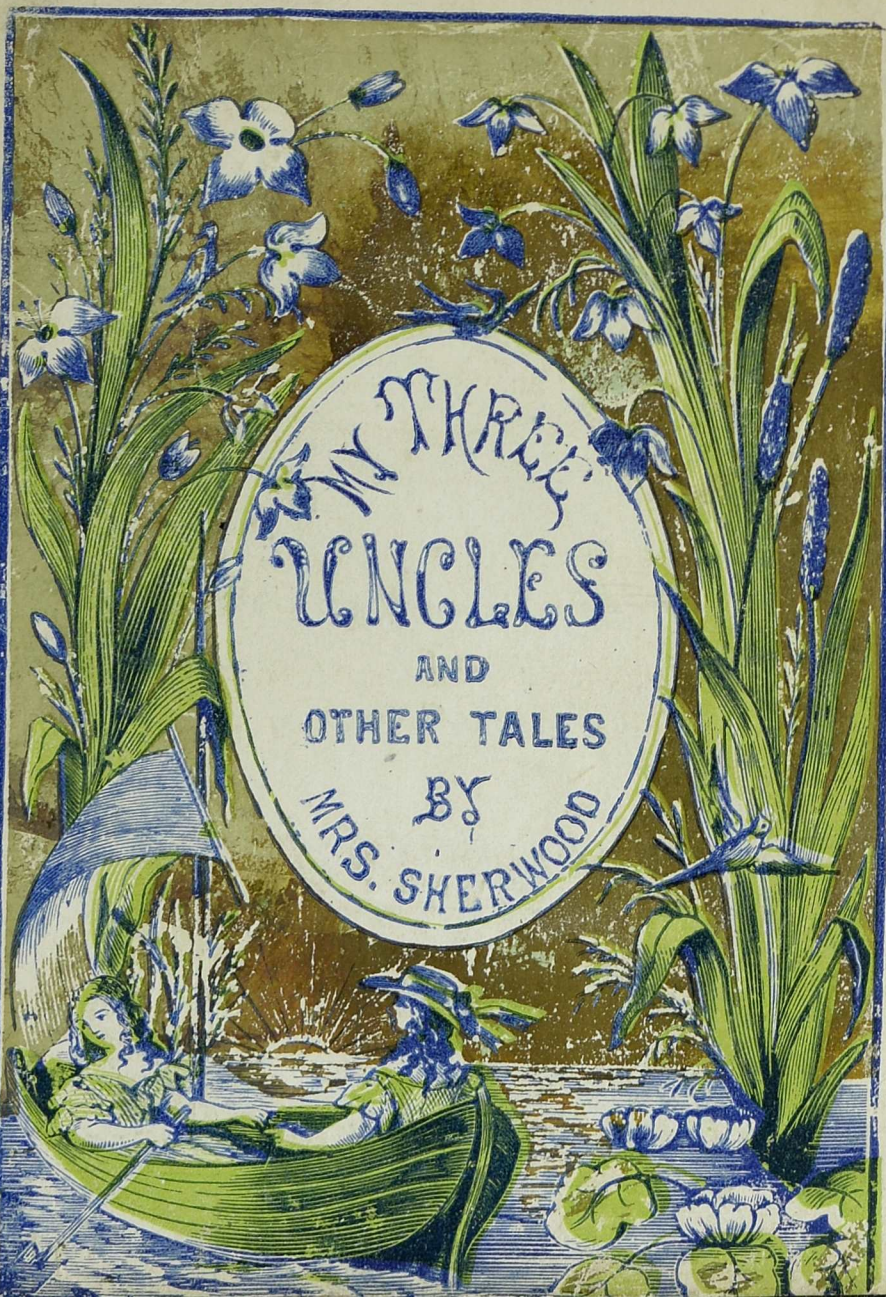
MY THREE
UNCLES
AND
OTHER TALES
BY
MRS. SHERWOOD

MY THREE UNCLES

AND

THE SWISS COTTAGE.

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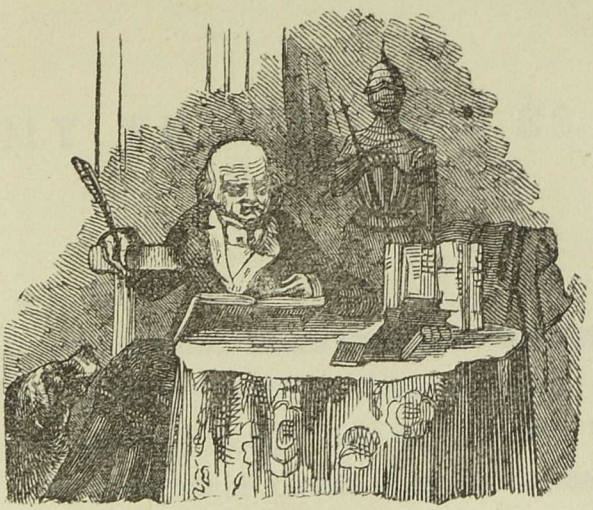


MY THREE UNCLES.

My father never had more than one brother, and no sister, and my mother was an only child; I was, therefore, brought up in the idea that I never had, and never could have more than one uncle; yet I have given for the title of my story "My Three Uncles." How is this to be explained? How is one man to be multiplied into three? This is what I am about to make clear; in order so to do, I must enter into a little outline of my life, and give at large some particular transactions of that life.

At first, I must make up my mind upon what

name I shall choose to give to my family, for the public, if I can help it, shall never guess our real cognomen. I will not even select a name which shall mark my country, or direct my reader to any particular district of the island; and for this purpose what name can be more suitable than that of Smith? Since there have probably been smiths by trade, in every habitable corner of the earth, where iron is to be found or obtained, from the time of Tubal Cain to the present day. Not that I would be so unpolite as to seem to hint that all the genteel and polished families which now possess the surname of Smith in this our island, originally proceeded from the artificers in brass and iron; but this is not at present much to my purpose; suffice it to say, that I have chosen to adopt the surname of Smith, and the Christian name of Francis; and I would also wish my reader to be informed that I was left an orphan at a very tender age, and was immediately

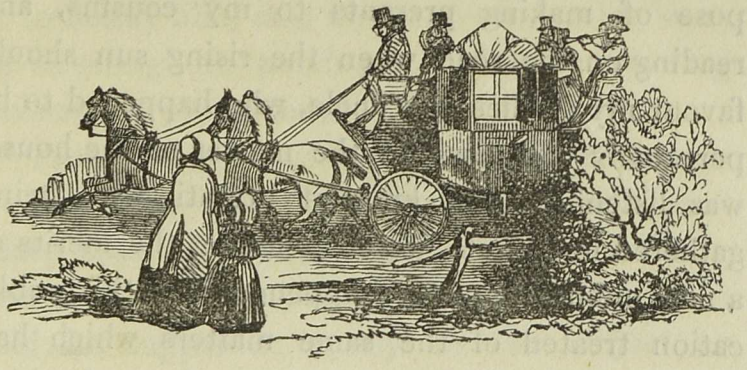
adopted into my uncle's family, brought up with his own children, and treated with so much kindness, and so great impartiality, that I as often passed for his son as for his nephew.

My uncle is a country gentleman, living on his own estate, which may be worth about a thousand a-year, having an excellent wife, and a blooming family; he is a literary man, and has devoted much of his leisure to the accomplishment of a work which was published some years since, and brought him so much credit, that he has been from that time a sort of public character, often quoted, and spoken of in the literary societies of the metropolis, and other parts of England. At present I shall say no more of him, but leave his character to develop itself in the course of my narrative; and here I must take the liberty of obtruding a hint which might not be altogether useless to certain celebrated writers of the present day—namely this, that he who is compelled, in

order to make his reader understand the character of the person he would describe, to use two or three pages of expletives and high-sounding adjectives, is something like a painter, who, having drawn a lion, was obliged to write under the figure, THIS IS A LION, lest the beholder should mistake it for a certain long-eared animal of a very different description. It is a poorly drawn character indeed, that does not show itself by its actions, and the parts which it takes in the adventures in hand; but I am growing prolix, and perhaps my readers will say, a little dull.

I had been more than fifteen years in the family of my uncle, when the good man was called to London, on some business relative to his publication; and as my two cousins, who were older than myself, had been with him before, he proposed that I, as the next in age, should accompany him to town. I was then past nineteen, and did not sleep soundly for a

week after this delightful prospect had been unfolded to me.



I do not propose to trouble my reader with our adventures on the road, nor with the account of all the sights we saw in London, or of our various regales on beef-steaks, porter, and oysters, but shall proceed to one of our latest scenes in town. We had taken our places for the country, and were to meet the coach at the White Horse Cellar, Piccadilly, at six o'clock in the evening. With the view of travelling all night, having a few hours on our hands, we entered a celebrated

bookseller's shop in Piccadilly, and while I was selecting some little books, with the double purpose of making presents to my cousins, and reading on the road when the rising sun should favour my studies, my uncle, who happened to be personally unknown to the master of the house, was listening to a knot of literati, who being gathered in a circle, were discussing the merits of a new publication. It happened that this publication treated of the same matters which had been so ably managed by my uncle, and which had obtained him so much credit. It was not, then, to be wondered at, if the mention of this publication should lead to that of my uncle's book, and accordingly one of the gentlemen present remarked, "that Mr. Smith's well-known valuable book contained all that could be said on the subject in question, and that every one who came after him, must, in consequence, come with disadvantage."

A slight colour rose in the cheek of my uncle, at the mention of his name, but he looked at me not to betray him, and we went on turning over and selecting our purchases, while the following conversation proceeded:—

"That Mr. Smith," said an elderly gentleman, in a large wig, "is a man of sense and erudition—a deep reader—a close reasoner. His work is a good one. He has said all that a man of sense could be supposed to say on the subject he selected; he has a mathematical head—a man of sense—quite the man of sound plain sense."

"Doctor," replied an elderly gentleman of very solemn and portentous aspect, "I quite coincide in your opinion. Smith's book on the subject in question is the best which has been written; the only one existing which is not mingled with, and spoilt by, metaphysical subtilities. I have had Smith's book on my table ever since it was printed; and Lord ———, who

was with me this morning, says that he knows it almost by heart."

"Do you know Mr. Smith?" asked a little gentleman in black, and wearing green spectacles, "do you happen to have seen him or conversed with him?" This question was addressed to the bookseller, and answered in the negative. On which the little man, taking some state on himself on the occasion, rejoined, "I have a friend who was in his part of England last summer, and heard much of his history."

"Well, sir," said the doctor, "and what may that be?"

"He is an elderly man, sir," replied the little man, "a widower, and brings up his brother's children in his own house! a strict man in his family; one who understands how to make a guinea go as far as any man in England—a very Puritan in his religious sentiments—an enemy to all amusement—in short, the sort of man who

would think it a sin to hold a hand at cards, or play a hit at back-gammon."

I had thrown down the book I had in my hand, and was turning like a turkey-cock in a rage to attack the little man in black, when a second glance from my uncle restrained my ardour, and we suffered the conversation to proceed without interruption. It seems that the little man had purposely mentioned the subject of cards, for the doctor fired instantly at the hint, and exclaimed:—"I cannot understand how the good people can find so much sin in an innocent game of cards. I should not have expected so much bigotry in a man of Mr. Smith's sense."

"And so you say, sir, Mr. Smith is an austere character. Well, that is to be lamented; but you did not see him. How is he said to appear in conversation?"

"My friend tells me," replied the little man in black, "that he never cared to open his mouth

before him. He is afraid of his acuteness. He is said to have a deep insight into human nature, and nothing leads to severity of judgment like knowledge of the human heart; you will allow that, gentlemen."

"Pardon me, sir," said the bookseller; "a keen sense of the follies of mankind leads to asperity; but not a knowledge of the human heart; because a man can only obtain this last species of knowledge by the inspection of his own heart; and the contemplation of his own defects will never make any man judge harshly of those of another."

"That is well remarked, sir," said my uncle, putting in his word in this place; "you have made an accurate and wise distinction."

The bookseller bowed, and the little man in black resumed.

"My friend was at the races of the country town, not far from which is the residence of

Mr. Smith, and saw some of the country gentlemen, his neighhours, and they all agreed in the opinion of the abilities of this author, but they asserted that he was shown rather as a sort of curiosity among them, than cultivated as an acquaintance."

"Perhaps," said the bookseller, smiling, "Mr. Smith being a man of talents, is not precisely the sort of character whose society would be relished by persons addicted to racing."

The little man bristled upon this. "My friend," said he, "is a man of intellect, otherwise I might venture to say he would not have been chosen as an associate of mine; but perhaps we do wrong in speaking rather slightingly of a popular author in this place. We will, therefore, if you please, call another question, and I will beg leave to introduce a pamphlet which I met with this morning, and which possesses an

infinitude of merit, if my poor opinion is to be depended upon."

Having finished our purchases, my uncle and I left the shop without waiting to see the pamphlet, and as soon as we were fairly in the street, I told my ever dear paternal friend that I was only sorry that his presence had prevented me from applying a horsewhip to the little prig in black who had taken such liberties with his character.

"Why," said my uncle, "what very great harm did he say of me? It is no ill to say of a man that he is a widower, and takes care of his brother's children."

"Harm enough," I replied, "when almost in the same breath, he asserts, that this same man is a severe and parsimonious character, a domestic tyrant, and consequently a harsh guardian to other people's children."

"The idea of my being harsh, severe, and strict, might easily arise," replied my uncle, "from my having always kept you, my children, within my own domain, and not having encouraged you to communicate much with other young people, and having never brought you forward on any public occasion. I repeat, that an idea of strictness and severity might easily have arisen from this circumstance."

"It might with ill-natured people, sir," I replied.

"With ill-judging people, I would rather say Francis," calmly answered my paternal friend; "but this is not the first time that I have had it hinted to me, that I am rather a severe disciplinarian at home."

"You a severe disciplinarian, uncle!" I reolied; "why, you indulge us all even to an extreme."

"I hope that I may deny that, Francis," he

answered; "I hope and trust that I allow you no improper indulgences. Name to me any indulgences which you think any of you have which are improper, and they shall be no longer allowed."

"I cannot," I replied; "you never allow sin in your children, or excesses of any kind. You make us work too, and you make us use self-denial; but as to happiness, there never was and never will be a more happy family."

"Well, then, it seems that my children don't think me harsh," replied my uncle, "let the world say what it will then; but in order to compose ourselves, for we are just now a little irritated, let us turn into this picture gallery, and talk of this conversation in the bookseller's shop at a more convenient time, and in some more proper place than the public street."

There was no farther allusion made to the scene in the bookseller's shop by my uncle or

myself, during that evening. At six o'clock we were in the coach, where we found two more persons. We travelled all night, and at sun-rise were at a considerable distance from London.

About mid-day we were arrived at a town which is only two short stages from our home, and at this town a young lady who had come by another coach, got in with us, and being young and incautious, told me presently where she was going—namely, to the very village where our home was situated. I had some curiosity to know more of this young lady, and therefore put several questions to her, without letting her, in the least degree, into my own history; a rather unfair measure often practised on the unwary by passengers in a public vehicle. My uncle, in the meantime, as I thought, had fallen into a doze, and, as I suppose, had heard nothing of what was passing. "I am going," said the young lady, "to visit my aunt, and to stay a long time with

her; and my aunt says, that there is a most delightful family living near her, a very large family too, and many young people, and that she will introduce me to this family, for she is very intimate with them; and then I shall partake in all their delightful employments, and perhaps be permitted to help them in their school, and to enjoy their schemes of pleasure in the woods and the fields, and hear the father of the family instruct them. For she says, he is the kindest father in the world, and so cheerful, that his children are never happy when he is from them; and she tells me that he talks so sweetly to them about religion, and makes it so pleasant, and is so good to the poor and so kind to his servants, that she can never speak enough in his praise."

"And pray, madam," I said, "what may this gentleman's name be?"

In reply, she named my uncle, as I expected, and was going on in the same artless manner (for

she was quite young) when my uncle rousing himself and looking smilingly on her (for she was a simple blooming young creature), "My little lady," he said, "methinks you would do well to exercise more caution in forming hasty acquaintances: for once, through the care of a gracious Providence, you have fallen into good hands; but another time when you happen to meet with strangers in this sort of way, wait a little before you become too communicative. But how comes it," added the good man, "that you are travelling alone at your tender age?"

"I am come only a little way alone, sir," she replied. "My father was with me till I arrived at the last stage."

"So far so well," said my uncle: "and as I find you are going no farther than we are, I shall have pleasure in delivering you safe to your aunt."

This remark led to an explanation, and the

young lady being found to be the niece of a neighbour, and my uncle to be the very identical Mr. Smith, in whose favour the fair traveller was already so much interested, we immediately became friends, before we had travelled together another couple of miles.

At length the woods and hills about my uncle's house arose to view. At the sight of them the tender father settled his wig, and began to anticipate the delight of embracing his beloved children again. I saw joy kindle in his eye as we advanced towards home, and it blazed forth, when first we espied through openings in the trees, the dear domestic party winding along the gravel walk from the house to meet the coach. Our good neighbour, Mrs. Horton, the aunt of our little friend, was in the company; hence we had nothing to do but to get out of the coach at the gate, and walk up to the house.

I have often thought, and so also must many

of my readers, that the greatest pleasure of going out is derived from coming home. This assertion may, perhaps, partake in some degree of the nature of a bull, nevertheless, it contains a truth which no happy member of a family will deny.

It was not, however, with an intention of drawing a view of domestic felicity that I took up my pen. Suffice it to say, that our evening was as sweet as the interchange of heartfelt kindness and elegant courtesies could render it; and my uncle and I did not enjoy our beds the less from having travelled all the night before in a stage-coach. The next day I had a conversation with my uncle, with which I propose to finish my narrative.

There is in my uncle's pleasure ground a long embowered walk upon a terrace, from whence, through openings in the trees, a lovely dingle discloses itself in various points of view,

presenting many exquisite combinations of shade and light, water and wood, rock and verdure. To this place we have often observed the dear father of the family, to retire at noon-day, no doubt there to pray and meditate—sometimes being reclined on the mossy bank, and sometimes pacing slowly up and down the close-shorn walk, as David Brainerd is reported to have done in the forests of the New World.

On these occasions, even the youngest children of the family are as careful to avoid any intrusion as our ancestors would have been to have shunned the haunts of the Druids in the hours which were consecrated to the less holy rites of their mysterious worship. Yet no one ever makes any remarks in the presence of my uncle on this his daily custom.

It happened, however, that on the day which succeeded our arrival at home, I chanced to cross one end of this consecrated path at the hour when my uncle might be expected to be there, and the excellent man seeing me in the clear obscure at the end of the vista, called to me, and requested me to join him.

"Francis," said he, as soon as I had come up to him, "I have been thinking of one or two circumstances which happened during our journey.

"The first of these was the conversation in the bookseller's shop, and the second, what I

happened to hear in the coach from our young fellow-traveller; and I will now tell you, my dear nephew, what are the reflections which have been inspired by these things.

"It may be said," continued he, "of every human being, and especially if he be at all known in the world, that he has three characters—the first being that which is given him by the world in general, and by persons who have only heard of him, or seen him, as a common acquaintance; the second, that given to him by his relations, intimate friends, and dependents; and the third, that which is known to himself only.

"All these characters are more or less misunderstood, and commonly more or less misstated. Supposing the individual to be amiable in temper, and possessing an ordinary portion of natural affection, his public character is generally less favourable than his private one. If he is a highly talented person, it sometimes happens that he

is better spoken of in public than in private, and sometimes the reverse: it being certain, that the more largely an individual is spoken of in the world, the more difficult it often is to acquire a knowledge of what he really is in his private life; and the more exposed he is to common slander, and the malevolent comments of envious men.

"When a man feels himself to be beloved at home, and among his connexions; when he has an assurance of being received on his return to his house, with such smiles, such caresses, as I met with yesterday; when he knows that his presence is as sunshine in the little circle of which he is the centre, he is surprised and hurt (as I was when in the bookseller's shop) to hear himself described as a gloomy tyrant by any pragmatical talker, who takes credit to himself for knowing more of him than any other person present, and he begins to ask what have I done to deserve this, and how can I be thus misunderstood? and it is

natural for him to experience irritation and sourness on the occasion. And truly, Francis, my boy, it was as much as I could do to conceal my anger in the presence of the knot of critics who were assembled in the shop; or my triumph, when I heard my praises from our warm hearted young companion, which I trusted were the simple and sincere echo of the voice of my friends. However, I rejoice that I did not betray myself, but that I was enabled, by the divine help, to bear myself meekly, both under the evil and the good report, and that I was kept within bounds till this morning afforded me an opportunity of reflection and meditation in this my favourite haunt, this calm retreat, this silent shade, so well agreeing with prayer and praise, where the strife of Satan ceases in some degree with me, and where I have so often heard the notes of the heavenly dove. Here I have been brought to see that I am neither what the world

would make me, nor what my friends believe me to be. I have been led to renounce both characters, namely, that which is given me by common report, and that which is given me by my friends and lovers, as neither of them belonging to me; and both, even the worst of these, as being far too good for me; for, in looking into myself with that discernment which is spiritually bestowed, I find that I am more vile by nature than my worst enemies have ever dared to represent me. I have been made to feel that there is in me no good thing whatever, and that I should prefer death to an exposure of my real thoughts and feelings to the most partial friend I have on earth. I have been led to see that it is by a continual miracle that I am, and have been, enabled to preserve anything like consistency of character; and that I have reason to thank my God every moment for having brought me so far on the journey of life, with that degree of respectability which I

possess, even in the eyes of my worst enemies. For when, my beloved nephew, we are made to understand that every imagination of the thoughts of our hearts is only evil continually, while we remain in a state of nature, and that even when in a state of grace, the original nature is ever struggling vehemently against the new principle; we ought to be filled with gratitude and astonishment at the infinite goodness and care of God, which prevents us from exposing and betraying ourselves in some unguarded moment, in such a manner as might blast our reputation, and destroy our usefulness for life.

"These, my dear nephew, have been the reflections which have occupied me for the last hour; and I impart them to you for your benefit; apply my case to yourself, and if the world thinks worse of you than your partial friends do, be assured that both think better of you than you deserve. Blessed and happy will that time be, my Francis

when your old uncle will really be what he now only seems to be in the eyes of those who love him best."

The good man gave me his hand as he spoke, and as I held it to my lips, my tears fell upon it and I could not help in part reechoing his last sentence.

"Blessed and happy, indeed," I said, "will that time be, when all need of seeming what we are not, shall have passed away, and when we shall be like Christ our Saviour; for we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is." 1 JOHN, iii. 2.

My reader, from this my little narrative, you will be taught, I trust, to feel, that the worst your enemies can say of you falls infinitely short of what you could tell of yourself; and hence will be made to bear the reproaches of those who do not love you, as being more your due than the praises of those who are stimulated to the expression of them by interest or affection.

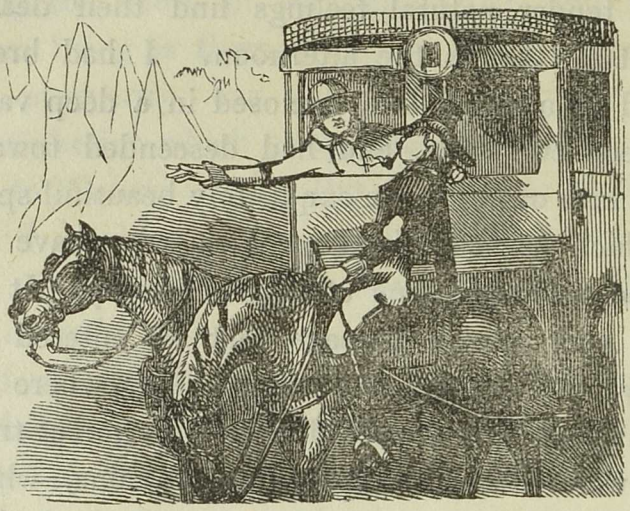
THE SWISS COTTAGE.

It is written, that man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upwards. No doubt this is perfectly true; but may we not ask, Do not many of our afflictions proceed from our own ill-conduct? And may not this question be answered by another, Are we always most unhappy when outward circumstances are the least propitious? Were we to mark our most uneasy days, would they be found to be always those in which we were lying under the pressure of external calamities? What believer is there who has not experienced a peace passing all understanding

during the hours of sore affliction? and what human being is there, who, in the moment of high prosperity, has not felt a weariness and dissatisfaction which he has been ashamed to own, even to his own heart? But, in order to elucidate what I would wish to say, I am about to introduce my reader to certain short passages of my very eventful life.

About fourteen years since I was travelling, in a melancholy mood, through one of the loveliest valleys of Switzerland: business had compelled me to leave my own country, and my melancholy arose from thinking of a wife and children far away. With the recollection of my own little dwelling, my orchard and garden, in the heart of my beloved native land—in such a state of mind, it was natural for me to fancy every peasant I saw, as I passed along, more happy than myself—inasmuch as I supposed him nearer to his home, and to that beloved domestic circle in which our

most tender natural feelings find their dearest objects. It was the afternoon. I had breakfasted at a small inn, enclosed in a deep valley between two hills, and had descended towards noon into one of those exquisitely beautiful spots, of which few can form an idea who have not visited similar regions of Alpine beauty. It was by a very narrow passage that we entered the valley, and descended into a hollow where the greensward was scattered over with forest trees, and watered by several pure streams, which, meeting together in the bottom of the valley, formed a small lake, on the polished surface of which were represented all the various beauties on its banks. Beyond the lake the ground arose precipitously, being richly diversified with rock and wood, and above the remote horizon, as it were, floating in ether, appeared a long range of snowy heights, presenting cones and pyramids of celestial brilliancy.



The bleating of sheep, and the hum of multitudes of bees, together with the rush of waters, and the murmur of the breeze among the lofty branches, added new charms to this enchanting spot; and as my wheels moved slowly round, I fell into a train of thoughts such as are commonly suggested by a beautiful landscape, in a country where the inhabitants are unknown to us, and

where we are wholly unacquainted with the little cabals and heart-burnings which exist in every place where human beings have fixed their habitations.

Here, thought I, applying the words of J. J. Rosseau, upon the brow of some agreeable hill (such as is now before me), in the depths of some retired province, I would have my habitation—namely, a white house, with green lattices; I would have my garden filled with culinary vegetables, and my park should be a green meadow; the fruits, at the discretion of those that walk in my garden, should neither be counted nor gathered by my gardener; all our repasts should be a feast where abundance will please more than delicacies.

In such a retirement as this, how I thought I should delight to dwell—far from the world, far from all its pompous pageants and gilded vanities excluded from all society but that of friends

most dear and precious in my sight, how great, how pure, how perfect would my enjoyment be! How happy are the inhabitants of this valley! give them but a taste for literature—give them but a little polish of manners, and the Arcadia of the poets would no longer be an imaginary state.

While indulging in these meditations, we had passed beneath the shade of the trees, and as I proceeded I seemed to be sometimes lost in the obscurity of a wood, and at other times to be travelling beneath arches of rock which hung terrifically over my head. In one part of the valley, sunny meadows opened to my view, gaily enamelled with every variety of flowers—the perfumed cups of which seemed to promise a rich regale to the multitude of bees which roved from sweet to sweet: and in another, I seemed to be departing from the channels of the brooks, being wholly unprepared for the instant when they should burst again upon

the senses, and come dashing forward from some rocky height, to cross the very footsteps of the horses. At length a lovely cottage, such as poets have delighted to imagine, with all the most delightful circumstances of a roof of thatch, a rustic porch, and casement windows, presented itself, a little before me, on a green slope, half retired behind a group apple-trees, then bending down beneath the weight of their golden fruit. It was situated beneath an impending rock, from whence hung in beautiful festoons the branches of a vine whose rich clusters were just beginning to assume their autumnal tint. A cow was feeding quietly on the green lawn, before the door of the house, and a young woman sitting near to her on the bank, playing with a little infant. In the porch was an old woman with a spindle and wheel, and on the summit of a ladder fixed against one of the trees, by the side of the house, was a peasant, who seemed quite in the prime of life, occupied in throwing

down fruit to a group of little children, who stood beneath the tree. To finish the picture, a creature of the feline order, with dainty step and murderous intent, was stealing along the thatch above the porch, and a row of bee-hives were arranged beneath the wall.

Here, I thought, as this beautiful picture broke upon my view with all its interesting features—here, surely is an exemplification of that unbroken peace and sweet domestic happiness, of which I have so often formed the image in my own mind. How enviable is the state of yonder peasant, who stands on the ladder, surrounded by his family, his aged mother, his wife, his little ones—the mother in whose arms he was reared, the partner of his life, whom no doubt he chose from the purest feelings of affection; for the love of money, which is the motive of so many marriages, can hardly have been felt in this simple scene. All these are gathered round him—all these contri-

bute to his happiness—all these administer to his wants, and receive him with their sweetest smiles, when he returns wearied with his healthy labours. Oh, happy peasant! kings might envy thee, and wish in vain to change conditions with thee. Thou hast every thing which mortal could desire. Thus I thought, and to this effect I no doubt should have spoken, had any one been with me in the carriage, but there was no one near me but the coachman, with his great jack boots and musical whip; for the drivers in Switzerland have the art of making their whips express many things, which we should consider beyond the reach of whipcord. I was therefore obliged to submit to be dragged up the eminence in silence, little foreseeing the sudden stoppage which was to take place, for I had scarcely been brought in a direct line with the cottage, when the carriage was suddenly thrown nearly over upon a bank; and when I could recollect myself, I found myself lying against its side

the wise, many of the learned, and many of the great, of this world, that happiness is not only affected, but actually, as it were, created by our outward circumstances; and in consequence, I had, through life, been in the habit of attributing perfect bliss to those individuals whose external circumstances were the most agreeable. In several instances, however, I had been undeceived, and had arrived at this conclusion—that honour, fame and riches, so much and so generally desired by young people, were often found to fail in bestowing happiness; but when I expected to find it in retired and domestic scenes, I had not the least idea that I was still pursuing a phantom, and that I should at length, be brought to the conviction, that outward circmstances have but a feeble influence in insuring the peace and serenity of the mind. This lesson I had not learnt at the period I am speaking of; I was therefore much surprised and disappointed, when seated in the porch of the cottage,

awaiting my meal, to hear the voice of discord from within. A disagreement, it seems, had arisen between the mother and the son respecting the fruit he had been gathering, of which she charged him with having given too much to his children, instead of laying it up in store for winter; and he answered her with surliness, on which the wife interfered, and the children attacked the grandmother. Words ran high, and the young man withdrew at a back door, shutting it after him with violence, and returning no more while I was in the house. It was probably not supposed that I heard all this, and the old woman came to lay my cloth soon afterwards, with a smiling face, indeed, but with a raised complexion, and that sort of fiery expression in the eye, which indicates a storm within. Everything, however, passed off quietly till I had dined, at which time the daughter, going out to milk upon the lawn, followed by the little ones; the old lady brought her wheel, and sat near me.

"You have a pleasant house and charming family and everything very comfortable about you, my good woman," I said, thinking it was necessary for me to show my complaisance to one by whom I had been so hospitably served. "True, monsieur," she replied; we have everything very comfortable, and are as forward in the world as any poor persons in the valley; and to what is this owing but to my industry? and did not get for my son the best wife in all the neighbourhood, and one that had a cow and a chest of linen for her portion? and yet I have but poor thanks, as you might have heard but now, monsieur, had you been minded to attend to what passed before my son went out; but although all prospers, as you see, about us, there is no contentment here. My son and daughter would spend all before them, and I would have them lay up something for a winter's day; and the children are so wilful, and my daughter-in-law so sullen, that I have a miserable life among them,

though I spin and toil for them from rise of day till the going down of the sun; and many and many is the skein of flax which I have spun for them, ever since I have been too blind to thread a needle."

There was irritation in the aged woman's face; I therefore ventured to suppose, notwithstanding what I had heard of the insolence of her son, that there might be faults on both sides; and accordingly I ventured to speak in behalf of the duty of mutual forbearance in families, and of the allowances which the different members of societies, should make for each other; on which the old woman begged I would give a little of my good advice to her daughter-in-law, who, she said, had no notion of making allowance for any body's whims but her own. This was an office for which I had no inclination, and was therefore glad when informed by the coachman that all was ready for the continuation of my journey. Never-

theless, I did not clear the premises of this supposed peaceful cottage before I had witnessed another domestic dispute, in which the young woman showed me, that she was perfectly able to fight her own battles.

Upon the whole, however, I had been treated with kindness, and retained some regard for these cottagers, although they had certainly destroyed many very pleasing illusions; for from that time I always felt a sort of damp on my spirits whenever I attempted, in imagination, to people any pretty cottage which I happened to pass in my travels, with any of those perfect beings which are said to inhabit romantic valleys, deep forests, and sunny glades.

Still, however, my mind remained in a dark state, and I attributed the unhappiness I saw in the world to chance or fortune, or untoward outward circumstances, or to bad examples, or to any other cause but the real one—namely, to the

depravity of our nature, which, mixing itself with every scene of life, and exerting itself most on occasions of high prosperity, and when the outward man is most at ease, disturbs our peace and renders us miserable, when, were our minds duly regulated, we ought to be most happy.

Through the divine blessing shed upon the word of God, administered to me by a faithful preacher, my eyes were opened, after awhile, to the real state of man on earth, the nature of his fall, and the means taken by divine wisdom for his restoration.

I was then made to see that man in his unchanged state is incapable of happiness, and that all those persuasions which had been entertained by self-sufficient persons respecting the different outward circumstances in which happiness is to be found, are altogether erroneous;—the seat of peace being chiefly in the mind, and independent of externals, and being the gift of God—a gift which is never

bestowed on those who have not been brought to seek him in the way pointed out in Scripture; that is, through Christ.

It was after my mind had been thus divinely illuminated, and that by the free grace of God and not through any merits or exertions of my own, that I was called again by my affairs, to visit Switzerland. Ten years had elapsed since my first visit, and I pursued nearly the same track as I had done on the former occasion.

I had retained such recollection of the hospitable cottage and its inhabitants that I resolved to visit it again, and having failed on my first visit of speaking a word in season (for how should I then have spoken of what I neither understood nor cared for?) I set out early one morning from the inn, in the pass, were I formerly breakfasted, with the intent of again taking my afternoon meal at the cottage, should circumstances permit. On emerging from the gorge, I was again impressed,

as before, with the uncommon loveliness of this valley of flowers and bees, of rocks and rivulets, of lawns and woods; and again my admiration was excited by the exquisite beauty of the thatched cottage and its rustic porch; but as I was slowly drawn up the eminence, I was struck with a sort of air and desolation and neglect, which was shed

over the environs of the house. No cow was feeding on the lawn, no laughing babes were grouped

beneath the trees, neither was the voice of the father heard, nor was the mother visible; but all was still and solitary—I was impatient—I sprang from the carriage, and approached the house by a shorter cut across the green sward.

I entered the porch and knocked at the door. It was presently opened by a little girl, about eleven years of age. I recollected the dark blue eye, and ringlets of light auburn which had designated all the children of this family whom I had formerly seen. "Where is your father, my little girl?" I said, as she stood, courtesying to me.

"Dead, sir," she replied; "long, long ago."

"And your mother?" I added.

"Dead too, sir," she answered, and seemed embarrassed, but then continued to speak, "they are all dead, sir, and only my grandmother is left;" and she stood back and pointed to an exceedingly wrinkled figure sitting in the corner of the wide chimney.

"All dead! all gone!" I said, and all those smiling and blooming children;—all gone but your old grandmother;—by what accident, by what misfortune did this happen?" And I advanced to the old woman, and had some difficulty to make her recollect that she had ever seen me before; but when I had succeeded in bringing myself to her mind, her eyes lighted up, and she hailed me as an old and kind friend. She caused her granddaughter to set me a chair, and expressed herself as particularly grateful for the visit.

I was embarrassed; I felt that things were strangely changed with her, and I hardly knew how to commence a conversation; but she presently relieved me by asking me, if all was well with me and with my family, and then reverting to herself, "Dear sir," she said, "you see me brought low; my son and his poor wife, and their four sweet babes, are gone to rest. The small pox visited us and carried all away but little Gertrude; she was

left by a kind Providence for my comfort. She has been a tender child to me, my little ewe lamb, that has lain in my bosom many years, and the great Shepherd will preserve her when I am no more; but the Almighty was very good to my children. The pastor of our parish, good sir, was changed soon after you were here, and the new one visited us in our cottage, and he catechised our little ones, and he gathered us all together several times in the week in the village church, and he taught us what we never knew before; and he made me feel how I had neglected the soul of my son in his childhood, and it was a very humbling feeling, sir. He visited my children when they lay dying. He visited me afterwards and comforted me, and he gave me a Bible, and made me to understand the goodness of God, and all he has done for sinful men; and so, kind sir, I have been reconciled to my bereavements, and made to be thankful for what is left. And I have a

belief that my children are in glory, for they died in faith: and I am waiting here until my change shall come; and I am not impatient to be gone because of little Gertrude, although it will be a gain to her when I am gone, because the pastor's lady has promised to take her."

"Oh! don't talk of going, dear grandmother," said the little girl, rubbing a tear from her eye. "Please not to let her talk of it, sir; I never shall be happy when she is gone; this house is so dear to me, I shall never love any place like this."

"It is a sweet and a happy place, my dear child," said the old woman, "and I thank God for giving us such a home: nevertheless this world is not our resting place—here we cannot stay, and ought not to wish to remain. But, kind sir, I can remember the time, when you were here last, when I was quite uneasy and dissatisfied, and yet could not bear the thought of going out of this world; and

now, sir, since the fear of death has been removed, since Christ our Lord has shown my heart what he has done for me, I am quite content to die; and yet I am more happy here than I was then, as much more happy, I think, as heaven is happier than the place of anguish and despair. I have lost a great deal too; that is, for a time I have lost a great deal, and sometimes we feel it hard to manage for ourselves: our cow is dead, and our garden is gone to ruin, and our bees have swarmed and hived in distant places; still we are happy and content, because we know it is to be for a very little while, and that a place is prepared for us as much better than this, as this valley is to the sandy deserts spoken of in Scripture, where no water is; and thus, sir, all care is off our minds, and of this I am sure, that where there is corroding care, there can be no peace."

In this way she talked to me, while I, from time to time, interrupted her to question and ex-

amine her, and as it were to try her serenity; and when she had told her story, and explained the changes which she had gone through, both in her outward circumstances, and her mind, she ceased to speak of herself, and began to busy herself in preparing a little repast for me. This fare, however inferior to what she had formerly given me, was tendered so hospitably that I could not refuse it; and it was from her manner, when she thought that I did not observe her, that I felt more fully convinced of the blessed change which had passed in her mind.

I spent several hours with this excellent person, and before I left the neighbourhood I went to the friendly pastor, with whom (having received a confirmation of the blessed change which had passed in this poor woman) I left a small sum for her use in case of need, and then took leave of the lovely valley, probably never to see it again, but strongly impressed with the truth so often

mentioned during the course of this little narrative—namely, that happiness is a gift of God, bestowed only on those who are brought to him by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and wholly independent of outward circumstances.

LITTLE CHILDREN.

Sporting through the forest wide ;
Playing by the water-side :
Wandering o'er the heathy fells ;
Down within the woodland dells ;
All among the mountains wild,
Dwelleth many a little child !
In the baron's hall of pride ;
By the poor man's dull fireside :
'Mid the mighty, 'mid the mean,
Little children may be seen,
Like the flowers that spring up fair,
Bright and countless, everywhere !

In the far isles of the main ;
In the desert's lone domain ;
In the savage mountain-glen,
'Mong the tribes of swarthy men ;
Wheresoe'er a foot hath gone :
Wheresoe'er the sun hath shone
On a league of peopled ground,
Little children may be found !

Blessings on them! they in me
Move a kindly sympathy,
With their wishes, hopes, and fears;
With their laughter and their tears;
With their wonder so intense,
And their small experience!

Little children, not alone
On the wide earth are ye known,
'Mid its labours and its cares,
'Mid its sufferings and its snares.
Free from sorrow, free from strife,
In the world of love and life,
Where no sinful thing hath trod;
In the presence of your God,
Spotless, blameless, glorified,
Little children, ye abide!

THE LORD JESUS.

Why are ye troubled?
Why weep ye and grieve?
What the prophets have written
Why slowly believe?

'Tis I, be not doubtful!
Why ponder ye so?
Behold in my body
The marks of my woe!

The willing hath suffered;
The chosen been slain;
The end is accomplished!
Behold me again!

Death has been conquered—
The grave has been riven—
For sin a remission
Hath freely been given!

Fearless in spirit,
Yet meek as the dove,
Go preach to the nations
This gospel of love.

For the might of the mighty
Shall o'er you be cast ;
And I will be with you,
My friends, to the last !

I go to the Father,
But I will prepare
Your mansions of glory,
And welcome you there.

There life never-ending ;
There bliss that endures ;
There love never-changing
My friends, shall be yours !

But the hour is accomplished
My children, we sever—
But be ye not troubled,
I am with you for ever !