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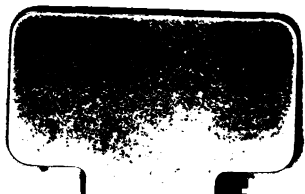
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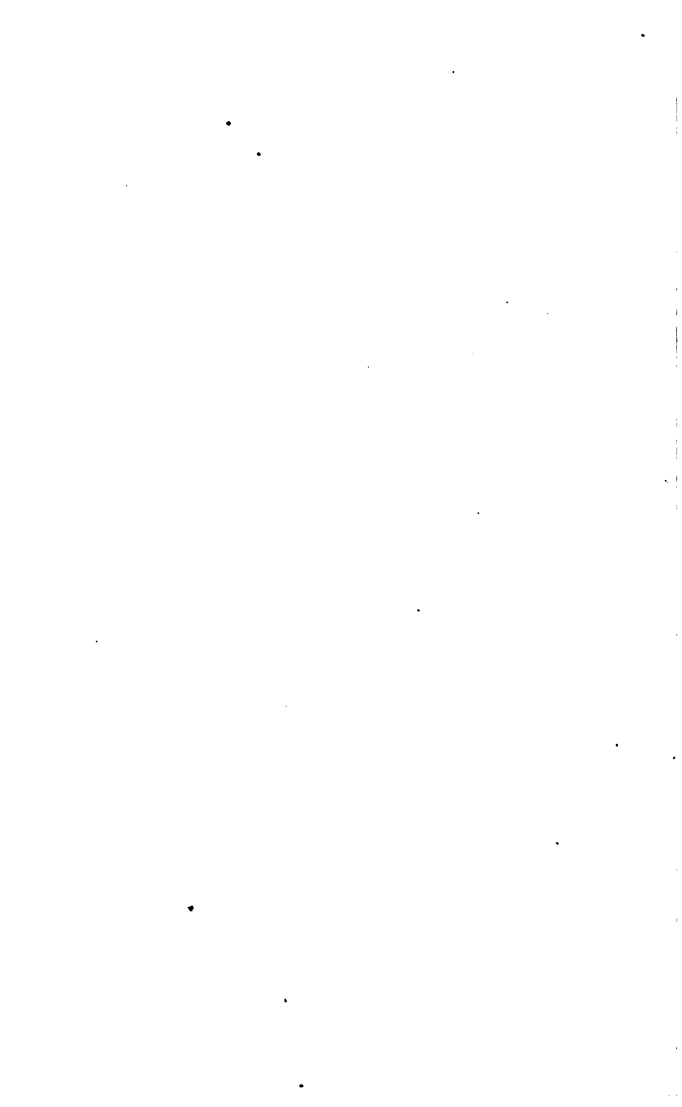
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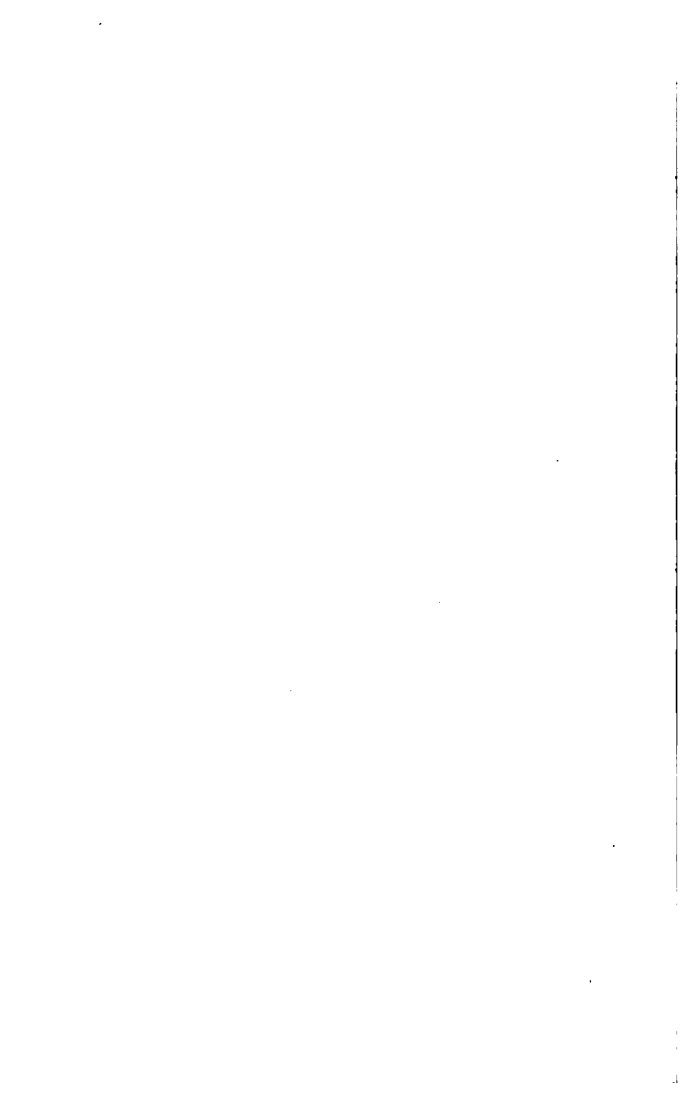
STORIES
ON THE
SEVEN VIRTUES.

BY AGNES M. STEWART.



LONDON :
C. DOLMAN, 61, NEW BOND STREET.

MDCCKLVIII.



✂

STORIES ON THE SEVEN VIRTUES.

✂

HUMILITY ;

Or, *Blanche Reville and the fancy fair.*

LIBERALITY ;

Or, *the Benevolent Merchant.*

CHASTITY ;

Or, *the Sister of Charity.*

MEEKNESS ;

Or, *Emily Herbert and the Victim of Passion.*

TEMPERANCE ;

Or, *Edward Ashton.*

BROTHERLY-LOVE ;

Or, *the Sisters.*

DILIGENCE ;

Or, *Ethel Villiers and her Slothful friend.*

✂



TO
MISS AUGUSTA TALBOT

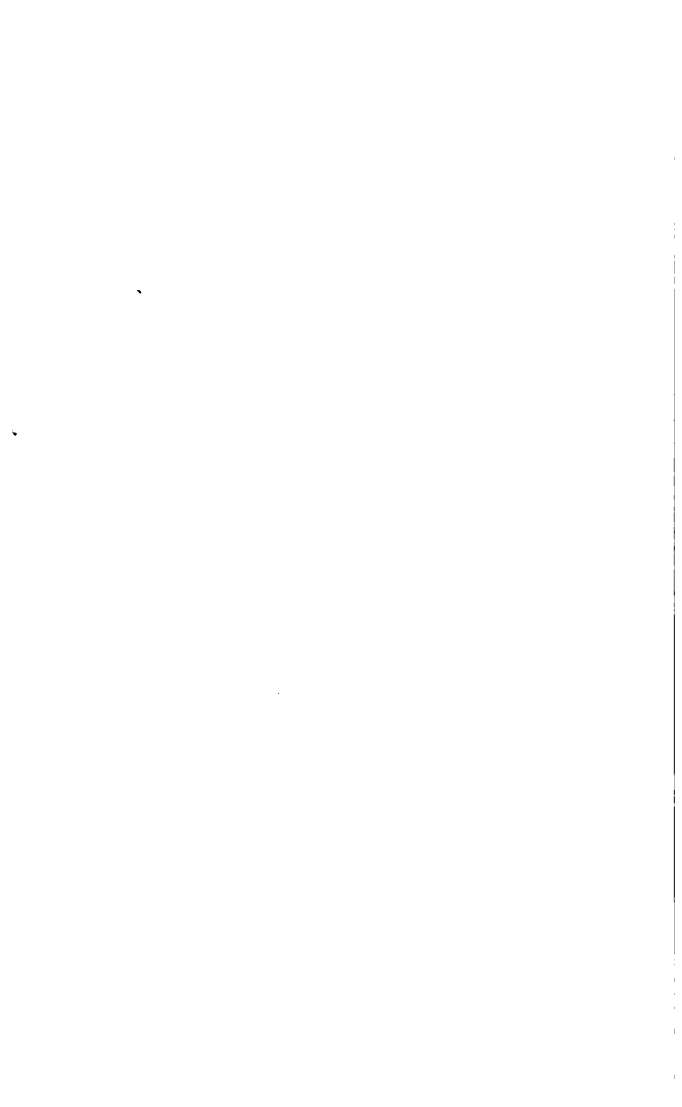
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THE AUTHORESS.





HUMILITY ;

OR,

Blanche Neville and the Fancy Fair.



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HUMILITY ;

OR,

Blanche Neville and the Fancy Fair.



God resisteth the proud, but to the humble he giveth grace.—

St. Peter v. 5.



REAT were the preparations which were made in the hitherto quiet family of Mr. Lovell, a country gentleman residing in the retired village of Ellingham, in Shropshire, for the reception of his ward, Blanche Neville. The ladies of the family consisted of a maiden sister of Mr. Lovell, with his wife and daughter, and to them Blanche was personally unknown; the kind hearts of the elder ladies made them so solicitous, however, in behalf of the orphan girl intrusted to their care, that neither time nor pains were spared to contribute to her comforts; but the

same may not be said of Ellen Lovell, who at eighteen was as much the spoiled pet of the family as at the childish age of eight, and who was rather inclined to look upon Blanche as an interloper than in any more favourable light. Of the disposition of her who was henceforth to be considered one of the family they knew nothing ; Mr. Neville had been one of Mr. Lovell's earliest friends, but since Blanche had merged from childhood into girlhood the latter gentleman had seen but little of the fortunes of his ward. Mr. Neville had at one time been the owner of considerable property, but his love for speculations, which had in many cases failed, had involved it to a great extent, and when upon his death bed he consigned his daughter to the care of the excellent Mr. Lovell, he had nothing to bequeath her save a small income sufficient to rescue her from absolute want.

Blanche had never known a mother's care, Mrs. Neville having died when she was an infant, and the one great sin from which so many others follow, the sin of pride, which was her predominant passion, and which a watchful mother's counsel and instruction, might have enabled her to subdue, if not entirely

eradicate, it was never the lot of Blanche to possess, but, on the contrary, this heinous sin was fostered rather than checked by those who watched over her childhood, till she grew so imperious and haughty that there were few who willingly sought her company.

But as she approached her sixteenth year the scene began to change, and little by little she discovered the alteration in her father's affairs; she bore the misfortunes that overwhelmed them with more resignation than he had expected, but there was perpetually some new sacrifice to make, till at last her own attendant was dismissed, the humblest style of living adopted, and her false pride then led her to be continually seeking to hide from those persons who visited them the utter change from affluence to poverty which was now theirs.

But yet Blanche had had one near her who had reprehended her fault, who had noticed the proud and haughty bearing of the young girl, her ready assumption of authority, her glowing cheek, and the displeasure she evinced if a friendly monitor dared offer the slightest reproof. But such a friend as this is generally shunned by the young who fall into the sin of

pride, and who with our heroine are too wont to assert that this fault is the last of which they are guilty. Her father's health had been long on the decline, and aware that the awful passage from time to eternity was near at hand, he wrote to Mr. Lovell, conjuring him to become the guardian of his child. The inexperienced Blanche could not be brought, however, to believe that her father's death was so fast approaching until the evening before his dissolution, when he introduced her to Mr. Lovell, and told her that he hoped when under his guardianship she would pay to his excellent friend the obedience and affection of a daughter.

"And am I so soon, so very soon to lose you, dear papa?" sobbed Blanche, throwing her arms around her father's neck as she spoke; "but yet," she added, "if it be God's will to take you from me thus early, if I am to be left an orphan in the world, then my heart will indeed turn with affection to him who will occupy your place."

"And Blanche, dearest," added her father, "promise me that you will strive to overcome that passion which has grown with your growth, and strengthened with your strength. Lovell,"

continued he, grasping the hand of his friend within his own, "be not too hard on my child ; remember she has never known a mother's care, or that proud spirit which you will soon find she possesses might have been subdued in earlier days than these."

And amidst tears of sorrow at the thought of her father's approaching death, Blanche gave the promise he required, a promise often given and, alas ! how often broken, to the good clergyman who had watched over her from childhood, who knew her heart to be good, that her disposition was affectionate and amiable, that the seeds of virtue were there, but who saw also that there was little chance of their being ever brought to maturity, if they were not indeed entirely stifled by the proud spirit which sometimes rose even at the deserved reproof of the priest. On the evening following this conversation Mr. Neville calmly expired, and as soon as the funeral had taken place, Mr. Lovell returned to Ellingham, accompanied by his interesting charge.

It was towards the close of a fine autumn evening when they arrived at the end of their journey. The villa inhabited by Mr. Lovell's

family was surrounded by spacious grounds, and the last beams of the setting sun shed a golden tint over the luxuriant foliage already embrowned by that lovely season.

Blanche met with a warm and affectionate reception from the wife and sister of her guardian ; to the latter lady especially, who was somewhat advanced in years, her heart immediately opened, and though the ready tears would for a while flow when the remembrance of her father and the change in her own fortunes pressed on her mind, yet on the whole her naturally cheerful temper sustained her in the presence of her new friends.

Blanche had been in the company of these ladies about an hour when she heard the voice of a person sharply scolding a servant for not having obeyed some command that had been given, and a moment after, Ellen Lovell, with a face inflamed with passion, entered the room.

“I am sorry, Miss Neville,” said her father, “that on your first meeting with Ellen you should see her in a character which cannot prepossess you in her favour. You are a sad tyrant, Ellen, but,” he added, “do not let us have any tears ; I have brought you a com-

panion: now, go and become acquainted with Miss Neville."

Ellen took rather coldly the hand of Blanche, which her father had placed within her own, and a slight shudder passed through the frame of the latter as the thought crossed her mind of the trials she might have to encounter from the evidently ungovernable temper of the young person with whom she was for the future to dwell.

For awhile things went on quietly at Ellingham, for Blanche kept as much as possible in the society of Miss Bertha, the maiden lady of whom we have spoken, and to whom she soon became much attached; but at the end of a few months, reserve on the part of Blanche, and the worldly caution she had adopted, had worn away, and having nothing left to keep her proud spirit from its aspirings, the little bickerings and jealousies between the two girls soon grew unceasing, and the once quiet household was in a continual foment. Before the arrival of Blanche all had yielded to the will of Ellen, her mild and too indulgent aunt and mother submitting to every wish of the spoiled capricious girl; but now the case was altered, and there was one to contend with whose spirit was

as overbearing as her own. Not that Blanche was habitually violent, as was her companion. If put out of her way by the negligence of another, none could bear it more patiently than she now did, and the servants were at times overheard drawing comparisons between her gentleness to them and the perpetual ill temper of their young mistress. This was soothing to the pride of Blanche, and she bore much for the praise of an attendant. Oh! this pride, how does it insinuate itself even into our best actions; for our young readers will observe that Blanche did not restrain the natural vivacity of her disposition because it was pleasing to Almighty God and for his fear and love, but because it raised her in the estimation of the servants above her companion. Her life soon became, however, one truly unhappy, before she attained her eighteenth year; the gentle Bertha appeared to become a severe mistress, her guardian's manner to herself seemed cold and reserved, Ellen and her mother perpetual fault finders. "For myself," she was wont to say in her conversations with Bertha, "I could be very happy with you all, but really Ellen is so cross and peevish it is impossible to bear with her." Too

often did Aunt Bertha have to tell Blanche that there was little piety or even common sense in being so very loud in the justification of herself. "We all are aware," she would add, "of the defects in Ellen's temper; set her an example of humility and patience, and, dear Blanche, believe me, we shall have cause to bless the day that gave our spoiled girl a companion, instead of feeling sorry.

Then, after a conversation such as this, would follow tears on the part of Blanche, wishes that the term of her minority were over, or that, if *she* made the family so unhappy, her guardian would procure his troublesome ward another home. "Can it be expected," she would add, "that I can calmly hear faults laid to my charge, of which I am innocent; that I can bear Ellen to tell me repeatedly that I am ill-tempered, when she alone is guilty?"

Alas! poor Blanche, how often had she been told by the clergyman to whom we have alluded, that in imitation of our great model, the Redeemer of mankind, the humble soul is either silent under affronts and calumnies how great soever they may be, or quietly and calmly seeks to defend her innocence, and then leaves all in

the hands of Providence, how often had she been reminded that in contradiction to all this, to her own promises of amendment even, she was still the same. "Let the least thing," he would say, "occur to wound pride or self-love, and with those who live for this world alone, the proud spirit rises directly. But pray earnestly, Blanche," her spiritual guide would continue, "and Almighty God will not fail to assist you ; put your trust in Him, and grace and strength to overcome this ruling passion will quickly follow. Confide in God, but be less diffident of yourself, for without Him you can do nothing ; and when you fall be not discouraged, for here will be another temptation of the Evil One, but rise quickly and return to God again by repentance."

But here lay the fault of Blanche. She had fallen too often, and had received too many reproofs to be ignorant of the deadly nature of the sin which she so frequently committed ; but instead of arming herself with the shield of prayer, poor Blanche too often went to work only with her own resolutions ; and it cannot, therefore, be wondered at that she remained nearly as faulty as ever. Until she was about the age of fifteen she stoutly contended that she

was not proud. But when the young girl grew warm in her assertion, that pride was not one of her failings, did she not show most clearly by such an assertion, that it was. St. John Climacus says, that when a young novice was rebuked for his pride, he said, "Pardon me, father, I am not proud." To whom the experienced director replied :

"And how could you give me a surer proof of your pride than by not seeing it yourself?"

Blanche had been an inmate in Mr. Lovell's family nearly three years when an alarming fire took place in the village of Ellingham, which brought ruin and despair among the poor. Subscriptions were immediately set on foot, for the relief of the inhabitants ; and Mr. Lovell's family were among the foremost who extended the hand of assistance, but to the great surprise of all, when Blanche was called on for her donation, she said, "I am sorry I cannot do anything ; I have nothing to give."

"You have nothing to give, Blanche!" they all said in one breath, "why how can this be possible, when you received your quarterly allowance but a week since?"

“I cannot tell you at present, indeed,” answered Blanche, colouring as she spoke, “but you shall know some other time why I can give nothing to-day for these poor people;” and as she spoke she hurried from the room.

“Mighty fine,” muttered Ellen, as Blanche closed the door, “I should like to know what she has done with her money, something not very creditable I should think, or there would not be so much mystery about it.”

“Oh, hush! Ellen,” replied Aunt Bertha, “this is judging rashly you know, for you cannot tell in what good purpose Blanche may have disposed of her money, certainly avarice is not one of her failings.”

“Oh, my dear aunt,” answered Ellen, with the contemptuous laugh in which she often indulged when she wished to be very cutting, “we all know Blanche is a great favourite of yours, you will presently find out that she possesses all the cardinal virtues instead of any of the deadly sins. But you will see—”

“Cease this conversation, Ellen,” interrupted her father, “your aunt is right, nor have I ever seen any thing in Blanche to make me believe her unfeeling or hard-hearted to the poor, how-

ever strange her refusal to give her mite in such a case as this may appear."

"Thank you, brother," replied the benevolent spinster, "for helping me to defend the absent; the day is not far distant, believe me, when her actions shall show her to have been blameless this morning."

"I hope so, yet can scarcely believe this will be the case," was the response of Mrs. Lovell, who had grown cold of late towards Blanche; she was naturally a very weak woman, and when any little disturbance took place between the girls, the foolishly attached mother did not stop to remember that, before Blanche came into the family, it was not in *perpetual peace*, though Ellen's whims were always yielded to, and that, therefore, Blanche was not the only one in fault; nor could she expect another to give way like herself to her spoiled daughter.

But to return to our story. The mode of relief spoken of above, though co-operated in by the clergy, and the most influential persons in the little town of Ellingham, failed to afford succour to the required extent. The week, however, before the distribution of the alms, Aunt Bertha and Blanche walked through the village,

regarding with melancholy looks the blackened and roofless tenements, whilst a few cottages yet remained which had partially escaped the general destruction, and which yet admitted in many places the chill March wind, which caused Blanche to draw her warm cloak more closely round her, and drew a sigh of pity from her naturally kind heart for the fate of the poor villagers. The next moment her countenance was lighted up by a smile, and she said :

“ I have a boon to ask, Aunt Bertha ; will you afford me your kind assistance in a scheme to ameliorate, to a greater extent, the sufferings of these poor people ? ”

“ Certainly, love,” answered the old lady, with a benignant smile, “ any help that I can afford shall be at your service immediately.”

“ Well, then,” said Blanche, “ I do not see why the ladies of the village should continue so idle, amidst such a scene of suffering as this ; the gentlemen are all busy doing what they can to make a good subscription. I have this week received my quarterly allowance, great part of which is already spent in the furtherance of my scheme ; but you must keep my secret. Aunt Bertha, may I rely upon you ? ” added Blanche, looking earnestly in the old lady’s face, as she spoke.

“Certainly you may, Blanche,” replied her friend, curious to know what was in agitation; “and I promise to help you by every means in my power, if there is any good to be obtained by your plan, and to keep your secret as long as you impose silence.”

“Well, then, dear Aunt Bertha,” replied Blanche, purposely drawing her aged friend to a more secluded spot, in order to avoid eavesdroppers, “my secret is this,—the Reverend Mr. Harding, the Catholic priest, of whom you have so often heard me speak, is, to my surprise, in Ellingham for a few weeks, and is equally busy with the clergy of the church, in raising contributions for our poor sufferers; I told him, that I wished we could have a society formed of ladies, who should set to work immediately, preparing fancy works of every description, and that a sort of bazaar, or fancy fair, might be held on the green. He thought, with me, that my plan was an excellent one; and is going to set the ladies he knows at Ellingham to work at once; and, from those who cannot work, he intends to solicit contributions towards promoting our charitable scheme.”

“Well, Blanche,” replied the old lady, “I

shall be very glad to assist you with my purse ; but why, my dear child," she continued, " should there be any mystery about the matter? In my opinion, the more publicity given to it the better."

" Why, do you not think," replied Blanche, " that the ladies, especially, will hold back now, if they think that, in the course of a few days, they are to be called on again : this is the reason why I would wish that silence should be kept at present. They will not like to refuse to do anything afterwards."

" Well, that is true enough," replied Aunt Bertha ; " but, meanwhile, I suppose you do not intend to be idle. Had we not better admit Ellen and her mother into the plot? though I fear that the whole village will become acquainted with our plan, should Ellen be aware of it."

" That is the very reason, Aunt Bertha, why I would wish Ellen to know nothing till the subscription is over," rejoined Blanche ; " for myself, I have, as I told you when I began our conversation, expended all my quarterly allowance, with the exception of a few shillings, which I shall, I believe, require to finish some fancy articles I have begun to make. I assure you,

I have a great many to show you already completed, by dint of rising earlier each morning; but see, Aunt Bertha," she said, "here is Ellen herself!"—a turn in the lane bringing them in contact with Mrs. Lovell and her daughter; but not before the good old lady had had time to whisper in the ear of Blanche—"Come to my room to-morrow morning, and I will give you my mite."

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It was the week after the subscription had been raised, and many a fair hand was now busily employed in the town of Ellingham—for the fancy fair was to take place early in the following week—but there was one who had done more than any other; who had been the first projector of the plan; who had given more out of her scanty means than many of the rich ladies of the place; who had toiled early in the morning, and late at night—but who had no merit before God for all her labour, no applauding conscience, with its still small voice, to tell her all was right. And this was none other than Blanche Neville.

On the morning after the conversation of Blanche with Aunt Bertha, she hastened to her old friend, Mr. Harding, to tell him of the success of her scheme. He told her that he had mentioned the proposed charity, under promise of secrecy, to two ladies, who had promised to further it by every means in their power; and bid her see him again after the subscription had been raised.

But what was it that made Blanche feel so uncomfortable, during her conversation with the priest? She spoke of nothing but a plan to lighten the sufferings of her fellow creatures: the clergyman, too, was himself a man of feeling; and yet there was a something in his manner towards her, a coldness, in fact, which reminded her of former days, and which it had been his wont to assume if he was displeased with the conduct of Blanche.

Our heroine left him, then, ill satisfied with her visit, and earnestly longing for the day in which she was to call upon him again; and on her way home, she thought to herself, "Is it possible I could have said anything to give him offence? What made him look so stern, and repeat my words, when I laid before him my

plans, and said I wished them to be adopted? He owned that they were all good ones!"

Poor Blanche! did she not see the old passion again at work! did she not find herself listening to the temptations of the Evil One, allowing him to rob her of the merit attached to her otherwise virtuous actions! for if our young readers reflect for a moment, they will perceive that, in the conversation of Blanche with Miss Bertha Lovell, and afterwards with the priest, that had she not been puffed up with pride, she would not have said, in proposing any plan to be joined in and supported by superiors, "I wish that so and so should be done;" or, "I shall have such a thing done in such a way;" for the humble soul, old as well as young, will suggest or propose, but not will or command, without the advice of others.

The appointed day, however, came at last, and Blanche, mindful of old times and old reproofs and half conscious of her fault, though endeavouring to banish the idea from her mind, presented herself with a palpitating heart to the priest, who dispelled her apprehensions by the warmth with which he received her. A lady was with him when Blanche entered, whom he introduced by the name of Miss

Vincent, and whom Blanche knew belonged to one of the best families residing at Ellingham. Mr. Harding spoke to this lady of the zeal with which Blanche had acted with regard to the proposed charitable undertaking, giving her her full meed of praise; and shortly after Miss Vincent took her leave.

“Now, my dear Blanche,” said the priest, as the lady left the room, “I shall give my vote for that lady to have the management of this affair; she is an experienced person, and I desire that as far as you are concerned you will be guided by her.”

It may be readily imagined, by the conduct of Blanche throughout the whole affair, that this request, or rather command, was not very grateful to her ears, but though her proud spirit rose she uttered not a word, save of assent to his will, and after a little conversation she gladly wished him good morning, but not before he had placed a card in her hand on which was written Miss Vincent's address, with a request that Blanche would call on that lady during the day.

It was not without difficulty that she stopped the tears of mortified pride and disappointment

which rushed to her eyes when she parted with him. Wounded pride and self-love represented to her in exaggerated colours the labour she had undergone, the sacrifice she had made of the whole of her quarterly allowance assigned for her private use, while it seemed to her troubled mind that another was brought forwards to reap the fruit of her labours and claim the praise which should be *hers* alone.

Covered then with chagrin and confusion, for a foolish person had said to her in presence of Mrs. Lovell and Ellen that for the interest she had taken she ought to preside over all proceedings, and her own pride always making her seek to be first, encouraged her to ponder over so ridiculous a suggestion, Blanche returned home, and anxious to stop the hints which some silly girls were perpetually throwing out as to Blanche and *her* Fancy Fair, she said on her entering the parlour, where the ladies were busily engaged.

“ I am happy to tell you that it is Mr. Harding’s opinion that Miss Vincent is the lady who ought to be called on to preside over our Fancy Fair, or whatever we are to call it, and as she is so well known and he has already

some influence at Ellingham, I make no doubt he will gain his point."

"Why, Blanche," said Ellen, raising her eyes in astonishment from the drawing on which she was employed, "I must say I am surprised at the calmness with which you speak. Is it possible that *you* who are so glad to be the *first* on all occasions, and who have dictated so as to what should be done or left undone, and without whom a Fancy Fair might never have been thought of, are really so resigned as you affect to be. Why, your old friend treats you very cruelly; I think now that he should place *you* the first, and thus make you the model of charity for the young ladies of Ellingham to copy, and ——"

"Ellen, Ellen, let us have no more of this," said Aunt Bertha and Mrs. Lovell in one breath, for even the latter lady was softened by the tears which gathered in the dark eyes of Blanche; but it was not so easy a matter to quiet Ellen when she once began. She had an old account to settle with Aunt Bertha as well as Blanche, for the vexation she had felt when it became known how Blanche had disposed of her money, when she had been so

positive that she refused from niggardly motives, as well as for the secrecy which her Aunt and Blanche had maintained towards herself till after the subscription had been raised, and Ellen was again about to renew her attack when the old lady rose, and passing her arm within that of Blanche, led her from the room.

It was not an easy task, however, which good Aunt Bertha had imposed upon herself in attempting to soothe one in so agitated a frame of mind as Blanche. She had discernment enough to perceive that the latter was cruelly mortified, and whilst she pitied Blanche for the pain she suffered she could not but own to herself that it was merited, and rightly concluded that Mr. Harding had noticed the same proud language in her young friend which had thrown a damp upon the pleasure she really felt at the charitable plan she had proposed. It was in vain that Aunt Bertha strove to calm her mind and beg of her to accept at least with resignation of the humiliation it pleased God to send her, and by calling immediately on Miss Vincent, instead of delaying till evening, put a stop to the spiteful language of Ellen. But the good and placid Bertha was really

alarmed by the obstinacy with which Blanche declared that nothing should make her call on that lady, and that the work which she had herself begun she should now leave to others to finish.

“But, my dear Blanche,” expostulated the old lady, “not only Mr. Harding, but the rector and the whole village will know what it is that has given you so much pain to find Ellen conscious of. Believe me, dearest, none pity the proud, and all will join in your condemnation.”

“I care not what is said,” was the impetuous answer of Blanche, “Mr. Harding is unjust, and, once for all, Aunt Bertha, I will have no more to do with the proposed Fair, and no one *shall* persuade me to call on Miss Vincent.”

Deeply grieved at the proud and haughty spirit evinced by Blanche, but hoping that solitude and reflection would bring her to a better frame of mind, the good Bertha bid her farewell for the present, and when the door closed behind the worthy lady, Blanche freely resigned herself to the baneful passion which possessed her.

The evening came, but found our heroine

still in the same mind. When she joined the family at dinner all was as usual, and she felt convinced by the conversation of Ellen that Aunt Bertha had not repeated the threat she still felt inclined to carry into execution, of taking no part in the Fancy Fair.

The next day, exactly one week from that on which it was to be held, Blanche kept her room as on the preceding, but towards evening prepared herself for a walk in the village, and she chose the same secluded spot to which she had drawn Bertha when proposing her plan to her. She had walked for some time buried in her own gloomy reflections when a voice familiar from childhood pronounced the name of Blanche, and to her great vexation, Mr. Harding, whom at that moment she devoutly wished any where but near her, stood by her side.

“Now, my dear child,” said the clergyman, “tell me all that has passed with Miss Vincent and yourself; you, of course, visited her yesterday, as I requested?”

“I have not called on Miss Vincent, sir,” said Blanche; “she is a lady with whom I am perfectly unacquainted. I felt very ill yester-

day, and you must seek for some one else to fill my place, for I am not better to-day," hurriedly added Blanche, and for the first time in her life she bore the stern look of the priest without confusion.

"Blanche, Blanche," said he in a severe voice, "do I come to Ellingham to find you at twenty years of age what you were at twelve. Ah! my poor child," he added, and his voice softened as he spoke, "it is your own bad passions that make you ill. Answer me, Blanche, am I not right? Has it not ever been the same, from childhood to womanhood; ever are you looking to be first, forgetful that the first shall be last, and the last first?"

For a moment he paused, evidently wishing her to speak; but Blanche was stung by his allusion to her childhood, and she walked on, and repressed the tears which started to her eyes; but, conscious that the cause of her illness was seen through, she sought not to offer any excuse.

"I will tell you, Blanche," resumed the priest, "why you have not called on Miss Vincent. It is because your proud spirit makes you fancy yourself fit to take precedence of others! Re-

member, my dear child, I am no stranger to your disposition. Look into your own heart," he continued, "and you will find that pride is depriving you of every merit, both before God and man, by the way in which you are now acting."

As Mr. Harding spoke, he fixed his eyes on the face of Blanche, whose self-love at last yielded; and bursting into tears, she exclaimed,—

"Oh yes! you are quite right, I feel and know it all! I am very sinful, very guilty! But where is the use of my promising amendment? Ah! do I not resolve, only to fall away on the first occasion! has it not ever been the case?"

"Blanche," replied the priest, "let the pain which your proud spirit has brought upon you, teach you a lesson for the future. Pray and reflect; for by prayer and reflection alone can you hope to triumph over this subtle enemy; nor must you give up the combat while life shall last, or again and again will you fall. Listen to me, my child," added the good clergyman. "I was pleased to find you entertain such charitable projects; but I noted your anxiety lest all *your* wishes should not be fulfilled, all *your* suggestions

adopted, and I said to myself, 'Blanche is still proud, she does not act purely from the love of God and her neighbour. For many reasons, one of which is, the influence she will have with others, I judged Miss Vincent every way calculated to hold that place you have so much coveted; and I find that I was not wrong in imagining that this would excite much displeasure. But humility, my dear Blanche, is best taught by humiliations; and if your virtue never attains so perfect a nature as to seek them, or be glad when they come, yet I will hope that when God sends them to you, you will receive them patiently; and, as the first proof of amendment, promise me to accept the penance I impose of calling on Miss Vincent immediately, and continuing this good work with the zeal and pleasure you felt even when such an unworthy passion filled your breast.'

And Blanche promised that, with God's grace, she would be more wary for the future; and before she parted from Mr. Harding that evening, she thanked him sincerely for the interest he had taken in her spiritual welfare. She felt truly penitent, and her future conduct showed her to be practically so; and during the rest of

her life she never ceased to pray for, and regard as her greatest benefactor, him who had taught her to love humility.

Before she returned home, Blanche paid her first visit to Miss Vincent; and on that evening commenced an acquaintance with an amiable and intelligent woman, which was afterwards cemented into a strong and lasting friendship. Poor Aunt Bertha wept for very joy, when she found that Blanche had at last become more tractable; but yet there were two or three harsh, censorious persons, whose strictures on her late conduct were most severe, for scandal travels quick. The remarks made by Ellen, and by some of these persons, reached the ears of Blanche; but she accepted this humiliation as part of her penance. Blanche had, it is true, sinned deeply; but for persons such as these, so proud in their own virtue, so severe upon an erring fellow creature, how truly may the words be applied—"Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall."

On the following week the Fancy Fair was held on Ellingham Green, and the proceeds were far beyond what any person expected. There were

many happy hearts that day in our little village, but none happier than Blanche Neville. No act can be performed more heroic, and at the same time more acceptable to God, than to conquer an evil inclination; and no heroine is greater than she who strives to subdue her passions. Blanche had taken the first great step towards conquering herself; and if she were placed last, she was not least in the eyes of the virtuous on this, to her, memorable occasion. Our young readers will believe us, we hope, when we tell them, that however alluring the path may seem into which passion may lead them, remorse is, sooner or later, sure to follow; whilst they will find a true and lasting happiness in conquering an evil passion, not only during life, but also at the awful hour of death.

A few months after the fair had taken place, Ellen was seized with a long illness, which terminated in her death. Blanche was rarely absent from the pillow of the invalid, whose temper was at last softened by her humble and patient attendance; for not in appearance only, but in deed and truth, was Blanche Neville an altered creature. When good Aunt Bertha died,

she left our heroine mistress of her property ; who continued living in the house of her amiable guardian and his wife till their deaths, which occurred within a few months of each other, when Blanche Neville took up her residence with her friend Miss Vincent.

The first of our little stories on the Seven Virtues is now concluded, and from Humility, the first and greatest of these virtues, all the others may be said to proceed. It may perhaps be, that some young reader of our simple stories may feel herself wanting in this most amiable, most estimable virtue ; of which the Son of God has Himself—in His holy incarnation, His life of labour upon earth, in poverty and sufferings, and, finally, His ignominious death on the cross—vouchsafed Himself to become our model. Humility, indeed, adorns every condition of life, whether in the cottage or the palace ; in either sex ; in every age ; when youth is ripening into maturity, or when, in the evening of time, man sinks into the grave. And if at this latter stage, humility be so fair a thing to witness, how lovely and beseeeming doth it appear in the morning of life ? Great and bright is

the example we have to follow; even that of the merciful Redeemer, who hath pronounced unto us the words—

“Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me; because I am meek and humble of heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is sweet, and my burden is light.”—*Matt. xi. 29.*





LIBERALITY ;

OR,

The Benevolent Merchant.



LONDON :

C. DOLMAN, 61, NEW BOND STREET.

MDCCKLVIII.



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LIBERALITY ;

OR,

The Benevolent Merchant.

Blessed is the man that considers the needy and the poor, in the evil day our Lord will deliver him.—Psalm xl.

IT was towards the close of a dark afternoon in the month of November, that a young girl accompanied by a boy about thirteen years of age, whose appearance betokened them to be raised far above the class to which the casual observer might have thought them to belong from the scantiness and meanness of their clothing, threaded with hurried steps one of the dark and narrow streets with which that part of the metropolis, east of London, abounds. The natural gloominess of the season had for the last half hour been increased, by a thick drizzling rain, with which the thin dress of the

female wayfarer had been for some time drenched. They suddenly stopped, however, before one of the meanest houses in the street, whose worn out and faded curtains, and uncleaned windows, told that its inmates had long ceased to care for appearances, or were too much buried in poverty and woe to heed exterior signs of discomfort. A low wailing sound as of a young child in great grief struck upon the ear, and ever and anon the moan of a person evidently in bodily anguish. The gentle knock the young girl had given was not heard; and again she raised her hand to strike, and as she did so signed to the boy beside her to be still, for a long and loud sob had burst from him, for until that moment he had been weeping in silence. The next instant the door was opened by a tall thin woman, about forty-five years of age, whose still fine countenance showed that she had once been very beautiful, but poverty and care had there stamped a seal of such deep suffering, and yet withal an expression of such patient resignation as never might be effaced.

“Rose,” she said, as she admitted the young girl into the passage, “tell me whether your errand has been of any avail.”

“Yes, yes,” answered the girl, “I have that which will provide him with fire and food for the present; but let me go to him, mama,” she added, “I have walked very fast lest he should even die before my return,” and as she spoke, she hurried up the narrow staircase and passed into the room from whence the sounds still proceeded. But what a scene of suffering was there. On a miserable flock bed, extended on the ground, lay a man still in the prime of life, but disease and want had reduced his once fine and manly form to that of a mere skeleton, and his sunken eye and hollow cheek betokened him the victim of decline, and beside the bed knelt a child, who still gave utterance to the low wailing sounds which had been heard in the street.

“My dear little Marian,” said the girl, raising the child from her knees and fondly kissing her as she spoke, “do not weep so loudly; see, you disturb poor papa.”

“As she uttered these words the dying man endeavoured to raise his head from the pillow and signed to his daughter to approach him; but the effort was too great, for even in that moment his countenance was convulsed with

the agonies of death. Rose saw that the last moment was at hand, and whispered to the child to call her mother immediately, but at that moment she entered, followed by the boy, who was loaded with the materials for a fire. One glance was sufficient to tell the truth to the wretched wife. Rose still knelt beside the couch, supporting her father's head and wiping the heavy dew from his face. Twice he essayed to address them, but the power of speech was gone ; but they knew him still conscious of their presence by the pressure of the hand. The next moment, however, his head sank heavily on the shoulder of his daughter, and the close grasp of his wife's hand was relaxed, and a long and loud sigh announced to his wretched family that all was over.

But pass we from the chamber of death in which Rose and her mother fulfilled the last sad duties to the departed, having nothing wherewith to pay the hireling's services, to give our young readers a brief account of the distressed family to whom we have introduced them.

Edmund Leslie had truly been what the world calls an unfortunate man. He had

entered upon life as a merchant, and for twelve years maintained his family in comfort and respectability, but at the end of that time, partly through heavy losses occasioned by the distress of some and partly through the frauds of others, he was compelled to declare himself bankrupt. From that time till the day on which we began our little tale nothing but a series of disappointments and trials had fallen upon the family, which for the last two years had been much added to by the declining health of Mr. Leslie, for since his illness their only means of support were drawn from the poor and insufficient earnings of Rose and her mother by the use of the needle. The selfishness of those whom the world dignifies by the name of friends is a tale too often told, a fact too well known, to need a comment here: there was one indeed who boasted much of what he would do for poor Leslie when his friend was first in trouble, but the plan he pursued was the last in the world calculated to effect its object, for he offered his services for terms so low as to render it doubtful whether it was done merely on the pressure of distress or the consequences of a character which if not entirely

lost was not unimpeachable. Then there were others who gave a few presents—now and then a sovereign or two, and their cast off clothing ; and there were some too who, when the news of the distress reached them, judged it wisest to hold aloof entirely from the Leslies, who will be, they were wont to say, like all poor people, always soliciting assistance. And thus, in a manner unfortunately too common with those in distress, the world treated the Leslies. After the father became confined to the house, the last ray of hope which had hitherto cheered the path of Mrs. Leslie seemed to desert her, for on his meeting with some person who would interest himself in their behalf appeared to depend their only chance ; but now that was taken away what but inevitable destitution was before them ? With the exception of one solitary friend who at times would still send them a trifle, accompanied with the remark, “ Of course I do not expect to have my money back ; when people are in the distress which you are in I consider a loan as a gift,” the wretched Leslies knew none who were likely to be of any service to them or to their children, even in the much more essential point of

assisting them to earn their own bread. The respectability in which they had heretofore lived prevented them, however great their poverty might be, from associating with persons in the humbler walks of life, whilst that same poverty presented an insuperable bar between themselves and those of their own class who would have had the power to benefit them. Thus during two weary years the wretched Leslies suffered all the aggravated horrors of poverty of the sharpest description; one by one every article of wearing apparel was disposed of for less than half its value, and then the bedding and the small remains of the household furniture which they had managed to save from the general wreck shared the same fate. Two days had passed when we opened our little story, and they had not the means to kindle a fire to warm the chilled limbs of the dying man. Rose had walked from the Commercial Road, East, near which place they lived, as far as Southwark, to carry home their work, but the wretched pittance she obtained would scarcely furnish food and candle, and on the day to which we have alluded she took another walk to see if she

could prevail on the person who employed her to allow her an advance on the next work they had in hand. It was but for a poor half-crown that Rose pleaded so very earnestly, and for this they had a great deal of work to do, but the person whom she spoke to was a harsh unfeeling woman, who sharply answered by saying, "Why, you must surely be mad to suppose that I can grant such a request as that. Oh no! it is quite enough for me to trust the work with you without a deposit, which I only do because you appear a more respectable body than the other girls who work for me, but as to advancing you money on the next work it is what I neither can nor will do;" and as she finished her speech she proceeded in her task of packing up some articles which a lady had just selected.

"Oh! no, no! for pity's sake," said Rose, "do not, pray do not, refuse me; my father is very very ill; you know my work always gives you satisfaction; you cannot doubt my honesty. Pray do not refuse me the favour I ask," she continued, and she burst into tears as she spoke.

"I have already told you, Miss Leslie," said the inflexible woman, "that I never have nor

will I now begin the practice of paying my work-people in advance. I have tales quite as pitiful brought me by others as by you, so now I must beg of you to go home and leave me to attend to my customers."

Without another word the almost broken hearted Rose took her little brother by the hand and was leaving the shop when the lady who had been apparently closely occupied in making her purchases, but who had in fact listened attentively to every word of the conversation between Rose and her employer, stopped her, and placing five shillings in her hand begged she would excuse the interference of a stranger, and giving her her address requested her to call on her at eleven o'clock on the next morning. For a moment Rose hesitated, and even as she accepted the donation of the generous stranger experienced a feeling akin to shame at having thus made herself the object of public charity, but in the next instant a better and more grateful feeling filled the heart of the sensitive girl, and warmly thanking her new friend for her kindness, she hurried on that journey homewards in which we commenced our tale.

A melancholy little party, indeed, was that which was formed by the wife and three children of the departed Mr. Leslie, on the evening of his death. The sounds from without in the howling wind and the heavy winter rain, which now beat furiously against the windows, were alone calculated to depress the spirits of persons who were not buried in so much grief and despondency as the unfortunate widow and her young and helpless children. Rose was but sixteen, and when her mother looked upon her slight and delicate form and remembered how weak and tender a thing she had been from infancy, and compared her melancholy countenance, scarce ever lighted up by the smile of youth or the merry laugh which used to ring in her ears before such sad suffering became their portion, and contrasted the pale tinge which yet lingered on her cheek with the healthful glow which once was there, she trembled at the thought that Rose would not cope long with this world of woe. She could not be called beautiful, but there was such an amiable expression in her countenance, and one of such softness and melancholy in her deep blue eye, as amply to compensate for the want of a more

regular cast of features. Edmund was a lively and intelligent boy, and was but thirteen years of age, while little Marian was two years younger. A long and sad conversation indeed was that which was held by Rose and her mother, for it was even to devise means to lay in the earth the remains of the affectionate father and husband, interrupted now and then by the remarks of the children as to whether such or such a person would not pay for the funeral of poor papa, but well the mother knew that an application to their *friends*, as they once called them, would bring upon them the advice to fly to the last refuge of the destitute, and have Leslie buried by the parish, and as the thought passed on the mind of Rose that in all probability this must be done, she would rise from her seat and pace the room with hurried steps. No sleep was taken that gloomy melancholy night by Mrs. Leslie and Rose; the children had begged for leave to lay before the fire and take their rest there, and after a prayer to the Almighty to have pity on their distress, were soon buried in sleep. The hazy light of the November morning at last broke in, and they rose from the fireside, blessing

that strange hand which had given them the comfort of a fire during their long watch, and then having performed their devotions and visited the chamber of death, they made a slight meal, and having begged a neighbour to sit with the children for a few hours, Rose and her mother both left home, the former on a long walk to Clapham to the house of the lady whose card she had received, and her mother to see if the friend whom we have mentioned as not having wholly thrown them off would assist them with anything towards the funeral.

We will, however, with our young reader's leave, accompany Rose, who, weary and faint with the length of her walk, arrived by the appointed hour at the house of Mrs. Selby. She was received by that lady with the greatest kindness, and making her sit down she entered into conversation with her, and telling Rose that she saw her above the station she at present filled, begged to know the circumstances which had placed her family in such distress. In her own simple way and with many tears Rose narrated the circumstances attending her father's failure, and all that they had afterwards suffered, not concealing the difficulty they at

present lay under from their inability to bury her father. Mrs. Selby appeared much shocked by the recital, and desired Rose to call on her again the following day, giving her at the same time a parcel of work, for which she said she should pay her half-a-sovereign beforehand, and on receiving Rose's address desired her to ride on account of the distance. With a lightened heart Rose returned home, but found her mother in tears at the little success she had met with. Her reception had been a rough one; many harsh things had been said, such as comments upon Rose not having sought after a situation as an upper maid in some respectable family, and then the widow was asked why Edmund continued to loiter at home when, young as he was, he might obtain a situation as errand boy, and the conversation was concluded by the gentleman taking a sovereign from his purse, which he put in Mrs. Leslie's hand, saying, "This is really the last time, Mrs. Leslie, that I can afford you any assistance. As far as the funeral of poor Leslie is concerned, I should certainly advise his being buried by the parish, and pray think over what I have been saying to you, and seek after immediate

employment for Rose and Edmund. You know fine feelings are very well for people with money in their pockets, but not for those who have none."

With a heart ready to burst, Mrs. Leslie thanked this gentleman for the sovereign he had given her with so much gall and bitterness, and gladly retraced her steps homewards without saying whether she should or should not comply with his suggestions; certain it was that something must be done, and that immediately, or starvation itself was before them; but where was she to hear of a situation for Rose even were she qualified to accept one, either for strength, or for the little knowledge of the duties she must fulfil; again Rose had but one dress to wear and that of the meanest description, too thin in fact for that inclement season, and no person would have admitted her even as a menial, clad as she was in other respects. Mrs. Leslie well knew that the person who advised this step was not prepared to offer a single shilling towards requisites for either of her children should situations be obtained for them, but it is very easy to offer advice, and this sort of commodity is freely given by all the world. A glim-

mering of hope seemed to rise in the breast of Mrs. Leslie, by the kindness with which Rose had been received, and her story listened to by Mrs. Selby; but again was the question asked of one another, "In what way is the funeral to take place, for something must be done immediately."

The plan at last proposed was, that they should devote the thirty shillings they now had in hand to pay in advance to an undertaker, could they find one willing to credit persons so poor as themselves for the rest of the amount, and trust to Providence for means to provide themselves with a black dress each and also for the wants of the morrow. Mrs. Leslie accordingly lost no time in hurrying to an undertaker recommended by a neighbour, who, on her paying down the thirty shillings, agreed to conduct the funeral for her husband in a plain and yet decent way, and to afford her six months for the payment of the remainder, which she was to give by instalments, as might best suit herself.

We will now leave Rose and her mother and return to her new friend, Mrs. Selby, who, after the dessert had been removed and the servants

had withdrawn on the evening of the day in question, told her husband that the unfortunate young person of whom she had spoken on the preceding day had called that morning as she promised; and then followed a narration of all that Rose had told her in the morning. When she mentioned that her name was Leslie, Mr. Selby passed his hand over his forehead, as if in thought, and then exclaimed,

“Can the father of this unfortunate girl possibly be the Edmund Leslie with whom I have formerly transacted so much business; but whether it proves that this family is his or not, we must not allow such distress to pass by unrelieved. Therefore,” continued the benevolent gentleman, “question her again to-morrow, my dear Mary, as to her family, for I could not lie down to rest in peace without relieving out of the abundance God has given us such a fearful accumulation of distress.”

It was then agreed on between the amiable pair, that Mrs. Selby should accompany Rose home on the following morning, and have some conversation with her mother, and that if all she had said was strictly correct, means should be taken to rescue them immediately from want.

Accordingly when Rose again called on the next day, Mrs. Selby had made up a parcel of clothing for herself and her mother, and informed her of Mr. Selby's wish that she should see her, and then ordering the carriage, into which the benevolent lady ordered a bottle of wine to be placed, with some nourishing things from her own table, she proceeded to Mrs. Leslie's home. It is not necessary to say that this good lady was fully satisfied that if there ever was a case deserving their assistance it was now before them. Under the disfiguring garb of extreme poverty there was still the accomplished and elegant lady, and as far as regarded the distress of the family every thing bore testimony to the fact that it was indeed great. Mrs. Selby also questioned Mrs. Leslie as to her deceased husband, in order to ascertain whether he were the person whom Mr. Selby had formerly known; she then inquired at what expense the funeral would be conducted, and to the great surprise of Mrs. Leslie and Rose laid on the table the required sum, with two sovereigns for present expenses: Amidst tears of gratitude for her kindness Mrs. Selby bid

farewell to the unfortunate family, after telling Rose and her mother to be at her house on an appointed evening on the following week, when she wished them to see Mr. Selby, and on her return found her husband already home. They were devising means for establishing the family in respectability again, should they on a longer acquaintance prove themselves industrious and deserving, and Mr. Selby knew the father to have been both, when Miss Coventry, a young friend of Mrs. Selby's, entered the room. In the course of conversation the latter lady spoke of the afflicting distress which had befallen this worthy and respectable family, when, to the surprise of the Selbys, Miss Coventry remarked that her father had known Mr. Leslie for many years, and had frequently assisted them, "but really," added the young lady, "he is quite worn out, they have latterly become so importunate; and the day after Mr. Leslie's death his widow called on papa to beg him to pay for the funeral, and this he flatly refused to do; but you know, Mrs. Selby, our family is an expensive one, and were papa to be so benevolent we must very quickly reduce our establishment; and I am quite sure," she added,

“that God does not require us to bring ourselves to poverty to assist our neighbours.”

“But, my dear Miss Coventry,” said Mr. Selby, who was much shocked to find that her father, whom he knew to be a man of considerable property, could so utterly throw off persons in such deep distress, “it must not be forgotten that, putting quite out of the question, the fact, that persons of property like your father have the power of materially assisting others without reducing themselves to poverty, there are many ways by which the distressed may be benefitted: was it not possible, now, for your father to place Leslie in a respectable situation, or to do anything for his wife and children, by which they might support themselves? Oh! believe me, if the rich would but interest themselves in this manner we should hear less of this unceasing cry raised against the poor, of their being so importunate, by which the rich seek to excuse their own apathy.”

“But, Mr. Selby,” exclaimed the young lady, not a little irritated by the remarks which he had made, “you know the Leslies have no claims upon us.”

“I cannot hold with such a doctrine as that,”

replied he, "you have said nothing against the character of the Leslies, and persons who are honest and industrious have to a certain degree a claim upon others, the claim, Miss Coventry," added he, "which one Christian has upon another, the claim man has upon his fellow man, for from those to whom much hath been given much will be required, and it is thus God expects us to use the talents entrusted to our care.

The conversation ended here, for Miss Coventry was not much disposed to renew it, feeling that she certainly had not the praiseworthy side of the argument.

The estimable merchant, however, had gained one point on which he much desired to be satisfied—he was now certain that the character of the Leslies was unimpeachable, otherwise Miss Coventry would, in the irritation of the moment, have gladly alleged their unworthiness as the cause why her father withheld his assistance. We have shown that he was not one of those who think that charity begins and ends with small loans or gifts to the distressed, but who strove, where it could be done, to place the means of livelihood in the hands of the

persons he befriended. On the following week, then, when Mrs. Leslie and Rose called upon him, decently attired in the new mourning they had purchased, he proposed for the next half year to send Edmund to school, and then to place the youth in his own counting house; "and," added he, "I have a small cottage in the village of Eltham which I shall destine for your use. It was my intention to receive Rose here as governess for the younger children, but as she is still very young and her education must have been much neglected, I think it better that she should for awhile apply herself to her studies, and we will then see what can be done for her."

The liberality of the excellent Mr. Selby was not, however, required to be extended so far. Mrs. Leslie was herself an accomplished woman, and until their poverty had become so great as to oblige them to sell their piano, and her mind so harassed as to disable her from the task; Rose had received daily lessons from her mother, and her talents were such as occasioned her, under her careful tuition, to outstrip many of her age. It was therefore settled, that on their arrival at Eltham, they should open a

school, and that when Rose had attained a little more proficiency she should offer to give lessons daily, and that if this plan failed he should receive her as governess into his own family.

The next day, then, beheld the poor Leslies preparing to leave their wretched habitation for the neat and pretty cottage given them by their benevolent friend. As to the two children, they were almost mad with joy; little Marian laughed and clapped her hands in the excess of her childish glee at the thought that she should not hurt her feet by wearing such old shoes again, or see mama and Rose cry so often because she was hungry and they could not buy her any bread; while little Edmund wept and wished that they had met this good gentleman while poor papa lived, for then he would not have let him die in such distress; and Mrs. Leslie, and the good and amiable Rose, felt a severe pang, and shed bitter tears, when they looked for the last time in the room in which Mr. Leslie had passed the last days of his sad existence.

“And, ah! why did we not meet such a friend sooner; he might yet have been spared to us,” was the repining exclamation of Rose; “but

there were none to succour, none to send anything to nourish or assist him in his long and painful sickness."

"Hush! Rose; this is mere vain murmuring at the will of our Heavenly Father, *who loveth those whom he chastiseth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth,*" said a venerable clergyman, who had been the only person to visit Leslie on his death-bed, and who now called to bid the widow and her daughter farewell before they left London; "let us hope," he continued, "that a merciful God has accepted the willing offering he made of his life before he was called hence, and the sufferings and privations of his painful death-bed so patiently endured, and that his offences being forgiven, through the merits of our Lord, he is now in the possession of greater happiness than any this world could possibly offer."

And Rose felt that the clergyman's remarks were indeed right, and with a lightened heart she bade farewell to the worthy pastor, who alone had given consolation to the suffering family, and proceeded to Eltham. It was a small but neat cottage, with a thatched roof, the front of the house entirely covered with

roses and the little rustic porch overgrown with clematis and woodbine ; quiet and peace seemed spread around, and it was the very place which Mrs. Leslie and the unambitious and industrious Rose would have selected and have said, " Here let us retire, apart from the noisy world, and in a happy seclusion pass the remainder of our days." The cottage was given to them, it was quite their own, but such unlimited seclusion they might not expect, save during the holidays, for Mrs. Leslie's school was soon patronized by some good families in the neighbourhood, and at the end of a twelvemonth, when Rose had become a really accomplished girl, she obtained pupils in the neighbourhood. Mr. Selby, who did nothing by halves, had furnished the cottage neatly when they entered, and allowed them a sum of money for their support till the proceeds from their school came in. At the end of the first half-year, however, on making the promised quarterly remittance, half of it was returned, and at the expiration of the next they required nothing, the blessing of God having descended on their efforts, and by frugality and industry combined they were able to maintain themselves, and the benevolent

merchant had now an opportunity of exercising his charity in another quarter, and he was wont to say, that the greatest pleasure he knew was, three or four times in the course of the year, to go with his wife and spend a day or two with Mrs. Leslie and Rose, in the little cottage in which he had himself began life, rather as a poor man than the reverse. Edmund, at the age of fourteen, was taken into Mr. Selby's office, and by integrity and industry he merited the esteem and praise of his employer, and when a very young man became a partner in the same firm. Mrs. Leslie continued for some years to continue the management of her school, but when Marian was competent to undertake it it was resigned to her care; and when Edmund attained the post we have spoken of he wished his sisters to discontinue their teaching, he having put a handsome sum aside annually for his mother's use and their own, but the two sisters had acquired so honest an independency of spirit that though they accepted part of what he offered, to afford greater comforts to the now declining health of their mother, and enable them to have a something always at hand for those in need,

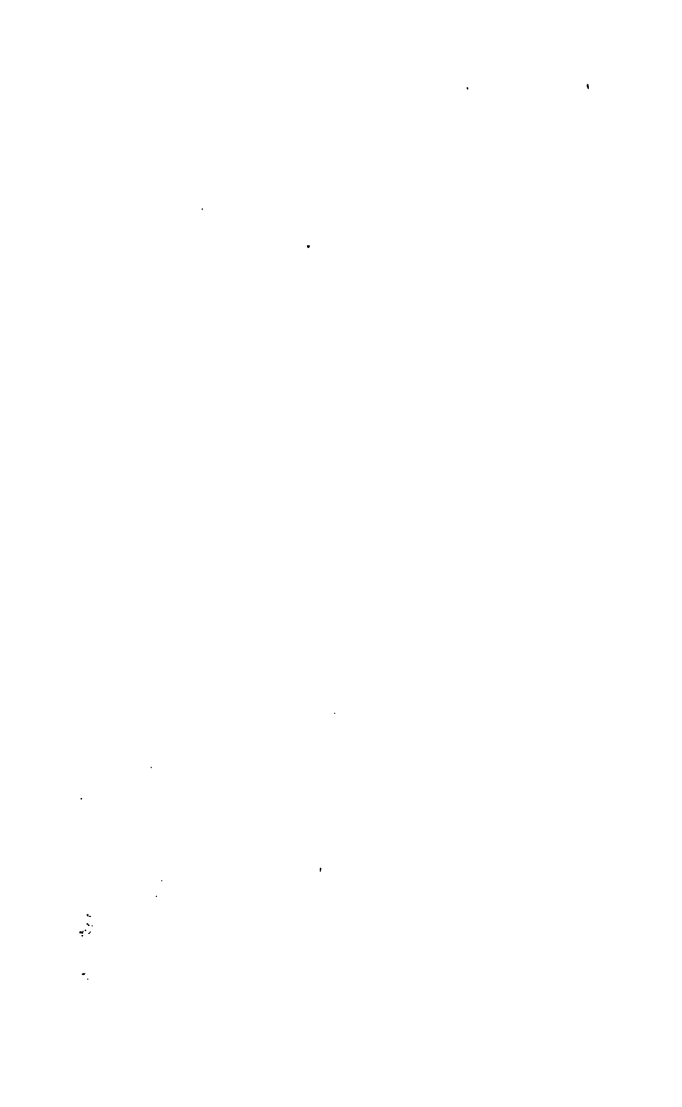
they never could be brought to accede to his request.

Of the generous merchant and his amiable and excellent wife we have no more to say, than that God ever visited them with prosperity and blessing, even in this life. They lived to a good old age, honoured and respected by all, and many were the prayers which were daily offered by those to whom they had nobly stretched forth the hand of assistance, and they died sincerely and deeply lamented by all who had known their worth.

Of the happiness of the charitable Christian in a better world what great room is there for hope, for what bright promises do the words of our Lord offer to the benevolent. “‘Come, ye blessed of my Father,’” saith he, “‘possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me meat, thirsty and ye gave me to drink, a stranger and ye took me in. Naked and ye clothed me, sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me.’ Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see thee hungry and fed thee, or thirsty and gave thee drink? When did we see thee a

stranger and took thee in, or naked and clothed thee ; or when did we see thee sick or in prison and came unto thee ?' And the King shall answer and say unto them, ' Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these, my least brethren, you did it to me.' "—Matt. xxv. 34.







CHASTITY ;

OR,

The Sister of Charity.



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CHASTITY :

OR,

The Sister of Charity.

He that giveth his daughter in marriage doth well, but he that giveth her not doth better.—1 Corinthians vii. 38.

T was the eve of the Ascension of our Lord, and the pious inhabitants of the village of E——, in the province of Languedoc, were for the most part busy in preparation for the following day. On the eve of that great festival many thronged to the churches to repair to the confessional, and by prayer and reflection sought, as far as in them lay, to besit themselves for the reception of the Sacrament on the next day, whilst some persons, young as well as old of both sexes, who were less piously

disposed, remained at home or sauntered to their customary places of amusement.

The bells of the church of Nôtre Dame had already given the customary peal for benediction of the Holy Sacrament, which devotion did not take place each evening before eight o'clock, in order that the villagers and other hard working persons might thus have an opportunity of finishing the day by assisting at the public service of the Church, when two young girls, whose dress betokened them to be raised a step above the village maidens, traversed quickly the winding path leading to the church. It was not the intent of both, however, to enter the time-worn and hallowed edifice, for the elder of the two laid her hand upon the shoulder of her companion and for the third time begged her for this one evening not to go to church.

“It is in vain for you to urge me thus, Pauline,” said her companion; “why do you attempt to delay me when I am already beyond my time, and you know well that to-night, the eve of our Blessed Lord’s Ascension, is the very last on which I should choose to absent myself.”

“I would it were my fortune, Madeleine, not to live with persons quite so religious as my mother and yourself,” retorted her sister in a sharper tone, and letting go the arm she had hitherto held. The former, glad to be free, entered the church with a buoyant though reverential step. And of all who were there assembled on that evening, there were none who entered more deeply in the spirit of the religious service in which she was engaged than did Madeleine le Clair, none more fervent, and few perhaps who felt as earnestly as she did that her sole happiness was in the possession of her own religious mind, which, poor as herself, and her widowed mother were, she would not have exchanged a gift so precious for all this world could offer. The last tones of the organ had died away, the waxen tapers were all extinguished, and no light remained save that which proceeded from the ever burning lamp which hung before the altar of the Blessed Sacrament; but Madeleine le Clair still lingered in earnest supplication. She was, however, suddenly interrupted by the sound of a footstep near her, and the next moment the venerable Abbé of Nôtre Dame stood by her side.

“Why do you stay here so late, my child?” he said. “Return home quickly, Madeleine, for night is drawing on, and our first Mass, at which you will assist, begins at four in the morning.”

“Oh! Monsieur, I have remained in the church so long because I wished much, very much, to speak with you,” said Madeleine. “I desire,” she added, “to have your advice and counsel this evening, yet, if it be too late ——” and again she hesitated, as if half afraid to proceed.

“No, no, my child; speak on and I will hear you now,” said the abbé, with whom, amongst his spiritual children, Madeleine was rather a favourite, on account of the general steadiness of her conduct, and her regular attendance at church.

“You will remember, father,” answered Madeleine, “that a few weeks since I was present when your niece Mademoiselle St. Armand, received the white veil in the new convent of the Sisters of Charity; now, I do ——” and again Madeleine coloured and hesitated.

“Well, my dear child, I remember all this,” said the abbé, with a smile, “but I should like

to know what it is you wish to have my advice about."

"Why—father—I wish so much to become a nun myself," answered Madeleine. "I have thought of little else since that day; in all my prayers I beg of God to grant this my desire. Oh!" continued the enthusiastic girl, "how happy I should be did I think there would be any hope for me, at any time, however distant it might be. But tell me, monsieur, do tell me, ought I to cherish this wish; is it proper for me to think of being a religious?"

"Make an offering of your heart to God, Madeleine," responded the abbé, "and it may be that your desire may be granted. And now farewell, and hasten home quickly, for it is late for one so young to be absent from her home."

With a lighter heart, now that she had met with no refusal on the part of the abbé, who she knew had it in his power to grant her request, but who at the same time was very particular as to who he recommended to the religious state, Madeleine, after having obtained his blessing, hastened on her way home.

It was growing dark when she entered the cottage inhabited by herself, her mother, and

her elder sister Pauline, and when Madame le Clair asked what had delayed her return so long, she answered,—

“Our good abbé, my dear mama, gives me room to hope that at some future time I may become a Sister of Charity; I waited to speak to him this evening. You, I know well, will not place an obstacle to that which would make the happiness of your child,” she added, as she observed a gloom pass over the countenance of her mother.

“No, my Madeleine,” answered the widow; “should the Almighty call you to serve Him in a religious state, it shall not be my voice which shall deter you from becoming more entirely His in time, whom you hope to possess in eternity, whatever I may for awhile suffer in parting with a dutiful and affectionate daughter; but think well over this matter, dearest,” she added, “and now to rest, for the tears are already gathering,” and as the fond parent spoke she wiped away the drops which already hung on Madeleine’s long lashes.

But let us now speak more fully of the parent of our heroine. As to circumstances, Madame le Clair was indeed very poor, and was at

present but a grade raised above the humble villagers by whom she was surrounded. Her late husband, Pierre le Clair, had been an extravagant man, who lived up to every farthing he earned, and when cut off suddenly in the prime of life, his widow and daughters were left penniless, but Providence watched over and protected them, and a good and wealthy lady, residing in the town of E——, contributed to the support of Madame le Clair and her amiable and pious daughter. Pauline had money sufficient for her own maintenance, which had been bequeathed by her godmother, and was not a little conceited on this account. There was no promise of future good, however, in the vain coquettish Pauline, who could not be persuaded to pass her time in any thing good or useful, but was perpetually to be found idling and gossiping with the giddiest girls in the village. With Madeleine it was far otherwise; at the early age of fifteen, two years before the commencement of our tale, she had been held up as a model by mothers, whose example they would wish their children to follow, and this pre-eminence, held by the young girl amongst her companions, failed to awaken any jealousy

in their minds, because she was generally beloved by them all for her sweet and amiable temper, and the unaffected and artless simplicity of her manner. There was a charitable institution in the town of E——, in common with many places on the continent, for the purpose of selecting annually or every three years one or more young women, according as the funds of the institute permitted, whose age should not be less than eighteen years, and who should be esteemed the most worthy young person in the town or village in which this custom is practised, and giving them a sum of money either to furnish a dower for marriage, or, should they choose to embrace the religious state and consecrate themselves to God, a pension to enable them to become nuns. This benevolent object was in the little town of E—— exercised once every year, and then but one young person received any benefit from it, on account of the smallness of the funds. Madeleine wanted little better than nine months to complete her eighteenth year, and already was it said in the village that she would wear on the next Lady-day the much coveted crown of roses which the abbé placed on the head of

the happy maiden distinguished, not for beauty or talents but for a good and virtuous life. More than one well doing farmer had sought to obtain Madeleine's hand, and from her refusal to marry it was fully expected by the young people in the village that at the expiration of the year they should lose their general favourite. Meanwhile things continued to go on as usual in the widow's cottage, Madeleine happy in the hope that the approval of her pastor and the voice of the public would select her for the dowry on the following year. Many were the exhortations of the good abbé, pointing out to her the difficulties as well as the advantages she would have to meet in the religious state.

“Remember, Madeleine,” he would say, “the bitters of the conventual state must be encountered ere its sweets may be tasted; reflect much on the step you design taking, for in this state you must at *least* aspire to perfection, and denying yourself must take up the cross and follow in the steps of your crucified Saviour. Do not forget that your place will henceforth be by the side of the sick and dying, and that you must overcome the repugnance you may feel in these offices of charity.”

But Madeleine still continued firm in her resolution, and made it her daily prayer to God that He would strengthen and assist her; but throughout the year there was much to suffer, for Madame le Clair's health suddenly broke up, and Pauline, the gay and selfish and irreligious Pauline, absented herself daily more and more from the cottage of her mother. No amusement was devised by the village girls in which she was not the first to join, no article of finery met her sight of which she did not covet the possession; in vain did Madame le Clair remonstrate, in vain did Madeleine plead; they had surmised but too correctly that she was treading in a path which would bring inevitable ruin upon herself, and, in spite of the advice and counsel of her best friends, she threw away herself, and the little fortune she possessed, on one who was the most profligate and undeserving in the town of E——.

But winter came, and with it aggravated illness to Madame le Clair; the affectionate and dutiful Madeleine was never absent from the couch of her sick parent; for many weeks she lingered on in a state which forbid her leaving her, even in the care of a neighbour.

Pauline sometimes visited her indeed, but there was so little affection, and so much dislike manifested to the sick room by the ungrateful girl, as to make Madeleine rather sorry than otherwise to see her. On one evening, however, when Madame le Clair was more than usually ill, Pauline entered the cottage, but her countenance was haggard, and there was a wild expression in her eyes which they had never before seen. Terrified and apprehensive that something wrong had happened, Madame le Clair started up in the bed, and seizing Pauline by the arm commanded her to tell her what had happened immediately. The wretched Pauline had indeed only met with the fate which all who knew her too truly anticipated would be hers in such a union. In eight short months nearly all the very small property she possessed had been recklessly squandered, and when sober as well as when under the effects of drink she suffered from her husband's fury; and now, wearied in mind and body both, she returned to her mother and sister to implore them to receive her again. It may well be imagined that Madame le Clair, who was already suffering under illness that left little

hope of recovery, felt herself grow worse a short time after Pauline's return. For Madeleine, the gentle and religious Madeleine, she felt no fears either for this world or that beyond the grave, for she had "remembered her God in the days of her youth;" she now wished to leave that world which she had never served; and her mother well knew that her amiable disposition and the piety of her conduct had gained her warm friends in the village, and also endeared her to the Abbé St. Amand, who had it both in his will and power to serve her. But with Pauline the case was widely different; not only was there no religious feeling in her own heart, but she could not bear to see it in others; one after another she had ceased to attend the public services of the church, and then threw aside the devotional exercises of home in which she had formerly joined with her mother and Madeleine. A little while longer, and Pauline rose at morning and retired to rest at night without thanking that merciful Providence which had sustained her during the day, or craving His protection for the night to come; and as if she yet thought her impiety did not extend sufficiently far, she ended with making the lives of her mother and

sister uncomfortable, as far as in her lay, by the language in which she indulged, when they attended to their religious duties, or she heard religion spoken of in her presence. What could be looked for, for Pauline? Could she expect the blessing of God to attend her, could she expect to be happy in this world, leaving out of the question the world to come? As for poor Madeleine, she had long been obliged to absent herself from church, and she felt this much, especially on the great festivals; but she had learned to form for herself a temple within her own heart, and in the midst of the most distracting employments kept herself ever in the presence of her God. Two days had passed since Pauline's return, and a great alteration was visible in Madame le Clair; her eldest daughter had retired to bed early in the evening, evidently very ill; and Madeleine sat up to keep the night watch beside her mother. Throughout the early part of the night she lay in a profound slumber, when suddenly awaking, and rising in the bed, she extended her hand to Madeleine, and said; "Hasten, dearest, bring Pauline hither directly, for I feel the hand of death is even now upon me."

Shocked at the change which in one moment spread over her mother's countenance, Madeleine aroused Pauline, and the next moment the sisters stood together by their mother's death-bed.

"Pauline, my child," said the dying woman, clasping her hands together as she spoke, "promise me one thing; tell me that for the time to come you will be more faithful in the service of your God. Oh! tell me, Pauline," she continued, "have you known happiness in the path you have hitherto pursued? Have you ever known that peace of mind which was yours when you served your Creator? And bethink you, my child, the day may not be far distant, when God shall call you to Himself. Shortly shall I appear before His judgment seat, and what is it makes me calm and happy now, but the blessed consciousness that I have ever sought to do His holy will, as far as the frailty of poor human nature would permit!"

And Pauline's harsh nature was at last softened by the touching exhortation of her dying parent; and clasping her cold hand within her own, and sinking on her knees by the bedside she exclaimed,

“Yes, yes, I promise you that I will reflect on all that you have said. I will return to those religious duties which I have so long neglected, that so I may prepare for that death which I now regard with feelings of the greatest dread.”

“And you, my Madeleine,” said the expiring woman, “how happy doth it make my dying moments to think that you are about to consecrate to God that life which he hath given; for oh, I could wish nothing better for you, than to know that apart from the cares and follies of this vain world, your life will be spent in the service of God and your neighbour.”

Once more Madame le Clair essayed to speak, but the effort was ineffectual; she experienced, however, no severe agony, but calmly as a babe expired shortly after.

The grief of Pauline on the death of her mother was, as might be expected from such a character as hers, wild and extravagant in the extreme, that of Madeleine of a more quiet, but at the same time, of a more enduring nature. The two sisters continued to reside together for some time after the death of their mother; but Madeleine was grieved to find the new fervour of Pauline, even in the course of a few weeks, beginning to grow cool; and, at the same time, she

found that she was again meditating a return to her unworthy husband.

But the 25th of March was near at hand ; that day which was to decide whether Madeleine possessed as good a chance as she suspected from the conduct of the Abbé St. Armand and the inuendos of the villagers. On that day, robed in spotless white, and the head covered with a veil of the same snowy hue, each village maiden presented herself, about half-an-hour before High Mass commenced, in the church of Nôtre Dame. Many were the hearts which then beat high with expectation among the most pious and well disposed, and many a one who had not arrived at the appointed age was wont to leave the church, and almost spend the intervening time in counting the weeks and months which must yet elapse ere her desire might be granted. But the abbé, vested in surplice and white stole, is already on the altar step, bearing in his hand the envied crown of roses which many a young heart sighed to possess, and in a loud and clear voice he pronounced the words :

“ We adjudge Madeleine le Clair to be deserving of the dower distributed annually to one maiden in this town who by her general good con-

duct has won the public esteem and the approval of her pastor, and to whose use it will be devoted as a pension, as she desires to become a nun."

Then, according to the custom of the place, Madeleine rose, for she had sunk on her knees in mute thankfulness when her name was pronounced, and passing through the long line of maidens who ranged themselves on either side the aisle, and were employed in strewing the spring flowers in her path, to the sanctuary step, and kneeling down, the abbé placed the white roses on the head of the candidate. High Mass then commenced, and Madeleine at its conclusion, after a short time spent in thanksgiving and in receiving the counsel of the abbé, who advised her entrance into the convent immediately, was led home in triumph by her companions, still bearing on her head the crown, which was worn throughout the day. In the afternoon she was again conducted to Vespers and to Complin in the evening, but as the veil and not marriage was the choice of Madeleine, she was left between these intervening services to silence and reflection, instead of leading the dance as usual on the village green. On the next day, Madeleine employed

herself in finishing her preparations for her departure, which was fixed for the following morning.

And how, our young readers will ask, was Pauline engaged, for we have not heard any thing of *her*? Why, to the great grief of Madeleine, she did not even accompany her to church, but remained at home arranging the remains of her bridal finery and preparing for her return to her husband, who, she told Madeleine, had written to her, begging her to go back to him. The latter well knew how fickle a character the mind of Pauline really was, and foresaw nothing but future unhappiness in so vacillating a disposition. She had now ceased to hope that Pauline would ever keep the promise made to her dying mother, but had recourse in behalf of the deluded girl to the Christian's only refuge, prayer.

The following day saw Madeleine admitted as postulant into the convent of Sisters of Charity, and at the end of two years and a half of probation and noviciate, which quickly passed away to the now happy girl, she was allowed for five years to bind herself by the usual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, being then again free to revert to the ordinary

Christian life or to give herself irrevocably to the more perfect service.

It was, indeed, a happy day for Madeleine, when she pronounced her first vows and wore the bridal wreath of roses, distinguishing her from the two ladies who made their second and final profession. These young women had each devoted their large fortunes to the service of their sick and afflicted neighbours.

The requisite questions were put to them, and answered, in the vernacular tongue, as follows :

“Still are you *free*,” said the venerable bishop, “to serve Him in the world or in the cloister. Return, then, to the world, if you think that the Almighty has called you to face its dangers.”

How touching is the response made to this exhortation by those who make their irrevocable profession.

“Thou art, O Lord ! the God of my heart, and my portion for ever !”

The vows were then uttered in a firm voice by each of these young persons on the book of the holy gospels, amidst the solemn and harmonious strains of the choir, and the silent recollection of the sisterhood ; but the closing

and most touching ceremony was yet to be performed. Madeleine, in religion called Sister Marie Therese, knelt still crowned with her bridal wreath, but they who had borne a crown of thorns once more lay prostrate on the floor of the sanctuary. Four of the nuns now held spread above them that last earthly covering which shrouds the bier of the departed, and which in reference to those whose consecration was irrevocable, spoke strikingly of their being indeed dead to this world. The three nuns arose, Sister Marie Therese to place on the altar her flowery wreath, the others to carry with them to their cells their crowns of thorns.

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The night of the 10th October, 18—, closed in dark and stormy, and the sisterhood of a convent of Sœurs de la Charité in the city of Paris were retiring to their humble couches to seek a little rest from the labours of the preceding day, which had been aggravated by an unusual call for attendance on the sick and dying, occasioned by a great increase of illness, when the convent bell was violently rung, and the

assistance of the community was earnestly craved in behalf of a dying woman who lived in the Rue St. Antoine, a street about half a mile distant from that quarter of the town in which the convent was situated. The request of the person was immediately granted, and two nuns were instantly deputed by the superioress to visit the sick woman.

The wind was high and the rain fell in large drops when the sisters left the shelter of their convent. Their way lay through some of the lowest streets in that part of the city, but the dress of the order was a sure protection against any act of injustice, for it is well known, that even when the city of Paris abounded with scenes of horror and impiety, in the height of the French Revolution, the Sisters of Charity were generally protected by the ruthless mob, so revered were these self-denying and heroic women for the sanctity of their own lives, and for the generous manner in which they so freely offered them up for their fellow creatures. The nuns of whom we have spoken had threaded many dark and narrow streets till they came to the Rue St. Antoine, which charity had often led them to visit before, and which was well

known not only for the poverty but also for the vice of its inhabitants. The sisters were not long before they found the house of which they were in quest, and on asking for Madame St. Aubin, the name of the person they requested to see, were desired to ascend to the garret which was inhabited by her. The sisters trod gently as they went up the stairs, but they were very old and creaked with every step. When at the top of the second staircase they pushed open a door, for there was but one room on the floor, and entered. A dismal sight met their eyes, but Sisters of Charity are accustomed to sights and scenes of suffering. It was a long and wide room in which they now were, and it was but partially and dimly illumined by the light of a rush candle; furniture there was none, save two old chairs, a broken deal table, and upon the ground, in one corner of the room, a straw mattress, on which lay extended the miserable object of their visit. The countenance of Madame St. Aubin was at first sight that of a person who had arrived at middle age, and still bore the traces of former beauty; but a nearer inspection showed that it was not age, but poverty, and a mind ill at ease which had

prematurely furrowed the brow and blanched the thick black hair which fell in clustering, and dishevelled locks over the neck and shoulders of the sufferer. She was groaning deeply when the sisters approached her, and one of them knelt beside her, and taking her feverish and wasted hand within her own, inquired the nature of her malady, and also if she had had the assistance of a clergyman.

“No, no ; for twelve long years,” answered the dying woman, fixing her eyes full on the speaker, “I have not spoken to those who would have offered me peace and consolation ; it is too late now,” she murmured, “I have not had the courage to disclose my many faults, and at the moment of death I am still irresolute.”

Again the nun and her companion offered words of advice, and warned her not to let the little time pass fruitlessly by, which the mercy of the Creator still afforded her. As the nun, who had first spoken, ceased, the sick woman raised herself on her bed and exclaimed :

“Oh, speak to me again, for your voice reminds me of days long past, when if not wholly good and innocent, I was not the guilty fallen thing I have since become.”

Then suddenly raising her hand she drew aside the veil, whose heavy folds still partially shaded the face of the nun ; but that one look was sufficient, and letting it fall, she exclaimed :

“ 'Tis herself, 'tis Madeleine !” and sunk senseless on her couch.

“And is this wretched lost creature my own Pauline, my own sister !” murmured the nun. “Alas ! alas ! is it come to this ?”

By every means in their power they strove to restore the unhappy woman to consciousness, but it was some time ere she sufficiently recovered to have any distinct knowledge of what had passed, and still wandered and spoke, now of Madeleine, and then of her broken promise to her mother. When she became herself again, Sister Marie Therese implored her unhappy sister to allow her immediately to send for a priest to which Pauline assented, provided she related her story first.

It was, indeed, a sad tale she poured into the ears of the nun,—a tale of vice and misery into which her own bad passions had drawn her. She had returned to her worthless husband only to meet with fresh ill-treatment, and at last left him for the second time, and entered the service

of a lady, as companion, who was going to reside at Paris. The gay capital had its charms for the vain Pauline. There was the theatre awaiting her almost nightly attendance, for the lady with whom she now was, lived in a constant round of dissipation, and the once homely village maiden was now the gayest of the gay. News at last reached her from E——, telling her of her husband's death. Pauline was free to marry again, and again gave away her hand. This time the object of her choice was a person somewhat advanced in years, and whom Pauline fancied she could govern; but she was not long his wife before she was undeceived; and Monsieur St. Aubin resolved to begin quickly, and not suffer his young wife to squander his substance by the senseless dissipation in which she had loved to indulge. This occasioned frequent angry scenes, in one of which the old man grew so excited as to bring on an apoplectic fit, of which he never recovered.

On his death it was found that only that portion of his property which the law would give, fell to his widow, her husband having willed every thing in his power to his male heir.

Again did Pauline abuse the mercy Providence

still showed to her, and turned a deaf ear to the exhortations of the pastor who had attended her husband in his last sickness ; and again did she fall into the same scenes of dissipation as formerly ; her resources at last sunk very low, and the haunts of folly which she frequented became of a lower grade, till penury itself stared her in the face, and she became at last sunk to the abject misery we have described. It was no wonder that Sister Marie Therese had failed to recognise the once lively blooming Pauline in the care-worn haggard woman of fashion ; but time had passed lightly over the head of the nun, leaving few traces of his progress on her placid countenance. Religion and charity had supported her in every trial, for the cloister *has* its trials ; and though the temper of the individual in a community *must* be restrained, and the voice of the passions, if not wholly silenced, at least subdued, yet is there still cause to be mindful of the injunction, “ Bear ye one another’s burthens.”^(a)

Shocked, indeed, she was to see her sister in such a condition, yet she blessed the merciful

(a) Galatians vi. 2.

Providence which had sent her to her in preference to another, and she hastened to comply with the wish Pauline now expressed to receive the rites of the Church. But she had been one of those at whose heart a merciful Providence often knocks in vain, and who offer to their God the vain fruits of a death-bed repentance. Ah! they have rejected the graces, the favours, He has sent them; and at their last moments how often do they wish that the time they have lost, the graces they have slighted, were again in their possession! Oh! how many young in life and strong in health are heard to exclaim: "There is yet time, when a few years more have passed over my head I intend to become more religious, and will give more time to the service of God."

And thus talk the young ones of the world, who ought to give the morning of their lives to their Creator, and of a truth have we seen the few years they speak so lightly of pass on; and the grave is now their home, their place is no more among the children of men; they slighted the mercies of their God in health; they abandoned, nay, they scoffed at, the duties of religion; they closed their ears to Him speaking to them

by the voice of His ministers ; and at death too often do they call in vain.

And so it fared with Pauline. As soon as her permission was gained, the sisters sent for a priest ; but when he stood by her couch she had fallen into a state of insensibility, in which she soon after expired.

It may well be imagined that Sister Marie Therese long felt the sad meeting and still sadder death of her sister ; she had heard of the misguided girl but once after she became an inmate of the convent at E——, in which she had taken her final vows, and had immediately after that time been sent to the convent at Paris, in which she had resided for the last four years.

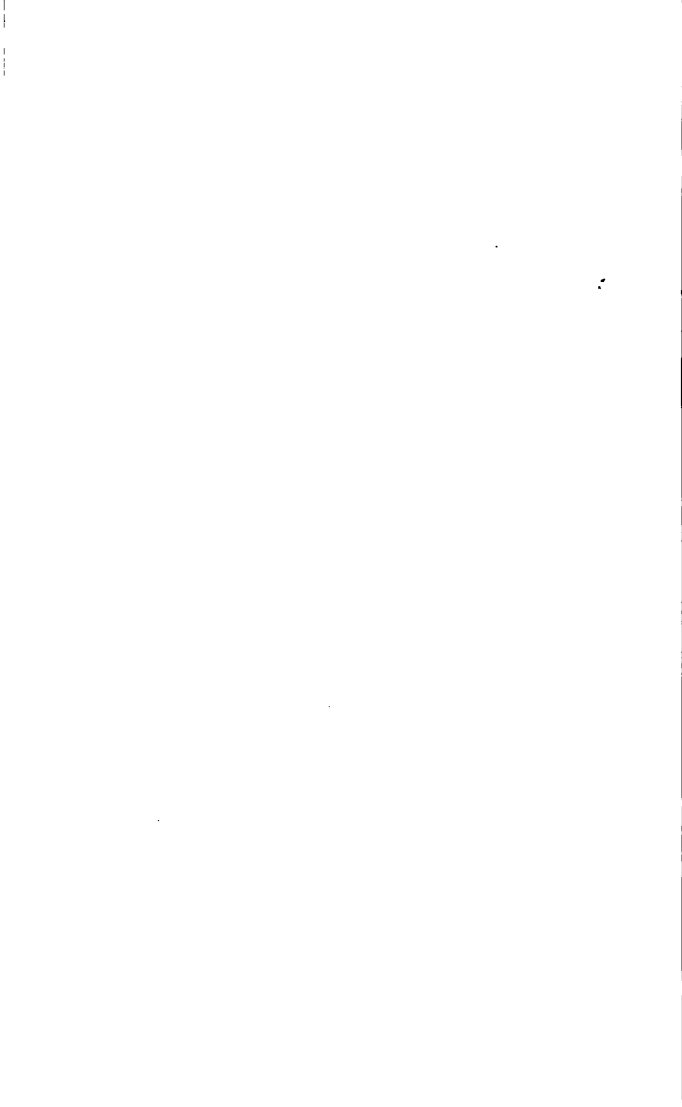
Sister Marie Therese loved the single state to which God had called her, for the facility it gave her of serving Him ; “for the unmarried woman and the virgin careth for the things of the Lord how she may be holy, both in body and spirit in Christ Jesus our Lord.”^(b) She loved it for the opportunity it afforded her of doing good to the afflicted, in a far more extended way than she

(b) 1 Cor. vii. 34.

could possibly have done had she remained in the world, for where are the persons who, residing with their families and friends, dare brave the contagious air of the fever-house like the devoted Sister of Charity. Oh! what worldling even will assert that the life of the nun is spent in vain, when passed in such heroic self-devotedness? Who shall blame those who, feeling the frailty and weakness of their nature, and mindful of the words "What doth it avail a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul,"^(c) prefer to fly the temptations of the world, rather than remain in it and perhaps peril their salvation. For Sister Marie Therese, the heroine of our tale, we may say, in conclusion, that she lived for many years superioress of the community in Paris, which she governed with great humility, piety, and prudence; and our Sister of Charity ended a holy and useful life with a no less pious and happy death.

(c) Matt. xvi. 26.





MEEKNESS ;

OR,

EMILY HERBERT

AND

The Victim of Passion.



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MEEKNESS ;

OR,

Emily Herbert and the Victim of Passion.



Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry, for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.—Eccles. vii. 9.

WILD and ungovernable from her earliest infancy had been the spirit of Adela Herbert, who, at sixteen years of age, was still the spoiled pet and favourite of her family, as the youngest generally is. A violent impetuosity of temper, too often roused on the slightest and most trivial occasions, was the one great fault in a character which was otherwise singularly affectionate and amiable. But then this fault too often darkened those brightest traits in her disposition, and made her a torment to herself,

and all who came in her way when any sudden fit of anger seized her. A fair example of the contrary virtue, meekness, to this dreadful sin of anger which carries so many others in its train, was, however, constantly before the eyes of the irascible Adela, in the person of her elder sister, the mild and gentle Emily.

Emily Herbert was thirteen years the senior of Adela; and in consequence of her mother's death when the latter was an infant, the sole charge and care of the little girl as she grew up in life, devolved on herself. Emily too, had much to try her temper, and though now very sweet and patient she often found it necessary to bear in mind the words, "A soft answer turneth away wrath;"^(*) for she was the eldest of a large family, and had three rough and high-spirited brothers, to whom she had not only been compelled to fulfil the several duties of a sister, but those of a mother also. But Emily Herbert had been tried in the hard school of affliction. Adversity had purified her heart; she found it indeed a sharp ordeal through which she had had to pass; but she had triumphed over all, and showed in

^(*) Prov. xv. 1.

her own conduct a bright exemplification of the virtuous principles she strove to instil into the mind of Adela.

But let not our young readers fancy Emily to be one of those cold and apathetic persons, in whom it is, indeed, no virtue to be ever calm and passionless. This was not the case; for in early youth she partook of the failing of her family, a hasty and excitable temperament. Emily was but seventeen years of age when her mother died, and from that time the sole management of every thing had devolved upon herself. She was looked upon by her father, a gentleman in somewhat reduced circumstances, as fit to take the care of the family, even at so young an age, and the counsels of the worthy clergyman who had directed her from infancy, were not wanting to impress upon her thoughtful mind, the remembrance, that she was called on in a particular manner to put in practice the virtues he hoped to see her possess. But the grace of a meek and quiet temper may not be gained in a few weeks or months, but is oftentimes the work of many years; nay, death will call on some and find them still labouring to attain this precious

virtue. Emily was, indeed, a heroine, for she had fought manfully, and though she had fallen often, speedily rose again, and at last bore away the inestimable treasure for which she had striven so valiantly, not for one month nor for one year—oh, no! the old enemy of man is not to be repulsed so easily—nor for two or three; but after ten long years had passed away, which Emily had assiduously employed in this, at first, arduous, but after awhile, pleasing task of correcting her passions, the once irritable and passionate Emily had, by placing the axe to the root of the evil, and by the frequent use of prayer and her own good resolutions, assisted by God's grace, without which she well knew her own endeavours to be fruitless, become one of the most meek and patient. There was much, very much, to ruffle and disturb the temper in Emily's family; leaving out of the question the endless anxieties caused by narrow circumstances, and which often harass and try the best of tempers, her brothers were now advancing in life, the youngest being eighteen years of age, and each had his own little temper, upon which no restraint was placed. Adela very frequently

threw herself into a passion, not for an insult or affront offered to herself, but because George, who was her eldest brother, was invariably cross and impertinent to Emily, whom he, with his younger brothers, invariably designated as the "old maid," forgetting in the spleen of the moment that it was for them the meek and unrepining Emily, still in all the bloom of womanhood, though the blush of early youth had indeed passed away, was contentedly filling her present humble station. She was naturally of a gay and lively turn of mind, and fond of company, and there were many families who wished her to enliven their little circle much more frequently than was in her power consistently with the regular routine of her daily duties; still at times would Emily rise earlier to despatch her various employments in order to accompany Adela to spend the evening at some friend's house, and on occasions such as these the impertinence of George was sure to break out, and she was called conceited to fancy that the company of such an old thing as herself could possibly be wanted by any one. Emily would at times change colour, when she felt herself thus insulted by one from

whom she had a right to expect no language but that of gratitude and affection, for the old passion would still rise within her ; “but she had made a covenant with her lips not to speak when her heart was moved,” but found it a much less easy task to soothe the irritated Adela, who would fight Emily’s battles quite as earnestly as her own.

But it sometimes happened that Emily was herself in fault, in the mind of the excitable Adela ; and, on one occasion, when she had given way to a violent ebullition of temper, ending in a fit of hysterics, which was not unfrequently the case, the former lectured her, on her recovery, rather more sharply than usual ; but Adela was not yet in a mood to bear the chidings even of her darling Emily, and stamping her foot on the ground, she exclaimed :

“You have not pride or spirit enough to feel when *you* are insulted, Emily ; and that is the real reason why you are always so calm, but I would thank you to cease preaching so perpetually of meekness and forgiveness to me, whose disposition is so very different to your own, for it only has the effect of making me still more angry ; once for all, Emily,” she continued, “ I

never will submit quietly to the language you are constantly receiving from others."

"Alas! my poor child," said the elder sister, "you little know me when you say I have not spirit enough to feel an insult. Many years, dear Adela, has it cost me to still the risings and subdue the proud and high spirit which you imagine I do not possess; but you know not," she added, and a tear gathered in her dark eye as she spoke, "the strife which yet wages war within my breast; and yet, my dear sister, I have fought against this sin of anger ever since I was your own age; thirteen years have rolled on, Adela, and during that time I have had much to do, and much still remains to be done; but He who hath said, 'Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart,' hath not forsaken me, but will be ever with me in the conflict. And now tell me," she said, "you will strive, will you not, to bear with more mildness the rough and harsh remarks of George and Henry, and not for every little trifling occurrence suffer your temper be so easily discomposed?" But to the grief of Emily, Adela made no reply to her affectionate solicitations; but removed the arm which she, with more of motherly than even sisterly fondness,

had thrown round her neck ; and the misguided girl breathed an impatient wish, whilst she resisted her sister's efforts to detain her, that she had not such a perpetual monitress always near her.

Adela then retired to her own room, and for some time shed tears of passion ; but these were succeeded by grief for having given pain by her conduct to Emily, whom she fondly and truly loved. But do not those who yield to their excitable tempers often wound the hearts of their best friends by the hasty and unwarrantable assertions made by them in their passionate moods ? But we have said that Adela was affectionate ; and no sooner had her angry fit passed away, than she sought the little parlour in which her sister was seated ; and besought her forgiveness for her anger to herself.

A kiss of peace, as the sign of reconciliation, was warmly bestowed on the repentant Adela ; and for a few days things went on quietly in the little household, and the news that the turbulent George had, through the interest of a friend, procured a cadetship which obliged him to leave England immediately, failed to spread much gloom over it. As for Adela she really rejoiced

at the preparations for her brother's departure, for latterly he had not bestowed even on herself the same show of affection as had, in days gone past, fallen to the lot of the petted girl; and she felt that one person was removed from her path whose trying temper was very frequently the cause of a fit of anger. Poor Adela forgot, however, that her greatest enemy was self; and when George was gone, with whom she had lately had many very bitter quarrels, she lived with even less circumspection than formerly; and Emily often sighed as the thought pressed on her mind that this beloved sister, whom she loved so devotedly, would never have courage to lay the axe to the root of the evil.

And truly did the passionate Adela find, when she made her nightly examination of conscience, that she was not amended to any extent by the departure of her brother. She had many young friends in the village in which her family lived, and with them there were frequent outbreaks of temper, besides those which occurred at home; and if her acquaintance was sought after by the young persons to whom we have alluded, it was because there was this redeeming point in her character, that violent as she might

be, she could readily forgive, sullenness not being amongst her faults.

But the ladies in the little town and village of Stanbrook, in which Emily and her family resided, were soon thrown in a state of excitement, by the pleasing intelligence, that the rich family residing at Stanbrook Park intended to give a ball to the gentry around them, in order to celebrate the coming of age of their only daughter; and amongst the first invited were the Misses Herbert. The acquaintance of Emily with Mrs. Danvers and her daughter had been but short; but there was no one in the village of Stanbrook, with whom she more earnestly wished her child to become acquainted. Emily was much surprised when she received the invitation, as she had only met Mrs. Danvers when visiting a few families in the village in company with Adela. The only milliner and dressmaker, of which Stanbrook could boast, was immediately set to work by those unfortunate damsels whose circumstances would not allow them to order dresses from the Metropolis, and amongst the former were our two sisters. But few of those rich young ladies who were to be at the ball, would wear so elegant a fabric as that which Emily

spread before the astonished dressmaker. The article which was destined for use at last, had been for some years carefully laid by, and was the gift of a lady residing in Paris who had stood godmother to Emily and Adela. It was of French manufacture, and was made of Tulle, embroidered with silver thread; and there were also several yards of white silk, to be made into petticoats. With many cautions from Emily, and requests that Miss Jones would be careful of the costly material entrusted to her care, and be sure to be ready by the appointed time, the latter departed; and, among her other duties, Emily found the time well filled up by the many preparations she had to make for the eventful night.

The morning of the appointed day at last arrived, and found the two sisters up an hour earlier than usual, and with many others in the village of Stanbrook, making ready by the rising of the sun for the event of the evening. By noon every little requisite was completed; and Adela began to grow impatient that their dresses had not arrived, and was already tying on her bonnet in order to go and ascertain at what time that evening they were to be expected, when she

observed the dressmaker's servant advancing with a hurried step towards the house; but a presentiment that all was not right passed across the mind of Emily, on observing that the girl was empty-handed. Adela hastened down stairs, but the first words of the servant were sufficient; "that Miss Jones was exceedingly sorry, but—"

"My dress! my beautiful dress!" almost shrieked Adela. "Tell me what has happened, directly!"

"Why, miss," replied the maid, "the young woman my mistress intended to employ to-day, to finish your dress and your sister's, has suddenly been taken so very ill as to be quite unable to work, and the dresses are not yet more than half finished; so that, with all the other work Miss Jones has in hand, it will be impossible to complete them in time."

"And how dare your mistress trifle with her customers in this manner?" exclaimed the enraged Adela. "It is false to say that her workwoman is ill! Why were our dresses left till the last day to be completed, when they were promised us early this morning? I will not bear such treatment as this from such a woman as your mistress! Bring me my dress directly, or—"

“Hush! Adela,” interrupted Emily, who had hurried down after her sister, but had vainly endeavoured to speak until now, when she saw it was necessary to stop the rage of the little fury. “Miss Jones,” she continued, “has, it is true, broken her promise by not sending the dresses home this morning; but if she knew there was a sufficiency of time to get them finished, and has been disappointed through illness, we must not, my dear Adela, be so unjust as to condemn *her* for such a cause.”

Emily then dismissed the servant, and turning to Adela, she said, “This is a most vexatious business, but it might have been worse; for you know we have our white muslin dresses quite clean, and if we trim them with blue ribbons, they will look very nice; and as everybody is aware that papa is not rich, these will pass very well.”

But Emily might as well have endeavoured to stop the mountain torrent in its course, as check the rage of Adela, when once excited. The face and lips of the slight and delicate creature before her, were perfectly livid from the excess of her anger; and stamping her foot on the ground, whilst her voice rose almost to a shriek, she ex-

claimed: "What do you mean, by telling me that I am to go to Mr. Danver's ball in my old muslin dress! Do you think *I* will present myself such an object, when I have been disappointed of my own beautiful robe by that infamous woman? But I will—"

Adela, however, had not time to finish her speech, for at that moment a stream of blood gushed from her mouth; and her face, before colourless from rage, was now covered with a deadly palor, and she sunk senseless on a couch.

Terrified beyond description at the frightful scene she witnessed, Emily ran to her support, and clinging to the bell-rope at the same time, shrieked loudly for assistance; and upon the entrance of her father and the servant, instantly despatched the latter for medical advice. In a few minutes, the gentleman who had been sent for arrived. Adela looked as if she were already in the arms of death; for the effusion of blood from the vessel which in her ungovernable fury she had broken, had been very copious, and it was some time ere it was stopped. Insensible to all around her, Adela was borne to her chamber; and a fresh flood of tears burst from Emily on entering her own apartment and surveying the

different articles which Adela and herself intended for their use that evening; and she sighed, as she replaced them in her drawer, on catching a glimpse of the despised muslin which had occasioned so much anger.

For many days Adela hovered between life and death, Emily ever at her pillow, ministering to her every want. At last she was pronounced convalescent; but she arose from her couch the mere shadow of the lively, sportive girl she had formerly been. She was naturally weak and delicate in the extreme; and the doctors were apprehensive that decline would result from the rupture of the blood-vessel, and recommended a removal for change of air as necessary to the invalid. Emily was particularly glad of the anticipated change, as the gossips of Stanbrook were already full of the cause of Adela's illness; the dressmaker's servant having heard her voice still in anger as she left the house, and afterwards met the maid in the village whom Emily had despatched in quest of medical assistance, and was told by her that, in the excess of her fury at the disappointment, her young mistress had broken a blood vessel.

In the retired and picturesque village of Sud-

bury, in which a friend who lived in Devonshire had hired for their use a furnished cottage for the summer and autumn months, Mr. Herbert and Emily placed their invalid early in the following week; and they had not resided there long, before a striking change for the better was visible in Adela's health; a colour was again on her cheek, and the merry laugh of old recompensed the care-worn Emily for her sisterly attentions. But still were father and sister saddened by the quick and angry speech, the proneness to passion for the slightest offence given to their excitable patient. And Adela had the advantage of the counsels of the good and patient in her gentle sister, in the frequent visits of the zealous and amiable clergyman; who read in the flashing of her dark eye, in the heightening glow on her cheek, when the too sensitive girl felt herself insulted when oftentimes it was never meant, and the quick and irritable answer, the predominant, the ruling passion of Adela Herbert; which even though it had caused the sad accident that in all probability was the forerunner of an early death, was not yet corrected. Time, however, wore on; summer had passed away, and nature began to array herself in the

sober tints of autumn, when the little village of Sudbury was enlivened by the arrival of the Danvers family. The acquaintance with Emily, which had been dropped for so sad an occasion as Adela's illness, was gladly renewed, and many were the evenings Lucy Danvers spent at the cottage; cautious, however, in her conversations with Adela, never to revert to the fatal ball night.

Quickly in the society of Mrs. Danvers and her daughter sped the autumn months; and at their conclusion, the two families, now intimate friends, returned to Stanbrook, and a large party was invited to the Park to welcome their return. Adela's heart beat high with expectation, for a festive meeting at the Park would be conducted on a much larger scale than anything she had before witnessed. It was not so, however, with Emily, who entertained a secret dread of Adela being one of the party. The appointed night, however, at length arrived. The elegant dresses which had been the cause of so much unhappiness through Adela's angry temper, were taken from the drawer in which they had been deposited when the dressmaker sent them home, completed the day after the ball; and the two sisters, escorted by their father, entered the

carriage which the thoughtful kindness of Mrs. Danvers had sent in order to convey them to Stanbrook Park. It was the first time Adela had appeared in public after her illness, and though materially better than when she left the village, there were few who did not blame Mr. Herbert for thus allowing his daughter to mix in a crowded party when she still bore so many signs of illness. Adela was exceedingly fair, and though until the late occurrence she had always been blessed with good health, her naturally pale countenance, and the extreme slightness of her figure often belied her assertions that she was perfectly well. As for Emily she looked as she always did, the very picture of good temper, inclined to please and be pleased with every one and everything, she had now indeed arrived at the *terrible* age of thirty, whilst Adela was but seventeen, but health and the enjoyment of an ever calm and tranquil temper, made but little apparent difference between herself and the pale invalid who leant upon her arm, and whose mind was constantly disturbed by the passion which warred within her breast.

A gay and numerous party it was which met that night within the walls of Stanbrook Park,

but amongst all the young maidens who were there, few were arrayed more elegantly than Emily and Adela; but as the former looked on her sister's slight form enveloped in the light foldings of the silver embroidered Tulle of which her robe was composed, a sigh unconsciously escaped her, as she contrasted her with those who were more simply arrayed in the despised white muslin, and who indeed appeared when

“Unadorned, adorned the most.”

Their kind entertainers had done all that lay in their power to make the evening a happy one to their guests. There was dancing and music within the old mansion, and the park was gaily illuminated. Adela after awhile turned faint at the heat of the rooms, and entreated Emily to join those who had gone to take a stroll in the park, and accompanied by Lucy Danvers, after carefully wrapping her in a large shawl, they descended for a few moments into the grounds. A numerous party were already there, and immediately they entered them, the sisters were separated from Lucy by the persons who gathered around them; an old lady instantly stepped forwards, and rudely seizing Adela by the arm,

at the same time taking hold of the light robe she wore, exclaimed ;

“ So, Miss Adela, it was really I understand for nothing more nor less than this fine robe that you lost your good health ; I must congratulate you on your recovery from illness ; and hope that you will take a lesson from the past, and not give way to such anger in future, for it is exceedingly sinful.”

“ Madam,” replied Adela, in a voice louder than had been heard since her illness, “ reserve your advice for those who will be more grateful for it than myself ; believe me, I shall never profit by the counsels of a meddling Pharisee.”

The last words were uttered in a manner intended to check any further interference on the part of the impertinent Mrs. Benson, and Emily, upon whose shoulder Adela had sunk faint and exhausted, when she finished speaking, haughtily commanded her to leave her sister to herself, and not seek to excite the feelings of one who had but shortly recovered from illness ; but Mrs. Benson had engaged herself in the employment she loved best—that of interference in the affairs of others,—and was not to be so easily

stopped ; and familiarly taking Emily's disengaged arm within her own, she exclaimed ;

“ No no, she must not be left to herself, she has given great scandal in Stanbrook by her profession of religion, but it is all lip-worship, with which the Lord will not be satisfied, and the young and old in the village are dreadfully scandalized by her conduct ; send for some good minister,” added the Pharasaical dame, “ to rebuke and admonish in time, and you will save a brand from the burning.”

“ Shame, shame, Mrs. Benson,” exclaimed several voices at once, for Adela now lay in strong hysterics on the bosom of Emily, and two gentlemen advancing, one of whom Emily discovered to her great relief to be her father, took the senseless girl in their arms, and bore her into the house ; it was not long before the heartless old woman who had caused so much disturbance made her exit, for she was shunned by every one for the rest of the evening, and treated with the greatest coolness by Mr. and Mrs. Danvers. She was indeed universally disliked in the village by the impertinent interference she assumed in the affairs of others, and was never a favourite with the young on account of her affec-

tation of superior sanctity, and the zeal with which she endeavoured to force them into attendance on the ministry of her pious husband, the Baptist preacher of the little village of Stanbrook, in which village, however, he failed to make much progress, owing to the indefatigable exertions of the clergy of the Church, and those of the zealous Catholic priest, who was not much more disliked than his Anglican brethren by the amiable Mrs. Benson, and her pious husband.

But return we to our tale. Adela was carried into Lucy's chamber, and by the use of strong restoratives shortly returned to consciousness. The first words she uttered were of anger against the meddling Mrs. Benson, and an earnest request to her father to take her home immediately. She was accompanied to the cottage by Lucy Danvers who earnestly requested her mother to permit her to spend the remainder of the night with her sick friend. Adela was very ill when they arrived home, and was in a state of high fever when the medical gentleman who attended her arrived in the morning. The truth was that the excitement and cold of the preceding night had been too much for her already weakened frame, and her naturally excitable temper roused

by the unfortunate meeting with the hypocritical Mrs. Benson, was now more irritable than ever, being acted on by a long illness of itself of a nature calculated to irritate and weaken the nerves of the unhappy patient. Day after day passed on in almost total seclusion to Emily, broken only by the friendly visits of Mrs. Danvers and her daughter, and the zealous pastor whose visits tended more than aught else to support the drooping spirits of the poor invalid. Oh! if religion is such a solace in health, how much is it increased in value to the weary tenant of the sick room, to those who have no comfort in their suffering, save that which it bestows in teaching them to bear with as much patience as the frailty of their nature will permit, the afflictions with which God for his own good purposes is pleased to visit them, and to unite their pains with those of their Redeemer. And such a comfort did Adela now find religion during the weary months of winter and spring, the whole of which time she was confined to her bed. The summer at length came bright and joyous, giving exhilaration to the spirits, but no buoyancy to the step, or strength to the frame of the invalid. The sun shone gaily each morning at her chamber

window, and the clear notes of the birds aroused her from her restless slumbers ; the fair summer flowers which she had loved to rear, still filled the air with their odoriferous perfumes ; but the blessing of life, good health, the real value of which is only truly esteemed when the treasure is no longer in the possession, was not Adela's. At times, when a greater depression than usual crept over her, she would steal to her chamber window, and weep for awhile as she watched the happy throngs who passed the house, or the sportive gambols of the children, who heedlessly trod over the osier-twisted graves in the village church-yard beyond ; but reflections more hopeful than sad, would fill her mind, for yet a little while, and one of those same green graves would cover her poor frame. Adela had suffered long and severely ; she felt that she was sinking into an early grave ; but she had not the fear generally felt by the young at the approach of death. She had been several times given over during the last year ; every word spoken by the good priest, who had so assiduously visited her during her illness, tended to raise the drooping spirits of the invalid, and prepare her for her happy transit from a troublesome world to a bright and

glorious immortality; and if the term may be allowed us, Adela had become familiarized with death, and could talk of her approaching end with far greater calmness than Emily or her father could bear to listen. At times, supported on the arm of her sister, or Lucy Danvers, she would walk around their little garden, or extending their ramble to the churchyard, would linger in melancholy contemplation amongst the habitations of the dead, and then weak and exhausted would return to her home. Many bitter tears did Emily shed in the silence of the night over the hopeless state of her darling Adela, whom she had cherished and watched over as if she were her child instead of her sister. Nature, however, was tenacious of life, and clung to it long after many had prophesied that the enfeebled frame of Adela Herbert would sink into the grave. She breathed no complaint, no murmur, for well she knew that she was the victim of her own passion, that decline was accelerated if not entirely the result of having broken one of the blood vessels in the fearful fit of anger, to which she had yielded on the night of the ball. Her temper was indeed changed, and few would have recognised the fiery and impetuous Adela in the

meekest and patient, though suffering, invalid. As to Emily, fond and kind as she ever was, it is not surprising that her sisterly affection endured to the last; no trouble seemed too great for her to take, if by so doing she could purchase but the slightest alleviation of the sufferer's pains; she had but one grief, and that was, that she could not even for a time ward off the approach of the dread tyrant, who slowly but surely made his advance.

And thus wore away the summer months, and autumn set in, Adela had rallied even so much as to lead Emily and her father to believe that she would be saved to them for awhile yet; and on a fine warm evening in September, she begged them to lend her their support for her evening stroll; she felt that night as if she could walk somewhat better than usual, and Emily congratulated her on the change, remarking, that she would not leave them yet so quickly as she expected.

"Say not so, dearest," answered Adela, "Ah! I trust I shall not linger long here, for do you know, Emily, I mistrust myself, and were I to live long, I might not die as well prepared as now."

Here the conversation dropped, and the father and daughters entered the churchyard. It was a calm and lovely evening; and whilst the invalid seated herself on one of the rustic graves, Emily and her father stood contemplating the beauties of the scene around them. The village churchyard of Stanbrook was a pretty and secluded spot; its gravelled paths were kept perfectly clean and neat; the grass always looked as if it had been fresh trimmed and cut; many of the graves were railed around, and flowering shrubs had been carefully planted within by the hand of the affectionate relative, whose love endured beyond the grave; yews were planted thickly along the path; and the old church, with its ivy-covered walls, was now lighted up by the beams of the setting sun. They had wandered about thus for some time, Adela now walking a little and then stopping to rest herself, when she complained of a sudden shiver passing through her frame; and Mr. Herbert and Emily, alarmed at the change which spread itself over her countenance, immediately led her home. The moon had risen, when they entered the little garden which separated the house from the high road. Adela however complained of faintness, and re-

requested a seat to be placed for her under the porch. All were for a few moments silent, buried in their own sad thoughts; and yet we should not say all were sad, for bright hopes filled the mind of Adela as to that future state which she had so long ardently desired; and, in the words of the Psalmist, had often cried "Wo is me, that my sojourning is prolonged. Oh! who will give wings to my soul, that I may fly as a dove! that I may fly away from this world and be at rest, dear Lord, with thee!" For some time the mournful party sat thus, the hands of Adela locked in those of her father and sister, when a long sigh escaped her. "Heavenly Father, have mercy on me!" said the now dying girl, laying her head on Emily's bosom as she spoke. Gently the afflicted father removed her into the parlour, and laid her on a couch; and by the pale light of the harvest moon which illumined that little apartment, and with the name of the merciful Redeemer upon her lips, the now meek and patient Adela expired.

And in the pretty village churchyard which Adela had loved so well, and had often made the scene of her melancholy musings, as the thoughtless ones of this world would call them, the

remains of Adela Herbert were placed; and many a fair flower, tended by the hands of Emily and Lucy, flourished on her grave. George, the brother who had so severely tried Adela's temper, heard of her death with unavailing regret; for he well knew that, though the Christian must forgive, the remembrance of the harsh, ungenerous speech will long fester in the heart of the relative: as to Henry, and Charles, who was the youngest, they had not so much of self-upbraiding to reproach themselves with.

Emily lived with her father until his death; after which she took up her residence with Mrs. Danvers, who, by the marriage of her daughter and her subsequent departure for London, felt grateful for her society. Religion taught Emily to resign her will to that of God; but it was very long before her spirits resumed their wonted tone: she mourned for Adela as a mother mourns for an only and beloved daughter. She lived unmarried; and spent the remainder of her days in the village of Stanbrook, the perfect idol of the poor peasantry around her.

May we not add a few words at the end of our little tale. What vice is more common than this of anger; and how few guard against its attacks!

Many are the victims to this passion whom the mercy of God alone preserves from such consequences as that which befel the heroine of our tale; but their whole lives are torments to themselves and those about them. We address ourselves to her, if there be one among our female readers who feels this sin at war within her breast; let her ask her faithful monitor, Conscience, if she feels happy whilst yielding to the dictates of anger—that passion, fearful to witness in man, but, if possible, yet more unseemly in the softer sex. Fair and bright are the examples Holy Writ affords us of those who, from the most passionate, have become the most meek; and far above all is our brightest model, even the Sinless One, the meek and merciful Redeemer, who in His sermon on the Mount, promises to the meek this rich reward: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land.”^(b) Even an inheritance with Him in the kingdom of His Father.

(b) Matt. v. 5.





TEMPERANCE;

OR,

EDWARD ASTON.



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TEMPERANCE ;

OR,

Edward Ashton.



The drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty.

Prov. xxiii. 21.



IF ever there was an abode the appearance of which proclaimed it to be the habitation of peace and comfort, humble though it might be, it was that of Edward Ashton, who rented for his own use and that of his aged mother, and his sister Alice, a small cottage just sufficiently far from London to enable him to attend to his business, and yet be removed from the smoke and noise of the metropolis. Edward had lost his father when he was three-and-twenty years of age, and with the exception of a small sum Alice earned at her needle,

his exertions formed their only stay. Temperate, but at the same time far from being niggardly, provident and careful to the last degree, and thus always able to assist those with at least a mite, who had less of this world's necessaries than he possessed himself, and assiduous and attentive to his employment, Edward Ashton saw himself at twenty-seven years of age promoted to a post in the office of the wealthy merchant whom he had served from his sixteenth year, which would enable Alice to lay aside the needle she plied so unceasingly, and give more of her time to her infirm and aged mother.

It was on a fine but very sultry evening in July, that with a countenance beaming with gladness at the good news he had to communicate, Edward entered the little parlour in which his mother and sister sat, but the young clerk felt that something unusual was the matter, for Alice had evidently been weeping, and there was a gloom on his mother's venerable countenance; they did not speak whatever was on their minds; and taking off her spectacles the old lady placed them on the table before her, on which lay the Testament and the Imitation of Christ, her two favourite books when anything occurred to harass

or cause her any vexation ; and drawing a chair beside her she motioned her son to be seated whilst Alice prepared his tea. But Edward bid them cheer up, and look a little brighter, for that he had excellent news for them.

“Hear, my good fortune mother,” said the amiable young man, “Mr. Leighton has raised me to a post in the office which more than doubles my late income, and now we shall be enabled to keep a servant, and you, my poor little slave,” he said, affectionately kissing his sister, “shall no longer tire your eyes, and wear out your health with that everlasting needle.”

“This is good news indeed, Edward,” answered mother and sister both in the same breath, but continued Alice, “I will be servant still, and very cheerfully too, if you will give a trifle now to one who is in great want, but very near and dear to us both ; but mama will tell you all whilst I prepare your tea,” added Alice, as she left the room.

“I have a sad story to tell you, Edward,” said his mother, “you will be surprised to hear that your sister Matilda, with her husband and child, are now in London, and in the depth of distress. She has been here to-day,” said the

old lady, with the tears in her eyes, "looking more poverty-stricken and wretched than I ever expected to see a child of mine; and she tells me that Henry has long become a confirmed drunkard. One by one the persons at Ashleigh, who entrusted their affairs to his management, have grown disgusted with his conduct, and have now put them into other hands; their goods have been seized for rent; the few friends they once had have long turned their backs upon him; and seeing no way of gaining a subsistence at Ashleigh, they have journeyed on foot to London, but alas! Edward," added his mother, "I do not think there is much hope, for who will employ a man who gives way to drink? for of all vices that is the one least likely to be cured."

For a few moments the young man made no answer to his mother, but remained leaning on the table, supporting his head on his hand as if buried in thought; the entrance of Alice, however, bearing his evening meal, disturbed his reflections, and he replied;

"We must see, however, if there is any likelihood that he may yet be reclaimable; and if that is the case it is probable I may hear of something for him. I grieve for Matilda, my poor twin

sister," added the young man with a sigh, "and regret that her fate is linked with that of so unworthy a being, and much do I grieve for you and my poor Alice. I have been projecting schemes for the greater comfort of you both during my walk home, and now," he added, "they prove to be nothing but castles in the air."

"Do not grieve for me, my dear Edward," answered his sister, "I have health and strength on my side, and can go on working for awhile as usual: it is true that our sad meeting with Matilda has thrown a gloom over this otherwise happy evening; but your kind heart would not have rested content with itself without tendering them any assistance, even if Providence had not sent this addition to your income."

"Spoken like my own good self-denying Alice," replied the young man; "but I trust still that your slavery will not endure long: meanwhile, we will to-morrow visit Matilda, and see if there is any chance of being able to do any thing for Henry."

The following day saw Edward home an hour earlier than usual, and Alice ready equipped, by the time he arrived, for their journey. Matilda

and her husband had taken lodgings in a small street in Westminster ; and although they had but two rooms, which were very meanly furnished, the rent was high, and Alice proposed that they should purchase a few articles for their use, and furnish for them a couple of rooms in some house near to their own.

Mrs. Ashton had endeavoured to prepare the mind of her son for a great change in the appearance of Matilda, but the description she had given fell far short of the reality.

When Matilda had left London four years previous to the period at which our tale commences, she was a fine and really very handsome girl. A presentiment of future unhappiness in her union with Henry Seaton had filled the mind of Edward, and pressed more heavily upon it as the time of her departure from the paternal roof arrived, but he carefully locked within his own breast the apprehension he entertained : he was indeed shocked when he next beheld her, for her form had lost its plumpness ; her cheeks, now hollow with care and want, glowed no longer with the fresh hue of health ; and her dress, for which she had always been distinguished amongst her young companions for its scrupulous neat-

ness, was now neglected and slovenly. Edward and Alice gazed in deep sorrow around them: in their own little home flourished the beautiful virtue of temperance, for Edward Ashton was as strict an abstainer from intoxicating drinks as Alice was careful and thrifty in her domestic arrangements; but this was the dwelling in which the vice of drunkenness reigned with undisputed sway. Was it not evident in Matilda's haggard face and faded form, in her neglected attire, and in the appearance of the sickly and puny child she held to her bosom; in the black bottle which stood on the table, and the half drunken gaze with which Henry Seaton regarded his brother-in-law when he entered the room?—for even in that burning July afternoon many a copious libation had been drawn from the vessel before him; and the room was filled with the fumes of tobacco and the smell of the liquor in which he had been indulging. Mr. Seaton rose when Alice and her brother entered; but not being able to stand without staggering, sunk again into his seat. They both turned from him in deep disgust to Matilda; and Alice whispered to her—

“Have you allowed the money we gave you yesterday, Matilda, to be expended in drink, in-

stead of purchasing any comforts for yourself or your child?"

"Henry was aware that I had seen you," answered the wife; "and, as usual, insisted on having part of what I brought home for liquor. It is of no use to refuse," she added, shrugging her shoulders as she spoke, "were I to be obstinate, as I have sometimes been, blows are sure to be the result."

After a few moments' conversation, Edward attempted to converse with the miserable being beside him; but he had come at an unlucky time,—one of his drunken fits being now upon him,—and after a little further speech with the unhappy Matilda, regarding their future prospects, the brother and sister bid her farewell, first charging her, should her husband be in a sober state on the following evening to send him to their own house."

In very depressed spirits they returned home; the evil had evidently gone further than they had imagined, or at least they had been willing to hope that it was not so irremediable as they now suspected; and not belonging to that selfish class of persons who can behold misery unmoved, provided they can furnish to themselves a pretext

for withholding any assistance on account of the faults or perhaps the crimes of those in distress, the poverty of the Seatons was the cause of the unusual gloom which now spread itself over this generally happy family. But prone as Alice was to judge mildly rather than rashly of others, she could not hide from herself that Matilda partook also of her share of blame, for otherwise she would not, poor as her dress now was, have so utterly neglected the little neatnesses she had hitherto been used to.

On the following evening, Henry Seaton, in company with his wife and child, the appearance of the former somewhat bettered from her being arrayed in a dress which Alice had given her, spent the evening at the cottage. There was a sullen acquiescence shown on the part of Seaton to every plan proposed by Edward or his mother, for bettering the affairs of his family, but no gratitude; and when they separated for the night, it was with a heavier presentiment than they had even felt on the preceding evening, that their friendly efforts to reclaim the drunkard would all prove ineffectual.

Early in the following week, Matilda and her husband took possession of two rooms which

Alice had engaged for them, a few minutes' walk from her own home, and which had been neatly and comfortably furnished for their use by Edward, who also paid them a sufficient sum weekly for their support, until employment could be obtained by Seaton. Many an evening did he and Alice spend with them in the hopes of reforming the drunkard, and at all events keep him from his old haunt—the public house. But too often did Edward note, on passing the house in the morning on the way to his business, the blinds of the chamber window closely drawn, and the traces of recent tears when they saw Matilda during the day, made it evident to them that he had been indulging himself freely after their departure on the preceding evening.

Meantime, notwithstanding all, the brother and sisters in the hope of a reform in his conduct should they succeed in obtaining employment for him, were assiduous in their endeavours to do so. Alice was so fortunate as to be able to procure work for Matilda immediately, both sisters having been brought up as dressmakers, and thus they were in a few months enabled to live with less expense to Edward. After a while the endeavours of the latter were blessed with

success ; and he one evening entered the apartment occupied by Matilda and her husband, with the welcome intelligence that he had at last been able to procure a situation for Seaton. The worthy young man did not leave without offering him a few words of advice, and earnestly conjured him to abstain from the excessive use of the liquor which had already condemned them to so much misery. It was then settled that Edward should, on the following morning, accompany Seaton to the office of the gentleman who had promised to employ him. Thither they accordingly went, and the benevolent heart of Edward Ashton rejoiced at the thought that he had been instrumental in again placing in peace and comfort his beloved sister, and he earnestly besought Henry, after a good engagement had been entered into with the gentleman to whom he introduced him, not to suffer his ruling passion,—the love of drink,—again to throw him friendless and penniless on the world. But the excellent Edward would have felt his spirits depressed, could he have heard the language of Seaton when he arrived home on that evening, or have seen the bright coin taken from his wife's earnings, in order to supply the evening's pota-

tion which for that night he condescended to take at home. As to himself, the worthless Henry was indignant that Edward should presume to become his adviser, and swore that he would not submit quietly to receive his strictures on his conduct in future.

Things went on pretty quietly during the first quarter that Henry Seaton filled his new situation. Every night the beloved dram indeed was provided for him by his wife, apprehensive that if she denied it, he would, instead of coming home straight from business, return to his old haunts ; but to supply the improvident husband she often deprived herself of some little necessary for herself, or her child, and at the end of the week, her heart ached on counting up her little earnings on finding herself minus at least four or five shillings. But Henry at last received his quarter's salary, a trifle only of which fell into Matilda's hands, and the unhappy wife soon felt that his reformation was only apparent ; and now that he had the means of gratifying his love for drink he no longer came home regularly, each evening to be restricted to the small quantity of liquor Matilda had been in the habit of supplying him with. Midnight would

oftentimes come and fail to bring Seaton to his home, and at one or perhaps two in the morning he would return mad with the effects of the baneful potion of which the wretched young man had partaken so freely. Again, as in former times, Edward Ashton would pass in the morning and see the chamber curtains closely drawn, and well he knew that he was sleeping off the effects of the last night's potation. Thus time wore on, till about the middle of the second quarter in which Seaton had filled his situation, when one night as Matilda sat work in hand, Edward entered with a countenance unusually ruffled. Apprehensive that evil was in store for her, though of what nature she did not know, and at the same time fearful that Seaton was mixed up with it, the wretched Matilda sprung from her seat, and seizing her brother by the arm, she exclaimed ;

“Is anything wrong, tell me, is Seaton safe ? is all right ?”

“Calm yourself, Matilda, and I will tell you all,” said Edward, replacing his sister in the chair she had quitted, “Alice and myself,” he continued, “will do all that lays in our power for the support of yourself and child, but it is

in vain to seek to reclaim Seaton, or to hope that anything respectable can ever be done for him."

He then, to the horror of the wretched wife, told her, that Seaton had purloined money to the amount of thirty pounds from his employer, that he had himself, to save the shame of a public trial engaged to repay from his own hard earnings, the sum so fraudulently obtained, and which the unworthy young man owned to having spent with his boon companions in the tavern he was in the habit of frequenting, together with the best part of his salary, and in consequence of the known respectability of Edward's family, the gentleman who had been so defrauded, consented to hush the matter up, and receive the money by instalments, but of course immediately dismissed from his employment his unworthy clerk.

To attempt to reclaim a drunkard is indeed a hopeless task, and the whole family now abandoned all hopes of ever beholding Seaton become again a respectable member of society. Trials, however, never seem to come alone; and Matilda's heart sunk within her as she saw one by one every little comfort which, with so much

care she had obtained, vanish, to furnish them with the wants of the day : add to which her little boy, a fine child between three and four years old, now lay dangerously ill. The poor little boy had been struck by his father when in his drunken moods, and would not suffer his mother to leave his bedside, screaming violently whenever his father approached him. Matilda still plied her needle unceasingly, and whenever Alice could spare a moment from her mother, she was at her side. Edward's purse was still often opened, but the increasing infirmities of his mother brought increasing wants, which together with the sums he still continued to give to Matilda much pressed on his own little resources. The child, at last, grew worse, and all hopes of its recovery were given over.

Matilda had had a satin pelisse entrusted to her care, which she had promised in the course of the ensuing two days, but the increasing illness of the little boy rendered it impossible for her to fulfil her task, and when Alice called on the evening of the second day she requested her to undertake it herself which the latter readily promised to do. But to the consternation of the sisters, when the drawer was opened in

which it was the custom of Matilda to place the best articles placed under her care, the satin was nowhere to be found.

“Where can it be?” said Alice, “you must have mistaken the drawer, do not be so alarmed, no one can have stolen it,” she continued, aware that Matilda’s bed-room could not be entered but through the outer apartment in which she herself always sat.

One glance, however, at Matilda, whose countenance was of an ashy paleness, and who with clasped hands seemed as if she were transfixed to the spot on which she stood, was sufficient to reveal the truth to Alice.

“Is it possible,” she said, “you can suspect that Henry has stolen the satin! speak, Matilda, tell me directly, do you imagine it is he who has taken it away?”

“I do,” replied the wretched wife, conscious of her husband’s guilt, “none other can have obtained admittance to this room. Gracious Heaven! what will become of me?” ejaculated Matilda, sinking into a seat, and covering her face with her hands, she burst into an agony of tears.

But the moans of the little boy quickly

brought the almost frantic mother to his bedside, but as she placed the cooling drink she had prepared to the parched lips of the sick child, a violent convulsion seized him, and the next moment he lay in his mother's arms in the agonies of death. Again and again Matilda placed her lips to his feverish face, and called him by name; but the dying child knew her not. A few moments passed in speechless agony, and Alice was the first to break silence, by saying,

“Place him on the bed, Matilda; our poor little sufferer is the inhabitant of a better world than this.”

And assisted by the affectionate Alice, Matilda performed the last duties to her dead child; but her grief even at his loss was mingled with terror as the thought of the missing satin ever and anon pressed on her mind. Alice could not reconcile to herself the idea of leaving Matilda alone that melancholy evening, and having asked the landlady to sit with her for a few minutes, threw her shawl on her shoulders, and hastened home to tell her mother she should remain with Matilda until the return of her guilty husband. But as usual eleven o'clock came, and Seaton

did not return, but a little before twelve a heavy blow was heard at the door, as of some person falling against it, and in the next moment the voice of her husband struck on Matilda's ear, singing a few snatches of a favourite drinking song. Alice involuntarily put her hands to her ears, and a shudder passed over her frame as she thought of the death chamber, and then of the miserable and worthless being without; and Matilda taking the light in her trembling hand hastened down stairs to admit her unworthy husband. A terrible scene occurred when he entered his own apartment into which he staggered, and had just enough of reason left to understand that something had happened to his boy, but when Alice placed herself at the door of the inner room, he pushed her aside, and opening the door, walked straight to the bed on which lay the remains of the poor child. In spite of the endeavours of his wife and Alice, Seaton removed the sheet, which covered the corpse, and kissing the face called the child by name; but when to his repeated calls no answer was given, the faint glimmering of reason which intoxication had yet left, seemed to make the miserable man aware of what had happened, and

covering his face with his hands, he burst into an agony of tears. Now that he appeared to have become more placable, Alice and his wife used their joint efforts to remove him from the room, in which they at last succeeded. Wearily passed on the short remainder of the night for the sisters, for the liquor still exerted its influence over the worthless Seaton, who after awhile fell with his head supported on his hand into a restless slumber. The misty light of the winter morning at last, however, shone in the room, and Alice rose to put on her bonnet and shawl, and return home, the noise she made in moving across the apartment, disturbed Seaton, who asked in astonishment what had brought her there so early, then looking at his wife's tearful and pallid face he passed his hand across his forehead, as if he had some vague recollection of something unusual having happened, and fixing an uneasy look on the countenance of Matilda, he said,

“Why is it that you are away from the child; what are you neglecting the boy for?”

Matilda rose from her chair as he spoke, and seizing him by the shoulder, exclaimed,

“Henry, our boy is dead, look to your past

conduct, look at what it is at present, and ask yourself *who* neglected him ; and tell me," she continued, "where is the satin deposited in my care? Oh, is not my grief at the loss of my boy enough of trial for me, is my mind to be agitated at a time like this, with the reflection that my husband is to become the means to brand his wife's name with infamy?"

The reproaches of Matilda were, however, unheard by her husband, who seemed lost in the one reflection that the child so little cared for in life was now no more, and that it had expired when he was indulging in his drunken fits. He rose apparently with the intention of again entering the bed-room, when Matilda held him by the arm, and conjured him to tell her immediately what he had done with the satin.

"You can get it again," he said, and he flung five shillings on the table as he spoke, "if Edward will assist you with the sum of fifteen shillings, I pledged it for a sovereign, because I had no money, and have laid it all out in drink except what I have given you."

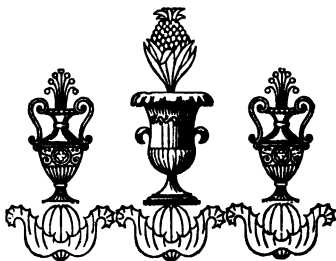
Matilda was so delighted at the idea that the satin was not irrecoverably lost that she bestowed no further reproach on her unworthy husband,

and accompanying Alice to the street door, begged her to prevail on Edward to send her the required fifteen shillings immediately. We need scarcely say that at a time like this Matilda was not deserted by the affectionate Edward, and that same evening saw Alice busily engaged with the satin.

The trials of Matilda were not however yet at an end, the remains of her little boy were on the following week consigned to the grave, and her place was now by the sick couch of her husband ; for many weeks he lingered on, in an illness occasioned by his excessive love of liquor, and which at last terminated in brain fever of which he at length expired in a state of raving madness. It could not be expected that Matilda herself, leaving the Ashtons out of the question, could feel much sorrow that Seaton was no more, for the drunkard drags down to penury and misery all who have the misfortune to be in any way connected with him, and of all vices this one stands pre-eminent for the difficulty of reclaiming its victims.

Edward, immediately on Seaton's death, received Matilda into his own house, and we are happy to record to our young readers, that if she

did not know happiness in the days of her wedded life, it was hers in the days of her widowhood. Temperance, that beautiful virtue, flourished in the humble home of Edward Ashton, ever bringing peace and plenty to the contented hearts of its inmates, whilst drunkenness, that most disgusting of all the vices, which places man beneath the level of the brute creation, had brought poverty, wretchedness, and a premature grave to Henry Seaton.



BROTHERLY-LOVE ;

OR,

THE SISTERS.

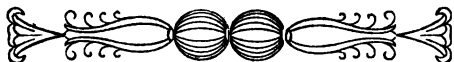


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BROTHERLY-LOVE ;

OR,

The Sisters.



Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you.—Matt. xlv. 48.

EDITH and Florence Mortimer were the eldest daughters of a family of five children, who by the death of their father, when Edith was twenty and Florence seventeen years of age, were thrown with their mother, who had been for years in a weak state of health, on the mercy and charity of this cold and heartless world.

Mr. Mortimer had held for many years the situation of confidential and managing clerk in one of the first commercial houses in the metropolis ; and having been paid a good salary,

had been enabled to bring up a large family in respectability, but his income was one which had never allowed him to save anything for the future; and at the time that his family most needed his assistance to push them on in the world, he was seized with a lingering illness, which terminated in his death. We will not say that the firm in the service of which Mr. Mortimer had devoted all his energies for two and twenty years, did not do anything for him in his last sickness, or refused assistance to his widow and children. This was not the case: but they certainly did as little as they possibly could. During his illness, indeed, they rated him at half the salary he had received when in the house; and, moreover, paid after his death a quarter's salary to his widow: and this was the end of the relief extended to Mr. Mortimer's family by the firm, for the welfare of which he had slaved for so many years. Then ensued a scene of cruel distress for the widow and her children. Two persons alone seemed to remember that they had been amongst Mr. Mortimer's most intimate friends. One of these persons was a clerk in the house in which the deceased gentleman had been employed; but his situation

was not one which enabled him to do any effective good for the family. The other gentleman, Mr. Lester, was a merchant; and though in good circumstances, was of a parsimonious turn of mind; and having a large and expensive family of his own, was not at any difficulty to reconcile to his conscience the apathy with which he viewed the downfall of his deceased friend's family.

The talents of Edith and Florence were of the first order. The latter was gifted with a rich and magnificent voice, and played with taste and execution on the harp as well as the piano; but then, it unfortunately happened that her style of music was not adapted to the taste of the present day. Her father had been a great lover of the old masters: Mozart, Handel, Corelli, and Purcell, were his delight; and if some young acquaintance presumed to introduce the more modern productions of the day, he took especial care soon to expel them from Florence's stock of music. As for Edith, she had shown very early a striking talent for painting; and her father had spent a large sum in providing instructions for her in that beautiful art. Alfred, the eldest boy, was one year younger than Florence, and

had been apprenticed to the medical profession one year before his father was taken ill. The two youngest children, Agatha and Lewis, were, the former eleven, and the latter nine years old ; but even at her early age, the little Agatha gave signs of future excellence in the art practised with so much skill by Edith.

Such were the talents of the children of the deceased Mr. Mortimer ; but we remember, that as yet we have said nothing of that which our young readers are aware is of far greater consequence than all the talent in the world, namely, good dispositions. These good dispositions, however, so necessary to the happiness of man even in this his mortal state, were in the possession of the young Mortimers ; but yet they were not without their faults : for Edith especially was wont to exercise an undue authority over her brothers and sisters ; whilst Florence, and even the little Agatha, were hasty and irritable of temper ; but withal there was a goodness of heart in every member of the family which many might envy. As for Mrs. Mortimer, she was as patient and enduring a creature now that she suffered under the accumulated ills of poverty and sickness as when the latter affliction only

fell upon her ; with nothing at heart save the welfare of her children, for whose sake alone she besought the Almighty to spare her life. The remembrance of the talents of her daughters cheered the heart of poor Mrs. Mortimer, in the first months of her widowhood. She established a plan of the strictest economy ; and for some time things were kept straight by the gift which had been made by the firm in which her husband had been engaged. Mrs. Mortimer, soon after the funeral had taken place, sold off all the furniture with the exception of a portion of the plainest articles, with which she designed to furnish a small cottage they had taken in a village in the environs of London ; and as Mr. Mortimer had died free from debt, the whole of the proceeds from the sale of the plate and furniture fell into the general stock. Then, when things grew a little quieter and they had settled in their small house, came the question, "Which is the best way for us to gain a respectable subsistence?" It was finally settled that Florence should make inquiry amongst her friends, as well as advertise, for pupils for the harp and piano, and also singing ; and that Edith should offer to give lessons in painting ; and they cal-

culated that what they might both hope to earn, joined to a little legacy of fifty pounds a year, which had been lately bequeathed to Mrs. Mortimer, would keep things together for awhile.

Meanwhile, the summer and autumn months passed drearily away. Seven pounds out of their carefully hoarded pittance, had been expended in the fruitless endeavours to procure employment for the sisters: some of their advertisements had indeed been answered, but as yet unsuccessfully. The modern music was placed before Florence, and when it was found that she could not play by sight in a style which she was totally unaccustomed to, and spoke of the music in which she excelled, she was told that such music as that was far too antique to be played now-a-days: whilst the best offer held out to Edith, was that of the wife of a very wealthy builder, who lived with his family in a splendid and magnificent manner, in a beautiful villa in a village in the environs of London, and who offered her for lessons in painting for her five daughters, the same sum as if there were but three; and when Edith remarked that her charge per lesson was but small, she was told that she could give lessons to five in the same

time, as to three—she would be engaged but for three hours twice a week. She however rejected the wealthy lady's offer, highly indignant at the proposal. Poor Edith, however, knew not as yet the selfishness and injustice of the cruel world with which she had to cope; and it was not many months before she regretted that she had not accepted the rich lady's offer.

One year had passed since the death of Mr. Mortimer, and no employment had yet been obtained by Edith and her sister. Distress now pressed hard upon them: they had no means to pay their rent, half-a-year of which was due; and Florence was compelled to sacrifice her harp, which had been the solace of many a weary hour, to meet the demand of their landlord. They now, too, were obliged to petition for the assistance of their friends, and found that which they afforded very slight; whilst, at the same time, a chill was thrown over the hopes to which the sisters still clung of being able to support their family respectably, by the answers made to their promises of repayment of the few shillings or the sovereign tendered to them—"that they expected their talents would do much more for them than they ever would, if they were weak

enough to think they would be able to repay their friends."

The poor Mortimers had indeed calculated on too much. Genius, when it is shown forth in the rich, is a fine thing; and can never be too highly extolled by the flattering sycophants who fawn around them: but when Almighty God bestows the precious gift upon the poor, oh! it is quite another thing, and, unfortunately, too often exposes them to the envy of their acquaintance; and well is it for the unfortunate possessor, if his or her praiseworthy endeavours meet not with repulses on the part of others, and finally with the cutting speech, "If you cannot subsist by this fine talent, you must seek for some menial employment."

And thus it fared with Edith and Florence. Where did the fatherless girls find the virtue of brotherly-love in the hard world on which they were cast? Oh! it existed only in their own still warm and generous hearts; in the love they bore to each other; in the noble manner in which they strove to support their family; and the generous kindness with which they were always ready to offer to assist any young person of their acquaintance, whose family were too

poor to allow them to remunerate the sisters for the services they were ever ready to tender.

Month after month rolled on, however, and no change came to the fortunes of the Mortimers. In religion alone did the mother and daughters find consolation ; and on the Saturday night the last words to each other before they went to rest were often, "Thank God, to-morrow is Sunday : we have at least one day of peace after the turmoil and harrassments of the week."

In the midst of all this distress, Florence was taken alarmingly ill with an attack of inflammation, which reduced her to such an excess as to cause her to keep her bed for many weeks ; and by the continued repetition of the attacks, her life was for some time despaired of. Slowly, and very slowly, however, she recovered from her illness, contrary to the expectations of others. And with the summer months the hopes of the family were raised, by Edith at last obtaining a situation for lessons in painting to two young ladies, for which she was tolerably well paid ; and the father of her pupils being somewhat of a connoisseur, promised to get her paintings put forward, in the hopes of obtaining her a few purchasers.

During the summer, though still very weak, Florence was again able to pursue her accustomed avocations, and in the following autumn, she also obtained two situations to teach the harp and singing, which she regularly attended every day in the week, even during the winter months, but this assiduous attention to her duties in her weak state of health, entering oftentimes the houses in which she taught with her clothes drenched with the heavy winter rain, was not without its effect on Florence, who, towards the end of the winter, was seized with a violent cold which finally fixed on her lungs, and compelled her to remain at home during the spring months. In the summer, however, she again became better, and again this child of adversity, to eke out the scanty means of her family, overtasked the little strength which was yet hers. The endeavours of Mr. Moreland in behalf of Edith were as yet unsuccessful, and whilst she knew large sums were awarded through the means of interest to the most miserable daubs, the young *artiste*, whose brilliant productions ought to have furnished a comfortable subsistence for herself and her family, was suffered to pine on in obscurity and want; and

those were not wanting, who, under the guise of friendship, proffered their services to Edith Mortimer only by means of perfidy to occasion her still greater disappointment.

There were times too, now, when the patience of Edith and her sister would give way beneath their hard fate ; and Florence, whose constitution was being gradually undermined by the insidious malady with which she had been for some time threatened, often spoke with a degree of angry irritability of temper of the callous indifference of those who still called themselves their friends. Poor Florence, she still worked on ; and when the knowledge that she was dying at last burst on her mind, comforted herself with the mournful reflection that she had been able to contribute a mite towards the support of those who were so dear to her. Often did the affectionate mother and Edith urge her to give up the situation she still held, but she warmly contended that the anxiety of mind she should then feel would be still worse than continual employment.

Poor Florence, too, had been told by the zealous pastor, who often visited her, not to forget that her time on this earth would be

but short, to look not at all to this, but to direct all her thoughts and views to that world to which she would so soon pass away, and in the sadness of the moment she would say to her mother, with a bitter sigh,

“Those who know not the cares of poverty like our own, or the happy religious, can alone follow out this injunction ; for me, as long as I yet linger here, it is an incumbent duty to work whilst strength is left to do so. I have no resource, but must think of this world even whilst preparing for the next.”

And when Florence yielded to the impetuosity of her temper which was now aggravated by those two great afflictions, sickness and poverty, she would at times almost murmur at her own humble lot, and envy that of the rich, who have no such occasions for sin beset them, when they become aware of the approach of death. Then would she call to mind how the pains of sickness are soothed by the many alleviations their wealth bestows, and that it is often said of the sons and daughters of fortune, when death has called them from this world, that they were almost saints, seldom were they known to yield to the ebullitions of temper, or suffer a cross or angry word to escape them.

But a little while for prayer and reflection, a short meditation at the foot of the crucifix, and holier thoughts and better feelings would fill the naturally pious mind of Florence Mortimer, and then she would remember that the rich are generally the least resigned to die, because they cling to their wealth, and that in sight of the Great Being, who penetrates the inmost recesses of the heart, these same persons whom the world deems almost guiltless have far more to answer for, than those who, surrounded by trials and afflictions, at times suffer an exclamation of impatience to escape their lips, or who, murmuring one moment at the weight of the cross His paternal providence has imposed upon them, look the next instant into their own hearts, and throwing themselves with love and confidence into the arms of His mercy, beseech Him to give them grace and strength to bear their cross with resignation.

But with Edith the case was otherwise ; she was in the full possession of health and strength, she saw around her, her mother sinking under the touch of poverty and illness, Florence, whilst life was yet so young within her, dying of an insidious disease, and she with her own brilliant

talents unable to secure her the comforts and the peace of mind she so much required, and the little Agatha and Lewis looking up to herself for support, and her once warm and generous heart now began to be filled with an evil passion, with a desire of revenge against those who had striven to suppress or make fruitless the talent God had bestowed upon her from their own base and wicked envy. There were many who had contented themselves with a scoff at Edith's expectations; but there were others who had worked a deadly injury. And amongst them was one whom Edith had known from infancy, who had it in his power, had he possessed a good heart in lieu of one filled with the base passion of envy, to have placed her fine paintings before a gentleman with whom he was acquainted who was a great connoisseur, and whose friendship once obtained, would, on account of the great interest he possessed, have entirely saved Edith and her family from suffering under the gripe of poverty. But this enemy in disguise promised what he never meant to perform; he threw out the bait, and Edith and her mother readily caught it. The historical painting which Edith had submitted to his care,

and which she never surpassed in excellence in after days of opulence and comfort, which her honourable exertions at last obtained, was thrown again upon her hands, with the remark, that the performance was too *mediocre* for Mr. Lascelles to put it forward as he had hoped. Edith had suspicions of the perfidy of her false friend, but this was all. And in after years, when her paintings were purchased at a great price by this very Mr. Lascelles, she ascertained that her suspicions had been but too well founded; her painting had never been shown to that gentleman. These circumstances had served to embitter the mind of Edith Mortimer against this person, and others who were ever on the watch, and seeking by their plots and plans to work her injuries, and had it not been for the religious principles that had been carefully instilled into her mind, Edith Mortimer would have freely given up her heart to the passion of revenge which was now lurking there.

But Edith at last remembered, after having awhile nursed the spirit of revenge within her breast, that it was indeed "vain to bring her gift to the altar," and remain unreconciled to those who had wronged her, and remembering

the words, "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay it," never sought by word or deed to revenge herself for an injury or an insult.

And in His own good time the providence of God granted success to the virtuous endeavours of Edith Mortimer, for let our youthful reader, for whom these short tales have been written, ever bear in mind that if through the machinations or ill designs of others, evil should befall us, that, how guilty soever these people may be, they are but instruments in the hands of God, who through them chastises or purifies those whom He would have for His own, and above all let no provocation incline us to become our own avengers.

Mr. Moreland, the gentleman whose daughters Edith had instructed for the last two years, one day imparted to her the pleasing intelligence, that the historical painting which had been thrown on her hands one year previous, with the mortifying announcement that it was too *mediocre* a performance to be worth much, had been hung some time since at an exhibition, and had attracted so much notice, as to gain a purchaser immediately in Mr. Lascelles, who offered a price for it far above Edith's most

sanguine expectations. From this day may be dated the success of the young *artists*. Edith arrived home so quickly, that when she opened the garden gate, it seemed to her that she had rather flown than walked. Florence and her mother on hearing the good news retired to their chambers to thank God for the success with which Edith's undertaking had at last been attended, and as to Lewis and little Agatha, they were almost beside themselves with joy.

With the exception of the daughters of her kind patron whom she still attended, Edith now relinquished the drudgery of daily teaching, and had a few pupils at her own home, which together with the large sums she continued frequently to receive for the paintings she offered for sale, yielded her not merely a comfortable, but a very handsome income. One grief, however, lay very heavily on her affectionate heart, and that was the fast approaching death of Florence. Often would she regret that things were so uncomfortable whilst Florence was in health, and that now she could not enjoy the blessing their change of circumstances conferred on them. The latter would answer that all was well; she had been spared to know that she left

her long suffering family in peace and comfort, and "for myself," she would add, "believe me, dear Edith, I heartily thank God, for removing me thus young from this valley of tears, and ask for nothing, save that I may be found watching with my lamp prepared."

And Florence, during the long wearisome days of confinement caused by her lingering illness, was provided, by the affectionate thoughtfulness of Edith, with her much loved instrument the harp, which acted as a charm to rob time of its dreariness.

"See, dear mama," said Florence one day, raising her head from her writing desk, over which she was leaning when Mrs. Mortimer entered the room, "I have a little souvenir for you, only a few simple lines ; you know I am no poetess, but you will value my poor verses as much as if they were the best."

Poor Mrs. Mortimer, with tears in her eyes, received her daughter's offering which in the solitude of her own chamber she perused, they were as follows :

Ah, yes! this world is fair to leave,
So bright in loveliness and bloom,
Yet mourn not, mother, cease to grieve,
Oh, why lament my early doom ?

No art, wherever I might roam,
This weak and sinking form could save;
But ah! there is a fairer home—
A home beyond the cold dark grave.

Come death, sweet harbour safe and sure,
To my sad care-worn spirit blest,
Where the wicked cease to trouble more,
And the weary may at last find rest.

Rejoice, my soul! the hopes and fears
Of this vain world will soon be o'er,
Thy cares and griefs, thou vale of tears,
For me will shortly be no more.

And when the dark and narrow grave
Hath claimed this mortal form its own,
Then for my soul sweet mercy crave,
Before my heavenly Father's throne.

Oh! mourn me not, but raise thine heart
Above yon bright and starry sky,
There we shall meet no more to part
In glorious immortality.

Need we say that the tender mother ever affectionately cherished till the latest hour of her own life, the simple verses of her poor Florence. It was scarcely six o'clock one bright spring morning when little Agatha, who was generally at work in her garden long before her mother and sisters were up, rose as usual, and was surprised to hear the tones of the harp at

that early hour, and the once fine voice of Florence now rising in weak and ineffective strains, as she accompanied herself in her morning hymn to the Blessed Virgin. As soon as the little girl had finished dressing herself, and recited her morning prayers, she hastened to the parlour, and as she descended the stairs, she caught the first notes of a melancholy air which was a great favourite with Florence. With a buoyant step Agatha bounded into the room, and seizing one hand of Florence within her own, and which held a Mater Dolorosa which Edith had just painted, exclaimed,

“Is not this very beautiful, Florence? See how naturally Edith has done that tear on our Blessed Lady’s face.”

Florence, however, returned no answer to the little girl’s speech, but continued to lean supporting her head on her hand against the harp. Agatha, however, was not to be so repulsed, and twining her arms around her neck, exclaimed,

“Come, Florence dear, mama will scold you for rising so early, you look faint, and your hands feel chill, do come to the sofa, dear,” she added, affectionately kissing her, and striving at the same time to raise her sister, whose head,

losing its support by the movement Agatha had made, sunk heavily on her shoulder.

The poor little girl shrunk back aghast, and uttered a scream of horror as she looked on the countenance of Florence, whose pure spirit had no doubt parted from its mortal tabernacle without a single groan or struggle, even as she had entered the apartment, for within an instant of that time Agatha had heard her touch the strings of her harp. Unaccustomed as the child was to the appearance of death, she knew her darling Florence was no more, the parted lips and half closed eyes, and the marble whiteness of the countenance on which she gazed, told her truly that she was dead, and her repeated shrieks at length brought Edith and her mother to the room, where Agatha still stood supporting the head of the corpse. The poor child was now in violent hysterics, and after having, with the help of Edith, placed the remains of Florence on the couch, Mrs. Mortimer called the servant, who hastily throwing on her clothes, run for medical assistance. We have, however, said that life was already extinct. Mrs. Mortimer having passed a bad night with Florence, who in the earlier part of it had been very restless, had sunk

towards morning into a heavy slumber, during which it was conjectured, that the poor invalid, unable to sleep, had risen quietly from her mother's side, and throwing a white wrapper around her, had descended to the parlour to play on her harp.

The death of Florence, though long anticipated, when it at last occurred with so much suddenness, cast a gloom for the remainder of her life over Mrs. Mortimer's spirits. With a little of the bitter feeling of earlier times Edith spoke of those whose envy had so far succeeded as to oblige Florence to toil as she had done even after she was attacked by the fatal malady which occasioned her death, but Mrs. Mortimer found a consolation in the remembrance that it was foolish to embitter their existence with the idea that their poverty alone had been the cause of her early death, when they knew that annually many of those who are lapped in luxury sink victims to the fell disease of which she had died, and leave England for a more genial clime, in the vain hope of regaining their health, only to lay their remains far from their native land.

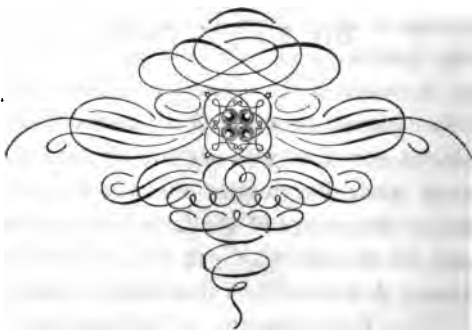
Edith Mortimer remained the support and stay of her family, showing forth in her affec-

tionate conduct the virtue of love to her relations, and also to the little world in which she moved, by forgiving the injuries, wrought her in early life, and by benefitting those who had done her any wrong if they were in need of her assistance, thus "heaped coals of fire on the heads of her enemies."

In the course of a few years, Agatha was put forwards in her sister's profession, and Edith also provided honourably for Lewis, by purchasing him a commission in the army, and the elder brother, who had been apprenticed by Mr. Mortimer to the medical profession, distinguished himself therein, and the fruits of Edith's industry, combined with her love for her family, formed their happiness. She had learned to practise the precept of our Lord, which we have taken for the motto of our tale. "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you, that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven."

She had conquered that evil inclination which had urged her to gratify her own revenge, and even in this mortal state, she met with her

reward, by her undertakings meeting in God's own good time with success, and with humble hope she looked forwards to that bright crown promised to those who do His holy will, in the world beyond the grave.





DILIGENCE ;

OR,

BRIEF VILLES,

AND

Her Slothful Friend.



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DILIGENCE ;

OR,

Ethel Villiers, and her Slothful Friend.



Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep, and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.—Prov. xix. 15.



ETHEL VILLIERS and Angela Templeton had been friends from childhood, but yet there were never two young persons whose characters and dispositions were so very dissimilar, as those whom we now introduce to our readers. Ethel was the second daughter of a gentleman of large property, whilst Angela was the youngest of a large family, and her father, who rented a house belonging to Mr. Villiers, was in very narrow circumstances. Angela and Ethel had both grown up from childhood into girlhood at the Benedic-

tine convent, in which they had been educated ; and on the return of Angela to the village of Elmwood, in Shropshire, where her family resided, six months after Ethel had left the convent, the latter immediately renewed the intimacy with her young friend. Elmwood Hall was but a few minutes' walk from the cottage inhabited by the Templetons, and thus it was very rarely that a day passed without the two friends meeting each other. Ethel Villiers was of a very pious turn of mind ; she was intelligent and generous, and had a love of humility which is rarely to be found. Ethel was condescending and affable to all ; if her mother wished a bottle of wine or a nourishing article to be taken to the village to any sick person, it was her greatest delight to place the parcel in her muff, or under her shawl, and carry it herself, and she had not been long at Elmwood before she became a general favourite. Angela was also blessed with a good and kind heart, but she had yielded from childhood to one passion, one deadly sin, which obscured the brighter traits in her character, and which the nuns had vainly striven to eradicate ; and this besetting sin was sloth. It was often considered strange, that characters so dis-

similar as those of Ethel and Angela, so opposite in every respect to each other, should ever have framed such an attachment, but so it was ; and there were some among the pensioners who said, that it was Ethel Villiers' piety and goodness which led her, as she advanced in life, to make herself the constant companion of the slothful and indolent Angela, in the hope, which they feared would prove fruitless, that she should be able to work a reform. But be this as it may, certain it was that Ethel herself was the first, on Angela's arrival home, to make overtures for a renewal of their old friendship. The situation in life which the Templetons held was, as far as wealth went, far beneath that of Ethel's family, and they were gratified that such a friendship was established between their daughter and a young person who might, in many ways, be enabled to befriend her in her course through life.

Who shall tell the numerous faults into which this one great sin frequently betrayed Angela? Slothful at her prayers, and in her ordinary devotions, she frequently was. "There is time enough," she would say when the hour struck which, at the convent, had been devoted to the

Angelus or some little aspiration, which wholesome practice of frequently raising the heart to God, amidst the occupations of this life, she had resolved to continue on her return to the world. Frequently, however, in her nightly examination, she would find that no Angelus had been said that day, for it was almost certain to be forgotten if not said at the proper time. With regard to her daily employments she was still pursued by the same slothful and indolent spirit. If a servant called her at seven in the morning, in order that she might be ready to breakfast with the family by eight, Angela was sure not to make her appearance till all had left the breakfast room, half an hour or an hour beyond that time, and even then her morning devotions were, if performed at all, which they sometimes were not, hurriedly run through at the best. Truly was she governed by the spirit of indolence; it was in vain that her mother expostulated, that her sisters complained, or that Ethel, presuming on her long friendship, to use Angela's own words, began to preach.

It was a fine evening towards the end of autumn, and Mrs. Villiers had projected a party of pleasure for the following day, which was to

be the last that season, and by Ethel's request, her young friend was to be invited to join them ; and immediately after all was settled, she put on her bonnet and shawl, and went in search of Angela, whom she found not at work with her mother and her two elder sisters, but lounging on her bed. Ethel put on a look of surprise when conducted by Jane Templeton into her sister's chamber, and going to the bedside begged to know if she were ill.

But the laugh in which Angela indulged, and the fresh glow on her cheeks immediately undeceived her, and she exclaimed,

“Ill ! oh no, I am not ill, but I did not feel inclined to make one of the industrious party below stairs, so I came up here to be out of the way of the endless preaching about my slothfulness, and to indulge myself on the bed.”

“Is it possible, my dear Angela,” said Ethel, “that in the possession of health and strength you can bear to lie here this beautiful evening ! Come, rise this moment,” she continued, playfully endeavouring to draw her from the bed, “and take a walk with me, we are going to make a party of pleasure to-morrow morning, and mama has invited you to join us.”

“ May I ask at what time Angela must be at the Hall, Miss Villiers,” asked Jane, “ for if it is very early, I am certain my idle sister will not be with you.”

“ You have no right to say that,” said Angela, languidly rising from the bed, and whose eyes had sparkled with delight at the thoughts of the proposed excursion. “ I am very fond of pleasure and I promise you, Ethel, that I shall be quite ready for you.”

“ Ready to be at the Hall at a quarter past eight by the very latest ? ” interrogated Ethel ; “ mama is very particular, you know, as to regularity and I give you to the very last moment, now may I rely upon you, is it quite certain that you will come ? ”

“ Yes, dear Ethel, quite certain,” answered Angela, “ you may rely on my coming, for there is no chance of a day’s pleasure for us, papa is too poor for us to have any amusement.”

But Jane looked incredulous, and shook her head, and Ethel herself half doubted whether, much as she would enjoy the journey, her resolution to rise early the following morning would overcome her habits of indolence. Angela and Ethel then took their evening stroll through the

village, and during their walk, the latter made use of the privilege the indolent girl good humouredly allowed her, of lecturing her on her fault. On their parting, Angela again and again repeated that she should be true to her appointment on the following morning, and in high spirits parted from Ethel at the gates of her own home.

Angela was not, however, allowed much peace that evening, for each one of her family, who had been long wearied with her slothful disposition, were ready to jeer at her expense with regard to the proposed trip, and Charles, her eldest brother, offered to lay a wager with her as to whether she would be ready by the appointed time or not.

Angela took it all in very good part, for she was anything but an ill natured girl, and desiring the servant to call her by seven on the following morning, went early to bed, her mind filled with thoughts of the morrow.

And a beautiful September morning too it was; and by six o'clock Ethel and her family were all stirring, for our heroine would not take a day's pleasure without first performing her ordinary devotions, and by seven the day's portion of the rosary was recited, a quarter of an

hour given to meditation, and her morning devotions performed. But our young readers will like to take a peep, we have no doubt, at Angela, and see if she was so laudably employed. But no; why, she is yet asleep, the sun shining gaily through the curtains of her chamber window; and for the second time the maid opens her room door, and assures her young mistress, that she would be quite too late if she did not rise directly, and dress as speedily as possible.

“What o’clock is it, Mary?” she inquired, in her usual languid tone.

“About half-past seven, miss,” answered the servant, “but you know I called you at seven o’clock.”

“Bless me, is it indeed so late!” said Angela, springing up in the bed, “indeed Mary, you could not have aroused me thoroughly, or I should not have slept again so soundly.”

“But indeed I did, Miss Angela,” answered the servant, “and you told me that you should lie awake for a few moments, and then get up directly, and,” she added, “your mama is very angry, for she says it will be a positive affront to Miss Villiers and her mother if you are too late; and we guessed, by hearing all so quiet, that you had gone to sleep again.”

“ Well, Mary, I must make the best of my time now I am up, but, mercy on me,” she said, looking at a watch which hung over the mantel-piece, “ I declare it is nearly a quarter to eight already, and I have got to dress and get my breakfast, and be at the Hall in less than half an hour.”

All was now hurry and confusion, as far as she *could* be in a hurry, and as far as her even temper could be ruffled, it was, by hearing Charles call out at the foot of the stairs, as he was leaving home for business,

“ Good bye, Angela, I shall find you here when I come back, you would not bet because you were pretty certain you would lose your wager.”

Now, as was always the case on such occasions, instead of every thing being ready to put on, there was a hook wanting to her best dress ; then her gloves were missing ; and every fresh disaster occasioned a fresh delay, so that when heated and faint with her unusual exertions, Angela left home without having knelt to say a single prayer, but determining to satisfy the scruples of her conscience with reciting a *Pater* and *Ave*, in her hurried way to the Hall ; it was already

ten minutes beyond the quarter. In half the usual time it took her to get to the residence of her friend, she got there on this morning, but the family had just gone. Miss Ethel, a servant told her, had been watching for her ever since eight o'clock.

Full of vexation and disappointment, Angela returned home ; and on entering the parlour in which her mother and sisters were at work, spoke in no very mild language of what she termed the ill nature of Mrs. Villiers, and the old maidish precision of Ethel.

But Mrs. Templeton had observed with grief that the sin of slothfulness, so far from being in the least eradicated, grew stronger every day, and she angrily replied,

“Blame no one but yourself, Angela, for what has occurred this morning, as a young person, and also the obliged party, you have been guilty of great rudeness towards Mrs. Villiers in failing to keep your appointment with Ethel, and wealthy as she is, you well know that she allows no indolence or sloth in any of her family, and would therefore be the last to countenance it in others, and for my own part,” she added, “whilst I grieve for your besetting sin, which you make

no effort to rid yourself of, I rejoice at the disappointment it has occasioned you to-day, for I trust it will be a lesson for the future."

Angry with herself, and all about her, and dreading the mortification she should suffer in the evening, on the return of her father and brothers, and afterwards with Ethel, Angela retired to her room, in which she spent the greater part of the day, but we are sorry to say she did not pass her hours of solitude in pious resolutions to do better for the future, but rather in a spirit of sullenness and impatience at the deserved reproof of her mother.

On the following morning, while she still lounged over the breakfast table, which the rest of the family had quitted, Ethel entered the room, and in a tone of playful reproof, accosted her by saying,

"That deadly sin of yours, Angela, that detestable sloth, deprived me of the pleasure of your company yesterday, for mama, who you are aware is very exact, would not wait for you after twenty minutes past eight; but you know, Angela, this will never do," she continued, "you must fight against this fault in good earnest, and promise to begin at once."

“Methinks, Miss Villiers,” Angela proudly replied, “it were becoming in you to be less lavish in your reproofs, and to withhold your advice till it is asked for.”

For a moment the blood rushed to the usually pale face of Ethel, but she quickly recovered herself, and holding out her hand to Angela, who coldly touched it, she said, in a tone of the sweetest humility,

“I ask your pardon, dear Angela, if I have offended you by presuming on the privilege I imagined long since given to an old friend, grant me your forgiveness immediately,” she added, “and never again call me by any other name than Ethel, and I will never more transgress by assuming the language of a mistress.”

The words of the meek and humble Ethel fairly calmed the temper of her impetuous friend, who, ashamed at the anger she had shown, begged her to forgive the rudeness of her speech, and at the same time promised to use her endeavours to amend.

And for awhile Angela kept her good resolutions, and her family rejoiced to see her rise each morning by seven o'clock; and Ethel's warm heart was gladdened when she paid her

daily visit to the cottage, by no longer seeing her lounge on a bed, or a sofa, but assiduously working, or writing, or engaged in some other laudable employment. Mrs. Villiers heard soon from her daughter of the happy change which had taken place in Angela, and aware of the attachment Ethel entertained for her, invited her to spend the ensuing three months with their family in London, whither they were shortly going. With great delight Angela accepted the invitation, and in the course of the next fortnight arrived in the metropolis. But now that she was constantly under Ethel's notice, the latter grieved to find that there was but a half reform, for if Angela was not quite so indolent as heretofore in her routine of daily duties, still was she fearfully slothful in the fulfilment of those which religion exacted, and for the neglect of which there was ever some vain excuse offered. Ethel saw all this, and pitied and prayed for her, whilst she still strove by the charitable admonitions which in all humility she offered, to make her become more diligent.

Angela had resided with Ethel's family about a month, when she one morning received a letter from her sister Jane informing her, that

her mother had been suddenly taken ill, and urging her to be at Elmwood early on the following day, and the note was concluded by a request that she would not be alarmed, as no immediate danger was apprehended.

"Poor mama is very ill," said Angela, with the tears in her eyes as she put the letter into Ethel's hand, "I must make preparations to-day for my return, and leave London early to-morrow morning."

"But, my dear Angela," replied Ethel, "your sister begs you to be at Elmwood early to-morrow morning, and this cannot be unless you leave London this evening, and——"

"But Jane need not be so very particular," interrupted Angela, "as to a few hours more or less, for you see, Ethel, she tells me not to be alarmed, for that mama is not in any danger, indeed," she somewhat peevishly continued, "there can be no occasion for so much hurry, it is impossible for me to return to Elmwood before to-morrow night."

"I much wish that mama were at home," answered Ethel, rising with a disturbed air from the table at which she had seated herself when reading Angela's note, "do for once be advised,

dearest," she added, " I sincerely hope that Mrs. Templeton is in no danger, nor would I for worlds unnecessarily alarm you ; but do you not see that if she really were so, Jane is far too cautious to lead you to fear the worst whilst at such a distance from home ? Were my mother or my sister Julia here, I am certain they would counsel you as I do to return home immediately."

With a feeling of vexation Angela endeavoured to laugh off what she termed the foolish apprehensions of Ethel ; and then rising with a languid air retired to her chamber to advance the few preparations for her journey.

And let not our young readers imagine Angela an unfeeling daughter, for such was not the case, but we wish to show them the evils into which a slothful and indolent disposition drags its possessor. Angela in truth fancied it was out of her power to return home on that day, and although every moment the tears came to her eyes when she thought of her mother, and the remembrance of Ethel's words pressed on her mind, yet she still proceeded with her accustomed slowness and deliberation about all she had to do, and the evening was far advanced when, with a triumphant look, she entered

the room in which Ethel sat waiting the return of her mother and sister, and seating herself by her side she exclaimed,

“You see, Ethel, how very impossible it would have been for me to have left London this afternoon, I have but just finished my little preparations, and really I feel quite fatigued, for I have not sat down for the last three hours.”

Ethel regarded Angela as she spoke, with a look of incredulity, and the thought glanced across her mind, “In what way does she imagine she will pass through a world in which she may possibly be obliged to look to her own exertions for a maintenance,” for our heroine was aware that she had been educated with the view of obtaining employment as a governess.

It was late at night before the family, who had all been absent with the exception of Ethel, returned home; and the latter had prevailed on Angela to retire to her room at an early hour, that she might be better fitted for her journey the following morning; and when she joined the family at the breakfast table, Mrs. Villiers, who was of Ethel's opinion that by this time she ought to have been at Elmwood, forebore to recur to the subject.

Angela parted from her kind friends with much affection, and was pressed to return to them should her mother speedily recover. But a restless and sickening feeling of apprehension filled her mind on this morning, and she felt relieved when, soon after she had left Mrs. Villiers' house, she observed herself quickly approaching the open country, each half hour was now counted by Angela, who had suffered them to pass by unheeded on the preceding day, and many times she murmured to herself,

"Ethel has surely communicated her gloomy ideas about poor mama to myself; it was very unfortunate that I should be from home, but I certainly do not see that I *could* have returned yesterday."

It was towards the close of a fine spring evening when she returned to Elmwood, and with hurried steps she proceeded through the village, having left her luggage till morning at the house at which the coach had stopped. A few moments, and she arrived at the lane which separated the cottage from the high road, and almost breathless she reached the garden-gate, but a slight shriek escaped her on perceiving Jane, who had been

watching for her, now advancing to meet her with her face bathed in tears.

“Mama lives, does she not, Jane? dear Jane, she is not dead—do not tell me she is dead!” gasped Angela, clinging to her sister’s arm for support.

“Poor mama still lives, Angela, and that is all I can say,” replied Jane, “at least she was yet alive when I left her, for I saw you in the lane, and feared lest you should disturb her by hurriedly entering her room; she has been watching for you the whole day; Oh, Angela, it was indeed wrong not to have returned this morning,” she whispered, as she softly opened the door of her mother’s room.

“Oh, I am too late,” sobbed Angela, sinking on her knees beside what she believed to be the corpse of her mother, Jane and her father motioned her to be still, and placed her hands within those of Mrs. Templeton which lay crossed on her bosom, and the faint pressure which was returned, the smile which played on the countenance of the dying woman, and the light which for an instant gleamed in the eye already covered with the film of death, told that the spirit of the mother still was there. It was but

for the brief space of a moment, and then the bonds which had confined that spirit to its tenement of clay were broken.

Long, very long, was it before Angela's spirits resumed their wonted tone; a heavy gloom from the night of that death-bed scene spread itself over her mind, and for many months her family feared that she would become a prey to a settled and incurable melancholy. There was no Ethel now either, to cheer her with her friendly converse, for she had, a few months after Mrs. Templeton's death, of which she had had so strong a presentiment on the day that she urged Angela's return to Elmwood, began her noviciate as Sister of Mercy, in a convent many miles from Elmwood. When at last, however, that dreadful gloom began to dispel, she entered on the duties of life with far more activity than she had ever before shown. She had learned a lesson on that memorable evening which she never afterwards forgot, and whenever she felt inclined to yield to sloth, it sufficed but to call to mind her dying mother,—dying, and yet unable to pronounce the name of her child, or call down a blessing on her head, to make her one of the most diligent.

And Ethel Villiers, our gentle and humble Ethel, now Sister Clare, did not forget the companion of her girlhood for whose reform she had striven and prayed so earnestly ; but on ascertaining, before her own profession, that it was Angela's desire to consecrate herself to God, requested her father to pay out of the fortune she was to bring to the convent, a sufficient sum to form a pension for Angela, who ultimately made her religious profession in the same community with her early friend, and where in the course of time she acquired so perfectly the precious virtue of diligence in her duties, both to God and man, as to form a model for the imitation of others.

We have little more to say, for our "Stories on the Seven Virtues" are now concluded, save to express a hope, that whilst endeavouring to amuse, we have not entirely failed to instruct the youthful mind. But yet we would say a few words more to those of our young readers, who may feel that they have sinned in aught against these seven virtues. We would bid our young friends remember, as we said in our story on Humility, that "No act is more heroic, more meritorious in the sight of God and man than

to conquer an evil inclination, and no heroine greater than she who strives to subdue her passions." Oftentimes indeed may we fall, but "The eyes of the Lord are on them that fear Him,"^(a) and He will be with them in the conflict; and if haply our simple stories should cause one to look thus into her heart, then indeed the pen has not been used in vain, and the humble efforts of the writer will be richly rewarded.

(a) Ecclus. xxxiv. 19.



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