

SUSAN GRAY

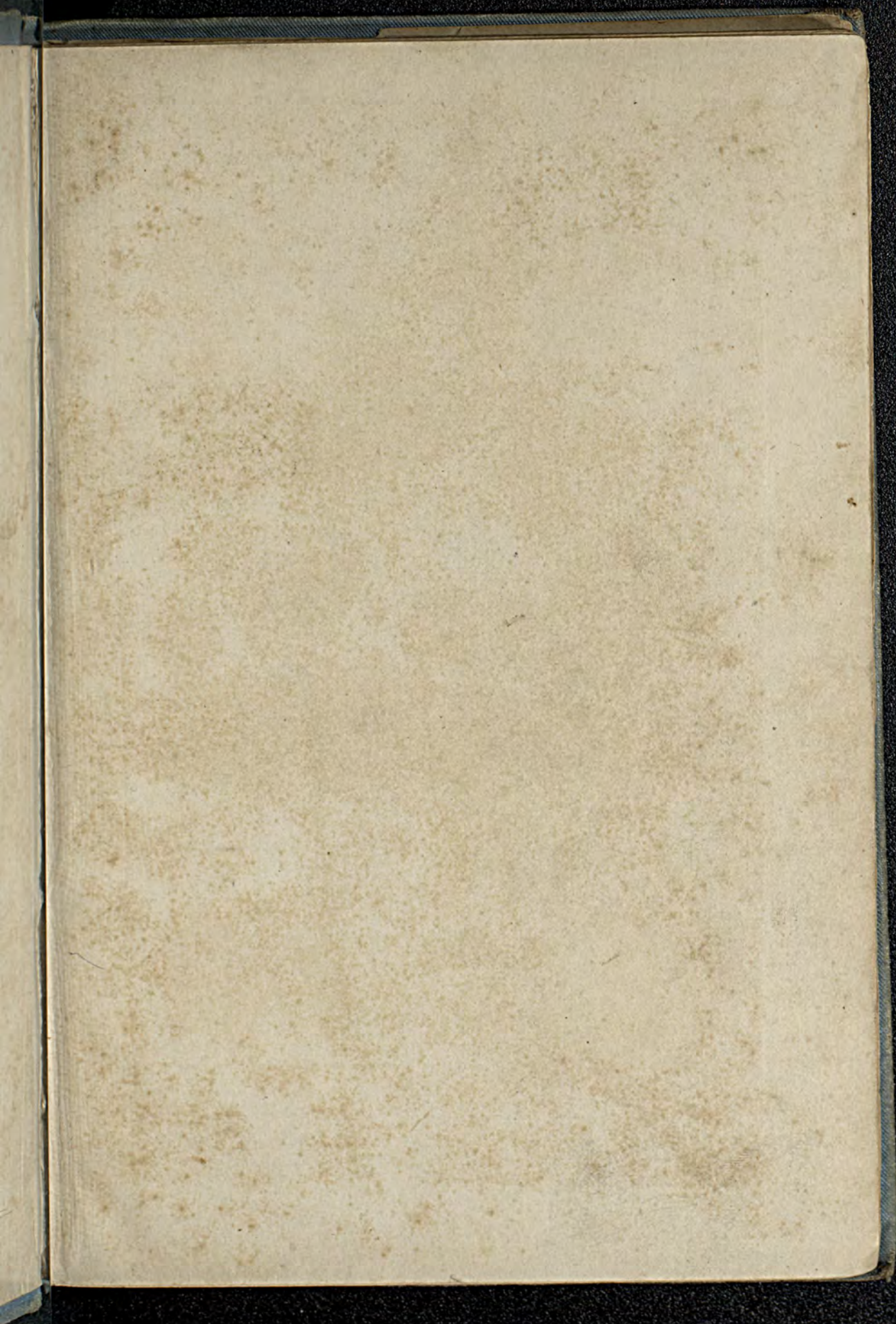


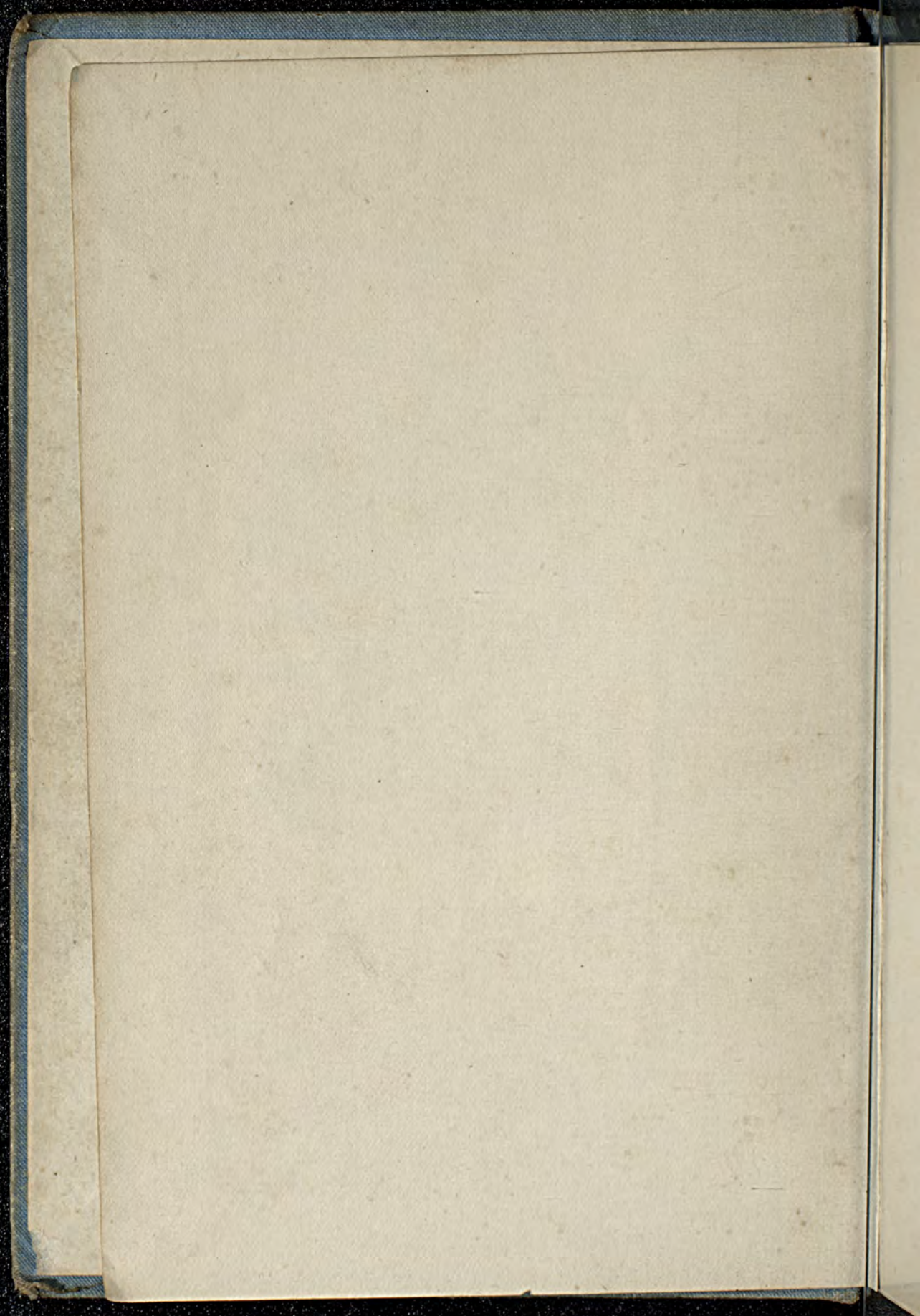
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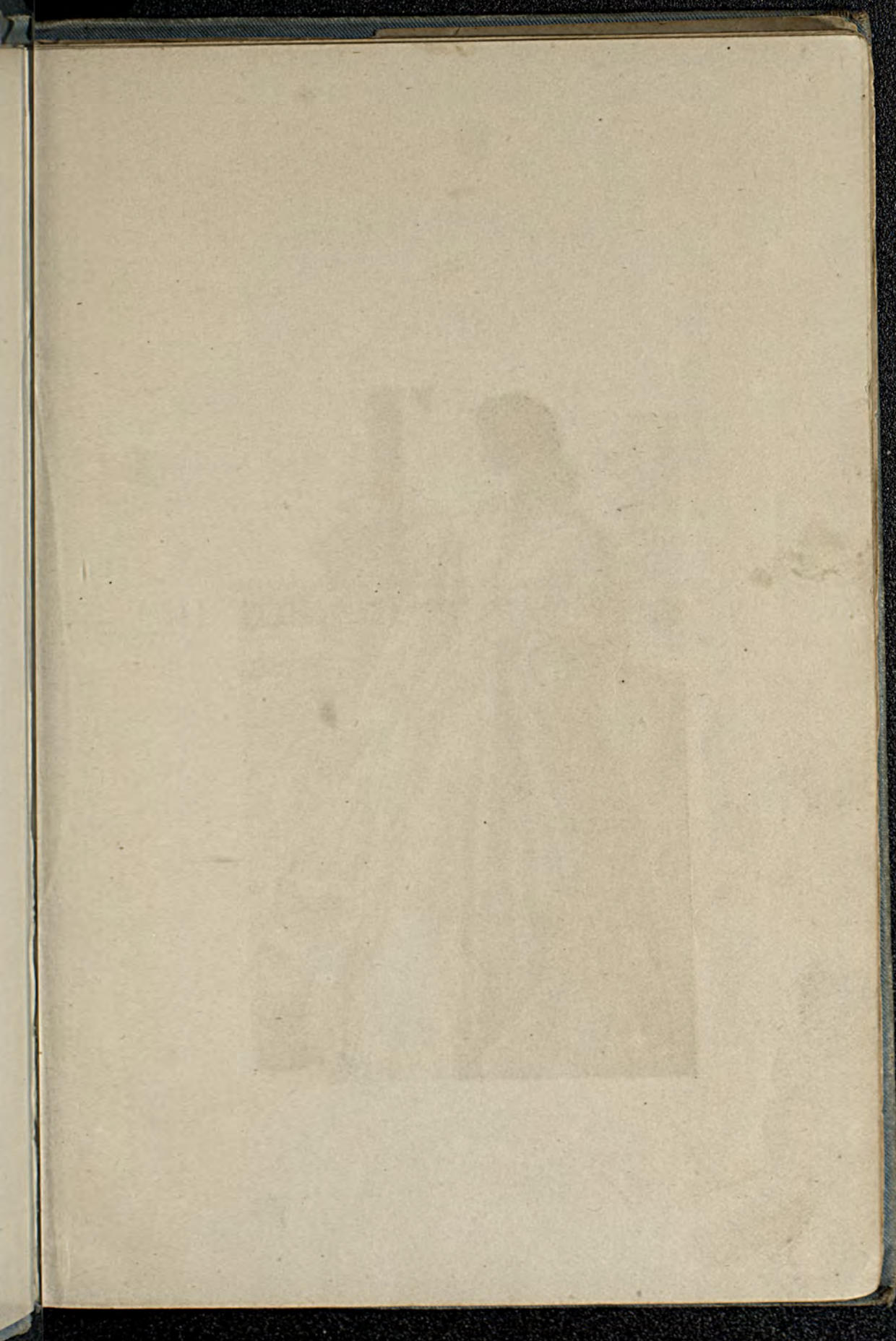
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HISTORY OF SUSAN GRAY.

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SUSAN GRAY.

THE HISTORY
OF
SUSAN GRAY

BY
MRS. SHERWOOD

AS RELATED BY A CLERGYMAN

LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS
BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL
NEW YORK: 416 BROOME STREET
1880

THE HISTORY

SUSAN GRAY

MRS. FERRIS

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GEORGE ALLEN AND UNWIN

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1884

THE HISTORY
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SUSAN GRAY.



IN my parish, not far from the fine town of Ludlow, on the bank of the beautiful river Teme, are the garden, the little orchard, and the ruins of the pretty cottage, which many years ago were rented by James Gray.

A fine wood of tall trees shelters this pleasant spot from the cold north wind, and a row of large willows grows at the foot of the garden beside the

river. When I first came to my living, I became acquainted with James Gray. He was an honest, good young man, and he was so happy as to have a wife who feared God: the character still given in that country by those who remember Mary Gray was, that she was a pious, sober-minded young woman, "a keeper at home" (Titus ii. 5), as the Apostle exhorts women to be, and a most kind and dutiful wife.

James gained a tolerably comfortable livelihood by working in his garden. He cultivated his land with so much care, that he had the earliest and best peas and beans, gooseberries and currants, salads and greens, in the country: these he always sold at a moderate price, never attempting to deceive or cheat the rich; for it was one of his most favourite sayings, that honesty is the glory of the poor man.

For some years these good young people lived most happily in their cottage. It is true that they were obliged to work very hard; and now and then, as I have been told, in a severe winter, to live rather hard also: but they loved each other, and, next to their God, they thought it their duty to please each other; and as the Holy Scriptures say, "a dinner of

herbs, where love is, is better than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith" (Prov. xv. 17).

After his daily work, James never omitted reading a chapter in the Bible, and a short prayer with his wife before they went to bed; for, as he often used to say, when we lay ourselves down in our beds, we know not whether we shall be ever suffered to rise from them again: many have died in their sleep; let us, therefore, before we lie down to rest, make our peace with God, ask His pardon for any bad thing we have done in the day, and pray Him to continue His blessings to us: so should death visit us in the hour of night, we shall not go into another world unprepared to stand before our Judge.

It pleased Heaven that Mary Gray should have but one child: but this child, although every one who saw her declared her to be one of the finest little girls in the country, never was foolishly indulged or spoiled by her father and mother.

Although little Susan's parents would have rather starved themselves than have let their child want anything which was good for her, yet they never gave her anything for which she cried; they never suffered her to show angry airs, or to disobey the least

of their commands. For as some very wise man remarks, if a father or mother suffers a child at five or six years of age to disobey his will, that child at twelve or fourteen will go nigh to break his parent's heart. The stubborn wills of children should be broken whilst they are small and weak, and yet dependent on their parents. It is too late to subdue an obstinate child when that child is nearly old enough to provide for himself. But although Mary Gray never spared correction when it was necessary, yet there was not in the neighbourhood a kinder mother; when Susan was good, she would play with her, she would sing to her, she would tell her stories, gather her flowers, and, when she had leisure from her work, she would carry her into the green fields to show her the high blue hills afar off, the pretty birds in the hedges, and the little boats on the river. Almost as soon as the child could speak, she taught her to kneel down and say a short prayer to God: when she became older, she told her that it was God who made her, and talked to her of that happy place to which those blessed children go who keep God's holy will and commandments.

When Susan was about three years of age, her

father and mother took her with them every Sunday to church ; upon which occasion they always dressed her very neatly, yet never decked her out in vain ornaments, for Mary remembered well these words of the holy St. Paul : " I will that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety : not with embroidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array ; but, which becometh women professing godliness, with good works " (1 Tim ii. 9, 10).

Mary would sometimes say, when talking over these things with James, as they often did of a Sunday evening : " It does not become me, who am myself guilty of so many offences, both in thought, word, and deed, to find fault with my fellow-creatures : yet it has often seemed very strange to me, when I have been at market, or at church, or in any kind of public place, to see so many women of all ranks and degrees striving, as it were, who should most transgress the command of the Apostle, adorning themselves and their children in every vain ornament which their fortunes could procure them ; surely this cannot be right. " In my humble opinion," James would answer, " the love of fine clothes is as plainly condemned in the Bible as the love of drink-

ing; but let us, my dear Mary, with God's blessing, bring up our little Susan, and appear ourselves in a plain way, and leave other people to themselves."



I often went to visit these good folks, and was greatly delighted with their pious and excellent discourse; for a foolish or profligate

word never proceeded from their lips, and their child was so clean, so well ordered, so dutiful, and so gentle, that, young as she was, I formed the greatest hopes of her, and believed she would become a good Christian.

It pleased Heaven, however, to deprive this poor child of her good parents. She was just turned six years of age, when a terrible fever which raged in this neighbourhood at that time, seized first upon Mary Gray, and then upon her husband; and, notwithstanding all the care and skill of the doctor, they

both died. But death to them was no evil, for they had always trusted in God, and endeavoured to fulfil His will ; and it pleased Him to take them from this world of sorrow and labour to that happy place where men are made "equal unto the angels, and are the children of God" (Luke xx. 36).

But their death seemed to be a sad evil to their little girl, for whom I and my wife felt so much sorrow, that had we not had many young children of our own, we would have taken her into our own family. As soon as her dear father and mother were dead, she was carried to the parish poorhouse ; after she had remained there about two months, an old woman, her father's aunt, who lived in Ludlow, undertook to maintain her till she should be twelve years of age, if the parish would allow her twelve-pence a week.

The parish having given their consent to this plan, the child was carried to the town by the old woman, and for many years I saw no more of her ; for about that time it pleased God to afflict me with a disorder which for some time prevented me from attending to my parish, and taking heed unto the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made me an overseer.

When at the end of twelve years, by the favour of Heaven, I was restored to health, and could ride about the country, and visit my children (for so I call my parishioners), I went several times to Ludlow to inquire after Susan Gray, but could hear nothing of her ; her old aunt was dead, and her house shut up.

Thus it was out of my power to serve the daughter of the worthy James and Mary Gray ; but I trusted that Heaven, who "visits the sins of the parents upon the children unto the third and fourth generation," would not fail to bless the child of these excellent people ; and so as I hoped it proved to be. God did bless Susan Gray : for a time indeed did He try her, but at length He made her who had sown in tears reap in joy, and rewarded her with an exceeding great reward.

James and Mary Gray had been dead about thirteen years, when one evening, as I was sitting by my fire with my wife and family, I was called out to a poor woman, who kept a very homely but reputable lodging-house in the village. "I made bold to come, sir," said she, "to ask you to read prayers this evening to a poor young woman, who is, I fear, at the point of death."

"And who," said I, "is this young woman?"

"I know but little of her," answered she. "She came to my house fourteen days ago; soon after that great storm of thunder and lightning which struck the church steeple, and blasted your great pear-tree, sir. It was after twelve o'clock in the night when she knocked at the door. I happened to be up, finishing some work, or I could not have let her in."

"And pray," asked my wife, who had stepped out into the kitchen after me, "from whence do you suppose she comes?"

"Indeed," replied the woman, "I should think from no great distance; for although she had a small bundle of linen in her hand, she had neither hat nor cloak on."

"I fear," said my wife, looking at me and shaking her head, "that this is some unfortunate young creature, who knows not the fear of God."

"Truly, madam," said the woman, "I would not wish to harbour any bad person in my house; but I really think that this poor friendless girl is one whom no one can say anything ill against. She is extremely neat and plain in her dress, and most civil and obliging in her carriage; while she was tolerably

well, which she was during the first week of her being with me, she did some little work for Farmer Flemming, who, as she told me, knew her father and mother; and then she paid me every night her two-pence for her lodging. But since she has been ill, she has scarcely been able to raise enough to keep her from starving, by selling one by one the few clothes which she brought with her. She has a handsome Bible and Prayer-book, which are constantly in her hands: these, she says, she would not sell if she could possibly help it, for she calls them her only comforters."

"Did you not say," asked my wife, "that Farmer Flemming knew this poor girl's father and mother?"

"Yes, madam," replied the woman; "they lived many years ago in this parish; their names were Gray."

"Gray!" exclaimed my wife; "is it possible?" And she looked at me.

I immediately put on my hat, and following the woman, hastened down into the village, thinking as I walked along of the wonderful ways of God: how sometimes for a season the good seem to be chastened and the wicked to flourish. "But we

know that all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. viii. 28).

When I was arrived at the lodging-house, I was conducted into a small yet clean room; where, on a straw mattress, and covered only with a thin blanket, lay a young woman, apparently in a kind of doze. She was very pale, and seemed to be almost at the gates of death; but there was nothing disgusting or frightful in her, as there is about bad people when they are sick or about to die. She was perfectly clean and neat, and her face was composed as the face of a little child; for it seemed that she had no wicked passions to disturb or agitate her.

Whilst I looked at her, as I stood by her bedside (for I would not suffer the woman of the house to awaken her), I could not help thinking of James and Mary Gray, and I said to myself, "Is this the same pretty lively Susan who, not many years ago, was blessed with a kind father and mother to take care of her, and to watch over her? And is she now without a friend, without a home? Is sickness so soon come upon her, and must she die, whilst yet in the flower and prime of life? 'But the days of man are as grass; as a flower of the field so he flourisheth:

for the wind passeth over it, and it is gone' (Ps. ciii. 15, 17). So saith the royal David."

Whilst these thoughts passed in my mind, she opened her eyes and tried to raise herself in her bed; and smiling, said in a faint voice: "I most humbly thank you, sir, for visiting a poor orphan: although I was quite an infant when I lost my father and mother, yet I remember how often you visited their humble cottage, and how often you kindly noticed their little child."



I turned away to hide the tears which came into my eyes; and she, not understanding wherefore I turned from her, and why I did not answer, said,—

"Sir, I fear by the freedom of my speech I have offended you. You perhaps do not remember Susan Gray. My father and mother lived many years ago in

the little cottage on the river-side just below the church."

By this time I had recovered myself, and turning to her, I took her hand and said, "Poor young creature, do you think it possible that I should be offended at your innocent joy on seeing me? No, my daughter, I have not forgotten you; I have not ceased to remember with affection your worthy parents. But where have you lived since the death of your aunt? What has reduced you to this state? Have you met with no friends in this world to protect you, and to supply to you the place of your lost parents?"

She replied, with a degree of piety which filled my eyes with tears of joy, "I have not indeed, sir, met with many friends; but that God who is the Father of the fatherless has not forsaken me. I have had many trials and temptations," she added, "and those who ought to have been my protectors laid snares for me. But I trusted that 'Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, would deliver me from this present evil world, according to the will of my God and my Father' (Gal. i. 3, 4). And praised be God," said she, clasping her hands together, "He has delivered me: I am now above the power of wicked pleasures.

or happy creature than she was when we brought her to the nurse's cottage.

Thank God, she was not in much pain, and she had made her peace with Him: her lamp was trimmed, and she was prepared for the long journey which she was soon to take. She spent many hours of the day in reading and prayer; and sometimes, at noon when the sun was high in the heavens, and the air was warm, she would sit at the door of the house, looking around her upon the green woods, the river rolling through the meadows, and the church upon the hill, where she hoped her body would be laid beside those of her dear parents, whilst her soul was mounting far above the clouds to that happy place, where "those who have endured temptation shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him" (James i. 12).

Whilst she was at this cottage, she by little and little, when she found herself able, told us her story, which, much as we loved and admired her before, rendered her still more and more dear to us.

But before I relate it, as I intend to do, to the best of my power in her own language, I must address a few words of my own to those young

women who shall hereafter read the history of Susan Gray.

I am an old man, being seventy-four last Old Christmas Day : I have been Rector of this parish forty years ; and during that time I can say with King David, "I never saw the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread" (Ps. xxxvii. 25). I will not say that misfortunes do not sometimes come upon very good people ; but God is "a strength to the poor man who fears Him, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat" (Ps. xxv. 4).

Yet whilst I affirm this, for the encouragement of those who try to serve their God to the best of their power, I must not hide from you who shall read this, what has been the end of all the bad people whom I have been so unfortunate as to know since I lived in this village. I will speak particularly of bad women. I never knew a vain, a light, or bold girl, whose end in this world was not shame, poverty, or disease. For a time a bad young woman may seem to prosper ; she may deck herself in silver and gold ; she may paint her face and tire her head like the wicked Queen Jezebel. But these are the words of God : "Hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures,

that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; evil shall come upon thee, thou shalt not know from whence it riseth; and mischief shall fall upon thee, thou shalt not be able to put it off; and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know" (Isa. xlvii. 8, 11).

And I pray you, my good girls, do not deceive yourselves, nor suppose, because you see many bad women around you, that God will spare them for their numbers: the city of Sodom, in which there were not ten good men, was burnt with fire from heaven; so, were there not ten good girls in the town or village in which you live, the multitude of the sinners would not save them. All bad people will have their portion in the lake which burns with brimstone and fire.

Nor must you hope that you will be saved by being secret in your crimes, for night is not dark with God. He knows even all your thoughts; and if we suffer our minds to be filled with evil thoughts, He will not receive us into heaven when we die.

Attend, therefore, my good girls, to what an old man says, who has studied God's book from his

cradle to his old age ; and all of you try to equal Susan Gray, that you may with her enter into the joy of your Lord.

But now let me proceed to tell you her story as I heard it from herself.

23
History of Susan Gray.
cribble to his old story and all of you try to repeat
Susan Gray that you may with her enter into the
joy of your Land.
But how let me proceed to tell you that story and
how it began itself.



*SUSAN GRAY'S ACCOUNT OF
HERSELF.*

—o—

THE early part of my life, whilst my beloved parents were living, is very well known to you, sir, said Susan Gray; I will therefore begin my story from the time when I was taken by my aunt from the poorhouse in this parish to her dwelling in a little narrow street in the town of Ludlow. I was too young to feel very much the sad change; a sad one indeed it was, for even in the poorhouse I had lived in cleanliness, and had been encouraged to behave well, but with my poor aunt I lived in dirt and rags; I was suffered to keep company with bad children, to tell lies, to take God's name in vain, and even to steal. My aunt was old, and made herself very sickly by the constant habit, from her youth up, of drinking spirits and strong liquor. She had never been an industrious, cleanly woman; and now that she was advanced

in years, she became so dirty and disagreeable, that no decent person cared to enter her house.

She had, since the death of her husband, sold by little and little all her furniture, till there was nothing left in her house but two or three broken chairs, a dresser which had not been properly cleaned for years, some old plates, and a set of cracked teacups. The floor of the house was covered with litter and dirt, and the broken windows were filled up with paper and rags; we had no other than straw beds to sleep upon.

But what was worse than all this, was the wickedness which went on in this house. My aunt not only herself took God's name in vain, and entirely neglected all religious duties, never going to church for years, but she encouraged all sorts of bad people to come about her. I never loved my aunt; for, although she often indulged me in all my wishes, giving me of the best of what she had to eat or drink, and suffered me to go unpunished for my faults, yet she sometimes fell into the most violent passions with me upon the most trifling occasion. She would sometimes beat me severely for throwing down her tobacco-pipe or snuff-box; and would at the same time allow

me to swear and tell lies, without correcting me in the least.

In this manner I lived till I was about ten years of age, and was not undeservedly thought by the neighbours one of the most idle, mischievous, and dishonest little girls in the town.

It was about this time that, early one summer's morning, my aunt sent me to gather sticks in the fields. I took with me as a companion a little girl of my own age, the daughter of a widow who kept a huckster's shop exactly opposite to my aunt's house. This child, whose name was Charlotte Owen, was not much better taught than myself, although there was scarcely a girl in the town who was dressed in a more costly manner. Her mother had often forbid her to play with me, telling her that she was much above me, and that it was beneath her to be seen with a little ragged girl. But Charlotte was fond of me because I was lively and active; because I was more expert than herself in finding birds'-nests, and in catching butterflies; and she therefore resolved that she would play with me unknown to her mother.

When Charlotte and I had got into the fields

opposite to the castle, instead of looking for sticks we began to run races, and to gather flowers.

At last, being tired, we sat down upon the grass, and began to talk.

"The day after to-morrow," said Charlotte, "is Sunday, and I shall go to church."

"So shall not I," I said; "I never go to church. I have no time."

"Oh!" said Charlotte, "it is not because you have not time that you do not go to church. I can tell you why, though."

"And why?" said I hastily.

"Because," said Charlotte, "you have nothing but those dirty rags to go in: what do you think the people would say to see such a creature come into the church?"

I began to be very angry, and jumping up, I said, "Don't talk to me about rags; I don't see what anybody is the better for the gown they wear. I am as good as the best of them, indeed I am:" and I began to cry with passion.

"I wish I had my mother's great looking-glass here," said Charlotte, laughing, "that you might see yourself in that old brown stuff gown and ragged

apron, and find what a different sort of figure you cut to me, in this nice stuff coat, this scarlet petticoat and blue hat."

"Oh! I wish, I wish," I cried, "that my father and mother had lived, and then they could have afforded to have bought me finer clothes than those."

"They might have bought finer than these," said Charlotte; "but they could not have bought clothes for you half so fine as those I am to wear on Sundays."

"Yes, they could," said I.

On which Charlotte gave me a slap, which I returned; and we began to fight.

We fought till we were out of breath; and Charlotte then ran home crying because her apron was torn, and I went farther on into the fields to get my sticks.

When I had gathered as many as I could carry, and had fastened them together, I returned homeward.

As I was crossing a narrow green lane, not far from the town, I saw in the hedge one of the prettiest little birds I had ever beheld. He was not much larger than a robin, and had a hooked bill like a hawk, but his feathers were of the brightest red, blue,

and purple. I immediately laid down my faggot, and walked softly up to the bush in which he sat ;



but no sooner had I put out my hand to take hold of him, than he hopped through the hedge into the next field ; I followed him there, and thought I was sure of him, when he again made his escape back into the lane.

To show you, sir, in what a sad wicked state my mind was, when I saw that the little bird had again escaped from me, I became excessively angry, and took up a stone to throw at him ; but the stone, by the care of God, who knoweth even when a sparrow falleth to the ground, who loveth all His creatures, and who will avenge the cause of the smallest animal who is wantonly tormented, fell at some distance from the little bird.

At length, with much trouble, I caught the pretty

little creature, and was surprised to find that he was so tame as to sit upon my finger, as my aunt's magpie used to do.

I was so delighted with my prize, that, forgetting my sticks, I hastened into the town, proudly holding up the bird, who perched quietly upon my hand.

Just as I was got into one of the larger streets, I heard somebody cry out, "Ah! there is my mistress's paroquet;" and immediately a very decent elderly woman came up to me, and said, with an air of much joy, "My good little girl, where did you find my mistress's bird?"

"Your mistress's bird, indeed," said I, "it is my bird."

"No," replied the woman, "that cannot be; he flew out of my mistress's window this morning, and over the garden wall into the fields."

"For all that, he is not your bird," I answered; "he is mine;" and I was going to run off with him, when she caught hold of my gown, and said she must have him. "Then nobody shall have him," said I; "I will kill him."

"Do not hurt him," said the woman; "my mistress will give you half-a-crown for him."

"No, no, no !" I cried, "I will have him."

At that moment my aunt, coming out of a shop hard by, and seeing me struggle with the servant, called out, "Heyday, what's the matter? What are you doing to the child?"

"Come, aunt, come," I exclaimed; "come and take my part: I won't part with the bird."

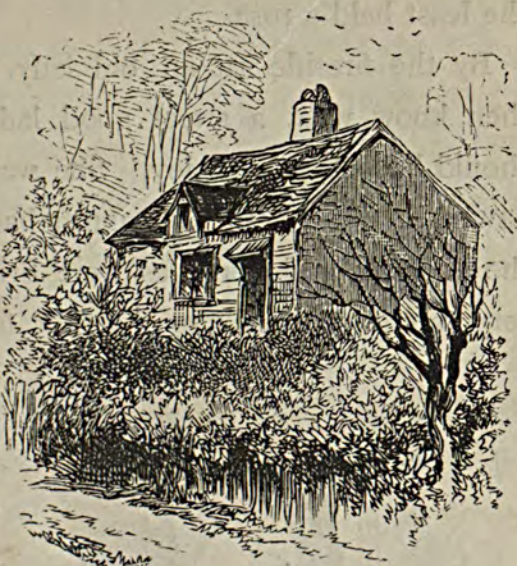
My aunt was at first very angry with the servant; but when she heard that I was to have half-a-crown if I would consent to part with the bird, she turned all her anger upon me, and bade me give it to the servant, and follow her to her mistress's house to receive the money.

I obeyed; but I looked gloomy and sulky, and went muttering the whole way to the lady's house.

We passed through several streets, till at length we came to one which leads up to the castle. The servant stopped before an old house close by the gates of the castle-walk; she opened the door, and bid me wait in the hall.

Whilst I stood there I stared around me with wonder, for I had never before been in a house belonging to gentlefolks. The hall was a large room,

hung round with pictures, which I afterwards learned were taken from the history of the Bible. At the farther end was a window, partly filled with coloured glass, which looked into a garden full of tall trees; beside the window was a clock, made of very shining black wood, gilt with golden



flowers. On one side of the hall was a door which opened into a kitchen, and on the other was one which led into the parlour.

When the servant had brought me into the house, she went straight towards the parlour, and left the door open so wide that I could see all within. The parlour was hung with paper of a dark colour; and in one corner there was a glass cupboard, filled with very fine china.

Over the fireplace was a coloured picture of three

very pretty little girls ; one of them held an orange in her hand, and one had a bird upon her finger, and the least held a rose.

By the fireside sat an old lady. Oh ! I did not then know what a sweet good lady she was, or I should have cried for joy. She was very short, and having lost her teeth, her mouth had fallen in. But she was fair, and her eyes were bright, and looking very good-humoured ; so that her face was still very

agreeable. She

was dressed in a black silk gown, with a short white apron ; she had long ruffles, and a white hood over her cap. A little round table stood before her, upon which lay her large Bible,



and a small yellow cat was asleep at her feet.

"Here, madam," said the servant, going into the parlour, "here is Miss Polly come back." The old

lady smiled, and holding out her hand, the bird hopped upon her finger ; and, while she stroked it, she called it a naughty bird, and asked it why it flew away from its best friends. She then inquired how it was found : and the servant having told her, she arose from her chair, and taking a little gold-headed stick in her hand, " I will go myself," said she, " and speak to the child."

I was by this time in a better humour ; and when the old lady came up to me, and began to talk in a gentle and kind way, I felt no longer inclined to be cross, but I smiled and curtsied, and gave an account of the way in which I had found the bird, as civilly as possible. When the



old lady had talked to me for some time, she called her servant, and said to her, " Sarah, I do not know whether my memory may have failed me, but I think there is some resemblance between this child

and what my eldest daughter was just before she died."

"It is now forty years or more," replied Sarah, "since my dear young mistress's death, and being then but young, I do not remember her very well."

"But," said the old lady, "look at the picture of my dear Clary, as it hangs there over the mantelpiece, and tell me if she has not the same white hair, and rosy colour, and the same smiling eyes as this little girl:" then looking kindly at me, she asked me many questions about my parents, and my way of living; and when I had answered them, she gave me the money which had been promised me, and told me to come again to her house four days afterwards.

"But be sure," added she, "before you come again, wash yourself quite clean, and comb your hair; for however poor you may be, there can be no necessity for uncleanness."

Thus did Almighty God provide a friend for me, remembering the virtues of my excellent parents; for, as the holy Psalmist says, "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord; his seed shall be mighty upon

earth, the generation of the upright shall be blessed. Surely he shall not be moved for ever ; the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance" (Ps. cxiii. 1, 2, 6).

So did God in His mercy remember my parents ; and when they were no more He became a father to me, making me strong against those who thought to have tempted me to do wickedly, and blessing me with the hopes of eternal happiness.

Four days afterwards I went again to Mrs. Neale's house ; for Neale was the name of this good lady. When Mrs. Sarah saw that I had taken care to make myself clean, she took me into a little room beside the kitchen, and taking off my old rags, she put on me an entire new suit of clothes, which good Mrs. Neale had caused to be made for me. My new gown was of purple stuff, and I had a nice blue apron, round tippet, and round cap.

When I was dressed she took me by the hand into the parlour, and said, "Here, madam, is the little girl to whom you are so good."

The old lady got up from her chair, and having put on her spectacles, she looked at me for some time, and turning me round, said—

"'Tis a nice little tidy girl to look at; I wish, Sarah, we could as soon put her soul in order as we have her body."

"Ah! madam," answered Mrs. Sarah, "that is not so easy a matter; there is no great difficulty in washing the outside of the cup, but it is a hard matter to cleanse the inside."

"Well, Sarah," said Mrs. Neale, "but we will at least make the trial. I am told that this poor child has neither father nor mother: and it is a most blessed thing to be a father to the fatherless. Remember what will be said on the judgment-day to those who have clothed the naked, have fed the hungry, have visited the sick and those that are in prison: 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' (Matt. xxv. 34).

Then looking in my face, "Little Susan," she said, should you like to go to school to learn to be good? Will you be content to leave off playing in the street, and will you give up your time to working and to reading? Children who play in the streets with others learn to lie and to swear, and perhaps to steal. They grow up to be idle, bold, bad men and

women ; and when they die, they go to a place where they live with devils in fire and brimstone, and chains and darkness. But holy children, who never lie, nor swear, nor steal ; who pray to God, go to church, and learn to read and to work, become modest, industrious, honest men and women, and when they die go to heaven."

But I fear that I shall tire you with making my story too long. It is enough to say that good Mrs. Neale sent me to a very nice day school, and every Sunday I dined at my dear lady's house, and read to her in the Bible after she came from church in the evening.

In a few months you would not have known me to be the same child ; I was become so cleanly and mannerly in my outward appearance, and was so greatly improved in everything that is good. I never played in the streets, but, when I came from school, busied myself in cleaning my aunt's house, or in mending or washing our clothes.

My poor aunt was, indeed, I am sorry to say, so very bad a woman, that it was very difficult to improve her ; but I remember with pleasure that after I became a better girl, she took less delight in bad company than she had formerly done ; she smoked and drank

less ; appeared cleaner in her person, and now and then went to church.

For four years Mrs. Neale continued to send me to school, and in that time I had learned to read very well, could do any kind of needlework, and by the means of Mrs. Sarah, knew a good deal of household business, of washing, ironing, and cooking in a plain way. But I had learned what was better than all this by means of my Bible, and from going to church, and from the good counsel of my dear Mrs. Neale,—I had learned what every one must do who wishes to go to heaven, and what they must avoid if they fear a place of torment after death.

When I was about the age of thirteen, my poor aunt died, and as I had now no home, Mrs. Neale took me entirely into her family, to wait upon her, and to assist Mrs. Sarah, who was getting past her work.

I lived in this family for more than two years ; and these were the happiest years of my life. Not a day passed over my head but I received some good instruction from my dear good lady ; and I endeavoured as much as lay in my power to profit by these instructions, and hourly to become wiser and better.

At length it pleased God to take from me my beloved Mrs. Neale, after an illness of a few days. She died at the great age of eighty-two. A few hours before her death, she called me to her bedside and talked to me in such a way as I never can forget.

"My dear Susan," she said, "in a short time I shall be taken from this world, where I have endured many hard trials, and I trust, through God's mercy, shall go to that happy country where there is no sorrow nor crying.

"Do not weep, my Susan, for I am going, through the merits of my Redeemer, to the dear children and kind husband whom I have long lost, and in a few years, my child, I shall see you again. Only continue to be a good girl; remember the commandments of God; be not drawn aside from your duty by the wicked pleasures of this world; pleasures which endure only for a short season, and the end of which is eternal torment."

She then told me, that knowing she must soon die, she had long been endeavouring to get a service for me, but that she had not succeeded; for people in general objected to me on account of my youth. "But," added this good lady, "I would not have

you, my dear child, to seek your fortune when I am no more ; I have provided a situation, in which I hope that you will improve yourself, and render yourself fit in a few years for a good service.

"You know Mrs. Bennet," said she, "who lives about two miles from the town, and gains a very comfortable living by washing and ironing, and by needlework. She is an industrious woman, and bears a good character, and has undertaken to receive you into her house for three years ; during which time she will improve you in her business, and you will then be fit to wait upon a lady."

I could not for some time answer, for my tears and sobs almost choked me ; but when I could speak, I thanked my dear lady for her kindness, and promised never to forget the good things she had taught me.

She then gave me three guineas to provide me with clothes whilst I was with Mrs. Bennet, from whom I was to receive no wages ; and also she gave me her Bible and Prayer-book, and a black stuff gown and petticoat to wear as mourning for her.

The same night this dear lady died ; and I remained in the house only till the funeral was over ;

then taking leave with many tears of Mrs. Sarah, who set off the next day to return to Cornwall, where she was born, and where all her family had lived, I went to my new place.

It was a small, yet very neat cottage, in the midst of a garden; there was behind it a hill covered with tall trees, and before it were many pleasant green meadows, which reached down to the river, through which was a pathway which led to Ludlow. The town itself would have been plainly seen from hence, had it not been for some trees which concealed all the houses, and only showed the tower of the church and part of the old castle.

As I walked from the town, I continued to cry the whole way; but when I came near the cottage, I wiped away my tears, and strove to put on a more cheerful look. It was a fine summer's evening, and Mrs. Bennet was sitting before the house door drinking tea. My old companion, Charlotte Owen, of whom I had seen but little since I had lived with Mrs. Neale, was with her, having taken a walk that evening to see her.

"Oh, here is Susan Gray," cried Charlotte, as soon as she saw me.

"Welcome, Susan," said Mrs. Bennet; "come and sit down, my good girl." So saying, she placed a chair for me beside her, and laying her hand upon mine, added, "I am glad to see you here, child. You and I shall agree vastly well, I am sure: and if you will mind your work, you shall have no cause to regret the old lady's death, for you shall want for nothing."

"I should be apt," said Charlotte, "if I was in your situation, Susan, to be very glad to see Mrs. Neale laid low, for you must have led a shocking dull life with those two old women."

"Oh! no, no, no," I said, whilst the tears came again into my eyes, "I was never so happy in my life as I have been these last two years."

Charlotte laughed, and Mrs. Bennet staring freely in my face, said, "Come, child, wipe away those tears, and let me see no more of them; nothing spoils beauty like pining and crying."

"Then I will never cry," said Charlotte, "or I shall never get a husband."

Mrs. Bennet laughed, and clapping her on the shoulder, said, "Thou art a wise girl." Then giving me a dish of hot tea, "Come, cheer up, child," she

added ; "if you could but look a little more bright, you need not be ashamed to show your face with any one. I dare say, before you have served half your time with me, I shall have some smart young fellow from Ludlow coming after you, with his fine speeches and I know not what."

She was going on, when I, remembering how often Mrs. Neale had warned me that God hated foolish and light jestings, adding, that if I hoped to enter into the kingdom of heaven, I must keep my mind free from every kind of impure and unholy thoughts, hastily drank the tea which she offered me, and then getting up, said that I was ready to do any work she might have for me in the house.

"Oh, sit you down again," answered she ; "I have nothing for you to do to-night. Now your old friend Charlotte is with us, and we will have a little gossiping."

I sat down as my mistress desired me ; but as she and Charlotte continued to talk in a very light and improper manner, I remained silent.

"Bless me," cried Charlotte, "how grave Susan looks ! Why, we have affronted her, I suppose, by telling her that she will spoil her beauty by crying."

"No, indeed," I answered, "I am not affronted : but if you must know the truth, I do not quite like the subject of your discourse, Charlotte. My dear Mrs. Neale pointed out to me many places in the Holy Scriptures where we are exhorted never to talk about idle or unprofitable things. I could, if you please, show you those texts in my Bible."

"No, for Heaven's sake, child," said Mrs. Bennet, "keep your preachments to yourself. Why, I suppose, by and by, these good Christians will deny us the use of our tongues. Come, let us hear no more of this."

I obeyed, for she looked very angry ; and, oh ! how earnestly did I wish that I was not bound to remain with this woman.

Had Mrs. Neale known what she was, I felt assured that she would rather have seen me in my grave than placed me under her care. But she always had a good character, and no one, before gentlefolks, spoke with more modesty and propriety, as she had the art to do.

The next subject of their discourse was fine clothes, and Charlotte gave an account to Mrs. Bennet of the gowns and head-dresses which the ladies wore at

Ludlow. Mrs Bennet, in her turn, described some fine dresses which she had lately made up.

Charlotte wished that she could afford to buy a silk gown, and said she should never be easy till she could get one. Then turning to me, "Susan," she said, "how are you off for clothes? Come, open your box and let us see what you have in it."

To prove that I was willing to oblige them in everything in my power, I unlocked my box, and laid all my clothes before them; but I had nothing fine to show.

"Well," said Mrs. Bennet, when she had examined all my gowns, "I cannot but wonder that Mrs. Neale, who everybody knows was of a very good family, should like a servant about her dressed in such ordinary garments as these. Indeed, Susan, you would look much better if you would dress a little smarter. I daresay the old lady gave you a little money before she died: now, if you would spend a few shillings at the next fair in buying a bit of ribbon for your hat, and a little trimming for your cloak, and one or two lawn aprons, you would cut a much more creditable figure, and look a vast deal better in every respect."

I smiled, and said, "If you choose to treat me with all this finery, I will not refuse to wear it."

"Nay, that is quite out of the question," answered she; "I have nothing but what I can earn, and it is not to be supposed that I should have money to spend upon others. But I know very well that you have money enough, if you please."

"I will answer for her," said Charlotte; "see how she blushes! she cannot deny it. But all I can say is this, that if she chooses to go about in such ordinary clothes, she cannot expect that people who can cut a better figure will be seen with her."

My patience was now almost gone; but I knew how offensive every expression of anger is to that God who has declared that He will only forgive those their trespasses against Him who forgive their fellow-creatures their trespasses against themselves. I therefore made no answer, but placing my clothes again in my box, remained silent, whilst they continued to ridicule and mock me for my meanness, for so they called my refusing to spend the little money I had in unnecessary finery.

At length Charlotte Owen took her leave, and Mrs. Bennet asked me if I was willing to go to bed, as I

must rise early the next morning to my work. She then led me to a small room upstairs, which was within her own; this she told me was to be mine. It had one window, which opened towards the hill behind the house; and from hence I could hear the song of the little birds among the trees, and see the



pretty flowers which grew beneath in the garden. This room was so small, that it would scarcely contain more than my flock bed and the box which held my clothes; yet, nevertheless, it was a great comfort to me to have a place which I could call my own, to which I could retire, when I had a leisure hour, to read my Bible, and think over my conduct.

But not to make my story too long, I must say, in a few words, that for the first two years my life with Mrs. Bennet was by no means so uncomfortable

as I at first thought it would have been, for my mistress was seldom at home. As I could soon do most of the work she had to do within doors, she used often to go out to iron, and work in the genteel families in and about the town ; for there was scarcely anything which she could not put her hand to. So that I had very little of her company, and of that light discourse which was so unpleasant to me. When she was at home, it is true, she did not always treat me as kindly as I had been accustomed to be treated by my dear Mrs. Neale and Mrs. Sarah. But we must not expect that everything in this world of trial will always pass on quietly and agreeably. She sometimes was very easy and free with me, as if I were her daughter rather than her servant ; and then, without cause, she would become fretful and sullen, and it would be totally impossible to give her satisfaction. But I remembered well the words of St. Peter, and I trust was patient :

“Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your

faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God; for even hereunto were ye called" (1 Pet. ii. 18-21).

I obeyed my mistress in all she could ask, whether it was reasonable or unreasonable, except when she was so inconsiderate as to require me to do anything wrong. She often requested me to go with her to wakes and merry-makings on a Sunday, instead of going to church, which I always refused to do, nor would I ever buy any fine clothes to please her.

I never went to Ludlow but when she sent me on an errand, and kept out of all company whatever, as much as lay in my power; for I, alas! was alone in the world, and had no kind parents nor creditable relations to watch over me: God was my only Friend, and I determined that I would never do anything to offend this kind, most powerful, and merciful Friend.

I saw very little of Charlotte Owen, although she came almost every Sunday evening to Mrs. Bennet's; and sometimes brought with her a young man, the son of a neighbour, with whom she was so foolish as to walk in the fields and lanes about the town. But

I saw she was a vain girl, who feared not God, and whenever she was with my mistress, I shut myself up in my little room, and read my Bible, if I was not wanted below.

Charlotte, at first, laughed at me for loving to be so much alone, and asked me if I did not shut myself up to write love-letters; for her head was always full of these kind of foolish thoughts. But when she saw that I persisted in keeping out of her way, she would hardly speak to me when she came into the house.

I had now lived with Mrs. Bennet more than two years and a half, and was looking forward with hope to the time when I should leave her service, and enter into that of some person who feared God, when one evening, towards the latter end of last April, my mistress had been at Ludlow the whole day, and I was ironing some linen which she had left me to get up: I remember that I was thinking of my dear father and mother, and Mrs. Neale, and of the happy time when I hoped my immortal soul would be taken from its mortal case, and would be carried by angels to dwell with these good and most beloved persons in the presence of God, when suddenly, towards dusk,

Charlotte Owen appeared at the garden wicket, and coming up to the window before which I was standing at my work, "What ! all alone, Susan ?" she said.

I was surprised at the free manner in which she spoke ; but I answered her as if she had always been equally kind to me ; I told her that I had been alone all day, and that my mistress was at work in the town.

"I came to have a little chat with you," said she. "Will you let me in ?"

I answered that "I should be glad to do so. But is it not very late, Charlotte ?" said I ; "and as you have nobody with you, would you not do better to make the best of your way home ? for you know it does not look well to see young women walking in the fields so late."

"Let us have none of your scruples, I pray, Susan," said she ; "you have lived with the old folks till you are got so starched and precise, that you are quite tiresome."

So saying, she went round to the door, and knocked very loudly at it till I unbolted it ; for, when I was alone, I always fastened it when night drew on.

When she came in, she took a chair beside my ironing-board, and began to tell me of a very large merry-making and dancing at the Blue Bear Inn, at which she and her mother had been present the night before.

"You cannot think, Susan, how merry we were; the room was so full, we could scarcely move; and we heard such charming singing, and all the girls were so smart. I am sure you would have liked it: why don't you come more amongst us, and enjoy yourself a little? Here you shut yourself up, and mope, and are so dull."

"Indeed, Charlotte," I said, "I am not so dull."

"But don't you think," said Charlotte, "that Mrs. Bennet would now and then let you go to a wake or a dance?"

"I daresay she would," I answered; "but I shall never ask her leave; for, to tell you the truth, Charlotte, I do not think that modest women have any business at such merry-makings."

"Lord bless me! and why not?" cried Charlotte. "Why, all the gentlefolks have their dances, and plays, and routs; and I do not see why we should not have them too. Do tell me where the harm of them lies?"

"I can scarcely tell you, Charlotte," I answered ;
"for I never was at a dance, or a wake, or a fair, or a
show in my life. But will you own to me whether you
ever went to any of these places without hearing
bad language, without meeting with bold or drunken
men, who talk familiarly to you, who utter profane
and wicked jests, and take God's name in vain?
Now do answer me that question, Charlotte."

"I don't know, I can't tell : why, why, why"——
said Charlotte.

"Answer me either yes or no, my dear Charlotte,"
I said. "Surely, if you do not meet with bad people
in these places, you may say so : and if you do meet
with them, you must agree with me that they are not
fit places for good young women."

"Lord ! how scrupulous ! how over-nice you are !"——
said Charlotte.

"How can we be too scrupulous, Charlotte?"
answered I. "Can we love God too much ; or serve
Him too well ? Is it not said in the Bible, 'No man
can serve two masters : for either he will hate the
one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the
one, and despise the other : ye cannot serve God
and mammon?'" (Matt. vi. 24.)

Charlotte made no answer ; and for some time she sat quite silent. At last she said, " Susan, when were you in town last ? "

" The day before yesterday I fetched this linen from Mrs. Nichols," I answered.

" Did you see the Captain then ? " she asked.

" What Captain ? " I said ; " I know no Captain."

" Why, have you not heard of the Captain who is just come to town ? Where can you have lived this last fortnight ? He is come to lodge at Mrs. Smith's, the mercer ; and he is the finest, handsomest, freest, pleasantest gentleman I ever saw in my life. He seems to regard his money no more than the stones in the streets ; and you cannot think how condescending and obliging he is. He smiles and is so gracious, when one meets him anywhere, and speaks so kindly."

" And speaks so kindly ! " I repeated. " O Charlotte ! what business could a gentleman, a stranger too, have to speak to a poor girl in your situation ? "

She coloured. " A poor girl, indeed ! " she answered. " I like that, Susan. A poor girl, truly ! I am no servant."

" Perhaps not," I answered ; " but you must know

that the gentlefolks do not look upon you as their equal; nor will a gentleman treat you as such. You may be assured that when a gentleman speaks freely to a young woman in your state of life, he means no good."

"Who says that the Captain spoke freely to me, I should wish to know?" said Charlotte.

"Did you not say yourself," I asked, "that he smiled, and spoke kindly when you met him?"

"Well, and suppose he did," answered she; "and suppose he should think me handsome, and suppose he should think of making me his lady, where would be the wonder?"

"O Charlotte!" said I; "gentlemen are not so ready to raise up poor girls to be their wives. Do you think, whatever they may say, that they could like low, ignorant women like ourselves better than the fine ladies whom they see every day? How are we fit to appear in the company of gentlefolks? Can we talk of the things which they talk of? Are we fit, with our homely and countrified discourse, to converse with learned people? Do not let us expect that our betters will raise us to be their equals. If a decent young man in our own station offers himself,

we may listen to him ; but if we think of making ourselves greater than our neighbours, we shall fall lower than we now are."

"I am sure I don't want to raise myself," said Charlotte. "I did nothing to make the Captain notice me: I was walking very quietly down the narrow lane from the town towards the meadows, when he first thought proper to speak to me: I am sure I did not speak first."

"But perhaps you looked at him," I said.

"Looked at him, truly ! why, who would not look at so fine a gentleman ? You cannot think how very handsome he is."

"And do you think, Charlotte," said I, "because you did not speak, that this gentleman could not find out what passed in your mind ? When we are angry, do not our looks show our displeasure, although we open not our mouth ? You suffered your mind to be full of this stranger ; you looked at him and admired him : and he no doubt discovered these your thoughts by your looks, although you supposed them hidden by your silence. If he, therefore, treated you with any freedom, it was your own fault ; and you have as much reason to blame yourself

as if you had tempted him to do so by speaking boldly to him."

"Upon my word, Susan," answered she, "you take finely upon you, indeed! Who made you ruler over me, that you should dare to find fault with me at this rate? What, must I neither look nor speak? I suppose you would have me walk about with my eyes shut."

"I beg your pardon, Charlotte," said I, "if I have spoken harshly to you; but you were the friend of my early days, and although we have been but little together of late, yet I cannot but love you, and I wish, if possible, to convince you that you allow yourself in liberties which you may think innocent, but for which I fear that you will be punished perhaps very severely after death. For although you are not so learned as the gentlefolks are, yet you have been taught to read your Bible; and it is your own fault if you are ignorant what is the duty of a Christian. Surely you have read in the Holy Scriptures, that 'every man that hath hope in God, purifieth himself as He is pure;' and, again, 'he that committeth sin is of the devil'" (1 John iii. 3, 8).

"And pray, what sin have I committed?" asked Charlotte.

"You have allowed your thoughts to be employed, my dear Charlotte," said I, "by very vain and improper subjects. Your heart has been occupied by this stranger, although God has commanded you to 'set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth' (Col. iii. 2). You have broken this commandment of God, and unless you resolve to repent, and to think no more of these vain things, I fear that you will make yourself not only miserable in this world, but in that which is to come. For the holy apostle St. Paul says, 'to be carnally minded is death'" (Rom. viii. 5).

Charlotte made no answer, but stared at me, as if, instead of repeating the words of God, I had been saying some very foolish thing. And at that moment my mistress knocked at the door.

Charlotte ran to open it, very glad, I believe, to break off her discourse with me.

In came Mrs. Bennet, with a large roll of fine Irish cloth under her arm, which she laid upon a small table; and throwing herself upon a chair beside it, "Now, girls," said she, "guess for whom I am going to

make that set of shirts; look at the cloth first, see how fine and even it is, and tell me who you think it fit for."

Charlotte said she presumed it was for the squire of the next village, and I guessed the worthy Dean, the Rector of our parish.

Mrs. Bennet laughed, and clapping her hand on the cloth, said, "You are both mistaken; it is for a finer gentleman than either of these. Why, Charlotte, I wonder you cannot think of him, for I have a pretty shrewd guess that he is often uppermost in your mind;" and then she laughed again.

I returned to my ironing without saying another word, and Charlotte, after thinking some time, cried, "Why, surely it is not for the Captain?"

"You have it now," said my mistress. "Mercer Smith called me in to-day as I was passing by, and told me that the Captain wanted to speak to me. I wondered what he could have to say to me; but it was about these shirts; he desired to have two of them made and washed by next Sunday morning. So, Susan, you must set to work by day-break; you have but three days to do them in, for I cannot help you. I am going out to-morrow, and we must not disoblige his honour for worlds."

"O Mrs. Bennet!" said Charlotte, "if you will give me leave, I will come to-morrow and help Susan; it would be a pleasure to me to work for so fine a gentleman."

"I thank you, Charlotte," said I, "I want no help."

"Mind that," said my mistress; "she takes such pleasure in working for this smart youth, that she will not have your help, Charlotte."

Charlotte laughed.

But I will not repeat all their wicked jests. Oh, how truly did the wise king Solomon say, "That the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xv. 26).

Charlotte insisted upon helping me in my work: and as it was very late, Mrs. Bennet asked her to stop with her all night.

When I had finished my ironing, and had got them their suppers, I asked leave to go to bed, that I might hear no more of their wicked talk; and when I was alone in my little room, I knelt down and prayed to God always to remember me, and to save me from being corrupted by this evil world. And having sung the evening hymn, I laid me down in bed, and slept most pleasantly.

Early the next morning I began my work ; and had done a great deal before Mrs. Bennet and Charlotte came down to breakfast.

As soon as breakfast was over, my mistress went out, and Charlotte and I sat down to work before the door. We were for some time silent ; at length Charlotte throwing down her work took out of her pocket a small pattern of flowered silk, which she showed me, asking me how I liked it.

"It is very pretty," said I.

"Should you not like a gown of it?"

"No," I answered ; "I think a silk gown would not become a poor servant."

"Why, as you are a servant, it might not suit you ; but I shall very soon have a gown of it," said she.

"Mrs. Hall, the pawnbroker, has one to part with as good as new, and she has promised to let me have it for a guinea and a half."

"A guinea and a half!" I cried ; "what a large sum ! you will never be able to raise it."

"And why not?" said Charlotte. "I have already given Mrs. Hall half-a-guinea towards it, and I know that I shall soon be able to raise the guinea. But

you must not say anything about it, for my mother is not to know at present."

"O Charlotte!" said I; "what are you about to do? In what way can you get the money unknown to your mother? And can you be so mean and foolish as to deceive your mother for the sake of a silk gown?"

"Lord bless me! why what is the matter now? Why I shall show my mother the gown as soon as I have got it, and tell her that I paid for it out of the money which my uncles, and aunts, and grandfather had given me, and which I shall say I saved up. And she will not ask many questions, for she will be so pleased to see me so smart."

"And can you resolve to offend God," I said, "to deceive your mother, and perhaps to be punished for ever in another world, for the sake of a silk gown, which in a few years will fade and wear away, and will be good for nothing but to be thrown aside?"

"As to deceiving my mother," answered Charlotte, "I am very easy about that; for I shall only do to her as she does to others, even to the very best of her friends. For not a day passes, to my knowledge, but she cheats some of her customers; and as to

telling lies, she minds them not the least when she can get a few pence by them."

"But," said I, "if she is so wicked as to deceive, and lie, and cheat, is that any reason that you should do the same? Remember these words, my dear Charlotte, which are taken from the Holy Bible, 'All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone' " (Rev. xxi. 8).

"But I am resolved," answered she, "to have the gown, so you may spare your preaching; only I beg you to say nothing about it."

"Will you answer me one question, Charlotte?" said I. "How did you get that half-guinea which you have already given for your gown? I know that but last week you told Mrs. Bennet that you had spent all you had in the world on a new hat."

"Oh! I am not obliged to tell you that," said she, laughing; "but all I will say is, that I got it where I hope to get more."

"I begin to be much afraid of you," said I; "this love of fine clothes will one day or other end in some sad evil. Indeed, my dear Charlotte, I beg you to think no more of this silk gown; be assured that if you could even get it honestly, no one would honour

you the more for being dressed above your station ; any undue degree of finery shows vanity and pride, if not something worse. Nor is it right for us to spend all that we have upon ourselves, little as that may be. If we deny ourselves some few pieces of finery, or even some few comforts, that we may give a little to those who are in greater want than ourselves, God will reward us tenfold : but if we greedily and selfishly spend all we can earn upon ourselves, our Lord, I fear, will say unto us at the great day of judgment, ‘ Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and ye gave Me no meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in ; naked, and ye clothed Me not ; sick and in prison, and ye visited Me not ’ (Matt. xxv. 41-43).

“ I think as you do, Susan,” said Charlotte, “ that rich people ought to spare some of their abundance to give to the poor ; but you know that we are not rich.”

“ As to you, Charlotte,” I answered, “ who have so many of the good things of this world, who have money to spend on gloves, and ribbons, and laces, and fine gowns ; can you say that you have nothing

to spare to the poor? I have less than you possess, and am obliged to work hard for what I have ; but like the poor widow I think it my duty to give my mite to the poor. And I remember what St. Paul says to the man who has been a thief: 'Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth' (Eph. iv. 28). And I could repeat to you twenty other texts in the Bible, to exhort and command us to take pity on the poor, and to love our neighbours as well as ourselves ; which we cannot be said to do when we lay out all the money we can earn in decking ourselves forth, or pampering ourselves with delicate food."

"You have a vast deal to say, Susan," said Charlotte ; "but I do not think, with all your fine talking, that I shall give up my silk gown."

"Now, my dear Charlotte," said I, "if you will promise to think no more of this silk gown and will for a few years be content to wear humble garments, and to give what you save to those who are in need, I think I can promise that at the end of that time you shall have a finer gown than any lady's in the kingdom ; yes, a richer gown than any queen ever wore on a birth-night."

Charlotte smiled, and asked me what I meant.

"This gown," said I, "that I promise you, shall be as white as snow, and as bright as the sun; it will never soil, and never wear away; no moths shall ever corrupt it, nor shall any thieves steal it from you."

"Why, Susan," said Charlotte, "of what are you talking? I do not understand you."

"And with this beautiful gown," added I, "you shall wear a crown of precious stones as bright as the stars in the heavens. Oh! my dear Charlotte, if you would but think less of this world with all its vanities; if you will resist its temptations, and endeavour to serve your God, you shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father, and enjoy pleasures for evermore in the presence of God."

"Oh! now I understand you," cried Charlotte: "you had quite puzzled me with your shining gown. It reminds me of the fine silver lace upon the Captain's waistcoat; you have no notion how handsome he looked in it."

I believe that I surprised her a little; for the moment she mentioned the Captain, I got up and carried my chair into the house, where I sat down at some distance from her.

"What is the matter, Susan?" said she: "why do you run away?"

"Because I do not choose to hear anything said about that gentleman. What business have we poor girls to be talking and joking about a Captain? I heard too much of these jests, Charlotte, last night; and whatever you may think of me, I am resolved that I will hear none of them to-day."

She got up, and coming to the door of the house, stood leaning with her back against the post, laughing at me for some minutes; calling me more nice than wise, prudish, and squeamish, and what not.

But I made no answer, remembering that it is said, "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves" (2 Tim. ii. 24, 25).

While she continued to laugh at me, two young men belonging to the town came running through the wood down the side of the garden. As they passed by the house they saw Charlotte, and one of them called to her; the other went on to the town.

She no sooner heard his voice than she ran to the wicket, and there stood talking and laughing with him till our dinner was ready.



As soon as dinner was over, she told me that she was tired of work, and wishing me a good day, took her leave.

I had finished two of the shirts, and washed them on Saturday evening, and on Sunday morning, it being a fine sunny day, my mistress laid the shirts in a neat basket, and strewing them over with lavender, ordered me to take them to the Captain's. "You will not have time, Susan," said she, "to get back to the village church; therefore dress yourself before you go, and when you have delivered the linen, you may leave your basket at mercer Smith's and go to church in the town."

I accordingly dressed myself neatly, and taking the basket under my arm, was just going out at the garden-gate, when my mistress calling after me, said,

“Susan, you must ask to see the Captain himself, and deliver the linen to him ; and if he asks you what he is to pay for the work, you must say, whatever his honour pleases ; for you know we must not fix a price to so great a gentleman.”

I thought that my mistress knew better how to deal with gentlefolks than I could do, who was a stranger to the world. Therefore when I came to mercer Smith’s door, I knocked and asked to see the Captain.

The Captain’s servant came, and asked me if he could not take the message to his master.

“No,” I said, “my mistress ordered me to see his honour himself.”

I was then led through the shop into a hall, where I stood for some minutes ; at last the parlour door was opened, and the Captain came out. When I saw his honour I began to be frightened ; for he was indeed a very fine gentleman ; I looked upon the ground, and at first I could scarcely speak.

“Young woman,” said he (I thought rather angrily), “what did you want with me ?”

“I hope that your honour will pardon me,” I said, “but my mistress ordered me to bring the linen to you.”

"Hold up your head, young woman," said the gentleman; "I cannot hear what you say."

I raised my head, and repeated what I had said before: but I was very much frightened.

When he saw that I was frightened, he smiled and said very kindly, "Tell your mistress, my good young woman, that I am obliged to her for obeying my orders exactly. You are her servant, I suppose; pray what may your name be?"

"Susan Gray," I answered.

"And where do you live?" he said.

"In the cottage by the river-side, under the woody hill." I then made a curtsey, and was going away.

But he called me back, and asked me what he was to pay for the work.

I answered, as I had been told, "Whatever your honour pleases."

He immediately offered me half-a-guinea. I was surprised, and said, "Oh! sir, this is too much; my mistress would not take half of it."

"Then," said he, "my good Susan, do you pay your mistress what you think she might expect, and keep the rest yourself."

"No, no, no, sir," said I, refusing to take the

money; "I am only her servant, and have no right to the profits of her work."

The Captain looked very hard indeed at me when he spoke these words; and when I had done, he said, "Your mistress is very happy, my good Susan, in so honest a servant. But you must take the whole of this money for yourself: when I see your mistress I will pay her for the work."

"Indeed, sir, I cannot take it; I thank your honour for your generosity to a poor girl, but I assure you that I want for nothing, and I have no right to take money which I have not earned." So saying, I made another curtsy and hastened away. When I got into the street it was time to go to church.

While I was at church, I could not help once or twice thinking how very odd it was that the Captain should offer me money, wondering that so great and fine a gentleman should talk to so poor a girl as myself in so free a manner. But when I recollected that my thoughts had been more employed by these things than by my duty to my God, I was very angry with myself. I prayed for forgiveness, and endeavoured during the remainder of the service to think entirely of holy and heavenly things.

As I returned home, I again reflected on what had passed between myself and the gentleman, and questioned myself whether I had done anything wrong or bold to make him so free with me. "It was but a few days ago," I said to myself, "that I blamed Charlotte Owen for allowing him to talk freely with her, and perhaps I have done the very thing for which I took her to task. As our Lord Jesus Christ said in His sermon, 'Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye' (Matt. vii. 3)? If I therefore take upon me to find fault with others, it becomes me more particularly to be blameless in my own conduct."

Whilst I thought of these things, I came into a narrow lane which led from the town to the meadows in which our house stood. At the end of this lane was a stile, on each side of which grew some very tall trees, whose green boughs made a kind of bower over the head.

When I came in view of this stile, I saw a gentleman sitting upon it reading a letter; but I could not tell, because of the shade of the trees, who he was.

I would have gone back and taken another way home, that I might not give him the trouble of rising to let me pass, but I supposed that my mistress would by this time be come from church, and would be in want of her dinner. So I walked on.

But when I came near the stile, I was much surprised to find that this gentleman was the Captain. He went on reading the letter, and never moved from his seat till I was come up close to him. I stood waiting for some moments; at last I begged his honour's leave to pass.

The first time I spoke he seemed not to hear me; and when I again asked him to give me leave to pass, he lifted up his eyes from the letter which he was reading, and without moving from his place, "Your servant, Susan," he said; "where may you be going, my good girl?"



"I am going home, sir," I said, "and beg your leave to pass."

"I will let you go presently, but first you must answer me a few questions."

"Sir," I replied, "you can have no business with me; if you wish to speak to my mistress, she shall call upon you at any time you shall please to fix."

"I have nothing to say to the old woman," answered he, "but I want to have a little discourse with you."

As I found that he was so rude, I turned back, and was going to take the other way into the meadows, although it was above half a mile round. But he, jumping from the stile, followed me, and said something which I thought very impertinent. Upon which I said to him, "If you forget, sir, that you are a gentleman, I shall forget also that I am a servant, and will tell you very plainly what I think of you."

"And what do you think of me, little Susan?" said he, laughing.

"I think, sir," answered I, "that you are a very wicked man: and although I may have no friend on earth to take my part, yet God Almighty will not suffer such behaviour as this to go unpunished."

So saying, I pushed hastily by him, and by means of running as fast as I could, was soon out of sight.

When I got home, I found the door locked, and no one within. I soon opened the door with a key which I had of my own; and as my mistress did not return, I ate my dinner, and prepared to go to our little village church, where I prayed God to preserve me through every temptation, and finally to bring me to His heavenly kingdom.

I had not been returned from church above an hour, before my mistress came in with Charlotte Owen, and two or three more young women, and as many young men, with whom she had been taking a walk to a village some miles distant, where they had dined together at a public-house.

"Susan," said she, as soon as she entered, "make the fire burn, and set on the tea-kettle, for we must have some tea as soon as possible, and set us a table and chairs at the door."

I did as I was ordered; but whilst I was getting tea ready within doors, I was shocked at the loud laughing and jesting of my mistress and her company.

The young men, who I found had drunk a few glasses of ale more than they were used to, were

extremely free and bold in their manner, and I was very sorry to see that not only Charlotte and the



other young women, but also my mistress, encouraged them, by their foolish tittering and still more foolish jokes, to behave in a manner which must be highly offensive to God,

who has commanded Christian men to treat "the elder women as mothers, the younger as sisters with all charity" (2 Tim. v. 2).

Having brought the tea-things, and prepared everything for the tea, my mistress bade me bring a chair, and take my place with the company.

I thanked her, but I said I would beg to be excused. "Now, don't refuse, Susan," said one of the young men, whose name was William Ball: "we must have your company. Here, take this chair by me; come, we are vastly merry."

"I see you are merry," I said ; " but I shall beg not to make one amongst you."

"And why not?" they all cried at once.

"Oh ! do not oblige me to stay," I answered.

"What, we are not good enough for you, I presume," said Charlotte.

"None of these airs, Susan," said my mistress ; "a fine lady in truth you are, with scarcely a rag to your back, or a shilling in your pocket, that you should turn up your nose at your betters. Sit you down this minute," added she, with a very naughty word.

William Ball at the same time took hold of my gown, and was going to pull me down into the chair by him, when I, struggling hard, escaped into the house, and, leaving my mistress and her company to wait upon themselves, ran into my own little room, where I shut the door, and throwing myself on my knees, prayed God to protect me. "Oh ! my God," I cried, "I am surrounded by snares and temptations ; deliver me, I pray thee, from the evils that encompass me."

My mistress did not call me down until all the company were gone, except Charlotte Owen, who

complained of a headache, and begged to stay all night at the cottage.

"Susan," said Mrs. Bennet, as soon as I came down, "any other mistress but myself would turn a servant out of doors who had behaved as you have done; but in consideration of your having always been an honest girl, I forgive you this once. I cannot say that I should pardon you so easily if you were to show any of these saucy airs again. Surely my friends are fit company for my servant!"

"I should think so, in truth," said Charlotte, who was sitting in an arm-chair, leaning her head upon her hand.

I thanked my mistress for forgiving me; and then turning to Charlotte, to prove that I was not in an ill-humour, but that I had only left the company for the sake of my God and my religion, "My dear Charlotte," I said, "I am sorry to see you so poorly."

She made no answer; and my mistress presently afterwards said, with a laugh, "Well, Susan, and what did the Captain say to you?"

"I do not like the Captain," I answered; "and with your leave, I will never go to his lodgings again."

"Lord bless me! and what now?" cried my

mistress. And Charlotte at the same time, raising her head, fixed her eyes upon me.

I then told them what had passed between me and the gentleman: as soon as I had finished the story, Mrs. Bennet cried out, "And were you so rude, Susan, as not to take the money? Don't you know that it is the greatest affront a servant can put upon a gentleman, to refuse his money? Why the Captain will never forgive you! How could you, Susan, behave in such a manner?"

"I did not want the money," I answered.

"Not want it!" said my mistress: "why you have not a handsome gown to your back. Everybody says that you would be well-looking if you dressed but smartly. But as it is, you are such a dowdy, such a country Joan, no one will look upon you. Is it not so, Charlotte?"

"Don't talk to her about it," said Charlotte: "she can't help her poverty: those who knew her aunt don't wonder at the figure she cuts—poor, low creature! And as to the Captain, I am sure he never would offer her money; and if he did, I am sure she never would refuse it. Don't let her deceive you Mrs. Bennet, with her fine stories."

"Nay, I do not think the girl would tell a lie," answered my mistress; "I always found her honest enough. But now do tell me, Susan, why you did not take the Captain's money."

"Because," I said, "although I am poor, yet I fear my God, and I will never take any money but such as I can get in an honest manner. Did God see fit, He could make me richer in one day than I should become were I for a long life to use every wicked means, and every lying and deceitful art, to get money. For as the Bible says, 'It is an easy thing for the Lord of a sudden to make a poor man rich' (Eccles. xi. 21). I know not for what reason the Captain offered me the half-guinea; but I knew it could be for no good reason, for I had done him no service, and stood not in need of charity."

"Not stand in need of charity!" said my mistress; "that may be as you think; to be sure you have bread to eat, but you certainly want for many comforts. Why, as I said before, you have not a decent gown to your back: you have not one that has not been patched in half-a-dozen places: and since you came to me, you have not had a new hat."

"But I am very well contented with what I have,"

I answered. "I remember these words in the sermon to-day, and when I heard them I was very glad that I had not taken the money : ' Godliness with contentment is great gain ; for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out ; and having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition ' (1 Tim. vi. 6-9).

"Now, had I taken the Captain's money," I added, "the next time I met him, if he had been rude to me, I should not have been able to have said what I did to him when I met him in the green lane ; I should have remembered the half-guinea, and should have felt ashamed.

"And suppose that I had the money, and were to buy a smart linen gown with it, do you think that I should look better, or handsomer, or genteeler, than I do in this old one, which is always clean and well mended ? Let us poor folks dress as we will, we never look like gentlefolks." And then I said, "As a Christian woman, I am above wearing finery which is given me by bad persons with bad intentions."

"For Heaven's sake, Susan, say no more," said Charlotte, suddenly getting up; "you take upon you most strangely and most impertinently, let me tell you, to call others to account: if a gentleman makes one a present, how do you know it is for a bad purpose? And let me tell you, it is nothing but low spite and envy which makes you say, that let us poor folks wear what we will, we never look as gentlefolks do."

I did not know what had made Charlotte so very angry, till I looked and saw that she had the silk gown on, of which she had been talking some days before; and then I guessed, what indeed was but too true, that she had bought it with some money which the Captain had given her; and as a guilty conscience is always the first accuser, she thought that all I had said about taking money from gentlemen was meant for her.

I made her no answer, and I was shocked to think what a sad girl she was, for I could no longer doubt of her wickedness. She continued to rail at me and abuse me for some time in very sad language. At last I said, "Charlotte, I pray you say no more. I did not know that you had taken money from the Captain, and therefore could not mean to offend you

by what I said. But now I have found out the truth, let me beg you to take no more from him, for he is a bold and a very bad man, I fear; and you will one day or other have reason to be very sorry for having had any dealings with him."

She would not hear what I said, but spoke so loudly and so violently, that Mrs. Bennet began to be frightened, and begged her to be quiet. We soon afterwards went to bed.

I arose early the next morning, and began my work before six; about eight o'clock my mistress came down, and ordered me to get her breakfast; "for," she said, "I am going to town, and must be there before nine."

Whilst I was setting the tea-cups, she took up Charlotte Owen's new hat, which she had left the night before on a chair, and placing it on my head, she held up her hands and eyes, as if she was mightily astonished, and cried, "Is it possible? I could not have thought that any head-dress could have made such a difference! Why, Susan, you look as handsome as the Queen of May in that hat; I protest that I should hardly have known you again. You must, indeed you must, have such a hat as that.

I do think, if you were to buy the silk and make it up yourself, it would not come to more than five shillings ; and you cannot think how very handsome you would look in it."

"Whether I look handsome or not," I answered, "I cannot afford to buy such a hat ; for I really have not the money to spare. My dear Mrs. Neale gave me three guineas when I came to you ; but I have now been with you nearly three years, and in that time my shoes have cost me a guinea, and with a little linen which I have bought, and a common stuff gown, and with a few shillings which I gave the last hard winter to our poor neighbour who was sick of a fever, I have not much more than half-a-guinea left, and this I shall want to buy a few necessities, if I should be so happy as to get a good place, when my time is out with you."

"What ! have you so much as half-a-guinea left ?" said my mistress ; "and yet you will not purchase a hat in which you would look so very handsome ! Come now, I will tempt you," said she ; "here is a half-crown towards it ; I make it a free gift to you." So saying, she held out the money.

I was puzzled to think what could have made her all

at once so generous, for she had never before offered me so much as a penny. I looked at the half-crown for a minute, as she held it towards me, and then at the hat; and at last I said, "I thank you, madam, for your very kind offer; but if I am to spend the money upon a hat, and to add another half-crown of my own to it, I will beg leave not to take it."



She looked angry, and putting the money immediately into her pocket, turned round upon her heel, and said some few words which I could not hear.

"I am afraid," I said, "that you will think me very ungrateful for not receiving your offer; but I am sure that I am much obliged to you; and if you please, I will tell you my reasons for not accepting it."

"Well," said she, "and what may those reasons be?"

"In the first place," I said, "I was taught by my

dear Mrs. Neale that it becomes not a Christian woman to be fond of vain ornaments. I could show you many places in the Bible where we are exhorted not to love the world, nor the things that are in the world. It becomes every one of us to dress decently and with the utmost cleanliness ; but surely, whatever the rich may think it right to do, it becomes not a poor servant to spend her little pittance on needless finery."

"Certainly not," said my mistress ; "I would not have you spend all you have on a hat. But if you were a little better dressed, Susan, perhaps some young tradesman, or farmer, might be taken with you, for you are a good-looking girl, and might choose you for his wife. And do you think, child, that if you could get a good husband by spending a few extra shillings, that the money would be thrown away?" And then the wicked woman laughed ; for indeed I must call her a wicked woman.

"If God sees fit," I answered, "that I should marry, in His due time He will provide me with a worthy husband. But this is at present no concern of mine ; I trust in God, and leave Him to do what He pleases with me. I will not be so bold as to take

any measures to ensnare young men, or to please them with my fine dressing, or to put myself in their way. Besides, to tell you the truth, I have no notion of that kind of men who can be pleased with a young woman, and choose her for a wife, because she is extravagant and selfish; because she spends all the money she can earn, or get possession of by any means, in adorning herself."

"You always have a mighty deal to say for yourself, Susan," said my mistress; "but come now, think better of it; here, I offer you the half-crown again. Have you a mind to take it towards buying the hat?"

"If you will give it to me towards a pair of shoes, or a coloured apron, I will thank you," I said; and held out my hand to receive it.

"No, no," said my mistress; "that will not do; you shall have it, if you please, for the hat, but for nothing else; for I want to see you with something smarter on your head than that old-fashioned black hat."

"Ah! why," said I, "should you tempt me to these vanities? If for God's sake you do not forbear trying to draw me aside, yet for your own you should rejoice that I am not fond of the fine things of this

world, rather than endeavour to fill my mind with the love of them.

“Now suppose, my dear mistress,” added I, coming nearer to her, and smiling, to show that all I said was in the greatest good-humour, “I were all at once to become vain, and to prefer fine clothes, and to be admired by men, rather than to be loved by God; immediately, for the sake of getting these things which were become so dear to me, I should pilfer you in a thousand little ways; nothing that you have in the house would be safe; but I should be changing your bread for a ribbon, your cheese for a bit of lace, a candle for a fine pin, a piece of soap for a pair of buckles, and I know not what; and then, as it would be of no use to show my fine clothes to the owls and the bats, the horses and the cows, whenever you were safe out of the way, instead of doing your work well, I should hurry it over in a slovenly manner, and fly off to town to show myself at the fairs and markets; and instead of being a clean, diligent servant, as you have been once or twice so good as to call me, I should be an idle, slovenly, good-for-nothing, saucy hussy. So I will not, if you please, buy the hat, lest when I have got one fine thing, I should wish for

another to wear with it, and so by degrees become a vain, bad girl."

My mistress made no answer, for at that moment Charlotte Owen made her appearance; and they sat down together to breakfast.

After breakfast they both left the cottage; my mistress having given me a task to do, and told me she should not return till night.

I continued to work very hard all the day long, and had finished my task before sunset; when just as it was getting dusk, and the moon began to show her face above the tops of the hills, I took a walk in the garden to enjoy the fresh air; it was a most pleasant evening, and the violets and other pretty flowers of spring filled the breezes with their most sweet smell. A nightingale was sitting among the branches of the trees at the top of the hill, and his voice sounded very melodious in the cottage garden.

As I walked up and down, I thought of the many snares and dangers to which those young persons are exposed who have not the happiness to have good parents. I had not one friend in the world; I was daily tempted to evil by those who surrounded me; those whose duty it was to guard and protect me

seemed to take a pleasure in exposing me to danger. I feared much also from my own corrupt nature ; for although I tried to fight against them, yet evil thoughts often came into my mind ; sometimes I felt weary in living shut up in the cottage, without having any one to speak to, except bad persons, who constantly made a mockery of me ; and sometimes I could scarcely help fretting and repining, and thinking that I was dealt hardly by.

I prayed God to forgive me if ever I had murmured, or forgot to trust to His mercy. I prayed Him to help me in keeping my heart pure from evil thoughts and vain wishes, and above all things I besought Him to preserve me from the snares and temptations which evil persons might spread in my way.

“Ah ! what does it signify,” I said, as I looked up to the skies, all bright and sparkling with thousands and thousands of stars, “whether I am happy or miserable, for the few short years which I am to spend in this world ? I am now young, it is true ; but when I am thrice my present age, I shall be an old woman, and must soon expect to lay me down in the grave. It will then be all one to me whether

I have been high or low, rich or poor, handsome or ugly; but it will be of the greatest importance to me whether I have been patient or gentle, whether I have served my God, loved my fellow-creatures, and prepared myself to dwell with angels and holy men.

"O my dear father and mother! and my beloved Mrs. Neale! you are now happy in heaven, in the presence of your God and Saviour; you are no longer poor weak human creatures, but immortal and glorious spirits; all tears are wiped away from your eyes; the Lord Jesus has 'changed your vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like His glorious body' (Phil. iii. 20, 21). God Almighty grant," added I, while the tears ran down my cheeks, "that in His due time your Susan may be restored to you, as innocent and as unspotted from the world as when you parted from her."

Having said this prayer, I sat me down before the cottage door, and sung the evening hymn, as I had been used to do every night before I went to rest, when I lived with my dear Mrs. Neale.

When I had finished the hymn, I leaned my head on my arm, and sat listening to the sweet voice of the nightingale, and the sound of the wind amongst

the trees, considering what a poor, forlorn, and desolate creature I should be, if there were no great and good God to take care of me; when all of a sudden I saw a gentleman open the garden gate, and come towards me.

It was nearly dusk, but when he came near to me, I knew him to be the Captain. Without waiting to think what I ought to do, I started up from my seat, and, running into the house, was going to pull the door after me, and to fasten it; but the gentleman was too quick for me; before I could draw the bolt, he pushed open the door and walked in. It was almost dark in the house; there was no other light except from a few embers which glowed upon the hearth.

"My dear Susan," said the Captain, coming up to me, "why did you run away? Why are you so frightened?"

"Pray, sir, pardon me," I said, making a low curtsy.

"Is your mistress at home? I wished to see her."

"No, sir," I said, "she is not. But if you please she shall call upon you to-morrow morning at any hour you may fix."

"No," he answered ; " what I have to say to her is of little consequence."

Then he added, looking very hard in my face, " You have a very sweet voice, Susan, and sing most charmingly. Do you always, when alone, sing hymns? Do you never sing any other than holy songs?"

" No, sir," I answered, " I know no other."

" By whom were you brought up ?

Where do your parents live ?"

" I have no father and mother," I said ; " but I thank God, although I am very poor and have very few friends, that I was not neglected in my younger days, but was early taught my duty as a Christian."

He asked me many questions about the way in which I had been brought up ; and when I had answered them, " Sir," I said, " will you pardon a poor servant, but as it is very late, might I ask you if you have any message which I could deliver to my mistress?"



"What, my little Susan," he said, "you wish me to leave you ; you perhaps think that your mistress would be displeased if she found me here."

"Why, perhaps, sir," I answered, looking down upon the ground, for I was afraid of looking so fine a gentleman in the face, "she might not be pleased if she should happen to return whilst you were in the cottage."

"Does she often go out, Susan ?" asked he.

"Yes, sir, very often," I answered.

"Will you then let me come and see you some day, when you are sure that she will not return ?"

I believe I looked very angry, for I felt very angry ; and I said, "Sir, you mistake me very greatly if you suppose that I refuse to do what is wrong lest I should offend my mistress ; no, indeed, I do not only fear her displeasure, but I fear that God whose eye is upon all His creatures, who now not only sees all we do, but searches our very hearts."

The Captain was silent for some minutes ; at last he said, "Susan, I beg your pardon ; I was deceived in you ; I believed you to be very different to what I find you. I thought that you were not much better than many others, who, although your superiors in

rank, have not been offended to be addressed with much more freedom than I have dared to address you with."

He then said some very fine and flattering things in compliment to my virtue and my modesty ; saying how much virtue made young women appear more amiable, adding to their beauty more than the finest or gayest ornaments.

I listened to these things with so much pleasure, for I was glad to hear him talk so becoming a gentleman, that I forgot for some time to ask him again to deliver his message : at last, when I reminded him that it was late, and that it did not become me, in my humble state, to enter into discourse with a gentleman :

"My pretty Susan," he said, "although you are in the low state of a servant, yet there are many ladies who might be proud to be like you ; nor is there any lady whom I have seen in all my travels that I should prefer to you for a wife. Had I not a very severe father, who would refuse to give me one shilling if I were to marry without his leave, I would marry you, Susan, to-morrow, and think myself the happiest man in the world."

"Oh ! sir," I said, "how can you talk so to a poor servant? Surely it does not become you to degrade yourself to deceive such an ignorant girl as myself."

"I am not deceiving you," he said ; and was perhaps going on to say many more fine things, when I, recollecting myself, said, "Sir, I have listened to you too long ; you must go this moment. It is neither fit for you as a gentleman, nor me as a servant, to talk any more on these subjects. I pray you, sir, go ; and do not think of returning again to this place, for my conscience tells me that I have already done very wrong in entering into discourse with you."

Seeing that I was so positive, he took his leave ; but before he had passed through the wicket, he turned back again, and in a most courtly and polite manner begged my pardon, if he had said or done anything which could offend me. "You take me for a bad man, Susan, I fear," he said ; "but I am not one ; and in future you may trust that I will always behave to you as I ought to behave to so virtuous and discreet a young woman."

He had scarcely gone out in the meadows, when my mistress came in.

"Did you meet anybody in the pathway?" said I to her.

"No," said she; "who has been with you? Has Charlotte been here this evening?"

I immediately told her who had paid me a visit, and repeated all that the gentleman had said.

Scarcely had I done

speaking, when she,

clapping me on the

back, cried out, "I

wish you joy, my

Susan! Play your

cards well, and you

are sure of being the

Captain's lady."



"Indeed," said I, "I have no such vain thoughts; I am not fit to be a gentleman's wife, I know very well; and am resolved that I will see him no more: with your leave, madam, I will never go to his lodgings more."

"Not see him more!" said my mistress; "why, you little fool, should you dislike to be a gentlewoman? Had you rather slave all your life, and be a poor servant, than live at your ease, and be honoured and respected?"

"Why should I think," said I, "that the Captain would marry me? Did he not tell me but now that it was not in his power?"

"Oh! but if you would try to please him," said my naughty mistress, "he would perhaps become so fond of you, that he would marry you in spite of his cross old father."

"And can you advise me to tempt a son to disobey his father?" said I, lifting up my eyes and hands. "No, no," I said, "I will neither tempt him to evil, nor shall he tempt me: I will never, if I can help it, see him more."

My mistress said no more on that subject that night, but the next evening she ordered me to take some more of the linen which was just washed and finished to the Captain's lodgings, and to ask for the money.

When I heard this command, I was like one thunderstruck; I stood for some moments silent; at last I said, "Pray pardon me, my good mistress, but I must for once refuse to obey you."

"At your peril," said she; "go this moment," or (and she said a very bad word) "I will turn you out of doors; go, and bring the money back with you."

"To-morrow," I answered, endeavouring to speak gently, "you will go to town early, and as the Captain is not in a very great hurry for the linen, it would then be time enough for you to take it, and ask for the money."

She called me some very bad names, and raising her hand, said, "Am I to fetch and carry at your command? Go you shall, or to Bridewell you shall be sent."

I trembled so that I was obliged to sit down, for I was unable to stand; but I made no answer.

"Are you obstinate? Do you refuse to obey me still?" asked she, stooping down, and putting her face, flaming almost with rage, close to mine. "Will you go, girl?"

I still was silent.

"You shall go; by Heaven, you shall go," said she, dragging me up by the arm, and offering me the basket.

I refused to take the basket in my hand. She struck me on the cheek, at the same time using a most shocking oath.

I raised my hands and eyes to heaven, and said, "God have mercy on me."

"What means that mockery of religion?" said she: "if your Bible does not teach you to be obedient to your mistress, you had best not look into it."

"My Bible," I said, "first teaches me to serve my Heavenly Master, and then my earthly one."

"One would think," said she, becoming a little more gentle, "that I had asked you to do some very wicked thing: who would suppose that all this grimace is because I ask you to carry a basket a couple of miles?"

"I would carry it fifty miles," said I, "another way to please you; but, indeed, if I go to the Captain's house and ask to see him, I may expect any treatment that he pleases to offer me."

"But," said she, "I want the money early to-morrow before I go to town. Farmer Jones will perhaps call for my rent, and I want about nine or ten shillings to make up the sum. You have about as much as that left, I think; if you will lend it to me for a few days, I will excuse your going to the Captain's, and will pardon for once your ill-conduct."

I immediately gladly fetched the money, not doubting but that I should be paid again, as I had

more than once before lent her a few shillings, which I had received duly again ; and she had everywhere the character of being an honest woman in point of money matters.

But although I had lent my mistress all the little money that I had left, yet she did not even that day treat me kindly ; and from that time, for several days, she was very harsh and severe with me, that my life was quite a burthen to me. I never received one kind word from her ; and it really seemed, from her way of using me, that she wished me to run away from her.

The only comfortable time which I passed was when she was from home ; then, indeed, did I truly enjoy the peace and quiet of the house ; then I could think of holy things ; and although I was quite alone, and had not one fellow-creature to speak to, yet I was not unhappy. But lest the Captain should come again to the cottage, I never walked out before the door, nor sat at the window ; but I generally took my work into my own little room, where no one could see me through the window ; for having no friend, and no one to take care of me, it behoved me, I thought, to be more nice and careful in my behaviour .

than if I had a kind father and mother, or watchful mistress.

Once or twice, whilst I was sitting at my work in my little room, which was in the back of the house, I thought that I heard some one's step in the garden ; and once, indeed, I was sure that I heard some one rap at the kitchen window ; but I thought it best to keep close, and mind my work, and to let no one in but my mistress.

One evening, I believe it was about a fortnight after the time that I had the dispute about carrying the Captain's linen to his lodgings, my mistress, who had been at work in town all day, sent a little girl to me about six in the evening, to tell me that she should be at home about nine, and she should bring with her a friend, who was to sup and sleep with her that night ; and she sent me her orders to make the house very neat, and to get the best of what there was for supper.

Accordingly as soon as the child had left me, I set everything in order ; and having made myself neat, I sat down about nine o'clock beside a bright fire which I had made : and whilst I waited for my mistress and her friend, I took the opportunity of

reading a few chapters in my dear Mrs. Neale's Bible.

It was very near ten, and my mistress was not come; but I was so engaged in my Bible, that I did not think how the time went.

The part of the Holy Scriptures which I was reading was the account of the cruel way in which the wicked Jews treated the Lord of glory: how they mocked Him and buffeted Him: how they reviled and persecuted Him; piercing His innocent hands with the nails, and leaving Him to die a slow and very painful death upon the cross. When I had finished this sad story, I shut up the holy book, and sat thinking upon the great love of God for us poor creatures, who, when we had enslaved ourselves to the devil by our sins, sent His only Son to redeem us by His precious blood from everlasting misery and torment; and how very humbly did the glorious Lord Jesus Christ take upon Himself the shape and form of a poor mortal! how many hardships and trials did He endure! as the holy prophet and apostle have said of Him, "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected

of men ; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief : we hid our faces from Him ; He was despised and we esteemed Him not " (Isa. liii. 2, 3).

"He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient " (Phil. ii. 7, 8).

All this He did for us. Yet for His blessed sake seldom do we give up any pleasure, or deny ourselves the smallest enjoyment. Although He humbled Himself to the cross for us, yet we, who are but dust, exalt ourselves, striving who shall be first, and who shall be greatest.

Then I could not but think how great the mercy of God was, in bearing so long with us sinful and obstinate beings ; and I prayed that I might not be numbered among the wicked, but that God would send His Holy Spirit to strengthen me, and to make me fit to resist temptation ; that in the last day I might be thought worthy to inherit eternal happiness, through the mercy of our blessed Saviour.

Just as I had finished this prayer, I heard a knock at the door : I immediately hastened to open it,

thinking foolishly enough that it could be no other than my mistress.

But how surprised I was when, instead of Mrs. Bennet, in came the Captain. Yet I did not feel so much frightened as might be supposed, for the Lord God had heard my prayer, and at that moment gave me greater courage and greater power to resist temptation than I should have had had I trusted in my own strength.

As the Captain walked up to me I stepped back, and said, "Sir, if your business is with my mistress, she is not at home."

"My business is not with her, Susan," he said, "but with you;" and then he said some very fine things in my praise.

But I looked very gravely indeed at him, and answered, "You can have nothing to say to me, sir, and I must beg you to go away, and leave me this moment."

"You are very cruel, Susan," said he; "you treat me as if you hated me." And then he went on to tell me how much he loved me, and many other false things.

"Sir," said I, "if you loved me as you say you

do, or indeed if you had that regard for me which every one ought to have for a fellow-creature, you would not give me the pain and trouble which your visits cause me. I am a poor girl without a friend ; next to the favour of God, my good name is most dear and most valuable to me. If you were to be seen here at this late hour, or indeed at any hour, my character would be gone, and I should then lose all that I depend upon for an honest livelihood."

"Must I never see you, Susan?" said he; "if I thought that I was to be parted from you for ever, I should never be happy again."

"As to that, sir," said I, "I do not pretend to say it is not true; for a gentleman would surely be above saying what he knew to be false at the time; but the question is not what we think will make us happy, but what God Almighty would approve. Be assured, sir, that, whatever you may now suppose, the only way to be happy is to be good. For God is the source of all happiness; from Him comes all pleasure, and we must know that He will not bestow them on people who do not think it worth their while to obtain His favour."

He looked at me very hard when I spoke ; but did not attempt to move.

"I beg and pray you, sir," said I, "to go away. What will become of me if my mistress should find you here?"

"Your mistress will not come yet, I am sure," he answered ; "and I have much to say to you ; indeed, Susan, you must hear me, or I will leave the country, and never more visit it."

"It would be better for us both if you would," I said.

He answered, that I was very cruel and hard-hearted.

But I will not repeat all the things he said : foolish discourse cannot be too soon forgotten. It was a very long while before I could persuade him to depart ; nor would he go till I was so much frightened that I began to shed tears, and till he had heard me more than once pray to God in a very solemn manner to protect me.

He then said to me, "Susan, I will leave you ; but whatever you may say, I never can be happy again. In a few days I will go out of the country, and return to it no more. I am not so bad a man

as you think me to be: I love you dearly, Susan, not because you are handsome, but because you are innocent and modest, and love your God. I would marry you—but I fear my father; although you are so charming, yet he would never forgive me for taking a wife from so low a condition.”

He spoke all this in so earnest a manner, that I almost believed he did not mean to deceive me. But I still persisted that he should go away. He begged very hard that I would see him once more before he left Ludlow, but I said I would not allow it.

“So great a gentleman as you are ought to have nothing to say to one of my condition.”

“Will you sometimes think of me, Susan,” said he, as he went towards the door, “when I am far away in the wars and in distant lands?”

“Sir,” I replied, “I ought not to think of you, but sometimes I will pray God to bless you, and I hope that you will deserve His blessings.”

“O Susan!” said he, “how greatly was I deceived in you! I did not expect to find so virtuous a young woman in your situation. I have known so many of light character.”

Then, returning again from the door, he said, “I

cannot leave you yet, unless you will promise to see me once again."

I then, being more and more frightened, threw myself on my knees before him, and prayed him for the sake of God to depart. He seemed to be touched by my grief: he begged my pardon for having caused me so much trouble, and at length left the house.



As soon as he was gone, I locked the door and bolted it, and then throwing myself on my knees, with my face on a chair, I thanked God for having delivered me from this evil, and enabled me to endure this temptation; then, sitting down, I began to weep very bitterly indeed.

At last, being come to myself, I wiped away my tears, and stirred the fire, thinking that my mistress would be coming every minute; but when I looked

at the clock, and found that it was nearly twelve, I thought that something unexpected must have happened to keep her in town all night. I would not, however, go to bed ; indeed, all alone as I was,



I should have been afraid. I therefore sat down in my mistress's arm-chair, and throwing my apron over my head,

tried to sleep. But at first I trembled so that I could take no rest. I could not help thinking of the Captain ; and although he had been very wicked in coming to the cottage, yet I thought that he had done better than some persons would have done, in leaving at my desire. I recollected that he had said he was soon going to the wars, and felt sorry to think that he should be in danger of being killed : then I thought that if I were a rich lady, and he loved me, I would marry him, and try to make him good ; which was a foolish thought, and I was afterwards very angry with myself for it.

It was past two o'clock when I fell asleep, and I slept till six o'clock, waking only now and then as if something had frightened me.

The striking of the clock then waked me, the fire was almost out, and there was no light but what came through the crevices of the door and window shutter. At first I could hardly tell where I was, or why, instead of my bed, I was sleeping in a chair; but when I recollected what had happened the past night, and how the Lord God had delivered me from a very great evil, I fell down upon my knees and thanked Him for His goodness.

I then opened the window shutters and the door. It was a fine bright morning: the grass in the field, and the flowers in the garden, were all wet and shining with dew; the little birds were singing in the woods, and the cock was strutting about before the door crowing most cheerfully. But although everything looked so gay and bright about me, I felt so sad that I could not help crying. I never thought myself so desolate and friendless before; and this shocking idea came into my head, that my mistress had stayed out on purpose the night before, to give the Captain time and opportunity to come to the cottage. Could

I but be sure of this, I thought to myself, be the consequence what it might, I would leave her and endure any hardship rather than live with so bad a woman.

I had just got some sticks to make up the fire, and had put the kettle on for my mistress's breakfast, when I saw her coming up the pathway through the meadows.

You may be sure that I did not go to meet her, or seem as if I was glad to see her.

"Good morning, Susan," said she, as she came into the house.

I was busied in taking the teacups and saucers from the shelf, and wiping them. I did not turn towards her when she spoke, and scarcely, I believe, made her any answer: for, as you may suppose, thinking what I did of her, it was hard for me to be commonly civil to her.

She placed a bundle of linen which she had brought with her upon the dresser, and said in a very brisk tone, "Well, Susan, how are you disposed for work this morning? These things must be done to-day."

I still scarcely made any answer, for I could hardly speak. The tears came into my eyes, and ran down my cheeks. I wiped them away with my apron, not

wishing my mistress to see them. But, however, she had observed them, and thinking, perhaps, wicked woman as she was, that, by my tears and silence, I had at last fallen into the snares which she had laid for me, she came up close to me with an exulting and malicious smile upon her face, such, methinks, as the wicked angel might have had when he had tempted our first mother to disobey the commands of God, and laying her hand upon my arm, bending forward at the same time to look in my face: "Why, how now, Susan," said she, "wast frightened, child, at being left alone last night? Could you not rest well by yourself?" And then she laughed aloud.

I turned to her with a look which made her start, and, shaking her hand from my arm, "Wicked, abandoned woman," I said, "can you think that I do not see through your arts? God will one day avenge my cause; that great God who has hitherto protected me, a helpless orphan, from all danger, will not long suffer such crimes as those of which you have been guilty to remain unpunished."

She was silent.

"O Lord God, I thank Thee," I said, raising my hands to heaven, "for having at length opened my

eyes, and shown me the dangers of my situation : henceforward, O my Father, I will trust only in Thee, and confide no longer in wicked people, who can plan my destruction, and rejoice in my downfall."

"And pray, Susan," said my mistress, "who are these wicked people of whom you speak?"

"Those," I said, "who could leave me last night."

She affected to be surprised, and said, "Lord bless me ! is all this uproar about my being kept out last night?"

"By what means did the Captain know," said I, "that you were from home?"

"The Captain !" said she, "what of him?"

"Do you not know," said I, "that he came here last night? And, I am well persuaded, knew that you were not at home."

"Heaven is my witness," said the wicked woman, "that this is the first I have heard of his being here."

Then she affected to be mightily angry with him : she called him many harsh names, and said that although she had not been brought up so precisely and stiffly as I had, yet that she was as much above doing a bad action as I could be : and pretended to be greatly offended at my suspecting her. And at

last she said so much, and brought so many arguments to prove that she knew nothing of the Captain's coming, that I began to think I had suspected her falsely, and begged her pardon for having said anything about it.

"Susan," said she, "I forgive you, in consideration of your being upon the whole a very honest and good girl. But, indeed, you have used me very ill in thinking I could commit a crime for which I should deserve to lose my life."

During the rest of the day my mistress was kinder to me than she had been for some time. In the evening, whilst we were at work, Charlotte came in.

I had not seen her since she had taken such offence against what I said about receiving the Captain's money. As soon as she came into the house, fixing her eyes upon me, "So, so, a fine lady in truth are you, Susan," said she, "taking upon you to preach and argue with your neighbours, blaming one for this, and condemning another for that, looking so demure and so precise, and I know not what! But now all is come out; we all now know you very well. You may as well lay aside your disguises, and look like what you are."

My mistress looked surprised, and I was so astonished that I could scarcely speak. At last, however, hearing her go on at that rate, I said, "Indeed, Charlotte, I do not understand you : what have I done ?"

"What have you done ?" said she in a taunting way ; "how innocent you look ! And so you pretend not to know what you have done ; but this I will tell you, miss, your character is abroad ; it is the town's talk : some, whom you have deceived with your fine grimaces and preachments, wonder at you ; but others say that they never thought the better of you for them."

My mistress began to laugh, and tapping Charlotte on the shoulder, said, "Why, what now, my girl ? Methinks you seem somewhat warm."

"Warm," repeated she, turning to Mrs. Bennet, "I warm ! What should make me so ? If Susan chooses to behave like a fool, it is no business of mine ; only I think that those who can do as she has done have no right to be lecturing and domineering over others."

On hearing this I smiled, for I could not guess what she was talking of.

"You may laugh if you please, miss," said she; "but when you come to be out of place, you will find it no laughing matter." Then she called me by some very bad name, and said that no decent person would take in such a wretch as I had proved myself to be.

I began to be frightened, and said, "For Heaven's sake, Charlotte, tell me what I have done."

"Done!" said she, "have you not received the Captain here in this very house many an evening? Do you think people have no ears to hear what is said, or eyes to see what is done? Why, the Widow Bell, who lives at the end of the lane, has seen him many an evening come over the stile into the meadows; ay, and has watched him to this very house, and seen him tap at the window. And last night, Susan, where was he? Ah!" said she, tauntingly, "now I have you. What have you now to say, Miss Susan? Have you no Scripture text to quote? There now, cry and sigh, and look pitiable, you little hypocrite, now that all your sly ways are out!"

Indeed I could not help crying; for I was thunderstruck when I heard all these things, and thought

how very difficult it might perhaps be, although I was as innocent as a new-born babe, to clear up my character.

"What have you now to say?" cried Charlotte.

I looked at Mrs. Bennet, and said, "You can clear my character; you know that I am innocent: speak for me, my dear mistress."

"I speak for you!" said the wicked woman, who, it seems, was bent upon ruining me, soul and body; "I am sure, child, I don't know what to say. Charlotte, I daresay it is not true: Susan is a good girl. I am sure I never saw anything wrong in her when I was at home; then, you know, I am out a great deal, and I cannot, to be sure, everybody must know, say what she might do when I am out late at night; nay, all night, as I was last night."

I got up from my chair, Heaven forgive me, quite in a fit of anger, and said to my mistress, "Oh! you wicked woman, is this the way in which you defend the character of a poor friendless injured orphan? O my Heavenly Father!" I cried, throwing myself on my knees, "protect me, I beseech Thee, protect me, for Thou art my only Friend."

Charlotte looked at me as I knelt; and when I arose, she burst into a loud fit of laughter, and used some very rude and brutal language. My mistress seemed half afraid of joining with her; nay, she even begged her to spare me. But although her words condemned her, yet her eyes looked as if she rejoiced in seeing me thus disgracefully treated.



I had been so long used to ill language and cruel treatment, that I could bear much with patience; but indeed I now felt my heart very, very sad. I placed myself in a chair at some distance from the cruel Charlotte, and throwing my apron over my face, sobbed most bitterly.

"You may well cry," said the barbarous girl, "you may well grieve and take it to heart, for you have lost every friend." Then she told me what all her neighbours in Ludlow, what all Mrs. Neale's and my aunt's old acquaintance had said of me; for, alas! it was

too true that the Captain had very often come to the cottage when I did not know of it ; and that, as might be well supposed, his many visits, particularly his having come to me the last night, when my mistress was known to be in town, had made even my best friends think very ill of me.

This the cruel girl took care to point out to me ; then, thinking to make my grief still deeper, she said, "Do not think, Susan, that the Captain, for whom you have lost your good name, has any love for you. No, no, truly, don't trust to that. 'Tis likely enough he should be steady to a poor 'prentice girl, when he never for a week together is true to the finest lady in the land. Let me tell you, Susan, that there are many of your betters even in Ludlow that he has deceived."

"I am sorry for that, Charlotte," said I, plucking up a little courage ; "but he has never deceived me."

I was sorry I said this afterwards, for it made her ten times more violent. She called me a thousand ill names ; and I found, from what she said in her passion, that her anger against me was from this cause ; that since the naughty gentleman had become

acquainted with me, he had taken less notice of her than he had done before.

When I found that this was the case, I wiped away my tears, and getting up and coming towards her, "My dear Charlotte," said I, "if we have either of us ever talked of the Captain, or been led by him to do anything wrong, which, however, I hope is not so, let us repent and be sorry for our faults, and let us think of him no more, but turn our hearts to some better thing. Do not let us add to our faults by reproaching each other, and blazing each other's follies abroad in the world."

"Oh, you little artful hussy !" said she ; "what, would you have it thought that I am a partner in your faults? I think of the Captain ! I hate the Captain. I would rather marry a blind beggar out of the street than *such* a gentleman. But, thank Heaven, he is going out of the country ; he has given warning to leave his lodgings. He is going abroad to the wars, and may the first shot that is fired bring death to him."

Whilst she spoke these wicked words my mistress looked towards me with so keen a look, that I could have thought she was searching into my very heart.

But she could see nothing there, God be praised, but hatred of Charlotte's wickedness; for although I would not join with her in wishing that the poor gentleman should die, yet I was not sorry to hear that he was going out of the country; for, as I was not a great lady fit to be his wife, it was better for him and for me that we should meet no more.

But I will say no more, added Susan Gray, upon this subject. The hours of my life draw fast to their close; I may have but a few days only in which to finish my sad story.

And so that I may not run too much into length, I will say in a few words that the next day, when I went to do some errands in Ludlow, I found, alas! that I was not regarded in the light I had formerly been. Some of the young men of the town laughed and looked after me as I passed, as if they thought lightly of me. Mrs. Fell, the grocer's wife, told me plainly that, say what I would, she could not but believe that I had been very inconsiderate; and Mrs. Hand, the mantua-maker, who had promised to get me a place, told me that she could not now answer for my character, although I might perhaps be belied. And on this occasion, said Susan, I cannot help

remarking how very careful people should be how they credit tales that go abroad, for many a poor girl has, I fear, been made desperate by worthy people denying her their notice and countenance upon a light suspicion.



I came home, as you may suppose, unusually sad and cast down. I had not a dry eye the whole day; sometimes I could not help thinking that I was dealt too hardly by; and once I was so foolish as to wish very earnestly that I were a rich lady to marry the Captain; then I thought that I should be above the contempt and abuse of the world; and if the Captain loved me as he said he did, I could make him very happy, and persuade him to be good. But this was a foolish wish, and had God Almighty granted it to me, I might perhaps in prosperity have forgotten to serve Him, and as our blessed Lord says, "What is a man

profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matt. xvi. 26.)

But I thank God that these foolish thoughts did not long employ my mind. The following day was Sunday, and then I went twice to our little village church, and humbled myself before God, and prayed Him to forgive my murmurings, and if not in this world, yet in that which is to come, to turn my sorrow into joy. Then I thought of how little signification it was what my fate might be in this world; nay, I even thought that it was perhaps better for me that I should be afflicted; for as the wise King Solomon says, "Despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of His correction, for whom the Lord loveth He correcteth" (Prov. iii. 11, 12).

After my prayers I was much more composed and contented in my mind, and hearkened with great pleasure and delight to the ninetieth psalm, which was sung by twelve pretty little children, who were put to school and clothed by the squire's lady. If you please, said Susan Gray, I will repeat part of this psalm, if it is not quite fresh in your mind, that you may think what a fine lesson there is in it to all persons who, being in high health and strength,

think that they shall live many years, and are full of anxious thoughts what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, or wherewithal they shall be clothed, for who knows what a day may bring forth ?

“ Thou turnest man, O Lord, to dust,
Of which he first was made ;
And when Thou speak'st the word, return,
'Tis instantly obeyed.

“ Thou sweep'st us off, as with a flood,
We vanish hence like dreams ;
At first, we grow like grass, that feels
The sun's reviving beams.

“ But howsoever fresh and fair
Its morning beauty shows,
'Tis all cut down, and withered quite,
Before the ev'ning close.

“ So teach us, Lord, th' uncertain sum
Of our short days to mind,
That to true wisdom all our hearts
May ever be inclined.”

When I heard this psalm I was in as good health as I had ever been in my life, and being very young, death seemed far from me : yet since that time, I have never been able to serve my God in His holy house, and never now shall enter a church till I am

carried thither in my coffin. Before a week was gone I was seized with that mortal sickness which soon will cut me down and wither me away.

But to return to my story ; when I got home in the evening, my mistress asked me if I would go with her to drink tea with a friend in town, and see some of the preparations for the fair, which was to be the next day.

"Alas !" said I, "what have I to do with visits and fairs ? I, who am now in such a sad disgrace among my friends."

"Well, but," said she, "if you stay at home, people will say the Captain will be with you."

"I cannot help that," said I ; "I shall shut the door and bar the windows when you are gone, and will remain in my own little room, nor will I see any one who comes."

She said a great deal, trying to persuade me to go with her ; but I was steady, and although it made her very angry, yet I would not be tempted to go to the town, where I thought I might see the Captain.

As my mistress went out of the door, "Susan," said she, "if you do not see me by eight o'clock, I shall not be back to-night."

As soon as she was gone, I shut myself up in my own little room, and sitting at the foot of my bed, continued till the dusk of evening reading my Bible. At last, it getting dark, I shut my book and thought over what I had been reading, of the great happiness which God has promised to those who, for His sake, give up the pleasures of the world. I remembered stories which my dear Mrs. Neale had told me of holy men and women, who for the sake of their God, and for the love which they bore the Saviour who died for them, gave up their lives, some being burnt to death by fire, and others being killed by the sword, others submitting to be starved, or to perish in deep dungeons far from the pleasant light of the sun, rather than deny their God, or do anything which might make Him angry.

Then I thought how good my God was to me, in not requiring me to give up my life, or to suffer cruel pain for His sake, as these holy martyrs had done. "All He asks of me," said I, "is to bear with patience a few unkind words and harsh rebukes, and to keep myself apart from those who would tempt me to sin."

Then I thanked my God for dealing thus kindly with me; for requiring so light a sacrifice from me,

and for promising so exceeding great a reward to my poor endeavours.

My mistress did not come home ; so about nine o'clock I went to bed and slept most sweetly ; till at break of day I was awakened by the crowing of the cock, and by the bleating of the sheep upon the hills.

Having earnestly prayed and besought God's blessing upon me that day, I went downstairs and began my work. About noon I saw my mistress coming along the pathway from the town ; she carried a large basket under her arm, and seemed, from her way of walking, to be in a great hurry.

When she came to the garden wicket, she called me several times, with a loud voice, to open the cottage door. As soon as she was in the house, she set down her basket in the midst of the kitchen, and, standing for a few minutes to rest herself, with her arms upon her sides, "Susan," said she, "you must see and bestir yourself. Why, this is the most unlucky thing that could have happened ; I was engaged to assist my cousin at the Blue Bear, and have been obliged to leave everything at sixes and sevens, and it has hurried me so, running down here

and getting things together, and I think I shall hardly recover my breath to-day."

So saying, she began to unpack her basket. She took out of it some tea and sugar, a loaf of fine white bread, some cold fowls and ham, and several bottles of wine ; and placing them on the dresser, "Susan, you may well look surprised," said she ; "why, who do you think is coming to pay me a visit this evening ?"



"Indeed," I answered, "I cannot tell ; but some very great person, I should think, if I may judge by all these nice things which you have brought with you."

"A great person indeed," said my mistress ; "well, it was the last thing I could have thought of or expected—that such a lady should think of visiting such a poor body as I am. You have heard me speak of having lived, in my younger days, with my Lady West, the widow lady who lives at the

great house on the other side of the town, about six miles, it may be, from this place. Well, about



an hour ago, as I was at the Blue Bear, who should ride into the yard but Mr. Thomas, my Lady West's footman. As

soon as he saw

me, 'Mrs. Bennet,' said he, 'my business is with you. I knew I should find you here.' And then, without getting off his horse, he told me that his lady had a mind of a little air this evening, and that she thought of coming to drink tea at my cottage, and bringing with her her two nieces. 'My lady will be with you about four o'clock, provided it is very fine weather; but mind, Dame Bennet,' added he, in his droll way, 'if there is one drop of rain you must not look for us.'

"So Mr. Thomas rode out of the yard, and I came home in spite of my cousin at the Blue Bear, who said she should be hurried to death to get her business done without me."

Although I had reason to think that my mistress had often before said the thing that was not true to me, yet I could not suppose that all this long story about my Lady West, and Mr. Thomas, the footman, was every word of it quite false, as it proved to be. I could not have thought that there could have breathed on earth so very bad a woman as I found my mistress to be very soon afterwards. I believed that my Lady West and her nieces really were coming to visit Mrs. Bennet; and I bestirred myself very much to get everything in the nicest order for them.

I rubbed the tables and chairs as bright as a looking-glass, and dressed the mantel piece and the shelves with primroses, and cowslips, and violets, and such sweet flowers as I could gather in the garden, and on the sunny bank above the house; and when I had put on the tea-kettle to boil, and placed my mistress's best china cups and saucers upon the little round table, I dressed myself as neatly as I could in my cotton gown, with a clean cap, and my best white apron and handkerchief.

Just as I had finished dressing myself, my mistress came into my room, and seemed to be in so good a

humour that I could not but feel very much pleased with her at the time, although since I have been shocked to think of her wicked arts.

She praised me for looking neat—she knew that I loved to be called neat; and said that I had been an excellent housewife of my clothes. She then took out of her pocket a new pink ribbon, which she said her cousin had given her as a fairing.

“But I am too old, Susan,” added she, “to wear pink ribbon; and as you have been a good girl lately, I believe I must present it to you.” She then made me sit down whilst she tied the ribbon round my head, and fastened it with a very smart knot in front.

As I had had lately so many disagreements with my mistress, I thought that I would not refuse to wear the ribbon, although I could not help fancying, when I looked at myself in the glass, that such finery did not become a poor servant, who, everybody knows, has nothing but what she earns, and particularly one whose character was, I hope indeed without reason, in some degree under a cloud.

It was four o'clock, and my Lady West not being come, my mistress bade me go to the top of the

garden, from whence I could see the road through which the coach must pass for nearly a mile. But I could see nothing on the road but a few asses eating thistles in the hedges; so I sat down upon the green bank to wait till the coach should appear.



I remember very well what passed in my mind whilst I continued to sit there alone. The evening was then very fine, although there were some very dark and angry clouds resting upon the tops of the Clee Hills, which are in full view of my mistress's garden.

The bells of the town were ringing most pleasantly, and the flowers filled the air with their sweet smell.

My mistress had told me, whilst we were at dinner, that she had seen the Captain with his soldiers march out of town early in the morning; that they had taken their leave of Ludlow, never more to return; and that it was very true, as Charlotte Owen had said, that they

were going to fight in some far distant country beyond the sea.

I thought with pleasure that my great trials, as I hoped, were at an end ; that I should never more be liable to be tempted to turn aside from my duty by this naughty gentleman ; yet, at the same time, I thought it was a very sad thing that he should go to the wars, and be in danger of having his life taken away before he had time to repent of his faults, and to make his peace with God. Then I remembered these lines, which I had learned at school :—

“There’s no repentance in the grave,
Nor pardon offered to the dead :
Just as a tree cut down that fell
To north or southward, there it lies
So man departs to heaven or hell,
Fixed in the state wherein he dies.”

Oh ! how dreadful a thing is it to think that so many thousands of young people forget that they have immortal souls to save, and for the sake of a few moments of pleasure lose millions and millions of years of happiness : but the time will soon come when every man shall be rewarded according to his works. Then will those who have offended their God be cast into outer darkness, where there shall be

weeping and gnashing of teeth ; but the righteous shall be rewarded with an exceeding great reward.

Whilst such thoughts were passing in my mind I saw my mistress come up the grass and walk towards me : in her hand she had a bunch of May-roses, which she was busied in tying together with a few sprigs of sweetbriar.

"I do not see my lady's coach yet," said I, as she came up to me.

"It is very extraordinary," answered she ; "it has struck four this half hour : I shall begin to think that she will not come ; and that will be very provoking, after I have been at all this cost and trouble to get things ready for her."

"Perhaps," said I, "those very black clouds on the tops of the hills have frightened her ; indeed, I fear that we shall have a storm this evening, the air is so hot and sultry, and everything is so calm and still. There is not the least wind to shake the leaves of the trees, and look how the cattle are all getting close together in that large field."

My mistress made no answer to this ; but giving me the nosegay which she had made, "There, Susan," said she, "let me see you wear these flowers this

evening ; here, let me fasten them for you in your bosom ; I have a particular mind that you should look well before my Lady West ; for, if she should take a fancy to you, I might perhaps persuade her to take you into her family as a kitchen girl ; and then, although you will be forced to work, yet you will at least be kept from want, which I am sorry to say I fear you are in some danger of ; for I do not know how it is, the gentlefolks about here have got a strange opinion of your character. They will have it that you received the Captain here at night when I was from home : it is a sad, a very sad thing, when any slur is thrown upon a poor girl's character ; it is almost next to impossible for her to clear herself."

I answered that I did not feel very uneasy on this account ; that, with respect to the Captain, I had done my duty, and I did not fear but that God would provide for me.

"Well," said my mistress, "I hope it will be so ; but I am sorry to say I do not think that you will find it so easy to get a good place when you go from me as you may think ; and I am sure I cannot afford to keep you longer than your time ;

winter will be coming on, and things are much dearer now than when I first came to housekeeping. Besides, people will not take you without a character, and indeed I cannot in conscience, after what has happened, give you one."

"Not give me a character!" I cried with astonishment; "why, my mistress, what have I done to lose your good opinion? Whatever other people may think, you must know very well that I never have done anything to deserve an ill name since I came into your service."

"I must own," said my mistress, "that I have myself never seen any ill by you, but am I not from home half my time? and, as Mrs. Owen, the huckster, said to me but yesterday, how can I answer for what you do here in this lone country place when I am at work in town?"

To this I made no answer, for indeed my heart was too full to speak. I leaned my head upon my arm as I sat upon the grass, and the tears ran down my cheeks. My mistress having peeped over the garden hedge, pretending to look for the coach, which I soon afterwards found she had not the least expectation of seeing, turned

hastily round and went along the green path into the house.

After she was gone, I remained sitting alone on the grass, till the clouds rolled from the hill and covered



the whole skies. The wind began to whistle in the woods, large drops of rain began to fall, and several distant claps of thunder were heard.

I then got up, and lifting up my hands and eyes to heaven, uttered a short prayer to God for mercy and protection, which having finished, I ran down the hill, and in a moment was at the door of the house.

The door was shut. I thought, as I pulled up the latch, that I heard some voices within; but, oh! think what was my surprise when, on opening the door, I saw the Captain talking with my mistress—the Captain, who I then thought was far away from Ludlow, and whom I never, never more expected to see. Surely at that moment I foresaw the ills that were about to befall me; for my heart seemed, as it

were, to sink within me, and I dropped upon a chair which stood just beside the threshold, without having power to speak, nay, scarcely to move.

The Captain no sooner saw me than, breaking off the discourse with my mistress—for they seemed to have been very busily engaged in conversation—he came up to me, and, I think, offering to take my hand, said, “Oh ! how happy am I, my pretty Susan, in seeing you once again. But why do you turn away your face? Are you sorry that I am returned? Are you angry that I cannot live without you?”

The tears ran down my cheeks ; I made no answer.

“What, will you not speak to me? Will you not look at me?” said the wicked gentleman ; “and yet, after having rode many miles out of the town, I returned to see you, my dear Susan ; for indeed, indeed” (and he called his God to witness the shocking words), “if you will not take pity on me, I will run this sword into my heart.”

I would have spoken, but my sobs stifled my voice. My mistress came up close to my chair, and bending her head down to me, said, “Come, come, my dear Susan, speak to the Captain. He is a good gentle-

man, he loves you most dearly, and I assure you he means no harm."

The Captain repeated her last words, using many shocking oaths to prove that they were true. Yet still I did not speak. Then the Captain threw himself upon his knees before me, and prayed me to have pity on him. Those were the words he used.

"Have pity on you!" repeated I, wiping away my tears and checking my sobs. "You ask for pity, yet will not bestow it upon others. Oh! rise, for Heaven's sake, rise; and do not demean yourself by kneeling to a poor servant. Oh! that you would grant me the pity you seem so humbly to ask. When you first knew me I had but few friends indeed; but now, oh! my God! I have not one friend on earth. I had then a fair and spotless reputation—in what light am I now thought of?"

So great was my anguish and grief of heart when I spoke these words that, had not my mistress, who stood by me, caught me suddenly in her arms, I should have dropped from my chair.

The Captain, seeing me look very pale, was perhaps frightened; for immediately he arose from his knees, and to give me air opened the door of the

house, which my mistress had shut to keep out the rain, which now beat in very fast.

My mistress gave me a cup of water, and I very soon began to revive, and to recover from the fright into which seeing the Captain so unexpectedly, when I believed him to be so far away, had thrown me. The Captain, seeing me better, was going, perhaps, to make some excuse for having caused me so much pain, when my mistress said, "Come, come, sir, I will beg for the girl that you will say no more to her on this subject at present. Will your honour condescend to take a dish of tea with us? Susan will be proud to wait on you; and very luckily I happen to have in the house such fare as I have no need to be ashamed of offering to a gentleman."

So saying, she placed a chair for the Captain, and began to busy herself in making tea.

The Captain sat down on the chair which she had offered him; but never did I see any one look so sad as he did. He leaned his head upon his arm, and for a long time seemed not to raise his eyes from the ground.

I should have wondered to have beheld his sadness, and thought it strange to have seen so great and

gay a gentleman thus cast down, had I not remembered what my dear Mrs. Neale had often told me, that whatever thoughtless and inconsiderate people might think, God never even in this world suffers the bad to be happy ; those who love not God may sing, and dance, and make merry, but in the midst of their laughter the heart is sad. But to return to my story :

My mistress, as I said before, busied herself very much to get tea ready, and when she had filled a tea-cup she called me to her, for I had not as yet moved from my chair ; and bidding me wipe away my tears, which still, in spite of all I could do, continued to run down my cheeks, she placed a waiter in my hand, and ordered me to carry the tea to the Captain, giving me a look at the same time as a signal to cheer up and not to look so downcast.

I trembled so that I thought I should have dropped the waiter ; and when I offered the tea to the Captain, which I did, making a courtesy at the same time, the tears again came into my eyes and ran down my cheeks.

He lifted his eyes from the ground, and looked up to me with such a look of bitter grief as I never

saw before. I offered him the tea. He took the waiter from me, and, placing it on the table, suddenly seized hold of both my hands, and said, "Susan, my dear Susan, I love you, and I think that you love me. Why should we not live together? I will marry you, I am resolved I will, in spite of my father, in spite of all the world."



Then he swore, and called his Maker to witness to the truth of all he said.

Oh! most honoured sir, said Susan Gray, what will you think of me when I tell you that I did not try to get away from the Captain, but that I listened to him for a long while? I forgot at that time to pray to God for His help, and without God's assistance we are none of us, no, not even the best and strongest of us, able to resist temptation. Never should we forget what our blessed Saviour said to His disciples: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. xxvi. 41).

I hearkened to the Captain whilst he told how greatly he loved me, and prayed me to go with him to London, where he said that I should become his wife. I should follow him, as he told me, into far distant countries, and when he was wounded in battle I should nurse him and comfort him; in return for which he promised to love me and never leave me.

Oh! I tremble when I think how very near I was falling into the snares that were laid for me. O my God, my God! how can I show my love and gratitude to Thee for having saved me from sin, which of all the evils is far, far the worst?

Whilst the Captain continued to talk to me, the wind became louder and higher; the air became very dark with the hard rain and hail; the thunder, too, was heard more near, and the lightning flashed through the windows of the cottage.

The Captain had been in storms at sea; he had seen many brave men swallowed up in the furious waves; he had seen those tempests in the hot countries, in which houses had been thrown to the ground, and trees torn up by the fierce winds; and he seemed to pay little regard to the thunder and the lightning. But I began to be very much frightened

by them; nay, I could almost have thought that they were sent by a kind Providence to alarm me, and bring me to a sense of my duty; for, as it were, I awakened as from a dream. I recollected how wrong it was in me to listen to the flattering and deceitful words of the Captain. I thought of the God who made me, and the Saviour who died for me, and struggling very hard, I tried to get my hands free. But when the gentleman would not let me go, I fell down upon my knees before him, and prayed him, for the sake of God, to think no more of me; but to leave me to gain my livelihood in an innocent and honest way, and to serve my Maker in that humble state in which He has been pleased to place me.

He looked at me, I thought, with pity, and I pleaded so hard with him, that he would, I verily believe, have left me, and have thought no more of his wicked purposes, had not my mistress said to him in a reproaching and taunting way, "What, will you now give her up when you have almost succeeded? I see that her heart relents, and she will, I am sure, go with you."

But why do I repeat all this wicked conversation? Surely I have said too much about it already. It is

enough to say that the Captain now, being encouraged by my wicked mistress, began to use new arts to persuade me to go with him to London.

Oh! how many shocking oaths he used! how many deceitful promises he made! and I doubt not but that I should at length have been deceived, and should have been persuaded to have given up all hopes of everlasting happiness in a world to come, for a few years, nay, perhaps for a few weeks only, of wicked pleasure in this life, had not God granted me His help. I remembered what my dear Mrs. Neale had often told me, that human beings are so weak, and of themselves so unable to endure hard trials, that those who hope to pass in innocency to a better life must fly temptation, and not arrogantly and confidently think themselves able to withstand it.

I thought of this, and God Almighty kindly put into my head a plan by which in His mercy I escaped from guilt, and was brought by His tender care to this happy and peaceful dwelling, where I hope to close my eyes in the blessed society of virtuous and charitable persons.

I said to the Captain and to my mistress, "I fear that God will one day require an account of your

conduct towards me. You seem both resolved on my ruin, and I, alas! have no protector but my God. But," added I, "before you proceed in your wicked purposes, I pray you reflect a little: remember that you cannot recall an evil action; innocence, when once lost, can never, never be restored."

I do not remember what was my mistress's answer; but the Captain repeated many of the wicked vows and promises he had made before, and swore that he should never leave the cottage until I should go with him.

To this I made no reply, but remained silent, thinking of the plan which I had in my head. In the meanwhile, my mistress coming up close to me, and laying her hand upon my shoulder, painted to me in very strong colours what would be my situation if I refused to go with the Captain; how that my reputation was now, alas! quite gone; that when I left her service no one would take me in; that I was not strong enough for hard labour without doors; and that I should be condemned to idleness, shame, and beggary.

The Captain then described to me the happy life I should lead with him; the ease in which I should live; the rich ornaments with which I should be

decked ; the fine countries I should see ; and the respect and honour which would be paid me.

I looked at my mistress, and then at the Captain. Alas ! I thought, it is very true, that if I refuse to go with the Captain, I shall be exposed to shame, and want, and hard treatment. But I remembered the promise of our blessed Saviour, "There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in the present time, and in the world to come life everlasting" (Luke xviii. 29, 30).

And I said to them, whilst I wiped away my tears, "I beseech you suffer me to go for a few moments only to my own room, that I may, when alone, think of all that you have said to me, and consider well what I ought to do : for indeed," I said, "I am perplexed and bewildered, and very greatly distressed."

They were both at first unwilling to let me go : nay, my mistress absolutely told me that I should not go out of her sight till I went with the Captain. Upon which I almost gave myself up as lost, and was in such an agony of grief that the Captain said he could not deny me this little favour.

He no sooner let my hands go than I darted from him like an arrow from a bow, and running upstairs, shut the door of my own little room after me. Now the window of my room was so small, that I should have thought it impossible at any time to have gone through it ; but I was now resolved, be the consequence what it would, to make the trial, particularly after what my mistress had said.

As soon as I was alone, I spread a handkerchief upon the bed ; and having placed on it my Bible and Prayer-book, and what little linen I could hastily get together, I tied up the corners of the handkerchief, and threw it from the window into the garden. The dim twilight, for night now came on very fast, hardly gave me light to see what I did.

Then, without waiting to put on hat or cloak, without regarding the rain or the wind, or the lightning which flashed again and again in my face, I climbed by means of my box into the window, and with some difficulty got out upon the thatch. Now the roof of the house sloped down to the hill-side, so it was not far for me to jump into the garden ; and then I was as active and as brisk as a bee, although I am now so poor and feeble a creature. So truly does the

holy prophet say, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field : the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it" (Isa. xl. 6, 7).

I instantly took up my bundle, and ran as it were for my life, till I reached the hedge just under the



wood at the top of the garden. There I stopped, being out of breath, and looked back to see if any one followed me ; but I saw no one : I could scarcely even see the cottage itself, on account of the very heavy rain which was then falling.

Now being a little recovered, I tried to climb the hedge, but the ground being very slippery by reason of the rain, I slipped back several times ; and when I had at last got over it, I found that there was a deep ditch on the other side running down with water. I found some difficulty in crossing this, and then, without waiting to seek for a path, I struck into the thickest of the

wood ; for just at that moment I fancied that I heard a voice.

As I went on through the wood, I was torn by briars and brambles : and, what was worse, after much pain and difficulty, I found, when I had made my way through the trees, that I was still very near to the cottage.

Having passed through the wood, I came out upon a large high fallow field, in the middle of which I remembered that there was a barn, in which I thought that I might take shelter ; for the rain beat so upon me, that I found it difficult to go on. It was now become quite dark too, the lightning only now and then giving me a momentary view of my path.

As I came nearer the barn I heard voices, and soon saw a light through the crevices of the door. I went silently up to the door, and looking in, I saw a party of gipsies, whom I had heard infested those parts, gathered together round a few embers ; and whilst they ate their last meal, they amused themselves with singing.

I knew that these were no companions for me ; I therefore, with a sad heart, turned from the barn,

and at length with great difficulty found my way into a long green lane, out of which I knew very well that there was a turning which led to Ludlow. I thought that if I could reach the town without being discovered, that I might find some secure lodging for the night; and I felt no doubt but that God Almighty would provide for my future safety. For these words of St. Peter came into my mind, "If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled" (1 Peter iii. 14).

But the lane being shaded by tall trees, and the night becoming darker and darker, the rain having by no means ceased, I missed the turning which led to the town, or rather my God, in whom I put my trust, was my guide, and led me on towards that place of rest which He had provided for me.

When I had walked on for nearly an hour, I became so weary that my heart began almost to sink within me; my clothes being quite drenched with wet, clung around me, and made it very difficult for me to walk; and the lightning too, which flashed often in my face, and the thunder which rolled over my head, made me tremble; and I had almost re-

solved to lay me down on the wet ground, and give myself up to my hard lot, when I saw before me a light. It came from a cottage which stood close by the wayside. I made the best of my way up to this cottage, intending there to beg shelter; but as I walked by the window, I looked up and saw two ill-looking men sitting before a large fire; a small table stood by their side, covered with mugs and tobacco-pipes, and an old woman sat knitting in the chimney-corner, whom I remembered often to have seen selling matches and ballads in the streets of Ludlow, and whom I knew to be a very drunken, dishonest woman.

"Alas!" I again said, as I turned from this house, "here is no place of shelter for me!" So, weary and worn with sorrow as I was, I continued my sad course, till being quite spent, I sat me down on the trunk of a tree, which was fallen by the wayside; and very, very sad indeed were my thoughts. Yet in this hour of deep anguish, God Almighty was my comforter: I remembered these words of the holy David: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou pre-

parest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies" (Ps. xxiii. 4, 5). And I felt at that moment



a most delightful assurance that my God was well pleased with my humble efforts to serve Him, and that my poor sacrifice was accepted with my Maker. Forlorn and desolate as I was, without a friend on earth, and not having a place whereon to lay my head, yet I would not have taken the place of

the most prosperous wicked person.

Whilst I was thinking of these things, it pleased God that the rain and the thunder should abate: and soon the clouds rolled away, and the full round moon was seen in the heavens. This was a great comfort to me, for which I failed not to thank my God. And now being somewhat rested, I arose and walked on till, at the end of about two more miles, I saw at a short distance a church upon a hill: I could just see the taper spire rising above some small trees.

This was no other than the church now before me: but I did not recollect my native village again, for although it is so near to Ludlow, yet I never had chanced to visit it since I was taken from the workhouse by my poor aunt; and then being but six years old, I had but a very faint remembrance of it.

I was glad, however, to see the church, and I walked on towards it till I came to the entrance of the village. I knocked at the first house I came to; this happening to be a lodg-

ing-house, and the good woman not being gone to bed, although it was then after midnight, she very kindly took me in. Very kindly indeed! for the figure I made was by no means a very creditable one; for I had neither hat nor cloak, my apron

and handkerchief were torn by the briars and brambles in the wood through which I had passed; all my clothes were still dripping with wet, and my eyes were red and swelled with crying.



Whilst the good woman took off my clothes and placed them at the fire to dry, she looked very hard at me.

"Alas !" said I, "well may you look at me ; and it would be natural for you to think the worst of me. But whatever my appearance may be, I am not a bad girl ; no, no, I love my God, and if you knew my story, you would not blame me for what may now seem very strange to you." Then I began to weep afresh.

The woman answered, that she hoped what I said was true, for my own sake ; then, seeing that I was quite spent with grief, and with the great labour which I had gone through, she took me into a small room, where I was very thankful to lay me down on a straw bed.

Being greatly tired, I very soon fell asleep ; but I had many uneasy dreams, and awoke by dawn of day crying as if my heart would break.

I looked about me, and for some time could not call to mind where I was. But when I remembered all that had passed the day before, and thought of my unhappy situation, in a strange place, without friends, without money—for I had lent all that I had

left to my mistress ; and not knowing what would become of me, or how I should be able to earn my bread, I really thought that my bitter anguish and grief of heart would have put an end to my life. But I called to mind these words : "What glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently ? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (1 Peter ii. 20).

"And, O my God !" I said, "I will, with Thy assistance, bear all my trials with patience : what are the hardships which I endure to those great and terrible pains, that bitter anguish, and those dreadful agonies which our Saviour suffered for us sinful mortals ?"

Then I arose from my bed, and having dressed myself, I took from my bundle my dear Mrs Neale's Bible, and read the account of the sufferings and death of my blessed Saviour, and also the history of the holy martyr Stephen, who was stoned to death, and of other prophets and good men who had endured very great pains and sorrows, and had laid down their lives for the sake of their God.

And when I had read these things, I thought no

more of my own light afflictions, that is, I felt no more disposed to repine and murmur at them, although, in spite of all I could do, I could not shake off the sorrow which sat heavy upon my heart ; and what perhaps made me less able to do so was, that, from being so long out in the wet, and from having gone to bed without having had time to dry myself sufficiently, I had caught a bad cold, which made me feel very ill, although I could scarcely tell what particular ailment I had.

When I had finished my prayers and read my Bible, I went into the kitchen, where I found the family at breakfast. The mistress of the house, seeing me look ill, offered me a dish of tea, which I did not refuse, although I would not eat any of her bread, which she would fain have had me take. I shall remember her kindness to my dying day, and never will in my prayers forget to ask God's blessing for her ; any other return I cannot make her.

After breakfast I sat down on a bench in the chimney-corner ; for although the weather was very warm, yet I shivered with cold like one in a fit of the ague.

My landlady seem to be very sorry for me, and

asked me if I had long been ill. I answered, as I then believed, that I had only a slight cold, and hoped soon to be better. I thanked her for her kindness, and asked her whether she would let me continue to lodge in her house if I could get any work in the parish.

She said that she liked my way of speaking and my manners better than my appearance: and my coming to her as I had done through the storm the last night, without hat or cloak, had to be sure a strange look, but that she had seen nothing amiss in my behaviour.

"I hope the time will soon come," said I, "when I shall be able to clear all this up to you, and to prove to you that I am no bad girl. But, in the meantime, if you will suffer me to lodge in your house, you will do me the greatest charity."

"I cannot," said she, "find in my heart to turn you out, so long as you behave so modestly and speak so properly and civilly."

I then inquired if it would be possible to get any work in the village.

She asked me if I had been used to out-door work.

I said that I had not ; but that I should be thankful to be put in any honest way of getting my bread.

"You do not look as though you were fit for hard labour," said she.

I answered, "We know not what we can do till we have tried."

"You seem very willing to do anything," she replied. "I am going this morning to carry this woollen which I have spun to Farmer Flemming's: the farmer begins his hay harvest to-morrow; perhaps he will have no objection to another hand." Then she asked me my name.

I said that it was Susan Gray, and told her the names of my father and mother, and where they had lived.

"And do you know," answered she, "that this is the very parish in which you say that your parents lived? I doubt not but Farmer Flemming knew them very well, for he is now getting old, and has been overseer of the poor these twenty years past."

When I heard this, and found that I had taken shelter in my affliction in my native village, I felt my heart, I know not wherefore, strangely touched, inso-much that I could not help shedding fresh tears. I thanked my landlady for her kind offer of getting me

employment from Farmer Flemming, and for consenting that I should continue to lodge in her house.

Towards mid-day I found myself much better, and was able to employ myself in mending the rents which I had got in my clothes. In the evening, however, I was almost spent for want of food, for I would not take any which my good hostess offered me, she having a large family of children who entirely depended on her for bread. I accordingly went into my own room to examine my bundle of linen, thinking that I might perhaps exchange some part of it for a loaf of bread at the baker's shop which was just opposite, when I found unexpectedly, wrapped up in a handkerchief, among other little things which had been bestowed on me in my childhood by way of rewards for good behaviour, a new sixpence, which Mrs. Sarah had given me for telling the truth when I had broken a fine china cup of my dear Mrs. Neale's. The tears of joy came into my eyes; I clasped my hands together, and cried out in the words of the holy David, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters" (Ps. xxiii. 1, 2).

Then having borrowed an old straw hat of my

hostess's daughter, I went to the baker's shop, and having laid out a penny on a roll, which I ate with thankfulness to God, I walked through the village towards the church, with the intent to visit the grave of my dear father and mother, who were buried, as you may know, sir, under the large yew-tree on the south side of the churchyard.

As I walked along the village street I called to mind a thousand things which had happened in my early days. I remembered them only as one remembers a dream, very faintly and very obscurely. I crossed the stile at the end of the village, and took the path up the hill to the church by your house, sir.

I saw you walking in your garden with your book in your hand, and I knew you again, and I remembered all the kind things you had done for me; how you carried me in your arms and talked to me of heaven, and of my God, and our blessed Saviour. I stopped at the garden gate, and thought that I would be so bold as to speak to you, and to make myself known to you. But before I could get courage to speak, you turned into the house without looking towards me.

Then with a sad heart I left the gate, and began to

climb the hill. As I went along I gathered in my apron a few primroses, cowslips, and other pretty flowers to scatter over my beloved father and mother's graves, if I should be able to find the spot where their dear remains were laid in peace.

When I got within the churchyard, I was obliged to sit down on a tombstone to rest myself, for I was become so weak that I was quite spent with the walk. My heart beat, and a pain in my side, which I had never felt before, was so violent, that it almost took away my breath.

I soon, however, became better, and I got up and walked around the church, till coming to the great yew-tree, I saw under it two graves side by side, at the foot of which was a stone, on which I read the names of James and Mary Gray.

I scattered the flowers which I had gathered upon the graves; yet, although I had



of late wept so much, I did not then shed one tear. I stood with my eyes fixed upon the gravestone for a very long while, and in that time I thought over all the strange things which had befallen me since the time when, a very young child, I had followed my dear parents to their last quiet home. But, although I did not weep, my heart felt very, very sad, and I wished that the hour was near at hand when I might lay my body in the dust beside those of my dear father and mother, and when my soul, through the merits of my blessed Saviour, might return to Him that made it.

Whilst I remained in the churchyard the sun set, and the darkness of night came on. The bats with their leathern wings fluttered about me, and the owl screamed from the church tower. Then calling to mind that if I should stay out late my hostess might perhaps have reason to think some ill of me, I walked slowly and sadly towards the village.

When I returned to my lodgings, my landlady told me that she had engaged me to go the next day to Farmer Flemming's to make hay. "You must be there by six o'clock," said she, "and your work will not be finished till late; but," added she, "you do not seem fit for such a day's work—you look very ill."

"I am not very well," I said, "but I cannot starve, and I must do any work which I am so fortunate as to get."

The good woman seemed very sorry for me; warmed some beer, and putting a toast and some spice in it, she made me drink it; and then advised me to go to bed, that I might be the better fit for my next day's labour.

That night, I thank my God, I enjoyed much sweet rest, although I had many dreams. I remembered one in particular, which I have since often thought of with much pleasure. I fancied that I was lying on my bed very ill indeed, nay, almost about to die. I was alone, and no one to take care of me. And I thought that my dear father and mother came into the room, and stood one on each side of my bed; and my mother said, "This is our beloved Susan; this is the child in whom we glory. 'Her light affliction, which is but for a moment, shall work for her an exceeding and an eternal weight of glory'" (2 Cor. iv. 17). This was a sweet dream, and was surely sent by God as a comfort to me.

The next morning, by break of day, I prepared myself for my new employment. I felt somewhat

better than I had done the night before ; and the day being fine and bright, I was tolerably cheerful as I took my way to the farmer's.

When I came to the house, I found the yard full of men, women, and children, with their forks and rakes in their hands, ready to set out for the hay-field. They stared at me when I came into the yard, but said not a word.

I went up to Mrs. Flemming, who was standing at the kitchen door, giving to each of the haymakers a large slice of bread and cheese.

I made a curtsy to her, and told her that my name was Susan Gray.

"Oh ! the young woman," said she, in a very loud voice, "whom Nancy Jones was speaking of. But methinks you do not look very fit for hard work." She then called to her husband, who was sitting within by the kitchen fire, to tell him that James Gray's daughter was come.

Hearing this, he came out, without his coat, and with a woollen night-cap on his head, and ordered one of the men to bring me a rake. Then, looking very earnestly at me for some time, "How comes it, young woman," said he, "that you have run away

from your service? I fear that you have not been so good a girl as you should have been. My nephew, William Ball, has told me of your tricks before now; but no good ever comes of girls when they get acquainted with those fine fellows in red coats."



I was going to make some answer, when Mrs. Flemming, raising her voice still louder than she had done when she spoke to me first, bade me not be saucy, but mind what her husband said to me.

"Let me tell you, young woman," said the farmer, "that you, who are come of such honest parents, might be ashamed of having done as you have done. Your father and mother were as good people as any in the parish, and if it had not been for the respect I had for them, you should never have worked for me."

So saying, he turned into the house, and my new

mistress bade me follow the other haymakers out of the yard.

Oh! with what a sorrowful heart did I walk slowly after the rest till we came into a wide field, which is skirted on one side by that large wood now in our view, and is bordered on the other by the brook which runs into the river by the mill.

My companions had heard what the farmer and his wife had said to me, and I soon found what they thought of me; for the old women looked very sour at me, and the young ones laughed and whispered, glancing slyly at the same time at me.

But what grieved me most was that the young men spoke to me as if they thought lightly of me. I however went on with my work, keeping close with the rest of the women, and saying very little.

Towards mid-day I became very weary with my work; my knees trembled, and I had a constant pain in my side. However, I continued my work till evening.

Yet, tired as I was, I was unable to sleep; for I felt feverish, and my mouth was parched with very great thirst.

I went to the farmer's again the next day, although

I was fitter far to keep my bed; and as I behaved with modesty, and returned not evil speaking for evil speaking, my companions the haymakers began to think better of me. The women in particular treated me with more kindness. I could see, however, that the young men still continued to think lightly of me.

The weather being very hot, the hay was ready to carry by Friday.

I was worse this day than I had ever been before, yet I strove to keep up and to do my work.

I was making up the hay into large hay-cocks, with two or three more young women, at the lower end of the meadow,

when the young men came up with the waggon in at the gate which is at the top of the field. Amongst these was William Ball, the farmer's nephew, the

young man of whom I have spoken before, whom I had never



seen since I had run away from him at Mrs. Bennet's.

It seems that he, being a very bad young man, had never forgiven me for this slight, as he thought it, and he was mightily pleased when he heard, at Ludlow, where he had spent the few last days with other young men who had gone there to the fair, of the disgrace I had fallen into on account of the Captain. And it was a new pleasure to him to be told by his uncle, when he came home, that I had run away from my service, and had come to him for work.

So soon as he came to that part of the field where I was, he called out to me from the waggon where he was loading the hay—

“Well, Mrs. Susan, and how did you leave the Captain, or, to speak more properly, how did the Captain leave you? For they tell me, in Ludlow, that he has gone out of the country, and taken with him, by way of company, Charlotte Owen, the huckster's daughter.” Then he laughed aloud.

I was like one thunder-struck when I heard these words; my rake fell from my hand, and my eyes were immediately filled with tears when I thought of the

wickedness of Charlotte and the Captain, and of the dreadful evil I had escaped.

I will not repeat all the foolish jokes of William Ball when he saw my grief and distress. Indeed I paid but little heed to what he said. At length one of the old women told him that he might be ashamed of himself for making a jest of what did not seem to her any jesting matter ; that, with respect to me, she had seen no harm by me since she had become acquainted with me ; that she believed I was a very modest girl ; and as to the other poor young woman who had gone off with the Captain, she did not see what there was to laugh at in a poor creature's running soul and body into ruin and misery.

"I never thought well of that Charlotte Owen," said a grave elderly man, the farmer's head servant, who had just come into the field with the dinner for the labourers ; "no good ever comes of a girl who is always showing herself and her fine clothes in the streets, nodding, and curtseying, and laughing at every young fellow who chances to go by. I have seen enough of her when I have been in town on a market day."

"But is it true," said I, "that she is gone with the Captain?"

"Ay, true enough," answered William : "so, my good girl, wipe away your tears, and think no more of the Captain ; for I promise you he thinks no more of you. Mrs. Owen herself was the person who told me of Miss Charlotte's freak. Never did I see a woman in such a taking. She stormed and raved, and I verily think she would have killed her daughter if she could have laid her hands upon her."

"Well, but," said one of the young women, "when did all this happen?"

"Why, you know," answered William Ball, "that the Captain and his men marched out of town on Monday morning, and about the middle of the day, on Monday, Charlotte was missing. But as she often went from home without saying anything to her mother, Mrs. Owen thought nothing of it till night came on, and that dreadful storm of thunder and lightning ; then the old lady began to be a little frightened, and she sent to all her neighbours, but could hear nothing of her daughter. And it was but yesterday that she was told that Miss had marched after the Captain ; although some folk do not scruple to say that his honour could well have dispensed with her company." Then he laughed again, and almost all

the young men, and some of the young women, joined in his mirth.

But the old servant shook his head, and turning to a woman who stood by him, he said, "I do not quite relish all this jesting; 'none but fools,' as the Scripture says, 'would mock at sin'" (Prov. xiv. 9).

"Very true," replied the woman; "for my part, I do not feel much disposed to laugh. I cannot help feeling very sorry for the poor mother of that bold hussy."

"Why, as to that," returned the old man, "one is very sorry for any one who is inconsiderate, and lays up for himself stores of misery. But Mrs. Owen may thank herself for what has happened. Why did she train up her child in the love of finery and vanity? Why did she wish to make a smart lady of her, instead of a modest, unassuming, decent girl? Why did she herself practise lying and deceiving before her, and neglect her duty to God, spending the Sabbath in idleness, feasting, and gossiping? As the wise man says, 'Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it'" (Prov. xxii. 6).

We all then sat down upon the grass to our dinner,

and I heard no more of this discourse at that time. But what I had already heard had quite spoiled my appetite, and the shocking wickedness of Charlotte and the Captain still dwelt heavily on my heart.

"Alas ! alas !" I thought, "what will be the end of all these crimes ?"

I fear that I did not that day earn half my wages ; for although I did my best, yet I was so weak that I was often forced to sit down and rest myself. A mortal disease had already seized upon me, although I did not know it. "What is our life ? It is a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James iv. 14).

But I forget that perhaps to-morrow my sou' may be required of me ; let me then hasten to finish my story.

I felt increasing pain during that night, and my few hours of sleep were disturbed by unpleasant dreams concerning what I had heard that day in the hay-field.

The night was rainy. Mrs. Flemming had told me the evening before, that as her husband would have no more work for me till Monday, she would employ me in weeding a garden which was at some distance from the house by the waterside.

She had given me a basket, and a small weeding-knife ; and having directed me which way to go to the garden, bade me be there betimes in the morning.

Now this garden was no other than that which was formerly tenanted by my dear father : when he died, Farmer Flemming had taken it, and the house, being a very old one, had never been inhabited since my beloved parents had quitted it. It was all fallen to ruins, and was now only used as a place for seeds and gardening tools.

When I reached the garden the rain had ceased ; but the ground was very damp, and a very thick fog arose from the river, insomuch that I could scarcely see the willows which grow by the water-side. It went to my heart to see the cottage which I so well remembered gone almost to ruins. There was no glass in the windows ; the roof was open in many places, and one of the chimneys had fallen.

Many sad thoughts passed in my mind as, kneeling on the damp ground, I weeded the strawberry-bed, just beneath the cottage wall, and tied up the rose-bushes and honeysuckles in the little plot of ground from which my mother used to gather nosegays on a Sunday morning, to dress the chimney-piece and the kitchen window.

About mid-day the sun began to appear through the fog : but although it shone upon me it could not warm me, for all my limbs were cold, and trembled with a mortal sickness.

At length I became quite spent, and was forced to desist from my work. I then reflected that my work was not worth my wages, and it seemed to me that I did wrong in receiving from the farmer the hire of a stout healthy person : and although I knew not by what means I should be supported, yet I resolved to go to Mrs. Flemming, and to tell her honestly that I was unable to earn my bread, and that I would not receive money which was not my due. And although I had no prospect before me but of starving, yet I trusted in God that He would not forget me.

Then I called to mind the words of the prophet : "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines : the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall ; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Habakkuk iii. 17, 18).

So I took up my basket and my weeding-knife, with the intent to go back to the village. But when I arose from my knees, I found it difficult to stand ;

and I was forced to sit down upon the stone step before the house door to recover myself a little. Here I had sat many times when I was a child, and amused myself with shells and stones, and other such trifles as children love, whilst my dear father and mother were busied in working in the garden. And here I called to mind a thousand little events long since forgotten. I remembered how my dear mother used often to leave her work to look after her little Susan; how sweetly she used to smile when she saw me coming towards her; and how anxiously she watched me, if by chance I ran with heedless steps by the side of the river. I remembered the wood-strawberries strung like threads of beads upon a blade of long grass, the acorn cups, and the blackberries, which my father used to give me when at evening he returned from the market through the wood which is beside our garden.

“O my dear father and mother!” I said, “how happy were those days to your Susan, when you were still alive! and how forlorn and desolate is her state now! But, thank God, through His tender mercy, she is as free from vice now as when she followed you to your untimely graves.”

Then I lifted up my hands and eyes to God in

gratitude for His goodness to me, in having assisted me to endure the hard temptations with which I have been tried.

Whilst I was still thinking of these things a sudden faintness came over me, and I lay for some time without sense. At length, however, I recovered: yet I had very great difficulty to get home to my lodging, where I immediately laid myself on my bed.

Nor did I leave my bed till you, sir, visited me; and till, by your great kindness to me, my health and strength were for a time in some degree restored to me.

Then Susan Gray, having finished her story, fell upon her knees, and thanked her God in the most solemn manner for the happiness she then enjoyed, and for her hopes, through her blessed Saviour, of a far more exceeding weight of glory in a world to come. Then, having expressed her gratitude to Him to whom our first thanks are always due, she turned to me, and to my wife and daughter, and to her nurse, and thanked us for our kindness to her in a way which made the tears flow afresh from our eyes; for, as you may suppose, they had often flowed abundantly before, during the time of our hearing the sad story of this good girl.

After she had finished her history, she lived only

three days ; but never, never, surely did any one prepare for death with so much joy, such holy hope, and humble confidence in God, as did this excellent young woman !

The night before she died I gave her the sacrament, my wife and two eldest daughters being present, and partaking of the holy feast with her.

But before she would suffer me to begin the sacred office, she called God to witness that she from her heart forgave all those who had by any means done her any ill : she particularly mentioned the names of Mrs. Bennet, Charlotte Owen, and the Captain ; and prayed Heaven to bless them, and to give them, before it was too late, a full sense of their wicked lives, that so they might repent and be partakers, through the merits of their Saviour, of everlasting happiness.

After she had taken the holy sacrament, she fell into a sweet sleep, from which she awoke at dawn of day. Her nurse saw, by the change that had taken place in her during the night, that she had not many hours to live, and immediately sent for me and my wife.

When we came into the room, and stood by the bedside, she smiled, but did not speak. I asked her how she did, and how she had rested. She made no answer, but held out her pale, cold hand to mine.

She soon afterwards asked for her Bible ; and when it was brought to her and laid beside her, she seemed satisfied, and did not attempt to open it.

She grew fainter and fainter, and was not able to take anything : but she often raised her eyes to heaven, and clasped her hands together. A few moments before she died we heard her repeat, in a soft, low voice, and very distinctly indeed, the holy name of her Saviour. She smiled at us who stood weeping around her, and closing her eyes, died so easy and so gently, that for some moments after her soul had quitted its mortal case, we believed she was only sleeping.

But when I found that she was really dead, I could not help crying out, whilst I looked on the sweet, composed face, and remembered how gloriously she had resisted evil, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?—the sting of death is sin" (1 Cor. xv. 55).

Before her body became quite cold, it was removed to the best room which the nurse's house afforded, and there was laid upon a neat bed, and covered with a fair white sheet. Her head, which rested upon a pillow, was dressed as it had been when she was still living, in a neat cap with a plaited border, and

bound with a white band ; and still it might be seen by those who looked at her, that the time was not long passed when she was very beautiful. But what is mortal beauty, that we should take delight therein ? "All the glory of man is as the flower of grass" (1 Peter i. 24).

About this time the history of Susan began to be much talked of in and about Ludlow, it now being generally known that she had run away from her mistress. Some took her part, and said that she had been very ill used ; and others spoke up for Mrs. Bennet. Many of my neighbours came to me to know the truth of this strange story, and indeed some person called upon me on that account whom I had never seen before.

Amongst these were my Lady West and her nieces. They were very anxious to know if all they heard was true ; for by some means it had come to their knowledge that Mrs Bennet had used their names to deceive the poor girl.

When I told these ladies the true history of Susan, and how nobly she had resisted temptation, they all shed tears ; and my Lady West said, that she had been strangely deceived in Mrs. Bennet, and had been a very kind friend to her, because she thought her to

be a very good woman : " but henceforward," added she, " I will do no more for her."

Then these ladies would go to Nurse Browne's to see the remains of poor Susan ; and as they walked through my garden, the young ladies gathered roses and other sweet flowers to lay upon her.

When they came into the room where the corpse lay, they all shed tears afresh. They looked for a long time on her sweet, composed face ; for she had died so easily, and in so heavenly a state of mind, that there was nothing ghastly or frightful in her appearance ; she rather looked as if she was still sleeping.

" Sweet young creature," said my Lady West, as she looked at her ; " would to Heaven that I had known her sad situation with that wicked woman. I would have taken her into my family, and she never should have known the evils which have brought her to this untimely end."

" Surely, surely," said one of the young ladies, " if the Captain could see Susan as we now do, deprived of life by his means, he would turn from his wicked course of life to the service of his God."

Then they scattered the flowers which they had gathered upon the bed, and took their leave ; but before the carriage drove away from the door of the

cottage, my Lady West asked me when I proposed that Susan Gray should be buried. "For," said she, "I and my nieces intend to be present at her funeral, that we may do all the honour in our power to this most virtuous young woman."

The Sunday following the day of Susan's death was the day of her funeral.

According to the custom of the parish, she was buried at the time of evening service. I will describe the manner of her funeral, for the satisfaction of those good persons who take delight in these solemn scenes.

It was early in August, and the weather was very fine. When all the congregation was assembled in the church (and I never remember to have seen in it so large or so genteel a congregation, for there were many ladies and gentlemen from Ludlow, also my Lady West and her nieces, and the squire of the next parish, with his family), I entered the church in my gown and cassock, followed by six young women, dressed in white, bearing the coffin. My three daughters, and three daughters of a farmer in my parish, followed as mourners, dressed also in white, with hoods of fine white linen. As I walked up the aisle, I repeated these words from the burial service:—

"I am the resurrection and the life," saith the

Lord ; "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth : and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God ; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another."

"We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away : blessed be the name of the Lord " (1 Tim. vi. 7 ; Job i. 21).

The coffin was placed upon a bier in the middle of the church, and all the young women stood round it whilst I read the evening prayers. After the prayers, the ninetieth psalm was sung by the whole congregation, which being finished, I preached a sermon upon the text which follows :—

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation ; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life " (James i. 12).

I opened my discourse with speaking of the hard trials with which our beloved sister, now departed this life, had been exercised ; and how nobly, through the grace of God, she had resisted these temptations.

Thence I proceeded to exhort my hearers to follow this most excellent example.

“You are not all tried,” said I, “as she has been ; yet you must be all sensible that you are surrounded by many and very great dangers. The young are daily and hourly tempted to forsake their duties for their pleasures, and the aged are tempted to the love of money and to worldly anxiety. Some of you are tempted by prosperity to love the world too well, and others in adversity to murmur against your Maker : but, my children, pray without ceasing to your God for His divine help ; for, as the holy apostle says, ‘God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able ; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.’”

Then I finished my sermon by speaking of the joy prepared for those who have kept their innocence through all the trials of this life ; the promises of God made to His saints ; the robes of light, the crowns of glory, and the dwellings of eternal happiness, which, through the merits of our Saviour, will be obtained by those who have loved their God and obeyed His commandments ; and I concluded with a solemn prayer, that all the congregation then present might, with our beloved sister, now no more, be

thought worthy, through the merits of our Saviour, to meet in the presence of God, "where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore" (Ps. xvi. 11).

After the sermon I finished the burial service, and all the congregation followed the coffin to the grave.

Every one present shed tears when the earth was cast upon the body: but surely they were tears of joy; for I have heard many persons who were then present, since say, that they would have gladly taken the place of Susan Gray, and have laid themselves down with her in the dust, could they thus have deserved the reward of her good deeds.

Susan Gray was buried by the side of her dear parents; and my Lady West was so good as to cause a monument of white stone to be placed over her grave. These words were engraven on the stone:—

"To the memory of Susan Gray, who departed this life in the twentieth year of her age, on the 29th day of July, in the year of our Lord, 1741.

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus ii. 13).

Twenty years are now passed since the death of Susan Gray; yet still she is spoken of with pleasure and honest pride in our little village. Every stranger

friend talked to see her grave, and her story
mour and her God before she sends her daughter
him. She said she ^s to earn her bread in the wide,
of her God, or of
had despised: s been dead nearly ten years; she
thoughts of death, use in Ludlow, where she spent
and shocking w of her life in a most miserable way.
he could not s story of Susan Gray was known, all

In this d, forsook her, and her customers fell off
althou one; till at length the old woman, having
was it the few guineas which the Captain had given
er for her wicked services, was obliged to give up
ner cottage, to sell her furniture, and to go into the
poorhouse; where, from confinement, and hard
living, she soon fell into a bad state of health, and
having lingered in sad pain for a few years, died,
without one friend to weep over her. Thus she
received the recompense of her wicked deeds even in
this world, and terrible is it to be feared will be her
lot in the world to come. "Behold the day cometh
that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea,
and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the
day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord
of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor
branch" (Mal. iv. 1).

It was not till after Susan Owen's death, seven years, that I heard of tarits of our Saviour, Owen. She went, as has been said, where there is full Captain when he left Ludlow. re" (Ps. xvi. 11). that he did not wish for her comrial service, and took her with him to London, and in to the grave. about a month ; at the end of which the earth was wife came from Ireland ; for this wickwere tears of of all the vows and promises he had mæere then Gray, had been married about twelve monttaken very rich lady in Ireland.

The Captain then left Charlotte Owen, and went abroad to the West Indies ; where, I heard some time afterwards, that he died, without having thought of repenting of his crimes.

What became of Charlotte Owen after that time for some years I could not hear, but it is well known that she led a very wicked life ; for at the end of six years, a friend of mine, who is a clergyman in London, coming to see me in the country, told me that a few months past he had visited a poor wretch who was dying in a garret, in a narrow, dark alley in London ; that she said her name was Charlotte Owen, that Ludlow was her native place, and that she had brought herself to this sad state by her extravagance and wickedness.

friend talked to her of repentance, and of heraviour and her God ; but she would not hearken to him. She said she could not bear to hear the name of her God, or of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom she had despised : she said she could not endure the thoughts of death, and made use of the most profane and shocking words when the doctor told her that he could not save her.

In this dreadful state she lay for some days ; and although the pain of her body was very great, yet it was nothing to the grief and anguish of her mind.

As soon as she was dead her body was thrown into a coffin by the mistress of the house in which she lodged, and she was buried immediately ; for she had no friend to watch by her, or to close her eyes, or to see that the last offices were performed decently for her.

And now I must finish my story, by beseeching you, my good women, to take warning by the sad end of this wicked girl, and to shun the ways of sin, which lead to eternal misery.

Remember Susan Gray, and let her example be ever in your mind ; and let it not be your wish to be rich and great, to seek for distinction and pleasure in this world, but to do your duty in that humble

state in which God has placed you. And, how lowly and poor that state may be, yet fear not, for you will fail of your reward; God is no respecter of persons, but He will reward every man according to his deeds.

"God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment. The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Peter ii. 4, 9).



