which bore on their surface the lofty vessel, whose spreading sails opening to the breeze, carried it grandly along, was food for surprise to those, who had never seen any larger than such as ply on the Thames.

The smaller craft, which were now just putting off from shore to supply the families of their owners with the means of subsistence, afforded a striking contrast, and gave life to a prospect already beautiful. The sun now hiding his broad beams beneath the world of waters, threw a rich and crimson hue over the landscape, which could not fail to engage the

eye, and elevate the heart of every human being, who had learned to reflect upon the wonders performed by the hand of Omnipotence.

“I should like to sketch this view, Emma,” said her sister; “that point of land which juts out, and on which the light-house is placed, would be a beautiful object; while the smoothness of the sea, the gentle breeze which undulates the face of the water, just fills the sails of the larger vessels, and skims the smaller so lightly forward, would bring it home to the imagination, and give life to the prospect.” “Let us go on the sands then,” said Emma, “perhaps some piece of rock may afford you a sitting, and give you an opportunity of prosecuting your design with comfort.”

They immediately descended to the beach, and having found a proper place, Matilda took out her pencil, and began her task. The design was nearly completed, when Emma, who had been anxiously watching the progress of her sister’s pencil; said, and there Matilda is a figure to add to your picture: Matilda looked up and saw a tall, thin man, habited in black, approaching them. Seeing them

engaged, he waited at some distance, but kept his eyes intently on them, watching their actions. Matilda continued her sketch, and catching the attitude of the stranger (who had for a few minutes been leaning against the fragment of a rock the impetuous surge had dissevered, apparently deeply engaged by his book) she had an opportunity of finishing her piece to advantage; then committing it to her pocket-book, and taking her sister by the arm, proceeded to the village, where they shortly joined their aunt. On looking back, they perceived the stranger following.

The benevolent views of Mrs. Althorpe in visiting the village were fulfilled, and observing to her nieces that it was getting late, and that the sun was declining very fast, she hastened them forward, walking a quick pace.

They soon lost sight of the village, and were crossing the third field from it, when the stranger, the sisters had observed upon the beach, and who still kept them in sight, called in a loud, though tremulous and faltering voice, to them to stop.

Unaccustomed to fear, and conjecturing they might have dropt something, Mrs. Althorpe,

immediately and unhesitatingly complied; he then demanded their money and watches, but in a tone of voice which told them they had little to fear. They hesitated, and the demand was made in a louder and more imperious tone; tremblingly they were given, as tremblingly taken. The robber stopped for a minute, looked at the watches: "take them back," said he, "I want them not; money is better,—but do not be alarmed, I am no common robber, I will not hurt you. Good God, and he covered his face with his hands, did I ever think to come to this."

By his accent, Mrs. Althorpe judged he was a foreigner; her heart was the seat of humanity, she saw he was as he said, no common robber; she fancied him perishing, and felt interested for him,—the manner in which he had accosted them, the trepidation and fear he betrayed, added to the meagre look, sunken eye, and dejected air, which, notwithstanding his assumed fierceness, were evident in his look, corroborated her opinion; recovering a little from the surprise and terror she had experienced, she addressed him in the softest accent; asked him what distress had

impelled him to so rash an action; but no sooner did she begin to speak, than like a frightened bird, he darted from her, and was out of sight in an instant.

Matilda and Emma, who had been terrified almost to fainting, during the whole proceeding, revived at his departure, and expressed their joy at it; Mrs. Althorpe, who now felt a little terror at what had passed, felt also as much amazement at the conduct of the robber; she was, however, internally convinced that something more than common had driven him to the commission of the crime, and felt anxious, she knew not why, to trace him out, enquire his circumstances, and lead him, if possible, from the dangerous course he had taken up.

She desired her nieces not to mention a word of the robbery, nor to give the most remote hint of its having taken place; wondering without daring to ask (for terror had so far gained possession of them, that they were fearful even of speaking to each other, lest they should be overheard and again attacked) they acquiesced in silence to their aunt's desire. Arrived at home, they longed to give

utterance to their feelings, and talk over the affair, but a fresh and positive command from Mrs. Althorpe silenced them immediately.

After this adventure the ladies were fearful of venturing far from home without the attendance of a servant. Except a few bickerings between themselves, Miss Howards had conducted themselves in such a manner as to entitle them to the warm commendations of their affectionate relative, who expressed her satisfaction, by making them a very handsome present: Miss Howard's was a pair of globes, elegantly mounted; her sister's, a small and elegant work-table. These presents, costly in themselves, and useful as well as ornamental, were the means of producing much animosity between the sisters, particularly Emma; who, as has been before said, had a species of envy in her disposition very difficult to eradicate: Matilda, whose understanding and abilities were much superior to her sister's, took much pleasure in profiting by her kind aunt's present. Always fond of geography, she now applied to it with redoubled diligence; her progress not only gratified but delighted her aunt, who was more and more convinced that

the seeds of knowledge, which had been but superficially planted, might yet produce much real fruit. Emma, who envied her sister the praise lavished on her, repeatedly wished she had had the globes, and her sister the work-table; the applause which Matilda received caused her frequently to wish that she also could excel in something, and as no science seemed more agreeable to her taste than geography, to that she determined to apply, which she did so assiduously, that her aunt, seeing her anxiety to get forward, and solicitous to promote so laudable a wish, undertook the task of instructing her; and promised her, as a reward for the incessant application she bestowed, to present her with a pair of globes, equal in size and elegance with her sister's. Her diligence soon obtained the desired reward; and Mrs. Althorpe saw with equal pride and pleasure that her nieces began to take delight in useful study. By way of diversifying their amusements, she gave them the works of Racine and Corneille, to translate from them: she proceeded to Italian, and happening to hear of a master of that language, who was recommended as fully competent to

the task of instructing, she resolved to engage him to attend her nieces. They occupied in the pursuit of knowledge, the young ladies found the summer glide sweetly and rationally away.

Mrs. Althorpe had introduced her nieces to a set of poor people, she called her pensioners; their habitations were built at the southward extremity of the park, sheltered from sight by a thick wood. These poor people, wholly dependant upon the bounty of Mrs. Althorpe, were at once objects of pity as well as of charity; not one of the number, for there were twelve, but had some bodily calamity or deformity. Two were blind, four were lame in their hands or feet; all were afflicted so as to prevent their earning a subsistence for themselves.

“I am going,” said this excellent woman to her nieces, “to introduce you to some objects, whose afflictions, while they move your pity, will serve to convince you that the Almighty does not always reserve his judgments for a future state; but sends them upon earth, to convince man that he is in his power, and that in a moment he can destroy his fairest prospects, blight his finest buds, and mark him

as the creature of distress and misery. The little histories of these my unfortunate pensioners will convince you, that there is no situation in life, however humble or however exalted, in which we are not subject to the visitations of Providence.

They entered the cottages, each of which contained two inhabitants, whom they found variously employed; the blind were knitting; those who were lame in their hands, were employed in reading; those who were lame in their feet, were either sewing or spinning, on small table wheels, which required the hand to turn them; and two of the most healthy, and whose calamity obstructed neither the use of their hands or feet, were occupied in household work. One young woman, whose age did not appear to exceed three and twenty, particularly attracted the notice of Miss Howards; and they both, as by agreement at one moment, asked their aunt who she was, and what was her name: "It is Jane Mason," replied Mrs. Althorpe; "she is not the exact person we had thought to shelter when we built these cottages, but the circumstances under which she took refuge

here were such as to entitle her to our tenderest pity and commiseration, and made both your uncle and myself happy in having an opportunity of succouring such a character."

"May we ask what they were, madam," said Matilda; "certainly my dear, I will with pleasure recount them."

The father of this unfortunate young woman rented a small farm, the profits of which supported himself, a wife, and five children, of whom Jane was the eldest; when she had obtained her twelfth year, her mother died of the small-pox, which she caught by attending a neighbour, who was seized with the disorder, but who had always believed herself to have had it in infancy. The contagion spread itself through the family of farmer Mason, none, except Jane, having had it before. The whole care of nursing her mother and the four children devolved upon this poor girl; for such is the dread the country people have of this disease, that they will leave their habitation to avoid it, and shun the neighbourhood in which it shews itself, as if it were infected by the plague.

Jane, with the tenderest and most assiduous duty, attended her mother and brothers; her little heart was nearly broken, when she found there was no possibility of her parent's recovery, yet still she restrained herself before her, and constantly gave such accounts of the rest of the family as she thought would be most satisfactory to her sick parent.

Her time, engaged between the sick chambers of the invalids, was fully occupied; yet, though she was often extremely fatigued, and hardly able to support herself, not a complaint or murmur escaped her. In spite of all Jane's tenderness and care, she had the misfortune to lose her mother, whose sufferings, upon the turn of this fatal disorder, were more than her constitution could struggle with. She died, however, sufficiently sensible to enforce with her last breath the necessity of a strict performance of her moral and religious duties, on the mind of her weeping child; and leaving her other children to her care, resigned up her soul to her Maker.

Thus you see my dear, at the age of twelve years, when many, alas, too many, think only of their dolls and childish follies, this

poor child was called to the execution of the serious duties of life. Her father was too poor to permit him to engage an assistant in his household concerns; thus, Jane had the family, the house, the concerns of her little dairy, to manage herself. But Jane had been brought up in habits of industry; she had never known the tedium and languor arising from idleness indulged: thus her spirits and health were good; naturally active, she considered how many were the duties she had to perform, and she strove to perform them with credit. Her sister and brothers were always clean, and her little cottage neat and decent; and no dairy in the country would bear inspection better than Jane's; thus the time passed sweetly on for four years. This good girl was the soother of her father's cares, the mother of his children, the child that caused his heart to throb with delight. But, poor Jane had another trial to undergo; her father was afflicted with the rheumatism, and it increased upon him so rapidly, that he lost the use of his hands and knees: this was a dreadful blow upon the poor farmer; he could not look after his men, he could take no part in

the labour of his farm, he was at the mercy of every one, and there was no prospect but that his whole property must go to wreck. Jane again exerted herself; with a few instructions from her father, she soon became competent to the task she undertook; such was her activity, that she seemed to be at home, abroad, or in the fields, wherever her presence seemed most necessary. Thus things went on well, for Jane was unremitting in her attention; and as the farmer was become incapable of any exertion, the whole care of the farm devolved upon Jane: she bought and sold, superintended the men, minded the house; every thing was done by her, and under her inspection. What will not industry effect, and perseverance accomplish? Jane, indeed, was frequently laughed at, called the petticoated farmer, and the female farmer; but she heeded it not. "I am but doing my duty," she would say, "and I am not to set aside the performance of a duty, because I am laughed at."

Jane had also a sweetheart, a good, deserving young man, whose father rented a large farm near to farmer Mason's; but he had sense to see and appreciate the virtues of this

poor girl, wisely considering, that so excellent a child could not fail of becoming as excellent a wife, and he was content, and even desirous that she should become his daughter-in-law ; but, Jane Mason, who felt and knew that the prosperity of five people depended on herself, would not become the wife even of the man she loved, while there was a probability of their suffering by it. Her lover felt the nobleness of her conduct, and applauded her for it ; he offered to stand in her place, to be a son and a father to them, but his mistress would not consent. Her two eldest brothers, she said, would soon be able to take the farm ; the third, wished to learn the business of a smith ; and little Dolly, her sister, was too young yet to fix to any kind of servitude. " A few years, Edward," said she, " if you have patience to wait so long, may make a great alteration." Edward was obliged to be convinced by her reasons : he waited a few years. The two eldest boys had taken the management of the farm, the third was bound to the trade he chose to follow, and Dolly was just going to live in a neighbouring gentleman's family, as assistant to the housekeeper ;

the old farmer was still alive, engaging himself, in spite of external pain, in the duteous attention and warm affection of his children.

Christmas Day approached; on the New Year's Day, Jane and her faithful Edward were to be united; the whole family were assembled, talking over the happiness in prospect: a chearful evening had been passed. Edward, with his father and family had, at a late hour, left farmer Mason's, and were returned to their own house; where they had not arrived more than two hours, ere they were disturbed by the alarm of fire at farmer Mason's; in an instant, Edward was on the spot, where the conflagration was indeed dreadful; house, barns, stables, all were on fire. His first anxiety was to save his Jane, whom, at the peril of his life, he snatched from the flames. "Oh save my father! dear Edward, save my father!" was her first cry; "and my brothers; alas, I had not time to save them!" Edward rushed forward to obey her; dreadful obedience! he had scarcely reached the burning roof ere it gave way, and himself, the farmer, and his four children, were buried in the ruins. The screams of the half frantic

Jane, who had witnessed the transaction, now drew the attention of the multitude; all were ready to render her service, either personally or through another; the still blazing ruins were dug, but alas, in vain; the sufferers had passed the confines of mortality; and Jane endured a suspension of misery only by the loss of reason, which fled at this unexpected and dreadful stroke. For six months she was closely confined, and subjected to the most severe treatment: her memory then returned, but, alas, to what purpose; all her affections were buried in the ruins of her little cottage; she was an isolated, unfriended being. The family of her lover would, indeed, have noticed her; but her heart was vacant: the one whose unremitting attachment had sweetened her thorny way, had died in her service; she could not, therefore, see his family. She turned every look of theirs into a reproach, and felt their words as daggers.

At the time Mr. Althorpe built these cottages, it was our intention to apply them only to the use of those whose age or external misfortunes would prevent them from getting their bread elsewhere; but, when we heard

the story of Jane Mason, saw this once blooming, but now blighted flower, we could not deny the shelter her friends solicited; our hearts were gratified by having it in our power to foster real worth. The cottage she resides in, is the best of the six; every little alleviation we could bestow, was cheerfully given; she is grateful and contented, without being happy. The barbed arrow, alas! has probed her poor heart too severely, and the shaft yet rankles in it. Her reason is suspended but by a thread; at times it is even yet shaken, and she has had more than one or two fits of delirium since she has become a resident of the cottage. I would, indeed, have placed her in a different situation, but her mind seemed bent upon that she now has, and I yielded the point, in the hope, that the indulgence of her inclination, might sooth her malady: I feel more than a common interest in the fate of this poor girl, whose deserts are much above all that can be done for her. In her rambling fits, she generally comes to the park, and asks for me; and, if I am not particularly engaged, is admitted: all her talk, then, is of her father, of her Edward, of little Dolly; I hear her with

patience, and try to soothe her. Alas, I fear she is inclining to a relapse ; for, from the silence she maintains, and the attitudes she takes, I judge her reason is again upon the point of becoming unsettled.

Matilda and Emma, who had wept plentifully during this recital, now besought their aunt to persuade Jane Mason to come to the park. "We will, dear madam, unite our endeavours with your's, to soothe this unfortunate and hapless sufferer ; perhaps she may, in time, become sensible of our attentions, and be consoled by them." "This wish does honour to your hearts," my children, replied their aunt ; but, I fear, she would not willingly remove, and I could neither use force or arguments with her ; to compel her would be cruel, and to make her act against her inclination would be barbarous. You may, however, try your influence ; but do not be rudely pressing ; deal with tenderness by her feelings, and do not, at any rate, urge your wishes, till you become better acquainted. If she is induced to yield to your request, the little bedchamber and dressing-room, adjoining your own, shall be appropriated to her use. She is

fond of singing, Matilda, and before she was visited by this heavy calamity, used to warble the most pathetic and charming little ballads, I ever heard; nay, frequently since, in her fits of delirium, she has sung wild snatches of various tunes, and that with a voice so sweet and melodious, as was sufficient to draw tears from any eyes. Poor, hapless girl! her merit and misfortunes, alike, endear her to every heart.

From this day, Miss Howards were constant visitors at the cottages: Jane Mason, accustomed to them, began to take pleasure in their company, and to be consoled by it; several weeks passed in an intercourse of kindness. The anniversary of the day, on which the hopes of poor Jane had been buried in the flames, arrived; as it approached, the poor unfortunate girl dwelt on it, and each day was ushered in with tears, or not closed without them; the anguish of her mind was insupportable, and it again became unsettled; her delirium rose too high to be governed, without assistance from those who were accustomed to rule over unfortunate maniacs: for more than two months this afflicted girl was insensible, either to se-

verity or kindness. Matilda and Emma, who, from pitying, had learned to love this innocent victim of calamity, devoted all their leisure to her; she soon became sensible of their attentions; her weakened reason gave symptoms of return, and her limbs were consequently set at liberty from the bands which had held them. No doubt appearing of her returning convalescence, the attentions of her nurse relaxed, and she was sometimes left to her own reflections for two or three hours. From fits of raving, her mind sank to gloomy despondency, and she was content to sit hours, nay days, without uttering a word. Her constitution, unable to resist the frequent shocks it had sustained, gradually sunk beneath them: the last attack had left her so weakened, that it was with difficulty she could exert herself to walk; every day produced fresh symptoms of decay, and the physician, whom Mrs. Althorpe had kindly called in, pronounced her in a rapid decline. In less than a fortnight after her last return to reason, she was but the shadow of herself; her pale emaciated countenance, now flushed by the passing hectic, or chilled by the approaches of death, gave certain indica-

tions of the rapidity with which she was hastening to eternity. But although her bodily strength decayed, her senses resumed their functions, and her mental strength increased. Mrs. Althorpe and her nieces, more than ever interested for her, seldom left her for more than a few hours. The patient sufferer felt and welcomed the approach of the grim tyrant; he had been a guest long desired, and she felt that in his power she should obtain a respite from the cares of mortality; deprived of every earthly attachment, her soul became weaned from it; her hopes were placed in a brighter region, and she now anxiously waited the hour which should again unite her to her father and her Edward. The day preceding her death, she talked with Mrs. Althorpe and her nieces on the subject, with a degree of calmness and composure which astonished the latter, who wondered she could so unconcernedly part with life; she discoursed upon the prospect which was opening to her view, begged her kind friends would pray that her transition, from this world to the next, might be performed without pain or much internal suffering, assured them she felt a conscious-

ness of happiness that inspired hope, and made her ardently long for her release; she blessed her kind protectress for her goodness, prayed that it might be rewarded both in this world and the next; she warned Miss Howards not to set their affections on things below, but to let their first concern be to make an interest with heaven; after much of this kind of discourse, her mind became again unsettled, and resolved itself into a thousand illusive ideas.

Neither Mrs. Althorpe or her nieces quitted her through the night: towards morning her respirations became thick, she articulated only short and broken sentences, fancied herself, at intervals with her father and her lover. At length she fell into a gentle doze, from which she awoke much refreshed, and beckoned Mrs. Althorpe to her bedside. Her voice was almost too thick for utterance, and her breath with difficulty respired; she made them sensible, however, that she died happy; that she had seen her parents and her lover, who had invited her to the regions of bliss; then stopping, her eyes became unspeakably animated; a something celestial seemed to beam from them; by an extraordinary effort of strength

she sprang up in her bed, and extending her arms, ejaculated with an articulate voice, "Bright spirit I come;" then sunk upon her pillow, and without a sigh or groan, expired. Miss Howards unaccustomed to scenes like this were quite overcome, and gave way to their emotions, with a violence that shocked their kind relative, who with the same kindness and gentleness that ever distinguished her, gave the necessary orders relative to the body. She gently withdrew her nieces from the chamber of death, and after allowing their first emotions to have vent, represented to them the folly of thus suffering their feelings to overcome their reason. "For this poor girl, my dear children, we ought not to sorrow," said Mrs. Althorpe, in a voice of compassion: "Life to her has only been productive of sorrow and misery; she had seen her fairest hopes dashed to the ground, and every opening prospect obscured, by the fell hand of calamity. Death then to her was a repose from misery, a refuge to which she looked as a shelter from future ills; and having performed her part well; filled her allotted station with propriety, and discharged her duties with alacrity, she had

nothing to dread. Religion sweetened the bitter draught of death, and conscience, hope, and the certainty of future happiness, smoothed her pillow: short has been her earthly race, her virtues were matured; fled from the dark confines of mortality, her bright spirit is journeying to an everlasting mansion of peace and felicity; myriads of angels are on their way to meet her, and her soul now reaching its last happy goal, shall be rejoined by those it loved, never again to be separated."

Mrs. Althorpe then walked home with her nieces.

The funeral of Jane Mason was performed with great decency. By the desire and at the expence of Miss Howards, a small neat gravestone was placed over her remains, upon which her name and age were inscribed, and underneath was written:—

"Innocence and virtue cannot preserve us from
"the shafts of calamity; but there is a hope
"beyond the grave; and on that hope does her
"soul repose."

To avoid confusion, I have finished the story of Jane Mason; but we must now return to Miss Howards, whose conduct we must

retrace. During summer, they had conformed to their aunt's regulation of their time; at first from necessity, then from custom, and last from choice. Their tempers were certainly amended with their conduct, especially Emma's, which was undergoing a visible improvement. But Matilda could not subdue those frequent and irregular starts of passion to which she had accustomed herself to yield: a trifle was sufficient to derange her temper. Mrs. Althorpe, whose mild, gentle, and persuasive manners, commanded the love and esteem of all who knew her, frequently reasoned with her on her petulance, and painted the horrible consequences of passion, in language so forcible and so energetic, that it was scarcely possible she could fail of being convinced by her arguments; yet she had not strength of mind sufficient to combat with herself, or by her own exertions to remedy the faults in her temper. It was after some proof of passion, that Mrs. Althorpe again represented its baneful effects, and proposed a walk to a village about a mile distant.—“I will there, Matilda,” said she, “convince you that I have argued only from truth.”

Matilda, with a very ill grace, accompanied her aunt. They proceeded on in silence, until they arrived at the door of a large handsome house, with jealousies at every window. They were immediately admitted.

“I have called, Mr. Carter,” said she, addressing herself to the master of it, “to enquire after the unfortunate woman I recommended to you a few weeks since; how is she?” “Not better, Madam; her paroxysms, if not so frequent, are more violent, and last longer.” “Poor creature! may we be allowed to see her.” “Certainly, Madam, but she is confined.” “What! not chained, I hope.” “Yes, Madam, we are compelled to chain her; she is beyond idea unruly and violent.” “Perhaps the sight of a stranger may have some effect upon her.” Mr. Carter then led the way, up two pair of stairs, to a small ill-furnished room, where sat what had once been a fine tall woman, of elegant deportment, haughty and commanding aspect; her fierce black eyes rolled wildly about to every corner of the room; and now, encountering the mild and benevolent ones of Mrs. Althorpe, darted uncommon fury. She rose, however, with a

native grace and elegance, that even the dominion of insanity could not alter. "It was you brought me hither," said she, in a voice so piercingly penetrating, that Matilda involuntarily shrunk from the sound of it, and retired behind her aunt. "It is you that have subjected me to the treatment I every day receive from that monster and his associates. Begone, lest I imbrue my hands again in blood. I will be revenged of the insult.—Release me; unhand me." And she struggled violently; when feeling the chains that confined her, and finding the struggle ineffectual, she sat down—the haggard look of despair overspreading her cheeks; she crossed her hands on her bosom; her head sunk upon her chest; her eyes, raised to Heaven, exhibited scarcely more than their whites; and two or three deep and heart-heaved sighs escaped her. From the shrill piercing tones of anger, her voice became mild and plaintive; several half-uttered sentences broke from her lips; they were then for a short time closed. But at length, breaking the temporary silence, she exclaimed,—“Murderous wretch! Unnatural mother! Lucy—dear Lucy. Oh!

could sighs, groans, or even my blood recal thee to life.—What a deed!”—and she shuddered dreadfully. “See! see! look!”—and her eyes glared frightfully as she tried to rub something off her garment. “There! There are the spots! Merciful Heaven! see the blood, how it gushes from her nose and mouth. Oh, save her—save her.—What, no help? Can nobody save my Lucy? Oh, wretch! wretch!”

Much of this kind of incoherent discourse and raving escaped her. Her passions increased with delirium; till at length she was obliged to be committed to the care of her keepers. Mrs. Althorpe and Matilda descended in tears to the parlour; and after a short conversation with Mr. Carter, they returned home.

Matilda, who had scarcely an idea of insanity wearing so dreadful an appearance, as it did in the object they had parted from, was inexpressibly shocked; and after walking silently by the side of her aunt for some time, at length asked her who it was they had been just visiting. “I will give you her history, Matilda,” said Mrs. Althorpe. “I trust you

will profit by it; that it will serve as a lesson for your future life, and instruct you in the real necessity there is to bring the passions under proper subjection. I should not, at your years, have led you to such a scene of misery as that you have just witnessed, had I not flattered myself it would be beneficial to you. I know not any sight that can wound the feeling heart more, than that of objects labouring under loss of intellect. To reflect for a moment on what they suffer—on what they undergo; confined in a strait jacket, so pinioned that their arms, and sometimes their feet, have not power to move; scourged with a whip at sometimes, threatened at others; always terrified into obedience; besides other discipline which they are compelled to endure. How degrading! how heart-breaking! And yet, Matilda, what makes this calamity in my opinion more grievous, is, that it generally shews itself upon people of elevated minds, enlarged understandings, and acute sensibility. I believe there never was an instance where a fool or an idiot was visited by this malady. Alas! as in the instance of this

poor lady, it too often springs from the effects of uncontrouled passion."——But to her story.

“ This lady, whom I shall call Maria, had the misfortune to be born in a climate where difference of colour only authorizes man to triumph over and oppress his fellow-creature ; where before the infant can scarcely crawl, its little hand is armed with a whip against his miserable slave ; where, brought up a tyrant from its birth, and taught to think the difference of colour a sufficient excuse for all the sufferings the little monster can inflict, his passions know no bounds, and his reason is untaught to subdue them.”

“ This unhappy woman, as I told you, is a native of one of our West India islands. Unfortunately for her, she was the only child of her parents : from the hour of her birth she was a stranger to controul ; her will was a law, and every slave in the house and plantation was to be subservient to it. If she fretted or cried, the whole house was in motion to soothe and quiet her. In short, she grew up a tyrant. With an understanding and abilities

infinitely above mediocrity, she was ignorant and idle; she must not be compelled to study, because she did not like it; it might hurt her eyes, destroy her shape; and a thousand other absurd reasons were given, as excuses for her not learning. In short, she attained her twelfth year without being able to read a common chapter in the Bible. She knew no pleasure but that of teasing the unfortunate beings whom the hand of oppression had made subservient to her; and the greatest gratification she felt, was wantonly to tyrannize over them. Hence she was an object of hatred and detestation to the slaves around her; and perhaps no joy was ever more sincerely felt, than that which arose among these poor people upon her departure for England; to which place, after much deliberation, she was sent for education."

"The correspondent of her father's, to whom she was entrusted, soon discovered her real temper; and, with a prudence and attention which did him honour, sought out a school for her where but few were admitted, and those few were immediately under the eye of the

governess, who was a woman eminently qualified for the task she undertook."

"It was under this roof I first became acquainted with her, we were school-fellows. At first, her temper and manners were so totally repulsive to every kind of intimacy, that she was universally shunned: by degrees, however, her natural asperity and haughtiness of demeanour were softened, and two or three little attentions I had in my power to shew her, bound her affectionately to me; for her heart was naturally warm in the cause of friendship."

"My good governess, who from her first coming had foreseen a great deal of trouble with her, but who left no means untried to reform the errors of her temper, frequently complimented me upon the change visible in her, saying, 'that she was a new creature—that I had moulded her mind into shape.'

"Companions for four years, I learned to love, though I could not always esteem or respect her; yet, have I seen her do many very generous and charitable actions. Indeed, except to negroes, she always manifested a

compassionate feeling; but no arguments that could be used, were sufficiently strong to convince her they had either feeling, sense, or principle. She returned to her parents considerably improved in person, accomplishments, and understanding; yet, still she had many faults; and my governess often declared she trembled for her, lest when no longer subjected to the guidance of another, and finding herself entirely her own mistress, she should relapse into her former errors, and suffer her passions to overcome her reason."

"We corresponded; her letters to me were replete with affection: at length she informed me she had become an orphan and an heiress; but that she had every inducement to alter her situation, and but for an attachment, she confessed she felt, would have returned to England."

"To be short: she married, but owing to a clause in her father's will, which was ambiguously worded, her nuptials were scarcely solemnized, when the next heir commenced a suit against her, for part of the property, which was immense: the cause was tried in the English courts. It became necessary for her

to attend personally; she revisited England, accompanied by her husband and child (for by this time she had one a month old) and a black female servant, who nursed it."

"Immediately upon her arrival she visited me; with no small concern, I saw, that although blest with every external comfort the world could offer, she was yet unhappy; the same temper which had disturbed her in early youth, now imbittered her maturer years. Her passions, as I before mentioned, were her masters; time had not taught her to subdue, or even bring them under proper regulation. I was particularly hurt at the severity with which she treated, and the despotism she exerted over her wretched slave. We had many strong arguments relative to her conduct towards her, for I still took the liberty of telling her she was wrong, when I thought her so: she still contended that the purchaser of slaves had the right of life and death over them, that he could punish them how, when, and where he liked; that, being slaves, they were forced to submit, and that kindness to them was cruelty; for they had neither

hearts to be grateful, nor feelings to acknowledge their sense of obligation."

"Perhaps," said I, "you have never had occasion to put their gratitude to the trial; did they never in any case or circumstance evince any thing like attachment? It is impossible, if a negro has a soul, and of that there can be no doubt, but that he must have feelings; and I have known many people, who have resided in countries where their attendants were all negroes, speak of their fidelity and attachment in very strong terms. You have certainly been very unfortunate, I continued, never, in so many years residence among them, to have met with one on whom you could depend, and upon whose attachment you could rely." "I do not say," she replied, "I never met with one: yes, once; and a temporary suffusion of red overspread her cheek." "Yes, once I met with a strong proof of duty and respect." "What was it, may I ask?" She replied, laughing, "you want me to furnish you with arms against myself." "Perhaps," said I, rather gravely, "it is of a nature you do not wish to acknowledge; if so, I do not wish to know." "No,"

she returned, " I am not ashamed of telling what it was. You shall hear : soon after my return to Jamaica, I accompanied my parents to a penn they had in the mountains ; one part of it was washed by a rapid river ; to which, as it was no great distance from the house, I used to go and bathe, always accompanied by a female slave, my father had purchased solely to attend me."

" I was one morning enjoying this luxury, which, indeed, in a climate as hot as Jamaica, is the greatest you can conceive, when the rapidity of the river carried me beyond my depth ; my fright, which was excessive, incapacitated me from making any exertions to save myself ; on the contrary, it seemed rather precipitating my fate. The slave, who saw my danger, plunged into the water to my relief, and by great exertions forced me back to a place of safety, which we had scarcely reached, when an alligator, which I suppose had been sleeping near the shore, and which till then I did not discern, roused, I imagine, by the noise we made, was coming towards us ; already were its ponderous jaws opened. I still shudder at what I then felt. I was

next to it. I screamed loudly: in another moment I should have become its prey, had not the slave cried out, "run, run, missy, no stop, me savee you!" she threw herself with force between us, and thus prevented my falling the sacrifice. "But what," said I, out of breath with impatience to hear the fate of the poor slave, "but what became of the slave; she was lost! was it not so?" "No, not quite," she returned coolly, "she lost an arm through it."

"Poor faithful creature," said I, with an emotion I could not suppress; "who, after hearing such a tale as this, will be sceptic enough to doubt their having feeling. Where, Oh where is the European that would have acted thus? O pure nature; African, thine, thine is the breast in which humanity, unrepressed by the selfish dictates of interest, glows with native fervour! thy glowing sun, thy scorching sands do not burn up the seeds of benevolence: no, they mature them to perfection; while our colder climates, our frigid soils, chill them in the bud."

"Well," said I, "and what did you do for this faithful creature? what recompence did

you make her? for in my opinion, no reward whatever could be made adequate to her services." "Reward," she returned, "who upon earth ever thought of rewarding a slave; it was no more than her duty to do as she did. Are they not bought for their services? do we not feed and clothe them? what else is to be done? I assure you, my dear Mrs. Althorpe, you have a very wrong notion of slaves and slavery; and were you in the West Indies, you would effectually turn their heads, and make them more incorrigible than they really are. I thanked the girl, no doubt, and took care she should be properly attended; but in spite of all I did, a mortification took place, and in less than a week she died; and a happy thing it was, for what is a mutilated negro worth? we should have had her to have kept, and she could have done nothing for it."

I shuddered to hear her talk thus. "For shame, for shame, Maria!" said I, "I am grieved and ashamed to hear you talk in this strain; surely, surely, something more than a mere cold thank you, was due to the poor creature, who twice in one day risked her own life to save your's, and at last lost it for you;

for she truly died to save you. Believe me, whatever you may think, your existence in the eyes of Providence was not of more value than her's, and her life was of as much real service to mankind. Never again, after such a recital as this, say that gratitude, feeling, and humanity make no part of a negro's virtues. Were I to speak from my ideas of the two, I should not scruple to say, that education had refined away your best feelings, and left you devoid of any. Good God! that you, with every advantage, knowledge, education, and good counsel could bestow, should suffer yourself to be outdone by the very beings you affect to despise; and shew yourself destitute of the common obligations of gratitude, which is thankful for a small service. This tale is indeed an argument against yourself; and I dare believe, and am sorry to say, I think the West Indies would furnish many others equally strong, and prove that slavery is indeed the bitter draught that dooms thousands to destruction. Gracious God! I continued," "how I pity, how I feel for these unfortunate ill-used, ill-rewarded beings! who with souls tuned by the fine hand of harmony to every

nobler purpose, who in their own happy land are enjoying the sweets of liberty and comfort, shall in an hour be torn from those upon whom their every hope hung,—those from whom they derived their all of earthly felicity, and borne away to chains and slavery, in a land far distant from their peaceful happy homes; where smarting under the lash of a brutal overseer, or goaded on by the whip of the unfeeling negro-driver, their worn-out spirit can no longer sustain the conflict. The suffering wretch sinks between his endeavours and his powers, and faints under his load; and while stretching his emaciated length upon the scorched soil, he looks up to the God of Nature, and prays for revenge on his persecutors. That God hears, and accepts the petition of the negro, though his fellow-man treats his complaints with contempt, and derides him for the sufferings his own cruelty inflicts.†

Hurricanes destroy the white man's hope of future gain, earthquakes swallow up the present: thus shall the negro be avenged. Thus shall He whose voice speaks in the thunder, whose eye darts in the lightning;

thus shall he punish the oppressor of him whom the iron hand of power has placed within his grasp. But not further to digress from my narrative.

“ You may easily believe, that with sentiments so opposite, no great degree of intimacy could long subsist between us. Soon afterwards we removed to Ash Park, and that removal, by placing us at a considerable distance from each other, gave us fewer opportunities of meeting.

“ It is now about ten years since I accompanied your uncle to London, whither particular business called him. Almost immediately upon my arrival, Maria called upon me, and pressed me to pass a few days with her, previous to my again quitting the metropolis : after much intreaty (for I really was averse to going) I consented ; and the last week of my stay in town, I went to fulfil my promise. Her husband, I found, had returned to Jamaica, whence she now hourly expected him. Her little girl, who had now compleated her fourth year, was, although very much spoiled, a child of considerable promise ; every little feature was beautiful and interesting ; and her

temper so uncommonly sweet, that it was impossible to help loving her.

“The black woman who had nursed the little Lucy was still there, and although always treated unfriendly, and frequently cruelly, by her mistress, remained with them entirely from affection to her little nurseling, who abundantly returned it; for ‘Zamba nursy,’ was the constant theme of Lucy’s song, and a part of every thing was reserved for her. In short, except her master, Lucy was the best friend poor Zamba had. But Mr. Ormond was blest with a benevolent and feeling heart, and always paid great attention to his child’s faithful nurse.

“I had not been there four days, when Zamba fell under the displeasure of her mistress. Lucy had been ill, and from her anxiety about her dear little missy, as she used to call the child, she had forgotten to feed a favourite bird, which had been given her in charge. Her mistress found out the neglect, and reproached her with it. Zamba excused herself, saying, “her dear lilly missy so ill, Zamba never tink of no ting while dear lilly missy sick.” The apology was not sufficient,

Mrs. Ormond fell upon the unhappy woman, and beat her till she was unable to strike longer. The screams of the poor black drew me with the child in my arms (with whom I had been playing) into the room; as I entered, Mrs. Ormond was wielding a hot poker, which appeared just taken from the fire, and was in the very act of striking her victim with it: mechanically I put down the child, and remonstrated with the mother, while the little Lucy ran to her to pull her away, screaming most piteously, and begging her not to hurt Zamba nursy.

“The poor ill-guided woman, vexed at being prevented from carrying her horrid intent into action, pushed the child with such force from her, that she fell with her temples against the carved feet of a sideboard table; she screamed, we ran to raise her,—her mouth and nose gushed out with blood. Alas! Matilda, it is a sad tale; the baby never opened her eyes more.

“To describe the scene which ensued is beyond my ability; for my own part, I was almost petrified with horror, and I had neither thought or power of action left; the poor ill-

used black, alone had recollection; she took the little innocent in her arms, bedewed it plenteously with tears, and tried several means to revive it; which finding ineffectual, she advanced with a countenance in which despair and horror were blended; exclaimed, 'bad missy, blacky woman never used baby so, negro mother never kill own piccaniny.' Her sobs, groans, and exclamations, collected my scattered senses: I called the housekeeper, made her (as well as my agitation would allow) sensible how the dreadful affair happened, and besought her to send instantly for a surgeon; and also to dispatch a messenger for Mr. Althorpe: they were presently with us; but alas, all that could be done for the child was ineffectual; its little innocent soul was fled for ever.

"As for the mother, to whom no one could turn without experiencing the most dreadful feeling, she sat torpid from despair; what she had done had flashed conviction of the baneful effects of passion on her senses, which before one hour elapsed were fled for ever. Short incoherent ravings escaped her; then her screams were so loud as to disturb the neighbourhood; with much difficulty she

was conveyed up stairs, and from that hour she has never been collected; once, indeed, excepted; that interval was short, and she employed it in begging she might not see her husband, whose reproaches she dreaded. The story, with a thousand aggravations soon became public. Incredible was the trouble it caused; for myself, I was never so harrassed or distressed.

“ In less than a week after the interment of the child, Mr. Ormond arrived. Mr. Althorpe met him at Portsmouth, and after proper preparation, detailed the sad story; his wish to see his wife was even less than her's to see him. He who loved his child immoderately, could never look upon her murderess.

“ He, however, amply rewarded the faithful Zamba for her attachment to his little Lucy, and not only gave her her freedom, but sent her back to her native country enriched by his bounty.

“ He frequently honours me with a visit; and as he is a man of an excellent disposition, and whose talents and abilities are greatly superior to those of most men, I look upon his acquaintance as an acquisition.

“ Mrs. Ormond has been removed from place to place, to try what effect change of air, system, or management, might have; but hitherto all has failed.—I hope, however, she is now settled till her recovery shall, if it ever do, take place; for it is no small inconvenience and trouble to remove her. Mr. Ormond allows a handsome sum for her maintenance; but he never does, he tells me he never can, see her.

“ Thus you see, Matilda, how the judgments and vengeance of the Almighty are manifested. Our punishments are not always deferred to a future state, but are frequently sent while on earth, to serve as a lesson to ourselves, and a warning to others. Signally was the wrath of God shewn to Maria, who in giving way to her fury against a helpless being, was the means of death to her own and only child; one in whom her every wish centered; one for whom she would willingly have forfeited her own existence. Life is to her become a curse—memory her bitterest tormentor! happy, happy for her, could she lose, in the insensibility under which she labours, the memory of the past; but even through the

delirium of insanity it pursues her. Learn then, Matilda, the necessity of bridling your passions. Believe me, it is easier to subdue them in youth than in age; they gather strength from indulgence, and too often, as in the tale I have just related, are productive of the most fatal consequences; thus you see, my dear, if you do not subdue your passions, your passions will conquer you.

“In the visit we are engaged to make this evening, you will see a very different instance. You will see how a well regulated mind can order itself, how it will struggle with its own weaknesses; and if not absolutely conquer, yet bring them into such a degree of subjection, as shall make them neither dangerous to itself or troublesome to others.

“Mrs. Paxton is among the few, who seeing her own errors have learned to reform them. Naturally of an imperious, violent, and commanding temper, she found herself subjected to many inconveniences, which are too often the consequences of it. She found that people were not obliged to submit to her caprices,—be terrified by her threats,—or, alarmed by her passions into subjection. She saw too,

(for she had much solid understanding and real feeling) that her company was rather avoided than courted, that her conversation could not compensate for her petulance, and she resolved to bring her temper under proper controul. The event has proved how well she has succeeded: from being disliked, she is admired: her company is eagerly sought after: she is held up as an example of propriety to the world: her children esteem and love her: her husband feels her value, and adores her for her virtues: her friends respect and love her: she has the satisfaction of reflecting, that she has constituted her own happiness by the efforts she made to reform her temper. Thus she reaps the reward of her endeavours; and thus may every one be rewarded, who take the same means to obtain the same end.

“ But see, we are just at home; reflect my dear child on what you have seen and what you have heard; and let me have the pleasure of finding that precept and example are not lost upon a sensible mind.”

The scenes she had that day witnessed, as well as the tale she had heard, sunk deeply on the mind of Matilda: she resolved to endea-

your at a reform in her temper, and determined to check, however painful the effort, the first ebullitions of passion. She longed ardently for the visit of the evening, as she much wished to see and be introduced to a lady of Mrs. Paxton's worth, of whom every one she had met, since her arrival at Ash Park, spoke well.

At length the desired hour arrived; they reached Acorn-hill, and found its mistress surrounded by her family, which consisted of four daughters and three sons, all of whom were variously employed; the former on different kinds of needle-work: one of the sons was reading aloud; the other two making extracts from the subject their brother had chosen to amuse the party: so truly domestic a society could not fail of attracting the notice of Miss Howards.

Mrs. Althorpe, who had ever been on terms of intimacy with the family, was received with that affectionate familiarity, that needed not words to convince her she was a most welcome visitor. Her nieces, on her account, were as gladly received; and the frank politeness and unadulterated openness and man-

ners of their young hosts and hostesses, soon made them familiar with each other. They conducted their young guests round the park and gardens, into the hot-house and greenhouse; introduced them to their scattered favourites; and in short, left no means untried to please and amuse them. Matilda and Emma were highly gratified by their attention, and were irresistibly won by their manners, which were indeed eminently pleasing.

Having wandered about the grounds till the hour of tea, they returned to the parlour: Matilda had now an opportunity of contemplating the features of Mrs. Paxton. She saw in her a look of authority and haughtiness of demeanour, so tempered by sweetness and affability, that while it created fear, it inspired esteem also: she felt that she could love her sincerely; but she felt also, that her anger would be terrible.

The tea table was scarcely removed before Mrs. Paxton was summoned from the room. After an absence of about twenty minutes she returned; and addressing herself to Mrs. Althorpe and the young folks, said, "she had come to solicit their charity for an object which, she

believed, deserved it; and which she was certain was very distressed. His story I will relate to you, my dear Mrs. Althorpe, after I have fulfilled the purposes of my commission; for I am too anxious at present to make the sufferer happy on his return to his family, to detain him longer than is necessary.

Mrs. Althorpe's ready hand was immediately in her purse,—Miss Howards were not behind hand: their father gave them a very liberal allowance; and they had profited so much by their aunt's example, as to feel pleasure in administering to the wants of others.

Maria, Sophy, and Fanny Paxton immediately contributed their little towards the sufferer's assistance: the three young men also added their share to the general stock: Emily alone held back, and retired deeply blushing and in tears, behind her sister. "Emily, my dear," said her mother, in a voice of kindness, "I wait for your donation." Emily was silent,—she hung her head; nor could she for one moment lift her eyes from the ground to encounter those of her mother. The request was repeated—still she was silent, abashed, and confused. "Why Emily," said Mrs. Pax-

ton, in a voice of amazement, "what am I to judge from this silence, these blushes, and these tears starting from your eyes: you were used, my dear, to be foremost in the performance of a good and charitable action; what is the reason of this tardiness?"

Emily tried to speak, and burst into tears: her mother became alarmed at her emotions, and still enquired the cause. Emily was no longer able to restrain them; but threw herself into her mother's arms, and eagerly besought her pardon. "For what, my child?" said Mrs. Paxton, affectionately, "In what have you offended me? Tell me what cause of anger can I have against you?" "I will tell you, Mamma," she sobbingly uttered; "for indeed, I longed to tell you: I have never been happy since. Yesterday, contrary to your orders, when you were at Mr. Marlow's, I persuaded one of the maids to accompany me to the village; at first she was against going, knowing it would be acting in disobedience to your orders; and fearful of incurring your anger; but after much persuasion on my part, and a promise of secrecy, she consented. We went to Mr. Evans's, where I

laid out all my money, and have none left for better purposes.” “In what did you expend it,” said her mother, in a tone of indignation, and putting her away from her. Emily’s cheeks took a deeper dye. “In cakes and sweetmeats, Madam,” she falteringly replied. “Was that all? Why, it was but on Wednesday I gave you half-a-guinea! Did you expend it all in trash?” Not quite all, Madam: I bought a pencil, tooth-pick, and tooth-brush, and a ribbon for Sa—Sal—. She faltered. Again she was on the point of betraying the servant whom she had persuaded to accompany her. “For Sally, was it not? And so you had the meanness to bribe a servant to do wrong. But go, Emily—go to your chamber; we will not entertain our friends with a subject of this nature; we will discuss this business in private; neither will I detain a worthy sufferer for a disobedient child.”

Emily left the room in tears; and Mrs. Paxton hastened to give relief to her pensioner.

Emily’s confession had thrown a damp upon the spirits of the whole party. Her brothers and sisters were generously uneasy for her, and represented, how much she would suffer

under the pressure of her mother's displeasure. "Our mamma," said Fanny, "is always ready to reward us for a good action, and takes great pleasure in so doing; but she punishes us as severely if we do wrong. I know she will call this fault of Emily's a breach of confidence; and it will be long before she forgives her: besides, she has often told us, if we once deceived her, she should never have any dependance again upon us; and I am fearful poor Emily will be long under her displeasure, and longer before she regains her confidence.

"Oh!" continued Fanny, affectionately, "my poor Emily; how she will suffer; how she will feel: she has such a tender heart. Indeed, Miss Howard, I do not know when she before committed a fault. You would love her as well as we do, if you knew as much of her: she is so sweet tempered and obliging. I wish with all my heart the poor man had not come this afternoon, you would not then have had occasion to know Emily had been in fault: but I must go to her; she wants some one to comfort her now."

Fanny then left the room. Matilda Howard blushed for herself, when she heard Fanny

express herself thus affectionately towards her sister,—something like conscience smote her ; she had not acted exactly in the same manner by her's, when she had been in disgrace ; and she felt how much more amiable was the conduct of Fanny Paxton. She saw and appreciated the nobleness of her conduct : a conduct she was resolved henceforward to imitate.

The harmony of the afternoon was in some degree disturbed by this incident. The promised history of the pensioner was deferred to another opportunity : Mrs. Paxton was too much grieved at what had passed with her daughter, to detach her thoughts sufficiently from it, to enter into conversation on indifferent subjects.

Mrs. Althorpe and her nieces soon took leave ; but not before Mrs. Paxton had promised them a visit in the course of the ensuing week.---As they pursued their walk home, the conversation naturally turned upon the visit of the afternoon. Matilda and Emma expressed their sorrow for Emily, and thought as she had candidly acknowledged her fault, her mother might have remitted her punishment. “I

cannot agree with you there, my dears," said Mrs. Althorpe: "Emily deceived her mother, and betrayed the confidence she reposed in her; besides being disobedient to her commands. Add to this, she seduced a servant from her duty; and bribed her to act also in direct opposition to her mistress's orders. I cannot then help thinking she merits punishment; nor would Mrs. Paxton do her duty as a parent, did she not express her disapprobation of her conduct. For what, my dears, can be meaner than to tempt a servant to disobedience? Is it not putting the authority of a mistress to defiance. The mutual confidence that should subsist between a parent and child is broken, if they teach the lesson of disobedience. We lose our reliance on persons who have once deceived us, and fear to commit the smallest concern to their charge. For depend upon it, my dears, no one would offer a bribe that would not take one. You will think I see Emily's fault in too severe a point of view: perhaps it may be so: but simple, undeviating rectitude, should be the great study of youth; and the commission of one fault leads on to many others. There is no one can say, 'so far will I

go and no further.' Error is progressive : we begin by small degrees, and shudder at first, to find we have overstepped the barrier of integrity ; but believe me, children, *that* once passed, the mind gets familiarized to vice, and so entangled in its snares, that it requires great self-command, as well as fortitude, ever to disengage ourselves from them.

“ For such is the world, my dears, and so artfully are its pernicious wiles spread to catch the unwary, that many fall into the net ere they are aware it is spread for their destruction ; and although some few may elude them, yet it requires not only prudence but foresight, to keep ourselves clear. Thus then it becomes necessary to check errors in their growth : and the parent who values her child, will particularly notice the first fault it commits ; for many, alas ! live to regret the mistaken indulgence which has tempted them to overlook a first fault.

“ But see, how rapidly the evening closes in ; we must mend our pace ; the clouds gather very fast ; I am fearful there is a heavy storm approaching, and we have still the heath to cross.”

Matilda and Emma, who had seen the clouds gathering for some time past, now quickened their pace; but they had not walked a hundred yards before the clouds burst, and a dripping shower succeeded: cloud gathered upon cloud; the thunder burst over them with loud and tremendous roar, while the livid and forked lightning flashed unceasingly across their faces; and, as if all the elements had conspired to dismay them, the winds rushed from their caverns, and howled dismally around them. The affrighted girls clung to their aunt as to their only support; while at every flash they screamed with increased terror. This was no time for reasoning: Mrs. Althorpe only conjured them to hurry their steps to the small hut of a very poor cottager, which she recollected was near the middle of the heath they were now entering. In about ten minutes they reached it; but so drenched with rain, and beat about by the wind, that they could hardly be known. Mrs. Althorpe immediately entered the little cottage; the humble mistress of which, no sooner saw who it was, than her best accommodation was at their service.

“Lack a daisy, Madam,” said she, smooth-

ing her apron, and taking an infant in her arms which had been crawling on the floor, "how came you to venture out in all this storm? The poor must go,---they cannot help it; but for you, Madam, that are not used even to have your feet wetted, sure it must be dreadful indeed. I that am used to be abroad in all weathers, should be frightened at this. My John is out in the midst of it. All I wish is, he was in-a-doors now; I don't like he should be abroad in such a storm,---it makes my heart ache, when I think of the dangers a poor man encounters. But, if I fear for my John, Madam, what must you for yourself; who, I dare say, never was out in such weather before."

"Not more than yourself, my good woman; I cannot expect the elements to be governed by my fears or feelings; and I think I need not shrink from a storm. Thousands are obliged to brave, who are far less able to bear it, and who are, at this moment perhaps, unsheltered, and half naked, exposed to its fury. A temporary inconvenience is all I endure; I must not therefore complain; but be thankful that there is a roof under which I can be protected from the inclemency of the storm."

“ But la’s, Madam,” said the poor woman, “ don’t be standing ; I’ll throw a morsel of wood upon the fire, and you’ll dry yourselves directly ; for sure you are dripping wet.”

She then called a little girl to bring some more furze, which throwing on the few embers which were yet burning, diffused a warm and comfortable gleam. With much humility she entreated Mrs. Althorpe to slip on one of her gowns, while her own was drying. Mrs. Althorpe was literally soaked with wet: she availed herself of her kind hostess’s offer, and was presently habited in her best suit.

Miss Howards, who were equal sufferers, were accommodated to the best of the poor woman’s abilities ; and after she had assisted in taking off their clothes, and hanging them to dry, she recollected she had a little elder wine in her cottage, which Mrs. Althorpe had sent her when she last lay-in. This, without saying a word, or even asking if they would take, she emptied into a saucepan and heated : when ready, she presented it, with a look more expressive of real feeling and gratitude than a volume of words, to her guests, saying,

“ that she was glad she had saved it for so good a purpose; she should be so proud and so happy, if it kept Madam and the young ladies from taking cold.”

Mrs. Althorpe would not mortify the good woman by a refusal; but taking part, insisted she should partake with her. Her humility, which was extreme, would scarcely permit her to avail herself of the honour, as she termed it; and no consideration could induce her to sit, till Mrs. Althorpe absolutely refused to stop a moment longer, if she did not pursue her usual occupations. This, with much reluctance, she did, though it was plain to see she did it uneasily.

The storm continued with violence; the poor cottager's thoughts were bent on her husband; and she every minute broke out into a wonder, “ where John could be! and why he did not come home?” Her seat was forsaken every five minutes to look at the door; her wishful eyes were turned to every part of the heath; still, no John was in sight.

Mrs. Althorpe began also to be uneasy; the rain kept pouring in torrents; the wind blew

almost to a hurricane: she was anxious to get home; her servants, she knew, would be uneasy; they would naturally seek her at Mrs. Paxton's, and not finding her there, would not only be alarmed themselves, but cause an alarm at Acorn-place. She then, almost as anxiously as poor Nelly, looked, and wished for the return of John; she participated his wife's uneasiness, and began to think something more than the storm had occurred, to prevent his return. Three long hours thus passed in all the uncertainty of suspence, and anxiety of watchfulness.

Matilda and Emma sat anticipating another robbery; Mrs. Althorpe was eager to reach her home; and the tender and terrified mistress of the cottage, unable to command herself, gave vent to her fears, and imagined a thousand causes for her husband's protracted stay. Her looks, piteous in the extreme, were now directed toward Heaven, then to her infants; she shuddered, as the increasing wind tore up even the stoutest trees from their roots; her lips, which were white as her apron, were now silently moving in prayer, for the preservation of him who was dearer to her

than life: and, although accustomed to endure every kind of weather, even from her earliest years, she involuntarily uttered a faint scream as the forked and vivid lightning flashed across her face. Mrs. Althorpe, with the most patient sweetness, tried to reason her out of her fears; but affection for her husband, anxiety lest he should be exposed to a storm more terribly tremendous than any she had yet witnessed, overcame the efforts of reason. Her mind's eye every minute presented her John in various views of distress; and neither soothing nor sympathy had any effect upon her. At length, after another hour passed in increased anxiety, the object of her care arrived.

It was now eleven at night. Mrs. Althorpe had long been seriously uneasy at what her people would suffer; she rejoiced therefore, to hear his wife hail, in the joyful accents of unadulterated affection, his well-known footsteps.

John entered his cottage, tenderly quieted his wife's fears, and kissed his sleeping children, before he had given a thought to his unexpected guests. The poor man, who was

drenched in rain, made a thousand apologies for his uncouth appearance, and hastened to get rid of his wet clothes.

Anxious as Mrs. Althorpe was to get home, she yet felt uncomfortable at the thought of being obliged to trouble a man to walk two miles, in such an evening, after he had gone through the fatigues of the day, and had entered his home to rest: yet what could she do; the storm, although it had considerably abated, had left the roads in such a state, that, for women, they were almost impassable: to propose staying in the cottage all night, she knew would be to forbid its inhabitants to take rest: she scarcely knew what to do; her nieces were extremely anxious to get home, as they were both tired and sleepy.

While she was considering how to act, thinking how little right she had to expect a man would risk his life for her, and lamenting she was so circumstanced as to be obliged to ask him to leave his comfortable fire side, smiling wife and children, to encounter the war of elements, Miss Howard exclaimed, "Thank God you are come! you will now,

I dare say, go to the Park, and order the carriage to fetch us home."

Nelly, who in the delight of seeing her husband safe, felt every other concern absorbed, had now time to recollect her guests, and mentioned Mrs. Althorpe's desire to get home. John instantly took up his hat, and without saying a word, hurried away to the Park. In about an hour he returned, and with him the carriage and servants. During this short interval, the friendly and hospitable Nelly had again pressed them to accept some of her humble fare. Mrs. Althorpe, whose heart was all benevolence, made her acknowledgements to her hostess, by leaving with her essential proofs of the sense she had of her hospitality.

The ladies were no sooner seated in the carriage, than Mrs. Althorpe took the opportunity of enlarging upon the pure and native benevolence and hospitality of Nelly and her husband. "You now see, my dear children," she continued, "that riches and grandeur are by no means absolutely essential to felicity: the domestic and humble station in which our entertainer and his modest com-

panion live, does not exclude them from the possession of real comfort, nor the opportunity of benefiting others. Happy in each other, living only for themselves and children, they work with cheerfulness, and endeavour, by uniting the honest produce of their labours, to procure a decent livelihood. Poverty, though it may cramp our powers of action, does not entirely deaden them; that we have proved in the modest welcome we received, when intruding upon the hospitality of these cottagers. Let it then convince you, that the power of doing good does not live altogether with the rich. I much fear had Nelly and her infants been in our situation, and applied for shelter beneath the roof of greatness, she would not have been treated with the same hospitality we received. There is no station of life that can exempt us from being at times obliged even to the lowliest peasant; and in more instances than one, kings have taken shelter beneath the roof of their meanest servants; with them they have been safe; from them they have experienced fidelity and affection, when the gaudy butterflies of their court, the creatures who before bowed with sycophantic

smiles, and had sworn fidelity to their interest, had basely deserted their cause, and been the first to betray them. Let us not, then, frown upon the indigent, nor look contemptuously or act unkindly by the poor; for we know not how soon we may want their assistance, or be obliged by their kindness."

From this time Matilda Howard lost much of the natural haughtiness of her temper; many circumstances had contributed to convince her, that a fine lady was not a very desirable character; and that humility and sweetness were more powerful recommendations than wealth or beauty. She resolved to attempt a different line of conduct: her understanding was naturally good, nor was her heart totally exempt from proper feeling. The truths, then, which her aunt daily deduced, as well as the opportunities she had of seeing and judging for herself, easily taught her to think she had been misled; and from thinking she had been wrong, to endeavour to act right. Her behaviour, temper, and inclinations, from that time took a different bias. Her aunt saw with pleasure this amendment in her conduct. She was now indeed growing

an amiable girl ; her study was to please and excel : with the desire she gained the ability ; and her father, who at Christmas visited Ash Park, became a delighted witness of the mental as well as personal improvement of both his daughters ; for Emma was not behind hand with her. With a mind naturally ductile, and disposition gentle and contented, she was easily guided. Although her judgment was not so clear, nor power of comprehension so acute as Matilda's, yet her perseverance and industry frequently accomplished what her sister found difficult to attain.

Matilda, possessed of great activity as well as vivacity of temper, could not always wait the slow unfoldings of science. Hence, with ideas naturally capacious, and genius sufficient to combat great difficulties, she was, for want of perseverance, frequently at a loss. The rapidity of her comprehension was to her a misfortune ; for relying upon it, she would take no pains to fathom the depth of her subject, but content herself with a superficial examination ; never reflecting, or giving herself time to reflect, that no science can be attained without perseverance and attention.

Her aunt had frequently mentioned her desire of having her nieces instructed in Italian; and Matilda, who was ever caught by the sound of variety, was eagerly anxious to commence the study. Mrs. Althorpe's chief fear was, that the same unsteadiness of temper and eagerness of disposition, which at first prompted her to set about any new study or employment with alacrity, would cause her soon to tire of it. Overcome, however, by the importunities of her nieces, she consented to engage a master to attend them. She had long since been recommended to one; but not having absolutely determined that her nieces should take lessons in the language, she had not been introduced to him. Willing, however, to oblige them, she no longer delayed; but writing to the friend who had named him to her, requested her to beg him to come over to the Park.

The morning presented to Mrs. Althorpe a venerable, white headed man, who seemed bowed to the earth by infirmity and melancholy: a patient resignation and dignified sorrow sat on his brow, which, contracted either by reflection or study, overshadowed

the lineaments of a countenance infinitely interesting. His address bespoke the polished gentleman, and his manners were as attractive and insinuating as his countenance was prepossessing. He was engaged to attend the young ladies; and Mrs. Althorpe found him so generally well informed, so sensible, and judicious, that she considered his company as an acquisition, and found no time pass more rationally or pleasantly than that which was passed in his company. Hence, he became a frequent and welcome visitor at the Park; his mind was well stored with information, and it was dispensed in so very modest and unassuming a way, that his pupils could not fail of receiving as much benefit from his general conversation as from his particular instruction. Yet still the same air of melancholy, which at first had struck Mrs. Althorpe's observation, continued; nay, even increased. Deep and long-drawn sighs escaped him; and, at times, half-uttered ejaculations. His looks became altered, pale, thin and emaciated; and he seemed almost sinking into the grave.

Mrs. Althorpe, who felt for the misfortunes of every one, was more than commonly interested for a man, whose conduct and abilities were evidently designed for a superior station. It was not until some months had passed, that she gathered courage sufficient to enquire the cause of the determined melancholy, with which he was so visibly oppressed.

After some hesitation and inward struggle, occasioned by the memory of past events, he resolved to reveal to his kind patroness the cause she was solicitous to learn; but begging to be spared the pains a recital would inflict, promised to commit the little narrative of his life to paper. His promise was faithfully observed; in a few days he delivered the following account of himself into her hands.

THE LIFE OF
SIGNIOR ALDERDOSINI.

“MADAM,—The benevolent reasons which have induced you to ask the cause of that heartfelt grief which consumes me, are such as not only do honour to the feelings of your own heart, but take from me the power of negating your request.

“Should the little history I have to make of myself and family, but prove a warning to one only (one too-fond parent) I shall think my griefs not given in vain; but learn to extract good from evil, and be thankful that I have been the means of saving others from the depth of despair into which I am plunged.

“My ancestors, Madam, were natives of Tuscany; ennobled by their virtues only, and sufficiently rich to enjoy all the luxuries that happy country afforded. It was the misfortune of my father (I call it a misfortune) to marry the heiress of a French nobleman, whose beauty, I grieve to say, was her chief recom-

mentation to his notice, as the whole of her property, which was immense, was entailed upon the first male offspring of her marriage, provided he married a French woman; if not, it was to descend to his sons, without the smallest benefit to himself. You may depend, Madam, my parents were solicitous for a son. Eight daughters saw the light, ere the so much desired blessing was given. In the fourteenth year of my mother's marriage, I was received into the world as the choicest gift Heaven could bestow. Of my infant years I shall say little; but that from my cradle I was taught to consider myself as a person of much importance; my inclinations were, upon no account, to be thwarted; my will was the law of the house: from my mother I received nothing but the tenderest indulgence; she considered me as the only representative of the Duke de Chateaufneuf, and in me she hoped to see all the honours of her family bloom with redoubled beauty.

“As I grew into manhood (pardon the egotism I am obliged to use) her hopes and affections, as well as expectations, strengthened, by the accounts she was constantly receiving

from my tutors, of my various improvements. At eighteen I quitted the beautiful shores of Tuscany for Paris, the then seat of every art, elegance, and pleasure, that could make a residence in it delightful to youth. My introduction to my mother's friends threw me into what is called the best, but is frequently the most dangerous company. I however, considering the natural impetuosity of youth, steered tolerably clear through this dangerous Scylla. My passions were never very violent; my friends, therefore, found no very great occasion to warn me to restrain them. I however, in spite of all its gaieties, soon grew tired of Paris, and with some young men, who like myself were eager for variety, quitted France.

“ Our proposed tour was northward; and gaining a few letters of introduction, we set off for Poland.

“ It was my fate to be an inmate in the house of a nobleman, whose daughter, in spite of the restrictions I lay under, I privately married. One of my companions betrayed my secret, not only to my wife's, but my father's family. The consequence was, we

were forbidden to consider either of them as holding any degree of affinity to us.

“ I will not enumerate the disagreeables we patiently endured. I returned to Paris; my former friends no longer knew me. I was poor—I was disowned.

“ Pressed by want, I wrote to my mother; informed her of my situation, and also of my being father to an infant, whose piercing cries for want, almost deprived his mother of reason, and nearly drove me to despair. She condescended to answer this letter; but how were we grieved when we found, that the only terms upon which she would consent to relieve us, were for us to surrender up our boy to her management, and upon no account presume to come near them. On our compliance with these, we were to have an annuity, equal to one hundred and twenty pounds English.

“ I will not, Madam, describe the feelings which distracted me upon the arrival of this cruel alternative. My wife, who merits a better fate, would not advise; but she, bent in fondness over the countenance of our infant, which she bathed with the tears of maternal

anguish. Ah! what did she not suffer, when she found the child she had nourished at her breast, torn from her maternal embrace, and separated from her, probably for ever. Yet, so it was; so hopeless was our state, that we were obliged to submit to a measure the most painful to an affectionate parent.

“ After this separation from our child, we retired to Montserrat, where we lived till our son had attained his nineteenth year; at which time France had witnessed a revolution, which had overturned her old government, and seen a king, whose humanity for his people had suffered him to relax the arbitrary power which had so long restrained them, led a victim to the scaffold. The peaceful plains of Montserrat, too, were deluging in blood; a victorious army had entered and laid waste the hopes of the husbandman; and, under the abused name of liberty, had committed enormities at which even savages would blush. I knew not till then that the power of the Noblesse of France was overturned; that their estates were confiscated for the use of the Republic, and that most of them had emigrated.

“ For the last two years my annuity had ceased to be paid ; but this gave me little concern. I had farmed many years for my amusement : I now did it for my subsistence ; but even the quiet possession of the fruits of my labour was denied me. We were to enter upon another scene of life ; our humble dwelling was plundered, our land became the seat of war ; and we were forced to quit those smiling vallies, which had so long afforded us shelter, to enter upon a world I had flattered myself I had quitted for ever, and again to encounter misery in various shapes. In the hour of distress and terror, the heart naturally clings to some hope, against which it props itself for support.

“ At this moment of calamity, when equality only was the order of the day ; when all distinctions of rank were levelled, and subordination ceased to be preserved among the inferior walks of life, I thought only of my father. I thought, could I once more reach those beautiful shores, where my first infancy was nurtured, and once again behold the countenance of my parents and child, even the present weight of calamity would be lessened,

and I should again be happy. Vain, futile wishes. Alas! I knew not the miseries that awaited me. We set out on our pilgrimage (for I can call it no other) with hearts sunk in woe; the little we had been able to save or turn into cash, I had secreted within the lining of my waistcoat, it was indeed but little; but as we were not solitary wanderers, as many besides ourselves were bending their course in search of a securer home, we mingled in small parties, sharing our little with the utmost frugality. We had part of the vast Appenines to cross, and our little troop separated when we came to the foot of that immense chain of mountains. Shall I tell you, Madam, the pang we experienced at parting? Ah! no; to recount them is but living over again griefs which have since been swallowed up in superior woes. Yet shall I never cease to regret that artless happy people, whose native benevolence, purity of mind, and simplicity of manners, made them little able to cope with the multitude of ills a commerce with the world produces.

“After much fatigue, anxiety, and weariness, we at length reached Genoa. Here we

rested a few days, reviewing the past, anticipating the future. We obtained a felucca, which carried us to Spezzia. We were now within the dukedom of Modena. I had formerly contracted some acquaintances, who resided there, and of them I was first to obtain intelligence of my family, which I did ere I revealed myself to them. But alas! the same misfortune which had occasioned me to emigrate from my peaceful habitation, had so completely overwhelmed them, that not a vestige was left behind. Again we set out on our inauspicious journey; again the tedious Appenines were to be crossed. Grand, awful, sublime, and majestic as they were; much as I admired the works of nature, and delighted to contemplate the beauties of creation, I could no longer take interest in them. It is true, the grand outline, the immense magnitude and elegant irregularity of this native barrier, even amidst all my mental sufferings, would for a moment abstract my thoughts, but the canker-worm was within; I could not look at the altered countenance of my wife without a pang, nor could I witness the patient endurance, the never tiring sweetness

of her disposition, without sighing, when I reflected, that to me she was indebted for all the adverse scenes of fortune she had experienced; that but for me, she might even now have been living in her native country, surrounded by affluence, and participating the comforts of life. Could I then cease to condemn myself, when I took a retrospective view of the past, and examined the present; when I reflected, that the ambition of man and the frenzy of enthusiasm, had driven us wanderers (we scarcely knew whither) and exiles from those scenes of bliss and simplicity, where the labour of our hands was sufficient for our support.

“ At length we reached the Arno. Ah, madam, I cannot express what I felt at the sight of my native river: when I contemplated its rippling surface, and fancied I saw it lave the base of my paternal mansion, a gleam of mental joy shot across my sad heart; but it soon gave way to the reflection of our forlorn state, and the agonizing doubts I entertained of our reception.

“ Having arrived at Leghorn; I enquired out some old connexions of my father's; but

what a change does a period of twenty years exhibit. I was totally forgotten by many, scarcely remembered by some, and proudly and haughtily questioned by others. After much mortification sustained on my part, I at length learned that my father had been dead five years; that my sisters were all married, and dispersed in different directions, and that my son had, in the general ruin in which France was involved, lost all his property in that kingdom, but had succeeded to that of his grandfather, which had been considerably increased by the addition of some large legacies that had been bequeathed him by various relations; that my mother's anger against me was still undiminished, and that my son had never been permitted to leave the castle. His general character I found to be that of a libertine, and that he was as much feared as hated by the peasantry, over whom he ruled with an iron hand.

“ You will think, perhaps, that I had little to hope when I heard all these particulars; yet hope I did, in spite of all the discouragement I had received, still fondly believing that the powerful feelings of nature were yet alive in his

breast; and that he could not see those to whom he owed his existence without acknowledging their claims, and administering to their wants. Under this impression we journeyed to his, or rather to my mother's house.

“In Tuscany, Madam, nature is no niggard; the richness, fertility, and luxuriance of the soil, demand but little from the hand of industry. The ground, like a fond mother, embraces her offspring, and nourishes them from her bosom. Nature can scarcely exhibit any thing more elegant, more vivid, or more glowing, than an Italian landscape. Her groves of myrtle, of limes, citrons, orange, and jessamine, regale the sight with their richness and beauty, and charm the senses with their odours. The towering hills, either broken into irregular chasms, or rich with purple clusters of luscious grapes which adorn their sides, exhibit to the pleased eye a magnificence unspeakable; while the sons and daughters of labour, continually attending, singing their simply interesting lays, watching the time when the cares of husbandry shall be repaid by the ripening of the vintage, and anticipating the produce of their labours, afford to the specu-

lative mind ample room for reflection. The rich autumnal tinge of mellow evening, shedding its softened rays over a country so peculiarly favoured by nature; the declining sun, darting his rays upon the broken rocks which exhibit a thousand fantastic shapes, and at length throwing his expiring gleams upon the irregular, magnificent, and immense Appenines, it is impossible to contemplate without an exquisite effect upon the imagination, without indeed feeling the soul wrought up to a pitch of enthusiasm the most refined and exalted.

“Forgive me this digression; forgive, Madam, my locality. Alas! Tuscany, Italy, is no longer what it was; war, with all its attendant horrors, has depopulated her towns and villages, laid waste her vineyards, seized her palaces, and overturned her religion. And for what: but again, Madam, I must intreat your pardon; I am writing as I would speak. But to resume my narrative.

“It was one of those mild and gentle evenings when, after enduring the burning heats of day, the peasant flings himself beneath the refreshing shade of some wide spreading tree, and taking his flagelet, enjoys the soft

breezes which are playing amidst the surrounding foliage, and serve as an accompaniment to the tones he produces.

“On such an evening as this, when all around breathed peace and harmony, we arrived at my paternal home. The faces of the domestics were new to me; I enquired for my son; at that instant he crossed the hall. Ah! Madam, when the servant said, “that sir is my master;” my wife, overcome by a variety of emotions, fell senseless in my arms; she was borne into an adjoining room, in which sat my mother. Good Heaven, what did I not feel! She looked at me with an enquiring eye; she traced in my features a likeness to which she had formerly been accustomed, but which she could not immediately recollect: I was too anxiously watching returning animation, to attend to the variations of my mother’s countenance; yet, I involuntarily sprang to her feet; I knelt, bowed my head on her hands, which I tenderly kissed; and overcome by so many powerful emotions, burst into a flood of tears, I could neither conceal or controul. The strangeness of the incident, the flying likeness she detected in

the lineaments of a countenance, once so loved, awaked her to the full confirmation of suspicions for which she could not account, but which were satisfied by the recovery of my wife, who had scarcely the command of her senses, before she enquired, in accents of maternal tenderness and anxiety, for her son. This completely led my mother to the knowledge of who I was. Shall I, Madam, retrace the scene that passed? No, it is impossible; language is inadequate to do justice to it; nor can my harrassed feelings bear the retrospect; suffice it to say, that my mother fell the victim of her anger and revenge; for unable to restrain the impetuous passions, to which the sight of me gave rise, they increased to such an height that she broke a blood vessel, which in four and twenty hours terminated her existence in this world: she maintained her anger with me to the last; and even when deprived of the power of articulation, her angry frown and gestures drove me from her bed-side, by which I knelt to entreat her last blessing.

“ Of my son I have hitherto said little: he received and acknowledged us with as much

affection as I could expect,—considering the sentiments in which he had been educated, and the idea he was taught to entertain of us.

“ After a short residence with him, I found his passions were his masters,—that his principles were free,—and his notions libertine; yet, with all, I found he had some sparks of native benevolence: that his heart was not naturally depraved,—and that, had a proper education been given him, and his evil dispositions and habits checked in their growth, he might have become a shining ornament, and a valuable member of society. To eradicate principles long fixed, and to conquer the prejudices of habit, are two things very difficult to perform. Youth naturally opinionated, frequently obstinate and headstrong, will not always be governed, either by the mild dictates of reason, or by the authority which relationship assumes. Many, many were the errors I saw my son had imbibed. High-spirited, daring, impetuous, and an anxious follower of what the world calls pleasure. He could little brook either controul or contradiction. By the mildest persuasion and gentlest remonstrance, I strove to correct his follies,

and to convince him of the errors of which he was guilty. I anxiously sought also, to teach him to hold the reins over his passions, and set a curb over those wild desires which were hurrying him on to ruin; but my words might as well have been delivered to the wind; they made no more impression on him. It is true, he civilly attended to all I said; yet, I frequently saw the sneer of contempt passing across his features as I reasoned with him. His mother, who in recovering her son, seemed to have lost the remembrance of every past grief,—excused his conduct, as the effect of too much indulgence,—begged me to be gentle in my reproofs, as she feared their being too constantly repeated, might lead him to dislike his home, and shun me as a censurer and controuler of his actions. In compliance with her request I ceased to remonstrate; yet, once more—upon the commission of an action, which honour, dignity, virtue, taught me not to overlook; and which even maternal affection could not excuse,—I ventured once more to remonstrate. Alas! Madam, I am now come to a part of my narrative which will wound the heart of any parent:—for my son, fired at

my interference in his pleasures—incensed at the lectures he had drawn upon himself, bade me remember, ‘ that although I was his father, he was my master: that to him I owed the bread I ate, and upon him was dependent for every comfort in life.’

“ ’Tis a painful task, Madam, for a father to recount the errors of his child,—to drag his vices into public notice, and have him held up to public view as an object of deformity. Yet, you ask, and I cannot say no. Our quarrel increased. This was not a speech to soften my anger: one word brought on another; till I was, a second time, forced from my paternal home by the unnatural commands of my son.

“ My wife,—my patient, enduring wife,—felt this agonizing stroke as the last pang of nature. In the anger of her heart she uttered a heavy malediction upon her son, whose errors till now she had palliated,—whose vices she attributed to youth and inexperience. I cannot, Madam, detail longer upon this ungrateful subject. Determined to be no longer under obligations to an unfeeling child, we resolved to quit him. The ebullition of his passion having had vent, it gave way to repen-

tance; and he would now willingly have recalled us to his mansion, but his repentance was too late. I forgave him it is true; but I could not forget the indignity with which I had been treated: I felt it as a man, and doubly as a father.

“ Collecting all the little wealth we possessed, we once more set out on our tedious journey, without even a hope to cling to, or a pleasurable idea to inspire us, stung to the heart by the conduct of a being, to whom we had looked for all the little comfort we could now enjoy—the little good that presented itself. A carriage conveyed us to Leghorn, where we resolved to re-adjust our plans. My wife, with all the partiality of local attachment, proposed our going to Poland, describing it as a country, where, in our present situation, we should find a sure asylum: there too, she hoped to meet some of her friends and relations, and be noticed by them. But we had lived upon hope, and experienced her fallacies. I discarded her therefore from my bosom; resolved no longer to be tempted by her illusions, or duped by the phantoms she raised to decoy. I would not then listen to her propo-

sals: indeed, the unhappy state of Poland was in itself sufficient to make a residence there unpleasant. I had tried friends, and found I had none. I was sick of the world; yet, I could not, to a woman who had suffered so much on my account, absolutely negative so natural a request; I therefore evaded it by saying, 'that the empire was so dismembered, and its political dissensions so prevailing; together with its being too expensive a journey for the present state of our finances,—that it would be not only impolitic, but imprudent to venture it.'

“ In the early part of my life I had become acquainted with an English gentleman of the name of Roberts. At the time our intimacy was resolving itself into something like friendship, he was ordered from Paris to attend his father, who was at the point of death. My friend I knew had great and powerful connections in his native land; and I believed, could I but find him out, he would with the generosity common to his nation, point out some way in which I could support myself; and that he would assist me with his recommendations. The more I revolved this idea, the more it ga-

thered strength. I therefore hastened to the quay, to seek a vessel to transport us to this happy island. Here, to my great surprize, I met the gentleman upon whom I dwelt for my future prospects: our astonishment at meeting was extreme: at first, he scarcely recollected me; but the features of his face were indelibly fixed upon my memory: a period of more than twenty years had not altered his countenance: his life had passed in quiet uniformity and happiness: the hand of affliction had not contaminated him with her touch, or caused a wrinkle in his cheek. We adjourned to an hotel, where I recounted the particulars of my eventful life. I told him our situations; I neither exaggerated nor concealed facts, but let him briefly into our circumstances and prospects. He was affected at my recital, and promised me his assistance. He was as good as his word: by his means I reached this country. From the letters he wrote to his friends, I derived both credit and consequence; and, through his recommendation, was appointed Linguist and Secretary to the —— Envoy.

“ Fortune, I now began to believe, had ceased to persècute me; and, but for the

remembrance of my son's unnatural conduct, I should have been happy.

“ The Tuscan territories had fallen likewise into the hands of the French conqueror: I thought of my son: I wished to obtain some knowledge of his fate. Crossing one of the squares at the west end of the town, I met him: I could scarcely believe my senses: he saw me: a sense of shame at that moment, I believe, came across him: a deep crimson overspread his cheeks: he faltered out his surprize at seeing me; his sorrow and grief for what had passed: begged me to forgive him, and suffer him to see his mother. Nature spoke loudly in his favour; I could not forget he was *my son*, and that I was *his father*. I took him home with me in an instant; all was forgotten — all forgiven. He recapitulated the circumstances which had driven him from Tuscany: you will naturally suppose, that the same cause which drove me from Montserrat, sent him a wanderer to England. But as he had brought away plenty of money with him, and was known to many English, he had not yet experienced any of the inconveniences attending the life of an unhappy emi-

grant. He entered with avidity into all those scenes of pleasure that the capital holds out to allure the gay, the giddy, and the dissipated. His fortune was unequal to his expences,—it was soon spent. He applied to me; I assisted him: the doors of his father were open to him; and he took up his abode with us. At first his life was pretty regular; but he got connected with a set of men who exist by the gaming-table: of course, he was scarcely ever in the house of a night. Of his immoralities; and his vices, I heard from every quarter. I had tried the powers of argument—of remonstrance; both were ineffectual: he had given himself up to a course of vice there was no restraining him from pursuing. Unable to brook reproof, and conscious he deserved it, we saw but little of him. I had assisted his pocket till I left my own empty.

“To add to my griefs, the —— Envoy was recalled. I thus lost the means of support. Drained by my son on one hand, my wife lying dangerously ill on the other, I contracted debts I could not repay. I was threatened with a jail; I fled for refuge to this neighbourhood, where, to add to the sum of my

woes, a few weeks since I heard that my unfortunate son, hurried on from one vice to another, had become amenable to the laws of his country, having committed a highway robbery, for which he was apprehended, and now lies under sentence of death in Dorchester jail.

“ This, Madam, is the cause of that woe my face so faithfully pourtrays. My wife, the patient partner of all my sorrows, lies on the bed of sickness; myself am threatened with a prison, and my son, Oh, horror! horror! when I think on the fate that awaits him, my old heart shrinks within itself, and I am ready to exclaim with Job, ‘ the measure of my woes is more than I can bear.’ ”

“ Never, for my sake, may a parent upon any consideration be tempted to give up his child, but regard him as a sacred deposit intrusted to him from Heaven, to whom he is accountable for the good or ill that attends him; and, ah! may his story be a warning to the youth of both sexes, that religion is the basis upon which the superstructure of their future good is to be raised to honour and credit, and that the child who performs his

duty to the authors of his being, is giving the best security for his conduct through life.

“ And let parents also remember, that to false indulgencies, and a misjudged education, children are frequently indebted for all the miseries of their future lives.”



The feelings and benevolence of Mrs. Althorpe were never more interested than in the perusal of this simple narrative, and she resolved to try her utmost to relieve the misery with which this worthy man was oppressed. She took an early opportunity of enquiring the extent of his pecuniary embarrassments; when finding that fifty pounds would set him clear with his creditors, she instantly advanced it, and then sought out the means of being farther serviceable to him and his family.

Anxious to hear if the prisoner had any hopes of assistance from any one with whom he was, or had been acquainted; of being befriended in this terrible emergency; she ordered her carriage, and, accompanied by her nieces, sat off for Dorchester jail. Here the scene of

misery, with which vice had become familiar, struck upon their feelings with a degree of horror they never before experienced. Requesting to see the young Aldersonini, they were introduced to the miserable apartment he occupied; but what were their sensations, when by the glimmering light which feebly illumined his wretched chamber, they saw in his features those of the man that had robbed them. Surprise for a moment bereft Mrs. Althorpe of speech, and in that moment herself and nieces were recollected by the prisoner.

“Do you too come to reproach me?” said he, mournfully; “am I not sufficiently punished? am I not almost on the very eve of execution? a few short days and this life, which dawned so brightly, which rose in such splendour, will be shut in darkness, in ignominy, in death.”

The accent with which this was uttered, convinced Mrs. Althorpe that the feelings of this unhappy young man were more wounded by the disgraceful fate which awaited him, than by the near approach of death. Assuring him that she came not to oppress but serve him, she besought him to tell her in what

she could befriend him, and if he had any friends to whom she could apply on his behalf. Being answered in the negative, she enquired if the circumstances of his crime were of such a nature as to preclude the possibility of mercy from his sovereign.

She then learned that they had been of such a complexion, that mercy, extended to him, would be an abuse of that justice which was due to the public.

“ Besides, Madam,” he continued, “ the extent of my crimes you are probably unacquainted with. Negligent of all the relative duties of life, I have ever walked in a course, which, if I had had any thought, I must have known would have led ultimately to this fatal termination. From childhood I was wayward, fretful, impatient of contradiction, and anxious for revenge. As I grew towards manhood, the same propensities continued. I added to my bad qualities profaneness and neglect and contempt of the duties of religion. Under the seducing name of pleasure, I engaged in scenes which served but to strengthen my bad habits and plunge me deeper into ruin. To reproof I had never been accustomed; I could not therefore brook

it, but treated alike the adviser and his counsel.

“ I have, Madam, broken every tie, divine or human. My mind was unequal to resist the first temptation to do wrong; rapid was my progress in vice; by gradual steps I reached the climax of wickedness. Alas! the temptations to vice are many, and happy are they who have virtue to shun them. Would but young people be warned in time; could they but be taught to reflect, they would see that though the paths of vice may for a time appear alluring, yet the sorrows, the miseries, and disgrace a deviation from rectitude produces, can never be recompensed by any of those fallacious joys, which are purchased at so dear a rate as that of mental peace. The internal satisfaction which the consciousness of acting right diffuses over the heart, is the sweetest reward it can bestow. Ah, Madam! none but those who experience it, can tell the fearful days and sleepless nights, the never-ceasing apprehensions that wretched being endures, who, having swerved from the paths of virtue and honesty, hears in every breeze the voice of his own condemnation.

Happier, happier far, is the lowest peasant, that earns his bread by honest and hard labour, and enjoys it without reproach, than the man of the most splendid station, and most brilliant prospects, if unaccompanied by honour and conscious rectitude. I have lived to little purpose. In the sad retrospection the hours of solitary confinement have afforded, I cannot find one virtue in my heart nourished to perfection.

“ At the age of twenty-five I am about to pay my life a forfeit for my crimes. Instead of smoothing the last days of the authors of my being, I plunge them into wretchedness; the blush of shame overspreads their aged cheeks for the vices for which I suffer, and the manner of my end: they must hear my name proclaimed in every street, and know that the story of my folly, guilt, and ignominious end, will be the conversation of every ale-house. Can they look in the faces of happy parents without regretting their own unfortunate child? Can they see a youth following the paths I trod, without reflecting, that by such pursuits I arrived at the sad fate which now awaits me? Thus, Madam, every

circumstance will contribute to aggravate their grief and despair; and my memory be a lasting reproach to them.

“I am resigned to my fate. I feel conscious of having deserved it, and am unworthy any interest should be used in my behalf. Yet, let me say, that were my time to come again, I should, I think, act differently, or the repentance I now feel deceives me.”

After much conversation, Mrs. Althorpe and her nieces departed; the former immediately wrote to her brother, to procure, if possible, a reverse of sentence for this unhappy young man.

Mr. Howard interested himself so successfully on this occasion, that the sentence was changed for fourteen years' transportation.

Mrs. Althorpe no sooner obtained this intelligence, than she informed his father, who was himself the bearer of the news.

The gratitude of Signor Aldersonini was boundless; the never-to-be-forgotten disgrace of a public execution would be now done away; and he trusted that with his exile, the crime for which he had been doomed to suffer would be no longer remembered.

The old man could now look up ; he introduced his wife to his benefactress, and they found, together with the steadiness which ever influenced her conduct, a friendship and tenderness to which they had long been strangers, and which smoothed the remnant of their declining years.

Signior Aldersonini, doubly bound by gratitude as well as interest, joined his endeavours with those of his patroness, to eradicate false principles from the minds of his pupils, and instil in their place such as would contribute to ensure their future happiness. The endeavour succeeded to the utmost ; for Matilda and Emma Howard, divested of those errors which had heretofore rendered them unamiable, found in the exercise of their reasoning powers, and practice of the virtues which had been so strongly pointed out to them, that to be good is to be happy ; and that no real felicity can be experienced without a conduct at once consistent, and active in the pursuits of religion and virtue.

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