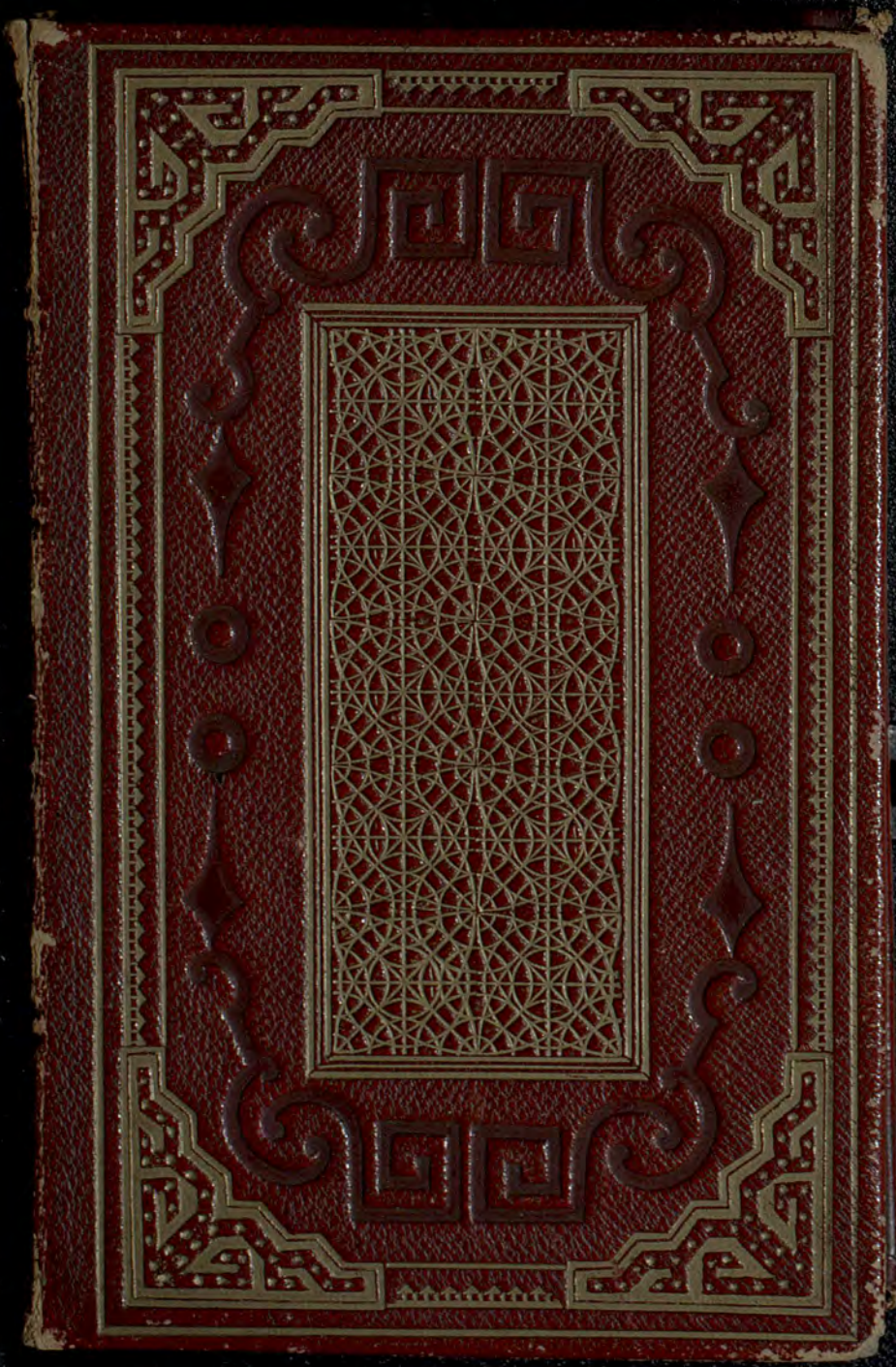

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1874.

TALES FOR THE YOUNG.

"The kind care of the physician and humane gaoler rescued me from this frightful malady."—
Page 191.

TALES FOR THE YOUNG.

BY

Miss C. Embury.

"Father," said Constance, "I wish you would have the flowers planted just in the same spots next year."—*The Blind Girl*, page 29.

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FOR THE YOUNG.

BY

Miss Embury.

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CONSTANCE LATIMER.

CONSTANCE LATIMER;

OR,

THE BLIND GIRL.

CHAPTER I.

Among the many fine mansions which have recently disappeared before the rage for public improvement was one, which from its commanding situation on the banks of the Hudson, and the unobtrusive beauty of its appearance, deserved to have been spared. Standing on a little eminence which sloped gradually down to the water's edge, and completely imbosomed in trees, Latimer Cottage, with its picturesque outhouses, formed one of the most beautiful points of view as seen from the river, and attracted many an admiring glance from the roadside

traveller. But a wide, naked-looking avenue, destitute of every green thing, now runs through that once verdant lawn; the place of the perfumed flower-garden is supplied by the paved footpath, with its inodorous kennel; the cottage, with its cheerful apartments and quiet library, has disappeared, to make room for the dark and dirty warehouse; and hundreds of busy feet now hurry to and fro over the spot once consecrated by the happiness, and hallowed by the grief, of human hearts.

Charles Latimer was the son of a rich East India merchant, and had been originally educated for the bar. His passion for literature led him to adopt this profession rather because it was a gentlemanly way of doing nothing, than with the expectation of deriving from it a livelihood; for he well knew that the only son of a man whose income far exceeded his most profuse expenditure was not likely to require it as a means of support. The sudden death of his father, however, just as he had completed his studies, changed the tenor of his fortunes. He found himself the only representative in

America of one of the most extensive commercial houses in the world; and, when he considered that several years must necessarily be consumed in settling the affairs of a concern which had its agencies in England, France, and India, he determined to relinquish his profession rather than give up a business for many years past extremely lucrative.

But Latimer was one of the few who look upon wealth as a means rather than an end. He cared not to devote all his noble energies to the task of making haste to be rich; but, satisfied with regular and steady profits, which enabled him to indulge all his elegant tastes, he mingled with the toils of business the pleasures of social and literary life. For several years after the death of his father he continued to reside in the same mansion, surrounded by the old family servants, dividing his time between the counting-house and the library, or occasionally mingling in the gay scenes of which he was so bright an ornament. But accident threw him in the way of a young and lovely southern belle, and he soon found his home had never

looked so cheerful as it did when gladdened by the presence of his fair bride.

Brilliant in conversation, sufficiently well-informed to join in the discussion of any ordinary topic, and gifted with that tact which enables a woman to turn aside the ball when it exceeds her grasp, there were few more attractive than the beautiful Mrs. Latimer. The total want of energy of character, which she owed to her luxurious southern habits, was a fault not likely to be discovered in the day of prosperity.

Immediately after his marriage, Mr. Latimer set himself to the task of modernizing and adorning his father's villa. Its proximity to the city, which enabled him to combine the advantages of town and country life, decided him to make it his permanent residence; and in a very few years he found himself the happy possessor of the loveliest home, the prettiest wife, and two of the sweetest children that ever blessed a mortal's lot.

At the time when our story commences, Julian, the younger child, was a lively, rosy

In a very few years he found himself the happy possessor of the loveliest home, the prettiest wife, and two of the sweetest children that ever blessed a mortal's lot.—Page 12.

little fellow, of perhaps three years of age, with the bold blue eye and open brow of fearless innocence. Constance was about two years his elder; but who ever beheld that child and paused not to look again and again ere they found language to describe her loveliness? Hers was a face of perfect beauty. The broad white forehead, the delicately-pencilled brows, the straight nose, the exquisitely-chiselled lips, and the perfect oval of its contour, might have made it a model for a sculptor; while the wonderful transparency of the complexion, the delicate rose-leaf tint upon the cheek, the soft brown hair curling thick upon the snowy neck, and, above all, the superb eyes so beautifully shaped, and filled with an indescribable expression of frankness, tenderness, and truth, made it no less a study for a painter.

How seldom are the characters of children properly and discriminately studied! A certain mode of discipline is usually adopted in a school or family, to which all its members are required to submit, and which is expected to benefit all in an equal degree; while every judicious mo-

ther can state, as the result of her own experience, that no two children will bear precisely the same kind of culture. The modern system of forcing the mental faculties to unnatural growth, and attempting to ingraft the moral virtues by the same hotbed process, have been productive of incalculable evil. The mental powers are weakened by being overtasked, the moral perceptions blunted by the vain attempt to infuse abstract ideas, the physical organization disordered by a total neglect of all bodily training, and the result of the instructor's labours is total disappointment. In nine cases out of ten the precocious child ends by becoming the dull, self-conceited man. If parents would be content with weeding out the early springing vice of insincerity, as the only effort at moral culture, and awakening the spirit of inquiry as the only attempt at mental improvement during the first years of their childhood; if they would turn their little ones into the fields instead of the school-room, and teach them the beneficent power of the Creator by familiarizing them with his wonderful works, they

would reap a rich reward in the healthy, hardy, and active minds which would afterward be brought to the labour of learning. The plan of education might almost be limited to that of the early Persians; and if our sons were only taught in boyhood "to ride on horseback, draw the bow, and speak the truth," the result would probably be less physical infirmity and more mental strength.

Such were the ideas with which Mr. Latimer began the work of instruction, and never was teacher blessed with a more docile pupil than the little Constance. Gifted with that exquisite delicacy of perception which frequently accompanies extreme delicacy of organization, she required no stimulus to the acquisition of knowledge. Young as she was, every faculty seemed already awakened, and only waiting to be employed. The endless variety of the painted flower, the changeful beauty of the insect wing, the various shapes of the leaves which strewed the autumn paths, and the multitude of voices by which nature breathes her music through the summer bowers, were all to

her objects of interest and inquiry. It was, indeed, beautiful to behold that fair childish face bending with eager glance over some newly-discovered wonder, or brightening with delight as some new truth suddenly dawned upon the rapidly-developing mind. But all these truths were taught by example rather than precept. The pages of Nature were the only books her father employed for the purposes of mental cultivation, while the foundation of all moral improvement was laid by forming the habit of self-examination—a habit easily acquired by an ingenuous child, whose spirit has never been crushed by fear. An occasional impulse of impatience, or a momentary preference of selfish indulgence, formed the subject, not of a lecture, but of a cheerful conversation between father and daughter, which resulted in her perfect comprehension, not of metaphysical subtleties, but of some of the most essential truths in morality.

"You are a happy child, Constance," said her mother one day, as the little girl was carolling a broken birdlike melody.

"I know it, mother," was the laughing response.

"Surely you ought to be happy if any one on earth could be so," said her father; "you have nothing to trouble you."

"Yes I have, father," said the child, while a sweet gravity stole over her sunny face.

"And, pray, what ever troubles you, Constance?"

"*My passions*," was the earnest and innocent reply.

CHAPTER II.

"Death should come
Gently to one of gentle mould like thee,
As light winds, wandering through groves of bloom,
Detach the delicate blossoms from the tree."—BRYANT.

"You ask me of my enjoyments and of my prospects. I can only say, that the present is full of happiness, and the future of promise. I am sometimes almost terrified at the magnitude of my own blessings; for while my sympathies are continually awakened by the misfortunes of others, my own lot remains entirely unclouded. Health, fortune, and domestic bliss all combine to render me as happy as mortal can ever be. Yet you will wonder when I tell you that I am sometimes disposed to look upon all this calm as but the prelude to a fearful tempest. When I consider how little I have merited all my good fortune, I cannot help fancying that these blessings are only lent me for

a season, in order to prove me more severely by their bereavement by-and-by. I feel that I am making to myself idols, and I cannot but fear that I shall, ere long, be taught the bitter lesson of humiliation, which all must learn who give to the creature the worship due only to the Creator. You will think me fanciful, but I am sometimes more desponding than those who have to encounter real evils; as the brighter the sunshine, the darker will be the shadow cast by an intervening object."

Such were the sentiments expressed by Mr. Latimer in a letter to a friend in Europe, when six years of uninterrupted happiness had dawned upon Latimer Cottage; but, alas! misfortune already hovered over them, and never was a deeper shadow flung from her dark wing.

One fine spring afternoon, as Mr. Latimer sat reading aloud the popular poem of the day, while his wife was busied with her needle-work beside him, they were startled by the sudden entrance of Constance, who, panting with her speed, and flushed with excitement, threw herself into her mother's arms, and burst into a

passion of tears. It was long before her parents' kind soothings could quiet her troubled feelings, or induce her to relate the cause of such unwonted sorrow. She told a simple, but touching tale. When the children went out to walk after dinner, the nurse had taken them to Mrs. Morden's cottage, where they frequently went to distribute their childish charities. They found the poor woman seated near the coffin of her baby, and holding in her arms another child soon to be stretched beside its playmate.

"Oh, mother, I cannot tell you how I felt," sobbed Constance; "I was not afraid, and yet I did not dare to touch little Mary, though I have so often played with her tiny hands when she was alive; she looked so white, and when Margery put her hand in hers she was so dreadfully cold." The child had never looked on death before; and when they told her that little Mary would never more open her eyes, but must now be laid in the dark cold earth, never again to be looked upon by the kind mother who now watched beside her, she gave way

to the utmost violence of terror and grief. Her parents listened to the tale with earnest sympathy.

"Of what disease did Mary die, Constance?" asked her father.

"I believe Mrs. Morden called it scarlet fever, father; and the face of the sick boy on her lap was very red."

A pang shot through the hearts of both her parents as she spoke.

"Was Julian with you?" said Mrs. Latimer.

"Yes; but he did not seem to notice anything; he ran about just as he used to do when we went there to gather strawberries, and he tried to make the poor sick boy play with him."

The tears of childhood vanish far sooner than the sympathy they excite; and, long after Constance had ceased to think of the dead child, her parents brooded over her narrative with apprehensions which neither dared breathe to the other. Mr. Latimer, with his usual kindness, hastened to the cottage of his poor neighbour, and found the second child just expiring with scarlet fever of the most malignant kind. The

atmosphere of the apartment was polluted by the feverish breath of the little sufferers; for the mother, in her ignorant caution, had excluded every breath of pure air, lest it should incease the virulence of the disease. "And in that dreadful room my two darlings have just been shut up!" exclaimed the anxious father as he gladly emerged into the fresh evening breeze.

His fears were not unfounded; twenty-four hours had scarce elapsed when Julian's rosy cheek wore a deeper hue, and his blue eye was suffused with the crimson tint of fever. Ere the next morning's sun had dawned upon the sleepless pillow of the alarmed parents, the fever spot burned the delicate cheek of Constance also. Who shall describe the anxiety of that doting father and mother? Who may enter into the depths of the human heart, and describe the workings of that most common, but, alas! most fearful of all human pangs, the anguish of a devoted parent? The buoyancy of spirit, which was one of Mrs. Latimer's strongest characteristics, prevented her from yielding to ter-

ror and despondency as soon as her husband; but the moment he saw the drooping form of his darling boy, and heard the low moan of his sweet Constance, hope vanished from his heart.

The children had wept so much at their separation when first taken ill, that the physicians deemed it advisable to place them both in one apartment. It was, indeed, a melancholy sight to behold those fair creatures so prostrated by disease, and to feel assured that on the frail tenure of their lives depended the whole future comfort of two noble hearts. Julian refused to leave his mother's bosom for an instant, while Constance lay in her little bed with her hand clasped in her father's, and her dim eyes fixed with unutterable tenderness upon her brother. Hour after hour, day after day passed away, and brought no change. No change did I say? Alas! did an hour ever pass without bringing change to all of us? The fever was most violent in its attack upon Julian; and, after ten days of such anguish as none but a parent can know—such anguish as whitens the darkest

locks, and withers the greenest heart, Constance was pronounced out of danger, but Julian lay like a waxen image in the cold sleep of death.

In proportion to her vain hopes was Mrs. Latimer's grief. She would not believe that a creature so beloved could die; and it was not till nature sank exhausted, after a succession of fainting fits, that her feelings could be in the slightest degree composed. The father looked upon the lifeless form of his little one with agony unutterable; but he heard the broken accents of his daughter, and while he felt that in His dealings God had remembered mercy, he tried to say, in sincerity of his heart, "Thy will be done."

Constance was unable to rise from her bed when the body of her brother was about to be borne to the tomb; but she pleaded so earnestly to look once more upon his sweet face, that her father bore her in his arms to the chamber of death. Never did the king of terrors assume a lovelier form. His forehead was as fair as if it had never known the touch of pain; his eyes as gently closed, and his lips as placidly folded,

as if the little boy had been laid down to sleep after the fatigues of a merry game. Constance looked long and earnestly on the lifeless body of her lost companion. Her frame shook as with an ague fit, but no tears fell from her eyes; and her father, startled by the sudden rigidity of her features, placed her in bed just as she was seized with a frightful convulsion. The dead was borne to its last resting place while the fate of the living was yet undecided; but, alas! a more fearful doom than that of death awaited Constance. The violence of her spasmodic attack had produced amaurosis, or paralysis of the optic nerve, and her brother's lifeless form was the last object that ever her eyes beheld. Every means that medical skill could devise was resorted to, but in vain; and Constance arose from her sick bed only to find herself totally and helplessly blind.

For a long time hope struggled in the hearts of her parents. Like him who, dwelling at the mountain's foot, mistakes the darkness of the impending avalanche for the shadow of the cliff—the very magnitude of their calamity

rendered them doubtful of its existence. But when, at last, hope was crushed beneath the dreadful certainty of evil, no words can express the utter desolation of their hearts. "Why," exclaimed the agonized father, "why, when the Almighty sped the arrow that destroyed my child's precious sight, did he not also take her useless life?" Imagination is too feeble to portray such anguish. The Grecian painter's veil must be drawn over such unutterable woe.

CHAPTER III.

"The day too short for my distress; and night,
E'en in the zenith of her dark domain,
Is sunshine to the colour of my fate." YOUNG.

MONTHS passed away; the glow of health once more dwelt upon the fair child's cheek, and her lip again wore its rosy tint, but the light of her glorious eyes was quenched for ever. They were still as deeply blue—still as deeply fringed by their long dark lashes; the disease which had destroyed them had not impaired their external loveliness, but their expression had for ever departed. They were still beautiful, but it was the beauty of the unlighted alabaster vase.

The effect of this misfortune upon the child's character was very remarkable. At first she wept unceasingly, and complained bitterly of the darkness. "I can see nothing," she would

say, "but a dark, dark room, with a little white form extended in one corner." Her imagination afforded the only organ of vision, and memory offered objects to its gaze. Her mind appeared to have acquired a sudden maturity. The absence of all outward things seemed to make the eye of the spirit more clear and penetrating. Childish things were put away, and she spoke with the earnestness, the tenderness, the energy of a woman. Library after library was exhausted for her amusement; but, alas! they who find in the common exercise of their sight a world of enjoyment, of which they are scarcely sensible, can form but a faint idea of the terrible privation of the blind. For them the light of the sun is darkened; the moon has withdrawn her ray; the beauty of the earth is vanished; the loveliness of household faces has departed; the familiar places have become strange; and, as one walking in the Valley of Death, every step is faltering and uncertain. To Constance this utter darkness was peculiarly painful, for she remembered too vividly the last object on which her eyes had rested, and

the emphatic language of Scripture might here be used literally, for it was, indeed, "The shadow of death upon the eyelids."

"Father," said Constance, as he led her one pleasant evening along the garden-walks, "I wish you would have the flowers planted just in the same spots next year, for I have learned to know them by the touch of the leaf as well as by their perfume, and I can almost fancy I see them since I have become so familiar with them." The promise was readily given, and Constance continued: "When first my eyes were darkened, the image of poor little Julian was always before me; but now I try to think of other things. I try to remember how the sky looked, and the different coloured flowers, and oftener still I try to bring before me your face and mother's. I am sure I shall never forget *them;* but I am afraid I shall forget many other things which I used to take little notice of when I could see them every day." Mr. Latimer's heart was full, but he mastered his emotion, and patiently set himself to the task of imprinting on her mind those ideas

which, at her age, are usually evanescent, but which now required to be graven as with a sunbeam. But those mysterious compensations which Providence usually vouchsafes to those who suffer under great privations were already hers. Her sense of hearing had become exceedingly acute, her touch extremely delicate. She learned to distinguish the different trees by the various sounds made by their leaves as they rustled in the wind. The flowers she recognised by their perfume, or, if they were destitute of fragrance, she could pass her slender fingers over their petals, and at once discover their names. Music, which had always been her delight, now became her passion; and three fourths of her time was spent beside her mother's piano, or listening to her father's voice, as, with swelling heart, he sang to her the songs she loved. Her ear became so accurate that she was soon able to mingle her own sweet tones with the music; and no one who looked upon the child, as she sat in her delicate beauty amid the costly luxuries which decked her home, singing some plaintive melody, would

have imagined that the portals of so glorious a temple had been for ever closed against earthly objects. But a more touching picture was sometimes presented, when, thinking herself alone, the fair creature over whom six summers had not yet passed would wring her little hands, and exclaim, in that thrilling tone which the blind so soon acquire, "What shall I do! oh, what shall I do!" Would that this were entirely a fancy sketch; would that the portraiture of this gentle child owed its colours to imagination only, and was not shaded by the deeper tints of sad reality!

The next four years were passed by Constance in a monotony so unvarying, as far as regarded external things, that the pen of her historian finds little to record. But the change that gradually came over her spirit might form a noble study for a philosopher. She knew that she was beautiful, for she heard it murmured from every lip; but each expression of admiration was uttered in a tone of sympathy which her delicate ear did not fail to detect, and the lesson of humility was learned along with that

which might have taught her vanity. She knew, too, that her voice was as musical as a bird's, and this was one of the chief blessings of her darkened lot; for the little blind girl's ear had now become endued, as it were, with a double sense, and great would have been her privation if she could not have expressed her innocent feelings in tones of sweetness. She sang beautifully, and never was music more expressive. She had learned, too, to weave baskets, (a favourite resource of the blind,) as an amusement to her many vacant hours; but, alas! with these acquisitions she was obliged to be content. The fountain of knowledge seemed sealed to her for ever, and she was fain to rest satisfied with an occasional draught of its pure waters from the hand of another. In spite of all her efforts at cheerfulness, she began to feel life a heavy burden, which daily grew more intolerable. At nine years of age she had all the weariness of spirit which belongs only to earth's care-worn children, when time has blanched the sunny hair, or sorrow seared the lonely heart. Her mother, given up to grief,

had gradually sunk into such infirm health, that there was but little prospect of her prolonged life; and when Mr. Latimer thought of the probable fate of his beautiful and helpless child, he was almost tempted to yield to utter despair. "She will have plenty of useless wealth," said he to himself; "but who will protect her when we are gone? Who will guard that delicate frame from the rude contact with a harsh and unfeeling world?" He had not yet learned to believe that "God ever tempers the wind to the shorn lamb."

One day, while in his counting-room, Mr Latimer was addressed by a gentleman distinguished for his philanthropy, who, utterly ignorant of his domestic misfortunes, applied for pecuniary assistance in forming an institution for the instruction of the blind. Mr. Latimer's feelings were almost too powerful for words, as, grasping his new friend's hand, he vehemently proffered half his fortune if the project could be accomplished. "Only let me see my child rescued from the depth of darkness into which she is sinking, and half my fortune shall repay your

labours," he said, as he added his name to the list of subscribers. On his return he communicated the occurrence to his wife and daughter. Far different was the manner in which the two received it.

"You would not surely send Constance away from us to a place where everybody would be received, and where she must live like the poorest among them?" said her mother.

"You will let me go," exclaimed Constance, her cheek flushing and her lip quivering with unwonted excitement. "Oh, father, I should be so happy if I could only learn to be less helpless; when will they be ready to receive pupils?"

"Will you be content, Constance, to feel yourself alone among the many who, like yourself, are deprived of one of life's best blessings? Will you not pine for the devoted attention, the undivided care of your parents?" asked the father.

"Oh! father," replied the child, "how little you know of my feelings. Should I not be happier if I did not require your attentions?"

Her father sighed, but answered not. He could not avoid observing, however, that from that moment a new hope seemed to have arisen in her heart, and that her despondency was rapidly giving place to a nervous restlessness of manner, which betrayed how deeply the current of her feelings had been stirred.

At length the benevolent founders of the institution were enabled to carry out their scheme, and among the first of their pupils was Constance Latimer. Great was the opposition she encountered from her mother, who dreaded the privations her child must undergo in an institution which could provide comforts but not luxuries; but Constance withstood all attempts to turn her from her purpose, and left her home without one sigh of regret.

"If I can learn anything, father, my short absence will be for the future happiness of us all; if I cannot, I shall not long be a burden to you," said she, as the carriage stopped, and she was carried in her father's arms to her new home.

The extreme beauty of the child and her winning manners awakened the warmest in-

terest in all who looked upon her. The number of pupils was as yet few, and Constance at first found her situation rather irksome; but when the plan of instruction was once made clear to her, nothing could exceed her happipiness. Once in each week she returned to her father's house, and even her mother acknowledged she had never seen her so cheerful. It was, indeed, delightful to hear her animating expressions of joy as on each successive Saturday she sat down between her parents to relate the new acquirements of the past week. The alphabet, the first principles of arithmetic, the notes of music, were acquisitions worth the wealth of the Indies to her. Gradually, but surely, she progressed in the path of knowledge; every step required guidance, but every step brought her nearer the goal of all her hopes.

If he be a benefactor to mankind who causes two blades of grass to grow where only one grew before, what gratitude do those deserve who devote all their talents and energies to the task of ameliorating the condition of those whom God has so fearfully stricken!

Never was a creature so changed as Constance appeared after a years's sojourn at the Institution for the Blind. She had applied the fine powers of her mind most diligently to the labour of learning, and great had been her success. It was now her pleasure to exhibit to her happy parents her accurate knowledge of grammar, arithmetic, geography, and music. Above all, it was her delight to stand by her father's side in the library, and while her finger traced the words on the page as rapidly as the eye could have noted them, to read in her sweetest tones the pages of the Book of Life.

"Her presence is now a perfect jubilee in my house," said her father to one of the patient teachers who had opened so many sources of enjoyment to her. "Formerly I almost dreaded to enter my door, for I could not bear to behold the hopeless sadness depicted in my poor child's face; but now the day of her visit is looked upon as a holyday in the family. May God forgive my bitter repinings, and teach me to be grateful for the good-

ness which has thus mingled mercy with chastening."

Constance anxiously sought to make herself mistress of every branch of knowledge. She would ponder over the embossed maps until her fingers had made her perfectly familiar with the form of a country and its most prominent objects of interest; then her next Saturday's visit to her home enabled her to learn from her father's lips all that his library could afford of other information on the subject. She thus became thoroughly versed in the history, as well as geography, of every quarter of the globe. Mental arithmetic was peculiarly suited to her reflective habits; but music still continued to be her chief delight, and it was wonderful to see how rapidly she progressed. Her dread of ever being idle led her also to acquire the various kinds of handicraft practised among the pupils, and it was not long before she could frame a rug, weave a basket, and even occupy herself in needlework.

Let us pause for a moment, and contemplate the blind girl in her former and in her present

circumstances. At the period which is usually the sunniest of all ages, we see her sitting in utter darkness, beneath the shadow of despair, and exclaiming, in the heart-rending accents of hopeless misery, "Who will show me any good?" Now we behold her moving in the pleasant light of contentment, and hiving up knowledge, as the bee stores honey, to be the support of the wintry days of life.

To crown the happiness of Constance, her home once more echoed to the voice of childhood. A brother had been born since her abode in the institution, and she felt as if he had been sent to supply the place of her little Julian. A beneficial effect was produced by this event on the health of the mother, who, in the new exercise of maternal duties, seemed to lose that burden of grief which had almost crushed her to the earth. A stranger who should have looked in upon that little household of love, as they were grouped in the library on a Saturday evening, when Constance touched her guitar in accompaniment to her sweet voice, and the babe sat on her mother's

knee, stretching its little hands towards her in childish glee, while her father looked on with tenderness too deep for words, would have deemed them perfectly happy.

CHAPTER IV.

"When I look
On one so fair, I must believe that Heaven
Sent her in kindness, that our hearts might waken
To their own loveliness, and lift themselves
By such an adoration from a dark
And grovelling world. Such beauty should be worshipped,
And not a thought of weakness or decay
Should mingle with the pure and holy dreams
In which it dwells before us."—PERCIVAL.

IT was on her fourteenth birthday that Constance returned to her father's house, skilled in all the wisdom which could be communicated to the blind. Her person had developed into that pure, classical beauty of which her childhood had given promise. Tall and delicately formed, with a face of exquisite sweetness, her soft brown hair parted smoothly on her fair forehead, and shedding its bright tendrils on her snowy neck, she was, indeed, a picture of innocent loveliness. The expression of her countenance was so gentle, and the long lashes which usually shaded the pale cheek, and con-

cealed the rayless eyes, gave such an air of pensiveness to her appearance, that she excited the interest of all who looked upon her.

In addition to her various acquisitions in learning, and her wonderful skill in music, her heart had taught her a new and sweeter lore. Possessed of the most ardent feelings and a passionate love for Nature, who always spoke to her in music; condemned to feed so much upon her own thoughts, and to find her sweet and bitter fancies uninterrupted by any external object,—is it wonderful that the blind girl learned the language of poetry, and became the lyrist of emotions which were too powerful for common speech? Her knowledge of music and her delicacy of ear enabled her to adapt airs with great facility. It soon became no unusual thing for her, after sitting silent a few minutes, to take her guitar, and sing her own simple words to some remembered melody. It is true, she was little more than a child in years; but the fearful calamity which had cut her off from the enjoyments of her childish days had made her prematurely wise in feeling. Her heart was

filled with all the gushing tenderness, all the deep though unawakened energy of a woman's nature, combined with a purity of thought and fancy which rarely outlasts the full development of intellect. There is too much of evil mingled with the good of this world's wisdom; too much unholy fire is blended with the light of truth; and rarely can the mind be illumined by the one without bearing some blackened trace of contact with the other. But Constance had escaped all knowledge of evil. She was like the pure and stately lily, growing whiter in the sunshine which withers the roses that surround it. Poetry was the natural language of her unsullied heart; she breathed in numbers because her whole soul was attuned to harmony. The harp was not discordant because it had lost a string, for a master-hand had touched the remaining chords, and attuned them to discourse the sweetest of all earthly music.

One of her first efforts in verse was a little song addressed to her brother. Alfred was now a lovely little boy of some four years old, and most tenderly attached to his sister. He had

learned to guide her feet to unfrequented spots with as much care as if he knew the full extent of her privation; and when she took her guitar, or seated herself at the piano, his usual station was upon a cushion at her feet. One afternoon he had thrown himself on a sofa beside her, and fallen asleep with his head in her lap. She busied herself for some time in tracing with her finger the outline of his features; but, suddenly desisting, and brushing away the involuntary tear, she sung to a plaintive melody the following words:—

Is thy cheek fair, my brother?
  Are thine eyes bright?
Hast thou the smile of our mother,
  Her remembered smile of light?
Art *thou* like the gentle vision
  That comes to my sleeping eye,
When my heart in dreams elysian
  Clasps its lost one in yonder sky?

Vainly I ask, my brother,
  No lip can tell;
The imaged form of another
  In my memory still must dwell;
In vain with impatient fingers
  Thy features I seek to trace,
His look in my soul still lingers,
  And in thine I find Julian's face.

Who cannot sympathize with the father, who stood without, listening to the sweet voice and touching complaint of his gifted child? Wealth, such as might purchase a prince's ransom; beauty, such as immortalized a Helen; genius, that might have won the laurel of a Corinna, all were given as if to show the utter worthlessness of those things which the world prizes when unaccompanied by the most common of God's blessings. The shrine was a glorious one; the music of the sanctuary was not wanting; but the sacred lamp of the temple had been extinguished, never to be relighted till kindled by the flame of immortality.

Constance did not relax in her exertions to acquire knowledge. Her memory never allowed any thing to escape its grasp; and her father's unremitting kindness in reading to her for hours together enabled her to obtain a vast deal of elegant literature, which otherwise would have been a sealed book. The pages of the poet and the historian were alike familiar to her; and perhaps, to her sensitive mind, the graphic sketches of the one and the har-

monious strains of the other derived a peculiar charm from being always expressed in the tones of a father's tenderness.

"Your voice is sorrowful, dear father," said she one day, as her father paused after an hour's reading; "I am afraid you have some new trouble, for your tones are lately full of sadness."

"You are a quick observer, Constance," replied he; "but do you not think your imagination sometimes misleads you?"

"No, father, no; the ear that has learned to detect every shade of feeling, even as your eye marks every gradation of colour, is not to be deceived; the faintest change in your voice is to me as evident as if I could see the cloud upon your brow. Nay, dear father," continued she, "I cannot bear to hear you sigh; give me my guitar, and I will sing to you the song I made yesterday, when Alfred ran with a little green leaf in his hand to tell me spring was coming.

"They tell me spring is coming
With her wealth of buds and flowers,

But I hear no wild bee humming
Amid the leafy bowers;
And till the birds are winging
With music from each tree,
Till the insect tribes are singing,
Spring is not spring to me.

They tell me spring is waking
All nature from her sleep,
That streams, their ice-chains breaking,
Once more to sunshine leap;
But the mountain brook rejoices
In music through the lea,
I must hear earth's many voices,
Or 'tis not spring to me."

"Did you sing that sweet but melancholy song to cheer me, Constance?" said her father. "Alas! think you the recollection of my child's misfortunes can comfort me?"

"Dear father," replied she, "I did not mean to utter the voice of complaint; earth is so full of music to mine ear that I sometimes think I am almost as happy as if mine eye divided its enjoyments. You know not how rich is the melody to which God opens the ear of the blind. Listen!" and the gentle girl touched a simple accompaniment of chords, while she

sung, in a strain of triumphant music, the following words:—

Earth speaks in many voices: from the roar
Of the wild cataract, whose ceaseless din
Shakes the far forest and resounding shore,
To the meek rivulet which seems to win
Its modest way amid spring's pleasant bowers,
Singing its quiet song to charm earth's painted flowers.

Earth speaks in many voices: from the song
Of the free bird which soars to heaven's high porch,
As if on joy's full tide it swept along,
To the low hum that wakens when the torch
Summons the insect myriads of the night
To sport their little hour and perish in its light.

Earth speaks in many voices: music breathes
In the sweet murmur of the summer breeze,
That plays amid the honeysuckle's wreaths,
Or swells its diapason mid the trees
When eve's cold shadow steals o'er lawn and lea,
And day's glad sounds give place to holier minstrelsy.

Earth speaks in many voices: and to me
Her every tone with melody is fraught;
Her harmony of tints I may not see,
But every breath awakes some pleasant thought;
While to mine ear such blissful sounds are given,
My spirit dwells in light, and dreams of yonder heaven

CHAPTER V.

"Though Fortune's malice overthrow my state
My mind exceeds the compass of her wheel."

SHAKSPEARE.

CONSTANCE was not deceived when she thought she discovered sadness in the tones of her father's voice. The cloud had been for several months deepening on Mr. Latimer's brow; and though invisible to the rayless eye of his affectionate child, yet she was not insensible to the chill which it threw upon his cheerful spirit. In his devoted attention to his daughter he had allowed his business to be chiefly transacted by others, and he found that the unfaithfulness of agents abroad and the imprudence of partners at home had involved him in engagements he should find it extremely difficult to fulfil. He had never before known the want of money, and his proud spirit was goaded almost to madness by

the necessity of asking for pecuniary supplies. But one of those seasons of commercial distress which occasionally occur in all mercantile countries, and are felt in every quarter of the globe, now ensued, and the consequence to Mr. Latimer was total ruin. The energy with which he had borne his earlier misfortunes seemed now utterly to fail him. Not that fortune was to him of more value than every other blessing; but, with a wife in infirm health, a son in early infancy, and a daughter hopelessly blind, he felt that poverty was an evil of far greater magnitude than he had ever before dreamed. His high sense of honour forbade him to compromise with his creditors. He knew that he had property sufficient to pay all his debts at home; and he doubted not that his foreign affairs, if properly arranged, would enable him to satisfy all demands abroad. But, in order to complete these arrangements, it would be necessary for him to leave his family penniless and wander off into distant lands. The struggle of feeling stretched him at last on a bed of sickness, and it was from his delirious ravings, during a severe

attack of fever, that his family learned the fatal truth.

A good constitution enabled him to withstand the violence of his disease; and, immediately upon his convalescence, he set himself seriously to the task of retrenchment. One of those singular but not unfrequent changes, which make the character of woman always a beauty and a mystery, now occurred in the mind of Mrs. Latimer. For a whole week she gave herself up to the deepest despair; then, as if she had indeed found sorrow to be knowledge, she dried her tears, and never allowed another murmur to escape her lips. Laying aside all her habits of luxurious self-indulgence, she devoted herself to the consolation of her husband, and witnessed with perfect composure the rapid vanishing of her costly furniture and plate. A small house in the city was taken and furnished in the simplest manner. The kindness of a creditor, who had often shared the hospitality of the ruined family, adorned their humble abode with the piano and guitar, which were so essential to the bereaved Constance, but no other articles of

luxury found their way within its walls. As if she had never known their use, Mrs. Latimer seemed totally regardless of the want of those elegancies to which she had been accustomed from her cradle. Her thoughts were only for her husband and her children. For them she sought, with all a woman's tact and tasteful management, to make their new residence look like the home of comfort, if not of wealth; and Mr. Latimer felt that even in this sorrow the hand of Providence had provided a solace. Well may the mourner believe in the beautiful system of compensations which prevails throughout the universe; for never was man compelled to drink of the bitter fountain of Marah without finding some kind hand to throw the branch of healing into its distasteful waters.

For a few days the little Alfred wondered at the change, and complained for want of the broad green lawn; but the sorrows of childhood are as evanescent as the joys of maturer years, and he soon forgot the privations in the novelties of his situation. To Constance the change in their circumstances brought no selfish regrets.

It was long since external things had been to her a source of enjoyment; and though the bustle of a city was exquisitely painful to an ear so acutely sensitive to the melody of nature, yet she would have felt not a momentary pang if she could have been insensible to the alteration in her father. With renewed health Mr. Latimer's strength of mind had returned; but the cheerful tone and elastic step, for which his daughter used to listen so anxiously, were no longer heard. Constance knew that his foot now fell heavily on the narrow stairs; and, instead of the full rich tone she was accustomed to hear, his voice now sounded in her ear like the monotonous and melancholy music of the distant sea.

The acquirements which Constance had regarded merely as means of amusing her heavy hours became, at this time, of actual use. It was not long before the place of those costly trifles, which had decorated their former abode, was supplied by neatly-framed articles of use and ornament, woven by the delicate fingers of the blind girl. Mrs. Latimer, in the fulfilment of

her duties as a housekeeper, found full employment for a great part of the day, and all the plain sewing which was required in the little household was, therefore, performed by Constance. Nor was this all; for her knowledge of mental arithmetic and rapidity in calculation enabled her to be of great assistance to her father in the arrangement of his private accounts; while her poetry and music, like the harp of David, served to chase from the minds of all the demon of despondency.

At the expiration of a year all Mr. Latimer's debts at home were fully paid, and he was left penniless. But his high-toned feelings would not allow him to rest satisfied until his name was rescued from disgrace abroad; and, borrowing a sum of money sufficient to secure the comfort of his family until his return, he embarked for England, resolving to visit every place where he had ever established an agency. This was the hardest of all his trials. He knew that several years must elapse before he could revisit his home; and when he looked upon his lovely daughter, now verging towards womanhood,

his courage almost failed him. He thought of her destitute situation in case he was never permitted to return, and the picture of her unequal conflict with a selfish world almost overpowered his imagination. But he believed he was fulfilling the dictates of conscience; and, silencing every regret, he bade adieu to all he held dear on earth.

How deeply Constance felt the loss of that devoted parent it is in vain to describe. It seemed as if the last glimmer that had cheered her darkened life was now extinguished. But she was not one to sit down content with fruitless repining, when it was possible to act as well as to suffer. A plan had been secretly maturing in her mind, which she now determined to put into practice, since the only obstacle to its accomplishment was removed by her father's absence. This was a scheme for procuring pupils to be instructed in music, and thus obviating the necessity of making use of the money which she knew her father, at the expense of his proudest feelings, had secured for the maintenance of his family. In vain did her mother oppose what

she, naturally enough, considered a hopeless attempt. Constance was not to be moved from what she believed to be her duty, and her mother was at last induced to write, by her dictation, to a gentleman connected with the Institution for the Blind, and whose extensive charities were well known.

"DEAR SIR,—Your well-established reputation as the friend of the afflicted induces me to address you on a subject of vital interest to one suffering under the severest of all privations. I am totally blind; and but for that noble institution of which you are a member, should have been utterly helpless. I am now well versed in all the knowledge which could be imparted to me. Music has been my especial study, and I may refer you to my instructors for assurances of my capacity to teach it, which my father's misfortunes have induced me to attempt as a means of support. I can teach, but I cannot seek out pupils; and if, amid the multitude of urgent claims upon your time, you can find a moment's leisure to bestow upon her who walks,

even at noonday, in the shadow of night, your kindness will not be unrewarded."

The letter also contained her address, and was signed by herself, her mother guiding her hand.

CHAPTER VI.

"Pensive grace
Was in every motion, and her look
Had something sacred in it, that declared
How pure the spirit in that form enshrined,
Like light that dwelleth in the diamond gem."—S. P. C.

THE apartment was brilliantly lighted up, and a smile of welcome sat upon the lips of his cheered family, as Mr. Wilson entered his home at the evening hour. The large arm chair was rolled to his favourite corner, and the children of all ages, from the fair girl of eighteen to the noisy boy of three years, clustered round their father as he took his accustomed seat. But an unusual shade of pensiveness was on his brow, and tears glistened in his eyes as he pressed the hand of his daughter, which rested fondly on his knee. "I have seen this evening," said he, in answer to their anxious inquiries, "a picture which has thrilled my very heart."

"Oh, tell us, father, tell us," echoed from the group.

"I received a letter yesterday," replied he, "from one whom I well recollect as having been one of the first pupils admitted into our institution for the instruction of the blind—I mean Constance Latimer."

"What, that beautiful little girl you once took me to see when she was taking her music lesson, and who, you told me, refused to wear the ornaments with which her mother had loaded her, because they excited the envy of the poorer pupils?"

"The same, Gertrude; she was then the heiress of an immense fortune, and her father one of the wealthiest as well as worthiest men in the community. He has since become bankrupt, and, after having sacrificed every thing to redeem his honour here, has left his family in poverty that he might fulfil his engagements in Europe. I determined to answer her letter in person, and glad am I that I did so. I was directed to a house in —— street; a healthy-looking little fellow, about six years of age, opened the

door for me, and conducted me into one of the smallest but neatest parlours I ever entered. The tables and mantel-piece were adorned with various kinds of fancy articles, such as are usually manufactured by the blind; and upon a stand in the corner lay a pile of those large volumes, printed in embossed letters, which constitute the Bible for the blind. By the fire sat a lady, pale and sickly in her appearance, but extremely graceful in her address, while near the window was a low seat occupied by the loveliest figure I ever beheld. Constance Latimer is about two years younger than yourself, Gertrude, and might serve a painter as a model for a personification of modesty. Her beauty is wonderful; I never saw any thing like it; the recollection seems to me almost dreamlike."

"You are quite enthusisatic father," said Gertrude, smiling.

"No wonder, my child," replied Mr. Wilson; "this lovely young creature is totally blind, and yet she applied to me to assist her in procuring pupils in music, that she might thus be enabled to support her mother and brother with-

out encroaching on the small sum which her father left with them, and which, she said, he had only obtained by incurring new obligations. The heroic virtue of a delicate girl, who thus forgot her own terrible privations in the wish to spare her father's feelings, almost overpowered me. I listened to her plans with wonder, and left her with a feeling of bewilderment, for the whole scene seemed rather like a phantasy of the imagination than a picture of real life."

"Oh, father, let her teach me music," said little Emily, as she clambered on his lap; "I will be very good, and not trouble the poor blind lady; do, dear father."

"Let me accompany you when next you visit her," said Gertrude.

"I met Mrs. Latimer in public," said Mrs. Wilson, "when she was the gayest and most brilliant woman in society; but years have passed since then; she has gone through much suffering; and if our slight acquaintance may now be renewed without an appearance of intru sion, I should be glad to proffer her the hand of friendship."

"I knew your hearts," returned Mr. Wilson, "and I was assured I need only tell my story to awaken as much enthusiasm in you as my little Gertrude accused me of feeling."

Two pupils were secured to Constance in this happy group, and the unremitting exertions of Mr. Wilson during the next three months increased their number to twenty, so that an income of fifteen hundred dollars was secured to the family by the labour of her who, at first, seemed the most helpless of its members. As she could not go abroad to give lessons, she was necessarily much confined to the house, and debarred from that exercise which had always been so essential to her health; but early in the morning she might frequently be seen, guided by the hand of her brother, along the pleasant walks of the Battery, or crossing to the heights of Brooklyn to listen to the melodies of nature. The family of Mr. Wilson did not relax in their interest for the noble-minded girl. An intimacy, such as probably never would have arisen in the days of her prosperity, now existed between Constance and the amiable Gertrude; and

many a quiet evening, after the fatigues of a day's labour in teaching, was spent by the blind girl in the cheerful parlour of her friend. It was on one of those evenings, during the early part of their acquaintance, that Constance sung the following song addressed to Gertrude:

Lady, they tell me thou art fair,
They say the rose blooms on thy cheek;
The rose's blush I have forgot,
Its breath alone to me can speak.

Lady, they say thine eye's soft blue
With heaven's own tint is flashing bright;
Alas! I have forgot that hue,
My ky is always clothed in night.

Lady, they tell me thou art good,
Thy heart in virtue's cause beats high;
I know this tale at least is true,
My ear assists my darkened eye.

Little I know of beauty's form,
The dimpled mouth, the snowy skin,
But I can learn from step and voice
If gentle be the heart within.

I know thou'rt one whom all may love,
Though thy fair brow I ne'er may see,
And can I doubt thou wilt allow
The blind girl's claim to sympathy.

But their intimacy had not lasted many

months, when Gertrude was compelled to claim the sympathy which Constance so plaintively desired for herself, for she was taken violently ill, and for many days her recovery was deemed hopeless. The heart of the blind girl had so few objects of affection, that it clung to each with a tenacity which made it almost death to sever its clasp. Nothing could exceed her passionate regret when she found that, though Gertrude's life was spared, a severe inflammation had fallen upon her eyes, which confined her to a darkened room, and threatened her with total loss of sight. "Oh! mother," exclaimed she, when first the tidings were communicated to her, "how will Gertrude bear that dreadful darkness? No one can imagine its horrors; though so young when I was stricken, yet to this hour I shudder when I remember the awful blackness which enveloped me—a blackness broken only by the white and stiffened form which imagination presented to me. Oh, mother, mother! I cannot bear to think of Gertrude's sufferings." Alas! none but the God who had smitten her knew the bitter feelings which Con-

stance had hidden in her heart of hearts. She had come out brighter from the furnace of affliction, but no one could tell how fierce had been the fire which had purified her of all earthly dross.

All her leisure hours were devoted to her sick friend ; all that sympathy or affection could devise for her amusement was tried ; and during the many days her eyes were bandaged, Gertrude learned much of the handicraft which has been appropriated to the occupation of the blind. She delighted to hear the blind girl sing ; and many a song did Constance frame for the amusement of the half-impatient invalid. During one of her visits she for the first time heard, in the course of conversation, that beautiful line from the Arabic, "*The remembrance of youth is a sigh.*" The sentiment was too poetical to escape her sensitive mind, and the ideas which it awakened were expressed in a language which had now become habitual.

Oh, yes, we may weep over moments departed,
And look on the past with a sorrowful eye,
For who, roving on, through the world weary-hearted,
But knows "the remembrance of youth is a sigh?"

Though earth still may wear all its verdure and flowers,
Though our pathway still bloom 'neath a bright summer sky,
Yet the serpent lies hid in life's sunniest bowers,
And still "the remembrance of youth is a sigh."

Then surely the heart whose best pleasures have vanished,
As spring birds depart when cold winter draws nigh,
The bosom whence hope's sweet illusions are banished,
Must feel "the remembrance of youth is a sigh."

Too early have faded *my* moments of gladness,
Ere the freshness and morning of life have gone by,
Too early *my* days have been shrouded in sadness,
And to me "the remembrance of youth is a sigh."

There was one who took a deeper interest in the blind girl during her attendance on Gertrude than he dared to avow. This was Mr. Wilson's eldest son, who had just returned from the tour of Europe. Young, talented, and enthusiastic, there was something peculiarly fascinating to his romantic nature in the history of the beautiful Constance. Seated unnoticed in a remote corner of the dimly-lighted apartment, he listened for many an hour to the sweet fancies and pure thoughts which filled the measure of her discourse with Gertrude. She seemed the very impersonation of his boyish dreams. Her beauty, her strength of mind, her poetical genius, her

graceful manners, nay, her very helplessness, were all powerful attractions to him. He gazed upon her delicate loveliness until it almost seemed to him that the fable of Pygmalion was realized. But, dangerous as this intercourse might be to him, it was to Constance perfectly harmless. The passions of our mortal nature seemed effaced from her breast, while only the gentler affections seemed left; and she welcomed Edward Wilson as a brother, without dreaming that there could be any stronger feeling.

A few weary months of darkness were all that Gertrude was destined to endure. The disease in her eyes abated, and once more she was permitted to behold the light of day. If anything could have disturbed the equanimity of Constance's contented temper, it would have been the exuberance of her friend's joy. Every moment she was exclaiming aloud at some new delight afforded her by her newly-recovered sense. But, whatever Constance felt, her well-disciplined mind taught her at once to repress all fruitless regret, and, in sympathy with her friend, to forget her own privations.

"My brother loves you, Constance," said Gertrude, a few weeks after her recovery, as she beheld his irrepressible agitation at hearing one of her songs. "Well, Gertrude, is that strange?" replied the pure-hearted girl; "do not you love me too? I think," added she, "that I regard your brother as I might have done Julian had he lived to man's estate."

"Nay, Constance, but it is not thus Edward loves you; he looks on you as one with whom he would share his future fortunes; he would make you his wife, Constance," said Gertrude.

"Never, Gertrude! never!" exclaimed she, vehemently; "do you forget that the glory of my life has departed, and that I must hereafter grope my way in hopeless darkness? No, he would not think of it; do not talk so wildly again, Gertrude; I have no such dreams, and I would not have the quiet current of my life disturbed by vain imaginations."

The next time Constance took her guitar at her friend's bidding, she sang the following song:—

Like the wind harp whose melody slumbers,
Unwakened by mortal hand,
Till the soft breeze called forth its sweet numbers,
Like tones from a seraph's land;
So my lips ever echo the feelings
Which nature alone may impart,
I know nought of passion's revealings,
Then wake not my slumbering heart.

Like a lake lying far on the mountain,
Where foot of man scales not its height,
Fed only by Heaven's pure fountain,
And only reflecting Heaven's light;
So my soul's quiet depths give back only
The feelings where childhood has part:
Bless'd with friendship, my life is not lonely.
Then wake not my slumbering heart.

The song was breathed into other ears than those of Gertrude. Edward had stolen to hear the lay, and it uttered a mandate which he dared not disobey. "No," said he inwardly, "the pure course of that life should never be disturbed by more earthly affections than those which awake in life's bright infancy. The daughter's and the sister's love; the friendship of a heart unacquainted with the wilder passions of humanity; such alone should be the habitants of that gentle bosom." With a degree of heroism totally unappreciable by colder hearts, he schooled

himself to look on Constance as a lovely sister, whose helplessness might naturally awaken a deeper interest than fraternal tenderness. If his heart sometimes beat thick, and his pulse quickened as he gazed upon her exceeding loveliness, he mastered his emotion and reaped his reward in the approval of his conscience.

CHAPTER VII.

"You bear a gentle mind, and heavenly blessings
Follow such creatures."—SHAKSPEARE.

THE Latimer family found many friends willing to aid in rescuing them from a life of toil and privation, but the noble heart of Constance spurned the thought of dependence. Her pupils increased in number, and she was happy in the certainty that, whatever might be her father's success, she should never more be a burden to him. Mr. Latimer had written regularly to his family, and occasionally sent small sums of money; but, unwilling to excite false hopes, he said nothing of his pecuniary affairs, and they, of course, concluded that he had nothing favourable to communicate. His stay was prolonged, month after month, until three years had elapsed, when he at length intimated his intention of returning. Great was their joy when the

time drew near to receive that beloved father. Everything that affection could suggest was prepared to welcome him; and, when he did return, though Constance could not see the renewed cheerfulness of his countenance, her first exclamation was, "Oh, father, you have won back your own glad voice!"

Mr. Latimer had devoted himself to the settlement of his affairs with a zeal and diligence that gained the good-will of all who had expected to suffer by his failure. Facilities of all kinds were afforded him, and, after the most unremitting toil, he succeeded in satisfying every claim. A small remnant of his once vast fortune still remained; and a successful speculation, which presented itself at the moment when he was preparing to embark for his native land, more than trebled its amount. "I am not rich," he replied to his wife's anxious inquiries, "but I have enough of this world's gear to raise us far above want; henceforth I shall devote myself entirely to my family, and relinquish all attempts at commerce." But what were his feelings when informed of the heroic

conduct of his darling Constance ! She had carefully concealed from him her success as a teacher, lest he should be made unhappy by the idea of the toil which she was enduring ; but now, when all privation was at an end, he learned from the lips of Mr. Wilson the whole story of her energy and heroism. He learned that to the patient, self-denying labour of his blind child, the child for the sake of whose suppose helplessness he most regretted his loss of fortune, his family had been indebted for every comfort, during three long years, while the money which, at the sacrifice of so much pride, he had borrowed for their subsistence, had been paid in less than six months after his departure. " And this creature," exclaimed he, in a transport of feeling, " this angelic creature I would-have consigned to the grave in my first moments of despair ; this is the child for the preservation of whose darkened life I dared to murmur against Providence."

Mr. Latimer's first wish was to possess himself once more of his beautiful cottage ; but the work of improvement was begun, and the home

of his happier days had already disappeared. He contented himself, therefore, with procuring a house beautifully situated on Long Island, where Constance could again be surrounded by the music and fragrance of nature. But none of his former magnificence was to be found in his new home. Of all his earlier luxuries, he only desired to regain his library. He soon gathered a fine collection of books about him; and if his eye sometimes missed the rich pictures and exquisite statues which had adorned a similarly-appropriated apartment in Latimer Cottage, he looked upon the glorious beauty of his daughter and sought no other loveliness.

Once more contentment smiled upon the long-tried family. Adversity had awakened the noble feelings which had slumbered in the hearts of all, and the voice of prosperity could not again lull them to sleep. To a mind filled with knowledge, and a heart pure as the dream of infancy, Constance now added a consciousness of mental power, a reliance on her own resources, and a piety which taught her that the shorn lamb, which had been sheltered from the pelt-

ing of the pitiless storm, would find the wind of future years tempered by the same benevolent hand. Her days are still gliding on so calmly, that she scarcely feels their current; and though the silver blossoms of the grave are strewn upon the temples of her parents, she still wears the garland of youth upon her sunny brow. The absence of all tumultuous passions has preserved the childlike purity of her countenance; and if ever perfect contentment dwelt in the breast of mortal, her home may be found in the heart of the blind Constance Latimer.

THE SON AND HEIR.

THE

SON AND HEIR.

"He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity."

My earliest recollections are those of poverty and sorrow. I saw my father wasting talents of the noblest order in a constant struggle for a bare subsistence; and my mother, a gentle and delicate creature, who might have been the ornament of palaces, daily condemned to the merest drudgery of existence. The circumstances which led to such distress it is needless to recount. The childhood of my parents had been passed amid the most gorgeous scenes of wealth and luxury; but the birth of their only son found them "steeped in poverty to the very lips." Is it any wonder then, that to my

infant mind, wealth should have seemed the greatest earthly good ?

Children that are brought up in the midst of affluence are like greenhouse plants ; they develop slowly, and require the constant care of the cultivator : but the children of the poor, reared amid privation and suffering, are like the hardy plants that find their nourishment in the crevices of the rock ; they evolve rapidly, and, perhaps, partake too much of the nature of the indurated soil that fed them. I soon learned to look upon the world around me with an eye of thought. He who is not too young to suffer is old enough to reflect, and many a bitter hour have I spent in contrasting the degradation of my own lot with the splendour of others. The poor who have minds suited to their stations —they who have been poor from their earliest generation—are comparatively happy ; their toil procures all that with them constitutes enjoyment ; but if there be an evil which exceeds all others in bitterness, it is poverty when it falls upon a refined and sensitive spirit.

My father died broken-hearted when I was

about twelve years of age. A neighbouring lawyer, who accidently became acquainted with our distress, took me into his house as a menial—yes—I do not hesitate to confess it. I was charitably allowed to brush his boots and make his fires, while my mother obtained a miserable pittance by doing coarse sewing for the shops. The two sons of my master were older than myself, but I was not long in discovering how infinitely inferior they were in intellect. My father had laboured diligently to cultivate my mind, and the facility with which I acquired knowledge was a solace to his pride, even while it added new stings to his poverty. I was, therefore, far more advanced in education than most boys of my age; and many a time, as I stood behind the chair of my young masters, obeying their capricious commands, have I been compelled to restrain the bitter sneer that rose to my lip at their palpable ignorance. My boyish vanity soon induced me to make some display of my rare acquirements; and the consequence was, that I was often compelled to sit up half the night preparing Latin exercises for which my masters

were to be applauded on the morrow. This was undoubtedly the worst thing that could have befallen me. Circumstances would otherwise have subdued my towering spirit, and reduced me to the level of my situation; but now a consciousness of my own superiority took entire possession of my mind. I felt that I was born for better things; and, while I cherished a boyish contempt for my youthful tyrants, I felt an innate certainty that the time would come when, from a superior station in society, I should look upon them as my inferiors in rank as well as intellect.

Such a state of things was, however, too unnatural to last long. A blow given by one of my young tormentors, and returned by the proud menial, led to a discovery of the peculiar services which were required of me. Mr. M., who was really a generous and liberal-minded man, after carefully ascertaining the extent of my acquirements, removed me from my servile station to the equally laborious, but more honourable situation of clerk in his office. I received no salary; but, when my master found that my services would enable him to dispense with one of his

hired assistants, he offered to give me instruction in his profession as an equivalent, and his offer was gladly accepted. Behold me, then, at the age of fifteen, copying deeds in a lawyer's office, wearing my master's cast-off clothes, pursuing my studies at moments stolen from sleep, yet cherishing as lofty dreams of ambition, as if I had been heir to the proudest name and largest fortune in the kingdom. My ambition was not for fame; proud as I was of my mental superiority, I never desired to be distinguished for learning and talent; wealth was all I asked. My situation brought me into continual contact with wealth and rank, and little did the titled clients of my master think that the poor clerk who wrote out their cases, often with a smile of contempt at their paltry subjects of litigation, concealed beneath his shabby exterior a spirit *destined*, because *determined*, to rise. "*Possunt quia posse videntur*" has ever been my motto. I believe that the mind of man, with its strangely complicated energies and lofty aspirations, is equal to any undertaking; and where the *will* is unfaltering, the power cannot be found wanting.

How vividly do I recollect all the occurrences of that period. Youth is generally a season of enjoyment; and, therefore, it is that, when we look back to it in later years, we can scarcely ever recall its details. We remember some events, perhaps, but how few are they in comparison with those we have forgotten! We recur to the season of youth with a feeling of vague and indistinct pleasure, for the footprints of joy leave too slight an impression upon the sandy desert of our hearts not to be easily effaced by the next whirlwind of emotion. But when our early life has been unhappy it is very different. When we grow up amid privation and suffering; when our souls are consumed by the fire of secret discontent even from our childhood; when we are daily compelled to endure the "proud one's contumely," and to have our best feelings trampled on by those who, born without hearts themselves, can never learn that others may be less fortunate; when such have been the events that have measured out our youth, we never forget them.

It happened one day that Mr. M. was un-

avoidably absent from the office, and several gentlemen were awaiting his return; so that in addition to the half dozen clerks usually found there, the apartment was occupied by a number of his clients. Among others I observed the Hon. George Fitzroy, and easily perceived from his manner that he was exceedingly impatient of the delay. I was at that moment busily engaged in finishing the papers which I knew he came to obtain. Wishing to spare him some unnecessary detention, I approached him, and in a low voice said, "We have almost finished your papers, sir, and if you will have the goodness to send in half an hour, they will be ready." Eying me with a look of ineffable scorn, and raising his voice so as to be heard by every person in the room, he exclaimed, "*We*, sir! *We!* pray who are *we?* My business is with Mr. M., not with a *hireling!*" Maddened with passion, my first impulse was to fell him to the earth, but my upraised arm was caught by a fellow-clerk. The violence of my emotion was too great even for my robust frame; the blood gushed in torrents from my mouth, and I fell senseless at the feet

of my insulter. I had broken one of the minor blood vessels, and for many weeks was unable to leave my room; but even there, in the solitude of a sick chamber, with death watching beside me, I vowed to be revenged. I never stretched out my hand to injure the scorner, yet my vow was gloriously fulfilled. Time, that slow but sure avenger, brought an opportunity that the utmost refinement of hatred could scarcely have anticipated. Fifteen years afterward, when I was presiding with almost unlimited authority over one of the richest provinces in British India, the Hon. G. Fitzroy, beggared by extravagance and an outcast from his family, was occupying the humble station of my *under secretary!* Yes, I saved him from starving, and, until the day of his death, the proud fool received the wages of servitude from the hands of the lawyer's hireling.

Such were the insults and mortifications that goaded me almost to madness, and would have crushed me into an untimely grave, had I not been supported by the hope that the hour of triumph would come. That hour *did* come.

I have lived to trample upon those who would have trodden me under foot; aye, and to be crushed too, even in the moment of success, by a blow as unexpected as it was inevitable.

I was twenty-one years of age when an office of considerable trust and profit under government was bestowed upon my master. One of his sons was at first employed as his secretary, but it was soon discovered that young M. could only be saved from an ignominious dismissal by substituting me in his place. The appointment was accordingly transferred to me, with a salary of three hundred pounds a-year. Could the newly-fledged butterfly, as he lifts himself upon his golden wings far above the earth on which he so lately crawled, be endowed with human feelings, methinks he would feel as I did then. For the first time I was independent; nay, more, I was rich—richer with that poor three hundred a-year than I have since been with an income of fifty thousand. Everything, even our own emotions, must be appreciated by comparison; and certainly the man who, for the first time in his life, receives the means of a comfortable li:e ihood,

as the fruit of his own industry, is happier than he will ever be again, though he should in after-life become the possessor of millions.

I was now enabled to rescue my mother from a life of toil; and never shall I forget the exquisite sensations which thrilled my heart when I brought her from the miserable lodgings where she had wasted the best years of her life to the plain but comfortable abode which we were now to occupy together. From my infancy I had been accustomed to consider wealth the source of happiness, and now the *one* favour which I had received from the hands of fortune, had been the means of procuring me the sweetest pleasure which the heart of man is capable of enjoying. Is it any wonder then, that I still determined to pursue the career of wealth? Everything served to keep alive the love of gold in my heart. My new situation threw me constantly in the way of that peculiar class of men whose every look is indicative of moneyed importance; whose very complexion seems saturated with gold dust; I mean the East India merchants. I soon learned that the shortest

My new situation threw me constantly in the way of that peculiar class of men whose every look is indicative of monied importance; whose very complexion seems saturated with gold dust; I mean the East India merchants.—Page 88.

possible road to wealth was to be found in India, and there I determined to seek it.

All my leisure time was now devoted to the study of the various Indian dialects. An old merchant, who had resided many years in the country, offered to assist me, and, no doubt, was as much gratified to find a ready listener to his marvellous tales, as I was to obtain a capable guide in the new path which seemed opening before me. He was a man of very singular character. Possessing a mind of wonderful energy, he would have distinguished himself in any profession to which he had applied himself; but he had been early devoted to a business life, and repugnant as it was to his elegant taste, he soon learned to adapt himself to circumstances, and forgot that he had ever had a wish beyond his counting-room. It happened with him, as it doubtless does with many others: compelled to sacrifice his first hopes, he devoted all his energies to the work that he was called to perform; and as a man of ardent temperament can never be *médiocre* in anything, he soon became as eager in the pursuit of wealth

as he might otherwise have been in the acquisition of fame. He was now an old man, and money was everything to him. To pile guinea upon guinea was his only pleasure; and no sooner did he learn the similarity of my feelings, than I became his chief favourite.

His house had however another attraction for me. His only surviving relative was an orphan niece, whom, since his return from India, he had taken home as his adopted daughter. Young, beautiful, and artless as a child, Emily Halford appeared to me like a creature of another sphere. It is true I had scarcely looked upon a woman when I beheld her; but even now, after the lapse of so many years, when so many visions of youth, and beauty, and mental loveliness, are bright in my recollection, there is still no form like hers. Mr. Halford early perceived my attachment. "You love my niece," said he; "I am not surprised; she is a charming girl, and I would rather bestow her on a man like yourself, who, born poor, possess the capacity of making a fortune, than on the heir of a princely estate, if the follies and extrava-

gances of modern education were a part of the inheritance. The husband of my niece will be the heir of my fortune, but not until he shall have merited it; my gold is the fruit of industry, and it shall never go to enrich the idle." Alive only to the consciousness that I was permitted to win the affections of Emily, I was utterly regardless of the old man's last words. Alas! I remembered them bitterly enough soon after.

I should have loved Emily if she had been friendless and destitute. There was a graceful and womanly tenderness in her manner, which to me was irresistible. Sordidness and selfishness have ever characterized my dealings with men, but never have I forgotten my almost chivalrous veneration for the pure and noble nature of woman. After a brief interval we were married; and as it had been arranged that Emily should still reside with her uncle, a very material change immediately took place in my mode of life. Had I hoped to derive any pecuniary advantages, however, I should have been much disappointed; a set of pearl ornaments

was Mr. Halford's only marriage gift. I was now, apparently, on the very pinnacle of good fortune. Living, if not in the midst of the refinements of rank, at least surrounded by all the magnificence of opulence, who would ever have recognised in the happy husband of the beautiful heiress, the ragged and squalid serving boy? Emily was devotedly attached to me, and there was something inexpressibly delightful in the consciousness that, among the cold and selfish beings who made up my world, one heart was found to love me with a deep and disinterested affection.

Our happiness was first interrupted about a year after our marriage by the illness of my sweet wife. The sudden death of our infant boy, who lived just long enough to awaken a mother's tenderness in her bosom, seriously affected her health, and she was just recovering from a long fit of sickness, when we were called to mourn the death of her eccentric but kind old uncle. He had been talking cheerfully with us all the evening, smoked several pipes of his rose-scented Turkish tobacco, drank

his usual quantity of old Madeira, and the next morning he was found lying cold and stiff in bed, apparently in the very posture in which he had composed himself to sleep. We mourned for him with a genuine sorrow; for, singular as were his habits, no man possessed a kinder heart; and, if that heart had been contracted by trafficking with his fellow-men, and his naturally fine intellect subjected to the iron bondage of selfish avarice, it was the fault of those who chained to the galley of commerce a spirit that might else have aspired to the loftiest realms of undiscovered truth.

But the worst of our misfortunes was yet to come. Mr. Halford had frequently thrown out hints of his intention to procure for me a situation in India; and, although I expected, of course, to benefit by his wealth in future, I was still desirous to push my own fortunes. It was, doubtless, a fear lest the possession of immediate wealth should induce me to relax in my habits of industry that induced him to make so singular a will. Upon examining his papers, three several copies of his will were found in

different, but equally secure places, as if he were resolved to guard against all contingencies. After a few trifling legacies to old domestics, he bequeathed the whole of his fortune to me, but with this singular proviso—the whole of the property, including landed estate, stocks, furniture, plate, &c., was given in trust to his executors, to be paid into my hands as soon as I should give satisfactory proof that I was worth fifty thousand pounds, acquired by my own exertions. In case of my death before the requisite sum was obtained, a certain portion was allotted to my wife, and the remainder appropriated to the endowment of several charitable institutions. Thus I found myself the heir to a magnificent fortune, but, at the same time, with no other means of providing for my family than the salary which I received from my secretaryship. Irritated as I was by this absurd bequest, my anger knew no bounds when I found that even the house we occupied, with its furniture and plate, was to be sold, and the proceeds added to that already overgrown fortune, which was not to be

mine until I should be able to do without it. I was compelled to remove to my former abode, still occupied by my mother ; but I entered it as if it had been a prison. The fetters which luxury weaves around us are like the bonds with which the Lilliputians confined the sleeping Gulliver ; separately, each might be broken by the turning of a finger ; it is the vast number of invisible chains fastened upon us by the factitious indulgences of wealth that renders us powerless beneath them. Little more than two years before, I had tasted in these humble apartments the first sweet draught from fortune's cup ; and now, when her overflowing chalice seemed offered to my lips, only to be withdrawn ere I could quaff one drop, my impatient spirit was almost maddened by the disappointment. My poor Emily used every effort to reconcile me to my situation. Though her life had been passed amid all the comforts of affluence, and mine amid all the evils of poverty, yet she cheerfully relinquished the luxurious habits which to her were a second nature, while I could not reconcile myself

to their loss, though I had scarcely yet learned to enjoy them. Unwilling to pain her gentle nature, I endeavoured to appear contented; but only those who can fully enter into my passionate desire for wealth, could understand with what loathing I looked upon my present mean condition. From the time I left Mr. Halford's house I never enjoyed a single repast. The rich damask, the massive silver dinner-service, the splendid china, which alone had cost more than the whole of my present income—all had vanished from my table, and I was weak enough to feel their loss as severely as if they had been as essential as the food to which they were the accompaniments.

I was soon to be punished for my folly. The death of Mr. M., my first patron, deprived me of my only dependance—the salary which I received as his secretary. Judge, then, of my situation. I had taken up all the arrears of my salary in order to furnish anew my humble habitation for the reception of my wife, and I now found myself absolutely penniless. Even now my blood boils at the recollection of

that period. In vain I sought for employment; the very eagerness with which I desired it seemed to prejudice those who might otherwise have engaged my services; for, in nine cases out of ten, the wealthy consider poverty so great a temptation to dishonesty, that they can seldom bring themselves to confide in the integrity of a poor man. The conditions of Mr. Halford's will were also prejudicial to my character, for the mass of mankind are always ready to attribute the worst motives and causes to that which seems incomprehensible. Day after day my affairs became more desperate, until, at length, it was only by the sale of our useless furniture and my wife's ornaments that we were preserved from starvation. I knew that Mr. Halford had applied for a situation for me in the service of the East India Company, but no answer had been returned to his application; and, rendered half mad by the rapid diminution of our little stock of money, I resolved to apply to one of the executors of Mr. Halford's estate. He was a stern, hard-featured man, who had begun life as a cabin-boy on board a

man-of-war ; and, having weathered many a stiff gale, he had no idea of any distress beyond that which the animal frame might suffer. He listened with the utmost coolness to my impassioned appeal, and calmly replied, that, as the estate had been given to him in trust, he was not at liberty to dispose of it "But my wife —my mother, are starving!" I exclaimed ; "give me only a hundred pounds for present necessities."

"Impossible, young man," was his reply ; "your chances of obtaining the estate are very trifling, and it is my duty to fulfil the wishes of the testator. An industrious man never need have a starving family ; there are plenty of employments for those who choose to seek them. I cannot dispose of the funds of my late friend ; but, as you are in distress, here is a sum which will relieve you for the present. You need not consider it a loan ; you will probably never be able to repay it." So saying, he handed me a bank bill for five pounds. I need not say how indignantly I spurned his insulting charity, and, dashing the bill in his face, hurried from the house.

Cursing, in a paroxysm of rage, the fool who had given me a fortune in expectancy, only to render more bitter my present misery, I hastened home. What a scene there presented itself! My landlord had been, during my absence, to demand his rent; his harsh and unfeeling violence terrified my helpless family, and I entered the house only to look upon the dead body of my second infant, and to behold my wife in strong convulsions. The fearful strength of my agony produced the same effect that excessive rage had done in earlier life, and again a ruptured blood-vessel stretched me upon a bed of sickness. Many weary weeks passed before I was again conscious of surrounding objects. The agitation of my feelings brought on a fever, which spent its strength upon my brain, and, during the paroxysms of my delirium, I was continually raving about my dying Emily. How great was my delight when the first object on which my eye rested, with a glance of recognition, was my wife—pale, indeed, and languid, but evidently restored to health.

When she believed my strength equal to the agitation which she knew the tidings would occasion, she gave into my hands a letter received some weeks before. It contained my appointment to a clerkship in India. How gladly it was accepted I need not say; but, as some time had elapsed since its date, I was compelled to arouse all my energies to prepare for my immediate departure. By pledging my anticipated salary, I raised money enough to pay off my debts; and, having settled my mother in a comfortable abode, Emily and myself bade adieu to England.

Again were all my expectations awakened India, that El Dorado of my imagination, was before me, and my present elevation of spirit was more than equal to my recent despair. Who can wonder at my thirst for gold? From my childhood want had been my constant companion. I had seen all that I held most dear—father, mother, wife,—suffering from poverty; and now, as if it were decreed that the demon of avarice should take full possession of me, a princely fortune was held out as the reward of

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my old age, solely upon the condition that I devoted the best years of my life to the acquisition of wealth. I had prayed for riches; aye, prayed with that bitterness of spirit which turns the language of supplication into blasphemy. My prayer was answered:—

> "Evertere domos totas optantibus ipsis
> Di faciles."

The fatigues of a sea voyage were extremely harassing to my poor Emily, already enfeebled by sickness and anxiety; but to me, every day added new vigour, because every setting sun found me nearer to the goal of all my hopes. Upon my arrival in India, I found my situation a very subordinate one, but I cheerfully entered upon its duties, feeling assured that the advantages of an intimate knowledge of many Indian dialects, and a thorough acquaintance with English law, would soon render me of essential service to my superiors in office. I was not disappointed. A question relative to some obscure point of law, and which involved considerable property, became the subject of discussion in the office where I was employed.

The opinion which I ventured to give differed very materially from that of several lawyers then present; but an appeal to the highest authority decided the question in my favour. From that time my reputation was established, and I was allowed to do the duties of my office by deputy, while my time was devoted to the more important and far more lucrative duties of a special pleader.

To crown my desires, I had not been long in India when I became the father of a living son. I cannot describe the sensations that overwhelmed me when I gazed on the delicate features of my infant boy. What a picture did my imagination portray of his future life! "He shall never dream," thought I, "of poverty; his life shall be like a fairy tale; all the luxuries of wealth shall surround him from his cradle; and if I am compelled to wear soul out in toil, my boy shall inherit a fortune which even the princes of his native land might envy." I seemed now to have a new motive for exertion. The sum which Mr. Halford's will required me to obtain seemed trifling compared with the magnificent

desires that had now arisen in my heart, and I resolved to make a fortune equal to that which had been bequeathed to me, and then bestow both on my son.

But the joy of a father could not render me insensible to the anxiety of a husband; and the pallid cheek of my beloved wife soon gave occasion to my most earnest fears for her safety. Day after day her step became more languid, her form more attenuated, and I soon became fatally convinced that she was withering beneath the baneful influence of the climate. In vain I implored her to return to her native land; gentle and yielding in every thing else, she was resolute in her determination to remain with me. "It is useless," was her reply; "before we left England the germ of death was planted in my bosom; my return could only prolong my life a few short months, and so brief a respite would be too dearly purchased by a separation from you. If I could regain my health and strength, if my native air could enable me to live long enough to watch over the infancy of our sweet boy, I would go; but it may not be; my days

are numbered: let me, then, enjoy the few that are left me; let me still share your tenderness, and look upon your face until my eyes shall close for ever." The most stony heart would ache for me if I could adequately describe the state of my feelings during the few short weeks that she remained with me. I have suffered the most violent paroxysms of grief, I have been crushed beneath the weight of accumulated afflictions; but never, save that once, have I known the awful stagnation of feeling with which man looks upon the dying features of her whom he has loved with the most idolatrous affection. It was a sort of catalepsy of the heart; life was there, but the *active principle* of life seemed extinct for ever. In less than six months from the birth of my boy he was motherless, and I, desolate!

I have often wondered at the singular, and, as it almost seems, unlimited faculty of endurance which belongs to the complicated nature of man. Evils, which, when seen at a distance, seem capable of crushing him to the earth, when they actually fall upon him scarcely turn him

from his path. He bends beneath the storm, and then rises up and pursues his way as if unscathed. But, alas! who has not learned the poet's bitter truth?

"The heart may break, yet brokenly live on."

The tempest bursts upon our heads; the whirlwind of passionate emotion sweeps away all those vague dreams which, in lesser afflictions, had been our solace; our hearts are buried in the ruins of hope's stately fabric, and, for a time, we believe ourselves the victims of utter despair. But days pass on; time familiarizes us with grief; it becomes our daily companion, and we learn to bear its unwelcome society with patience. The smile revisits the lip, the eye again looks forward into the future; hope rears once more her fairy structure in our hearts, and, to common eyes, all is again "fair seeming." Like the ivied ruin, the desolation of our hearts is hidden by the new pleasures which are daily budding in the sunlight of the world; and even while we sicken at the ruin of departed joy, we yield ourselves up to the delusion of coming happiness. But never can our spirit's thirst be thus quenched. Still must we

struggle, still toil on in search of the well-spring in the desert, and we shall find it only in that hour when the desires of our mortal nature are merged in the newly-awakened powers of immortality.

Soon after the death of Emily, my anxious fears led me to imagine that my son, too, was drooping beneath the sultry sky of India, and I determined to send him to England, there to be nurtured under the watchful eye of my mother. His nurse, the widow of a British soldier, gladly consented to return to her native land, and with a heavy heart I intrusted him to the faithful creature, promising an extravagant reward if she gave him safe into the hands of my mother. I knew no rest, day or night, until I heard of his arrival. My mother wrote that his health was very precarious; but, once assured that he was in England, I would not allow myself to doubt of his future welfare.

Hitherto, my life has been characterized by sorrow, but never by guilt. My father had imparted to me his own strict integrity; and, with him, it was not enough to act towards his

neighbour only as the law prescribed ; there was a tribunal in his own bosom that taught him to abide by the dictates of equity and justice. In the midst of the most abject poverty, I had learned the noblest lessons of high-toned honour. In my day of want and humiliation I never forgot them ; in my hour of prosperity they vanished from my remembrance. My integrity was built upon the sand of *worldly* honour, and not upon the rock of Christian morality ; what marvel, then, that it could not withstand the secret sapping of the *besetting sin ?* The incidents of my life in India are such as I could not relate without a feeling of degradation, such as I would not willingly endure. Let me not be misunderstood. I never have committed an action which, at a human tribunal, could condemn me. If we should judge of wrong according to the interpretation of the law, then I have never wronged my neighbour ; but, alas ! my conscience bears fearful testimony against me. It is a trite remark, that the criminal who dies in the hands of the hangman is often less guilty, if judged

by the laws of equity, than many of the jury who condemned him. The poor wretch steals to save himself from famishing; the miser cheats to add to his daily increasing hoard. The former breaks the laws of the land, and is punished; the latter *only* violates the law of equity, and is safe. Let a man have sufficient cunning to overreach his neighbour without overstepping the boundaries of legal right, and he will, in all probability, be honoured for the very price of his guilt. Such is the state of society: we ask not whence the wealth was derived—it is enough that the jewelled hand presses ours in cordial kindness—our vanity is flattered, and conscience slumbers on her post.

My desire for gold became an absolute passion. My fondness for ostentation would not allow me to live parsimoniously; but he who does not scruple to avail himself of every means cannot fail to become rich in India; and, although my establishment abounded in all those expensive luxuries so essential in a voluptuous climate, the stream of wealth was for me rapid and abundant. My salary was

moderate, but my perquisites (for such I considered the exactions which my knowledge of their dialects enabled me to wring out of the rich natives,) were enormous, and to these were added the great profits of my law business. Skilled in all the thousand subtleties of the law, I was celebrated for the adroitness with which I could make "the worse appear the better cause;" and it may be supposed, that in a country proverbial for its habits of litigation, I was never without employment. He who had an unjust cause to support could generally afford to pay the largest fee, and I was therefore the champion of injustice from the time I first commenced my career as a pleader until, laden with wealth and wearied with subtleties, I renounced the bar for ever.

I heard frequently from England, and though my mother's letters were always desponding, yet I attributed this to her habitual melancholy, especially as she never designated any particular with which my son suffered. The world would think me a madman if I were to relate my wild and extravagant dreams respect-

ing that idolized though almost unknown boy. Determined that he should be surrounded from infancy by all the superfluities of wealth, I had given orders to my banker in London to purchase for me a splendid country residence as soon as opportunity offered. He soon informed me that he had procured one of those fine old baronial castles which are the glory of the English villages. It had been fitted up in a style of great magnificence, and the peculiar fancy of the proprietor had led him to furnish it in the antique taste; but his debts having exiled him to France, he gladly disposed of it for little more than half its cost. I immediately wrote to my mother to take possession of her new abode, and to provide a household suited to its splendour. Such was my foolish vanity. I wished that my son should be reared not only in wealth, but in the midst of what might seem hereditary magnificence. In this happy republic, where I have spent the last few years of my miserable life, such a feeling could scarcely be understood. Here, the man who had been the architect of his own fortunes is

entitled to as much consideration as if his genealogical tree had been the growth of centuries; but in England it is very different. There the *parvenu* is a sort of pariah. Fortunately for my pride, I belonged to an ancient, though not a noble family, and I wished that my son should never learn the abyss of want and woe which had yawned between its past respectability and its present opulence.

Years passed away. I continued to accumulate wealth with almost unexampled rapidity; there was not the slightest interruption in the current of my prosperity; and the only source of anxiety now was the health of my son. Yet I was far from being happy. Harassed by avarice, that most tormenting of passions, I knew no enjoyment save the accumulation of wealth. At first my heart rebelled against the tyranny with which I subjected all its affections to that one passion. The charms of female society were almost irresistible. I felt, though the loss of my Emily was irreparable, I might yet find some shadow of happiness with a gentle and affectionate companion; but the

idea was suppressed ere it scarce suggested itself. Never, thought I, shall another child call me father, or claim from me a portion of the heritage destined for the son of my Emily. Such was the strange, the almost phrenzied folly with which I devoted myself to the attainment of the one object—the accumulation of wealth for the son whom I had scarcely seen, and whose weak health, I was assured, rendered his life very precarious. In fact, my mother's letters became more and more unsatisfactory. She sometimes spoke of his improved health, but there was a tone of despondency pervading all her letters for which I could not account. My questions respecting his education were either evaded or answered in such a vague manner that I received no information. I determined, therefore, to wind up my concerns and return to England ; but, notwithstanding my desire to see my boy, that rapacity which perpetually urged me to add a little more to my hoard delayed my departure until nearly fifteen years had elapsed since I consigned him to another's care. At length I

tore myself from my favourite pursuit, and followed by the curses, "not loud, but deep," of all with whom I had had dealings, I left India. My wealth trebled the sum for which I had originally toiled, and my heart yearned with unutterable tenderness towards the object for whom I had so fondly laboured.

After a tedious voyage I was once more in sight of my native land. I would not apprize my mother of my arrival, because I wished to appear unexpectedly before her, and thus to assure myself, if possible, that she had conformed to my wishes regarding my child. How exulting were my feelings as I once more trod my native soil. I had left it a beggar; I returned with a fortune that might support regal magnificence; but, alas! a moment's reflection taught me that I had been rich in the treasures of the affections when I last looked upon its shore, and that now I was all but beggared in heart. My first care was to demand my fortune from Mr. Halford's executor. How the creature stared when I showed him the testimonials of my overgrown wealth. He was mean enough to

attempt an apology for his former conduct, but with cool contempt I directed him to place his papers in the hands of my agent, and to communicate with me, if necessary, through him.

Stopping only a few hours in London, I bent my course with all possible speed to the village of S——, the residence of my mother and son. With what unutterable fondness did I yearn to look upon the object of my long-suppressed affection. He was now sixteen, and I pictured to myself the graceful stateliness of figure, the open brow, the frank manliness of demeanour which characterize a well-educated boy of that age. By the time I arrived at S——, imagination had portrayed his lineaments so minutely, that I felt assured I should know him at a single glance; and every passing equipage, every distant wayfarer was examined with anxious curiosity, lest I should accidentally pass my son unrecognised. It was a bright and balmy afternoon in June when I reached the little village. Leaving my carriage and servants at the inn, I walked alone towards the stately building whose antique turrets had greeted my eyes at some

miles' distance. As I entered the extensive park I paused to look upon the lovely scene. The mellow light of the declining sun gave redoubled richness to the soft greensward, and flung the shadows of the ancient oaks in lengthened lines across the lawn. Peacocks, with plumage glittering like the jewelled turban of an Eastern rajah, were stalking majestically beneath the branches; and from afar came the cawing of a rookery, a sound dearer to an Englishman than all the music of Italy, because always connected with ideas of family antiquity. My heart beat quick when I reflected that all these evidences of an ancient and princely heritage had surrounded the childhood of my son—the son of the serving boy—of the lawyer's hireling! Yes, I felt prouder at that moment of having been the founder of my own fortunes, than if I had actually inherited that noble castle with all its appanages. Like Napoleon, when he proudly answered the vain attempt of the Austrian emperor to prove him descended from an ancient line of princes—"No, I have no claim to hereditary distinction; I am the Rodolph of my race."

As I approached the house I heard a soft low voice singing what appeared to be fragments of a legendary ballad. The sound proceeded from a small pavilion, wreathed with ivy and honeysuckle, which stood in a little thicket on one side of the lawn. Advancing towards it I caught a glimpse of a face of almost infantile beauty; but my approach had been discovered, for the singer, uttering a faint cry, darted through an opening on the opposite side and disappeared. A quantity of flowers, a flageolet, and a half-finished wreath lay on the ground. Who could it be? Probably some young friend whom my mother had taken as a companion; and immediately a thousand ideas of childish partialities and foolish attachments alarmed my sensitive pride. A splendid alliance for my son, a connection of the highest attainable rank, had long been my favourite day-dream; secretly fretting at the folly of exposing him at so immature an age to female influence, I walked towards the house. Sending a servant to request my mother's presence, but without announcing my name, I seated myself in a beautiful apartment, which

opened into a conservatory filled with the choicest flowers. In a few minutes she entered. Time had made sad ravages in her once beautiful person; and yet, while contemplating the change in *her*, I was foolish enough to be surprised and pained when I found that she did not recognize me. When I left her she had just begun to tread the down-hill path of life; she had now apparently travelled to the very verge of the grave; was it surprising, then, that her dimmed eye should have failed to recognize the son who had left her in the vigour of early manhood, and who now returned with the furrowed brow of premature age? I had believed that habitual melancholy had so blunted her sensibilities, that I might safely venture to appear before her without preparation; I was greatly astonished, therefore, at her excessive emotion when I made myself known to her.

"My son—my son!" exclaimed I, before she found words to address me; where is my boy? is he well?"

"Well," she faltered, "but—"

"But what?—speak! has any thing befallen him?"

Looking into my face with an expression I never shall forget, she uttered a few broken words, but suddenly paused. The casement near which she stood was darkened for an instant, and a slender childlike figure sprang through. It was the person I had seen in the pavilion; the face was that of my lost Emily. I gazed more intently; powers of Heaven! it was the face of a beautiful idiot! The truth burst upon me like a thunderbolt; my boy—the heir to all the fruit of my protracted toil—was an idiot!

For the third time I was visited by that dreadful prostration of all my powers which twice before brought me to the brink of the grave. My brain reeled—my eyes swam—all the blood in my body seemed rushing with torrent-like fury to my head, and bursting with irrepressible violence from every possible vent. The next moment I lay senseless at the feet of my ill-judging mother and my unhappy son.

For many weeks I was confined to a bed of sickness. A sort of stupor fell upon me. I was conscious of what was passing around me, but I had not the power of making known my

conciousness ; and my eyes, too, were totally darkened, so that I could not distinguish between day and night. My mother nursed me with the tenderest care, and there was often a light step around my bed, and a hand of feminine softness upon my brow, which I knew must be the step and hand of my son. Words cannot describe the sensations that thrilled me when I felt him near me. The love which I had so long hoarded up in my heart—the horror which I felt at finding that treasured love had been lavished upon an idiot ; the sudden and awful overthrow of all my ambitious hopes —the sickening recollection of my ill-gotten and now useless wealth—all united to awaken emotions which made my very soul quiver beneath his gentle touch. At times I heard his sweet voice warbling, in some distant corner of my apartment, snatches of old ballads or wild melodies, for which he framed words as he sung ; words wild and incoherent, but full of gentle and tender feeling. Had he been a stranger, my soul would have yearned towards the helpless and interesting boy ; but the destruction

of my own proud hopes was too present with me, and my heart grew faint as I listened to his flutelike tones.

At length I was once more enabled to leave my couch, but my eyes were still darkened; the violence of my disease had spent its strength upon my sight, and it was a matter of doubt with my physicians whether I ever should recover that inestimable gift. I was, however, able to leave my room, and, led by my mother or some attendant, began to take short walks about the lawn. I soon found that my boy's light step was generally beside me. His naturally tender disposition enabled him readily to learn the lesson of affection which my mother taught him during my illness; and, as he gradually overcame his timidity, I often felt his soft hand in mine as he gently urged me towards some favourite retreat. Strange as it may seem, it was with the utmost difficulty I could endure his presence. A vague horror thrilled my frame whenever he approached me, and it required all my self-command to conceal it. It was long before I could summon reso-

lution to inquire why this dreadful affliction had not been made known to me. The child's health was such during infancy as to preclude any hope of long life. Several years, of course, elapsed before they could accurately ascertain his unhappy situation ; and when, at last, suspicion became certainty, the belief that the delicacy of his constitution had assuredly destined him to early death prevented my mother from afflicting me with the tidings of his mental imbecility. She at first trusted that the death which continually menaced him might spare me the pain of learning his distressing situation ; and when, at last, she found that his improved health rendered it necessary that I should be made acquainted with the truth, she shrunk from the painful task and deferred it from day to day, as if the blow would be lighter from being so long suspended. I did not blame her ! the mischief could not now be repaired. What might have been my situation had I known the truth, it was vain now to imagine. Now all was lost ; the infirmities of premature age were upon me ; I was a wretched

worn-out man ; the widowed father of an idiot boy ; the heirless possessor of incalculable wealth.

Slowly my sight returned to me ; and then did I learn to love my helpless son. His face was the face of his sweet mother ; the liquid blue eye, the rosy lip, the transparent complexion—all were hers, even to the delicately moulded hand and foot. Such a face in a picture would have seemed the portrait of a beautiful female. The prevailing expression was pensiveness ; and it was only in moments of glee, when chasing the butterfly, or snatching the honey-bee, that his vacant look of imbecile mirth transformed his beautiful countenance into that of a gibbering idiot. Had he died then, methinks my punishment would have been sufficiently severe ; but an all-wise Providence had decreed that he should be the innocent instrument of torture to my guilty spirit. Think what must have been the anguish with which I looked on him, surrounded with all those luxuries with which my vanity had encompassed him. To see him wandering,

with vacant look, through the painted halls and marble staircases, or seated at a table loaded with rich plate and costly dainties, but, with infantile helplessness, receiving every mouthful from the hands of an attendant. No one can imagine the passionate pleasure which I once felt in thus lavishing upon him all the superfluities of wealth, and no one can form an idea, therefore, how all these trifling circumstances added to the bitterness of my punishment.

Yet he was one of the purest and gentlest creatures that ever dwelt on this dark earth. Guileless as at the hour of his birth, he seemed to have inherited, with his mother's beauty, all her meekness and tenderness. Many a time have I looked upon him, as he was walking beside me, with downcast eye and pensive brow, and almost deemed it impossible that so rich a casket should be destitute of the precious gem of intellect. Many a time has a faint hope dawned in my heart that it might not be irrecoverably lost, when a sudden bound after a passing butterfly, or a leap into the thicket after a flower, would chase all expression from

his countenance, and he would return with the blank smile or meaningless gravity of hopeless idiocy.

He lived long enough to knit my heart to him with a tender and strange affection; and then, as the finishing stroke of punishment, he fell beneath the long-suspended dart of death.

About a fortnight before his decease he accidentally discovered the miniature of his mother, which I always wore about my neck; uttering a wild cry of joy, he snapped asunder the riband to which it was suspended, and, tying it to his own neck, refused to relinquish it. When I endeavoured to ascertain his meaning, I learned from his wild rhapsodies that, night after night, such a form visited his dreams. "She comes to me," said he, "and kisses me, and points to the stars; and, when she leaves me, she beckons me to go with her—and oh! I do so long to go." This little incident deeply affected me. I allowed him to keep the picture, and hour after hour he would sit gazing on his treasure.

He died even as a rose falls from its stem. No sickness, no fevered pulse, no glazing eye,

gave token of his approaching dissolution. We were seated one evening in the large window which looked out upon the lawn, when suddenly I recollected that it was his birthday. Just seventeen years before I had been transported with delight by the tidings that I was a father. My emotions overpowered me, and, covering my face with my hands, I gave free vent to my tears. I felt his arm upon my neck and his soft lip upon my forehead, but still I stirred not. At length he stretched himself at my feet, and laid his head on my knee, as he was wont to do when overpowered with slumber. I removed my hands from my face, and looked on him; his cheek was paler than usual, but his eyes were closed in such deep repose that I scarcely breathed lest I should disturb him. Suddenly he raised his hand, and without opening his eyes, pointed to the star which was just rising in the heavens. "She is there," murmured he. With a strange feeling of mingled awe and tenderness I gazed intently upon his face; such a change came over it as only one fearful hand can make—my idiot boy was dead!

THE VILLAGE TRAGEDY.

THE

VILLAGE TRAGEDY.

"Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in *all things*."—1 Cor. ix. 25.

CHAPTER I.

"There is no vice so simple but assumes
Some mark of virtue on its outward parts."
Merchant of Venice.

In our rapidly growing country a village seldom retains its identity long. House after house springs up, as if built by the genius of Aladdin's lamp; soon the white spire of a church is seen peeping from among the trees; anon a broad square building, dignified by the title of court-house, displays its clumsy front in the main

avenue—I beg pardon—street, I should say; and in less than ten years from the time the first dwelling w .s erected, the village is merged in a large and flourishing town, modern in everything except its ludicrously classical name. Such has been the case with the little village of D'Autremont, which, but a few years since, was to be found in the northern part of the State of New-York. D'Autremont had received its name in honour of a rich French emigrant who formerly owned the tract of land on which the village was built; but, if he could have arisen from his quiet bed in the little churchyard, he would have been as much puzzled to recognize his patronymic in the designation of Otter-mount, into which it had been corrupted, as would old Montaigne to discover *his* in the name of Montoyne, so common on Long Island.

In one of the most beautiful situations of the village, on the summit of a hill which commanded a view of the whole adjacent country, and at whose foot ran a clear and rapid stream, stood a large stone house, evidently the abode of rustic opulence. The kitchen, with its pro-

jecting oven on the side, was at some distance from the house, but connected by an open piazza, which, in winter, might be converted into a covered passage; and the immense barns, cornricks, and stables which stood in the clover-field, all bore testimony to the wealth of the master. James Churchill was, in fact, the richest farmer in that part of the country. His father had been a painstaking, penurious man, and the son had faithfully trodden in his steps. Honest and upright in all his dealings with his fellow-men, he was yet so rigid and exacting, that he was as much feared for his inflexibility as respected for his integrity. Every man knew that so long as he fulfilled his engagements, he was safe in the hands of Churchill; but if sickness or blighted crops compelled him to defer his payments, he was well assured that Churchill would have "judgment, and not mercy." All feared him, therefore; and if, as it sometimes happened, a farmer required a temporary loan, he resorted to almost any expedient rather than that of assuming an obligation to James Churchill. When Walter

Howland mortgaged his large farm, therefore, every one was amazed ; and while they severely censured the old man, they warmly sympathized with the son, the young Walter, who thus found himself burdened with a heavy debt at his first outset in life.

In a village where there are so few subjects of interest, everything is discussed, and everybody's affairs examined with a degree of earnestness almost unknown in a great city. There is always something approaching to a unity of interests and feelings in a small community. Every man has somewhat of a brotherly regard towards his neighbour, and the love of gossip, which in the city degenerates into scandal, in the country seems merely a deep interest in the welfare of each individual. It was soon rumoured that the demon of strong drink had taken possession of Mr. Howland, and that to this fatal propensity he owed the embarrassment which had compelled him to mortgage his property. Every one pitied his son, especially when, at length, the old man began to carry his shame abroad.

It was just three weeks after Walter had brought home his young wife, to occupy the place which had been left void by the death of his mother, that his father was found lying on the roadside senseless from intoxication. Churchill first discovered him in this situation, and in the pride of his own uprightness, was about to pass, like the Levite, "on the other side," but thinking that a severe lesson might perhaps reclaim him, he ordered one of his blacks to carry him home on the wheelbarrow. The negro, delighted with the task, grinned from ear to ear, and after dropping his burden several times in the muddiest parts of the road, finally reached Walter Howland's door just at noon, when all the labourers of the farm were assembled to dinner.

"Massa Churchill sen' you present, massa Howland; but he say, next time he fine old man drunk in de road he leave him dere like a dog," said the negro with a loud guffaw.

As he spoke, he lifted one side of the wheelbarrow, and the gray head of the old man fell heavily upon the grass. Walter happened to be

standing in the doorway at that moment, holding in his hand the tin trumpet, or horn, as it is termed in the country, with which he had just summoned the labourers to dinner. Darting forward in a transport of rage, he struck the insolent fellow a blow on the head, and the black fell bleeding to the ground.

"Oh, Walter, Walter, what have you done?" exclaimed his terrified wife, as he lifted his father in his arms and bore him into the house.

"Killed the rascal, I hope," was Walter's impetuous answer, as he laid the old man hastily, yet carefully upon the bed; and, rushing out of the back entrance, buried himself in the woods. It was long after nightfall when he returned, and found his father in a high fever. In falling from the wheelbarrow his head had been severely wounded by a stone, and this, in his enfeebled, excited state, had been sufficient to produce inflammation of the brain. For many days the old man remained insensible; and Walter, who loved his father with an affection not to be effaced by the recent disgrace he had brought upon him, watched by his bedside with the most devoted solicitude.

He well knew that he had deeply offended his stern neighbour, and he lived in daily expectation of hearing something respecting the wounded negro ; but he was scarcely prepared for the rigour with which Mr. Churchill demanded restitution. Mr. Howland was still in a very precarious state when Walter was summoned to answer to the charge of assault committed upon the person of Mr. Churchill's slave. The affair had occurred in the presence of too many witnesses to be denied, even if Walter had wished to avail himself of a subterfuge ; but he was too proud to screen himself by a falsehood. Frankly stating the circumstances of the case, he avowed the fact of the assault, and appealed to the jury to know whether any one possessing the common feelings of humanity could have restrained his passion under such provocation. The fact of the assault was proved, however ; and as Churchill had been deprived of the services of his slave for several weeks, a sum of money was awarded him, which, though much less than that originally demanded, was still much larger than Walter could afford to lose.

Walter listened to the verdict in silence. As he left the court he encountered Churchill in a deep glen at the foot of the hill on which stood his house. Calmly, as if conscious that he had not outstepped the limits of justice, Churchill faced his young adversary, and, with a slight salutation, was about to pass, when Walter stopped him. His features were swollen with passion, and his voice was hoarse with suppressed emotion, as hes aid,—"Beware, Churchill: you have trampled the hoary head into the dust; think you your own gray hairs will lie lighter upon your temples? I tell you, man, if my father dies, you owe me a heavy retribution. I am not yet mad, but God knows what I may be. Pass on, and remember my warning."

Notwithstanding Churchill's inflexible ideas of justice, and his firm belief that he was acting in perfect equity towards the Howlands, yet his heart smote him as he beheld Walter's agitation; and he entered his own door saddened rather than elated by his victory. He looked around his own fireside; there sat his wife in all her matronly comeliness; his daughter, whom he

had once hoped to see married to the very man he was now persecuting; his son, but little younger than the only child of the unhappy Howland; and his stern feelings were subdued. Still he was conscious that his conduct had been instigated only by a strict sense of justice, not by any dislike to the individuals, and the pride of his nature soon conquered his unwonted softness.

He sat down in moody silence—a silence unbroken by his expectant family, for Churchill, though a good, was not a kind man, and even in his own household was as much feared as loved. It was not until after his two children had left the room, that his meek wife ventured to address him.

"You are troubled, James; what has gone wrong with you?"

"Nothing," was his cold reply; "the trial is finished, and Walter Howland will pay dearly for his insolence."

"James, James, you are too hard upon that young man; depend upon it no good will come of it," said the kind-hearted woman.

A frown was on his brow as he turned hastily

towards her; but when he looked upon her placid countenance, and remembered her unvarying gentleness during more than thirty wedded years, he checked the harsh reply that rose to his lips, and answered, "You know nothing about it, Annie; you are a good woman, but no lawyer."

"I can *feel* what is right," said she earnestly, "and I would rather relieve the afflicted than oppress them."

"Say no more, Annie," cried the stern husband; "old Walter Howland has given himself up to drunkenness, and the fruits of my honest toil shall never be wasted for the encouragement of vice. He owes me money, and it shall be paid to the last cent."

The gentle spirit of his submissive wife dared no further to gainsay his will; and Churchill sat down to his evening meal, satisfied in his own mind that he had only done his duty.

CHAPTER II.

"I'll have my bond ; I will not hear thee speak,
I'll have my bond, and, therefore speak no more:
I'll not be made a soft and dull-eyed fool,
To shake the head, relent, and sigh, and yield
To intercessors."

Merchant of Venice.

THE situation of Walter Howland was far more distressing than Churchill could have supposed. The illness of his father, and the damages which he had been compelled to pay Churchill, together with costs, lawyers' fees, &c., had consumed all the money which was originally intended to pay the interest of his mortgage. The day of payment arrived, and Walter found himself compelled to ask a delay of payment for three months. His very soul writhed with anguish, for Walter was a proud man, when he thus stood before Churchill as a suppliant ; but strange to say, for once he was merciful, and

The next three months passed rapidly away —too rapidly for Walter Howland. Misfortune seemed to have set her mark on him; nothing prospered in his hands; the blight, the mildew, or the worm, destroyed his unripened grain and the fine fruit which his farm had always produced, so that, at the expiration of the time allotted for the payment of his note, he found himself totally unable to make any provision for it, or even to pay the additional interest due on the mortgage. Again he was under the necessity of suing for delay, and again he was not denied. A second note for double the amount of the first was received by Churchill in lieu of the money, and the evil day was once more deferred. Walter well knew that to the influence of the kind-hearted Mrs. Churchill he owed this forbearance, and he was not ungrateful; but his hatred to her husband was not to be appeased. He never looked upon his father that he did not curse Churchill as the cause of his dreadful imbecility. "I told him if my father died he should pay me a heavy retribution. What does he not owe me now?" exclaimed he one day as

he beheld his father seated childlike upon the floor. "Let him take heed of himself," he added gloomily; "while he practises forbearance, so will I; but the time will come when both his debt and mine must be paid."

Walter Howland possessed one of the kindest hearts in the world; but there was a host of powerful passions in his bosom, of whose very existence he was unconscious, because they had never been called out. If ever man was actuated by two principles, one of evil and another of good, that man was Walter Howland. When influenced by the good principle, (and so he had been nearly all his life,) it was impossible to be more noble-minded and upright; but there was sometimes an outbreak of passion, which too clearly showed that the evil, though latent, was inherent. Yet habit is so essentially a second nature, that, in all probability, he would have lived and died utterly ignorant of the dark part of his own character, had it not been for the untoward circumstances in which he now found himself.

Wading through debt is like toiling through

the Slough of Despond ; every effort to advance but plunges one more deeply in the mire. Walter soon found his utter inability to meet his engagements, and there was but one thing left for him to do. He must relinquish his farm, and retire to a smaller one which his wife had recently inherited from her father. When the third quarter became due, he signified his intention to his unrelenting creditor, and Churchill accepted his offer. The original mortgage was about five thousand dollars, and the interest now due amounted to two hundred and twenty-five dollars. Walter proposed to sell his farm at public auction, and, after paying his debt to Churchill, with the residue of the purchase-money to stock his new one. The day was fixed, and Walter, trusting to Churchill's well-known integrity, did not even take the precaution to procure the presence of a friend at the auction. Much as he hated Churchill, he firmly believed that he would deal justly, and he rested satisfied to wait the result.

Just before the hour when the sale was to commence, the village was visited by one of

those dreadful storms of wind which sometimes sweep over our northern counties. The sky became black as night; the growl of the distant thunder sounded through the forest like the roar of some immense wild beast; the lightning flashed fearfully, and the voice of the wind, at one moment like the shrill shriek of mortal agony, at another like the feeble wailings of a dying infant, awoke the deepest terror in all who listened to its threat. At length the wind arose in its terrific might. Trees that had braved the storms of a hundred winters bent like reeds before its rushing strength. On it went, bearing with it uptorn saplings and boughs twisted from every tree in the forest; unroofing dwellings; prostrating outhouses and stables; overthrowing the cattle in the fields, and stifling their cries of distress with its own fierce roar, until its fury was exhausted. Of course no one ventured to expose himself to this elemental war, and it was generally supposed the sale would be deferred. But Churchill was not a man to be turned from his purpose; all the advantage which the law would allow him he rigorously

exacted, and such an opportunity of making a bargain was too tempting to be resisted. He awaited the coming of bidders until two hours after the time appointed for the sale, and then became himself the purchaser of the Howland farm for the sum of five thousand dollars, about half its real value.

The rage of Walter, when apprised of this transaction, knew no bounds. He openly accused Churchill of having cheated him of his property, and vowed vengeance against him in the most violent manner. Whatever Churchill felt about its justice, he well knew that the sale had been a legal one ; and irritated by the abuse which Walter had lavished upon him, he sent an order that the farm should be vacated within three days. Walter positively refused ; and the consequence was, that a writ of ejectment was issued against him, so that he was absolutely turned out of doors with his family to seek another residence as he best could. The paroxysm of rage into which Walter was thrown exasperated the officer who served the writ, and his duty was performed in the harshest manner.

But there was yet another aggravation to his misery. His father had been rapidly declining in health, and now, terrified by the violence of the officer and the anger of his son, he had cowered down in a corner of the kitchen, with his face buried between his knees. When ready to depart, Walter went in search of him, and vainly besought him to arise. At length, wearied with importuning him, he stooped and gently lifted the old man's head ; it fell with a lead-like weight upon his breast—his father was dead ! Even the officer was horror-struck as Walter reappeared bearing his dead father in his arms. He spoke not until he had placed the body carefully in the waggon which was to convey him to his new home ; then, turning to the man, he said, "Go to your employer, and tell him his work is done. I am homeless and fatherless, now comes the hour of retribution."

Deeply was Mrs. Churchill grieved when she heard of these proceedings. She had known Walter Howland from childhood ; she had once hoped to have seen him wedded to her only daughter ; but though Walter had loved another

better, yet, for Lucy's sake as well as for his own, she felt a deep interest in his welfare. But vainly did she now attempt to influence her husband to gentler measures. To James Churchill's narrow mind misfortune always wore the semblance of guilt, and he firmly believed that Walter's recent distresses were owing to some misconduct. In fact he had imbibed a suspicion (most unjustly, however,) that Walter had fallen into his father's evil habits. His gloomy demeanour, his moody language, his mysterious threats, were all considered as evidences of occasional intoxication, for Churchill's cold heart could little understand the fiery passions that actuated his young adversary.

As the chameleon changes its colour to suit the hue of the object on which it is placed, so the human heart seems, by a singular faculty, to adapt itself to any circumstances, whether they be good or evil. Where strong passions exist, the transition from good to evil is but too easy. The good is a passive, but the bad an active principle, and therefore it is that we sometimes behold a life of unblemished integrity suddenly

stained by some strangely inconsistent crime. It has been gravely doubted by some philosophers whether a sudden impulse of evil *could* overcome long-continued habits of virtue ; and when instances have occurred to prove the fact, they have avoided the inference by asserting that those apparently virtuous habits were but the arts of hypocrisy. Alas ! had they studied *men* as well as books, they would have learned but too well how—

> "In a moment we may plunge our years
> In fatal penitence, and, in the blight
> Of our own soul, turn all our blood to tears,
> And colour things to come with hues of light."

CHAPTER III.

"Is there a murderer here? No—yes, I am!"
Richard III.

It will be remembered that Churchill had purchased the Howland farm for a sum equivalent to the original mortgage; and Walter, who had fully calculated upon paying off all his debts by the proceeds of the sale, found himself still hampered by the note which Churchill held for the amount of the unpaid interest money. He had been but a short time settled in his new abode, when he was surprised by a visit from Churchill. As he rode up to the door, and was about to alight from his horse, Walter hurried out to meet him, but not in kindness.

"Come not a step nearer, Churchill," said he, in a voice of suppressed passion; "come not a

step nearer ; this house shall never be polluted by your presence while I am its master."

Churchill, still influenced by his unjust suspicions, fixed his eyes on Walter's face, and, mistaking the tremulous frame and bloodshot eye of smothered rage for the effects of intemperance, sternly replied, "I come to demand my own ; give me my money and I shall never darken your doors ; but, mark me ! not one penny of the proceeds of your soil shall find its way into your pocket until my note is paid. I came prepared to make some amicable arrangement with an industrious and unfortunate neighbour, but with Walter Howland the drunkard I have nothing to do."

Walter rushed forward with uplifted arm, but his foot struck a stone in the path, and he fell directly before Churchill's horse. With a grim smile the old man bade him mind his footing another time, and rode off.

The next day, as Walter was busily engaged in the field stacking his hay, he perceived Churchill again approaching, but not now alone. The officer who had served the writ of eject-

ment accompanied him; and before Walter could recover from his surprise, he found his hay seized for debt. Without a word of expostulation, he quietly allowed them to depart with it; then calling his labourers about him, he paid their wages and dismissed them.

"I have no further need of you," said he; "my land may as well lie fallow as be tilled for that old rascal; and no plough shall ever cross my fields while he lives to claim the fruits of my labour." There was a sort of unnatural calmness in his manner, which betokened fearful results; but the ignorant labourers only wondered at his tranquillity, and departed.

From that hour his character seemed entirely changed. The endearments of his wife, and the playfulness of his infant, were alike unheeded. He wandered about the woods with his gun in his hand from daybreak until sunset. His cheek became sunken, his eye haggard, his hair and beard untrimmed, and his whole appearance was that of one haunted by an evil spirit. Even the seizure of his cattle and stock of his farm by the inexorable Churchill failed to

arouse him to any exertion, and he seemed as if his distresses had actually stupified him.

Months passed away in this manner, when one bright November morning he took his gun, and, as usual, proceeded towards the woods. Heretofore he had always returned at sunset; but now hour after hour passed on, the gray of twilight deepened into the dusk of night, and still he came not. Terrified at his unwonted delay, his unhappy wife sat at the door listening to every sound until long after midnight; when suddenly he rushed out of the neighbouring thicket, and, springing into the house, threw himself on the floor, exclaiming—

"Thank God, he has escaped! my hands are yet clean."

All attempts to learn where he had been were unavailing. His clothes were wet with dew, and his rifle still loaded; but he refused to answer any question, and remained on the floor with his face hidden between his hands, until the morning sun shone brightly through the unclosed window. He then rose, and dressing himself with unusual care, went out in the

direction of a neighbouring inn. He had not been long in the tavern when Churchill entered. Walter evidently had expected him, and, to the surprise of all present, as he entered Walter extended his hand to him.

"You have escaped a great danger, Mr. Churchill,' said he; "let me congratulate you."

Looking at him with very natural astonishment, Churchill could only account for his unwonted civility by believing him intoxicated. Spurning his proffered hand, therefore, he replied,—

"Yes, I have escaped the danger of losing my money by an idle drunkard," and turned away.

Walter's face became perfectly livid, as he looked after him. Raising his hands high above his head, he cried,—

"Stay, Churchill, and listen to me for the last time: I have wrestled fearfully with the demon which you have conjured up within my heart; I have struggled to trample down the fiend, and I came to you to-day in all the fullness of forgiving, ay, and of repentant feeling. But the strife is past; you have spurned my

hand of friendship; when next that hand is extended, it will not be in kindness; you have turned your back upon me, but when we next meet, by all the fiends of hell I swear, it shall be *face to face.*" As he spoke, he strode hastily from the room, and returned to his gloomy nome.

A few weeks after this memorable meeting, the whole village was thrown into consternation, in the depth of night, by the horrible tidings that Churchill had been murdered! Between twelve and one o'clock at night, a knock was heard at Churchill's door. Having demanded who required admittance at that unreasonable hour, he was answered by a hoarse voice,—"I have a letter for Mr. Churchill; be so good as to open the door and take it." He immediately rose, and without waiting to dress, stepped to the door, unclosed it, and received a rifle ball through his body. He uttered one groan, and fell instantly dead. Terrified by the report of the gun, Mrs. Churchill started from her bed, and, as she groped her way into the passage, stumbled over the dead body of her husband. The neighbours were soon assembled,

and, while all stood in mute horror round the body, a suspicion of the murderer flashed across the minds of more than one. A meaning look was exchanged between them, and in a few minutes a sleigh, filled with some of the indignant witnesses of the dreadful scene, started for the Redfield farm. It was about three in the morning when they arrived at the humble abode of Walter Howland. He appeared to have heard their approach, for at the first knock he arose and opened the door for them. They told him that Churchill had been murdered; but his countenance betrayed no emotion, not even the ordinary horror that might have been expected in a stranger, on hearing of such an event.

Looking eagerly in her husband's face, his wife exclaimed,—"Walter's rifle has been at the gunsmith's these three weeks; we have no gun in the house."

"You are mistaken," said Walter, coolly; "there is young Morton's rifle in the east room," and then quietly proceeding to dress himself, he asked what they wanted with him.

"You are suspected to have had a hand in

She uttered a loud shriek and fainted on the floor.—Page 155.

this murder, Howland," said one of his visitors.

"Is it so?" asked he, and a strong smile flitted over his dark face as he spoke. "Well, I am ready to attend you. Whoever be the murderer, Churchill has at last paid the debt he owed me for my father's death; yet I would it had been a lighter penalty."

"Oh, Walter, what will become of us if you have done this wicked thing?" cried his unhappy wife. "Speak, Walter, and tell them you are not the murderer."

"They would not believe me, Mary," was his calm reply.

The wretched woman looked earnestly in his face; then as if she read in his countenance the confirmation of his guilt, uttered a loud shriek, and fainted on the floor. Giving her to the care of a servant, he turned to the men, and said, "Let us go now; her grief would only unman me, and I wish to confront my enemies boldly." During this time some of the persons who had thus volunteered to apprehend Howland were engaged in searching for evidences of

the murder. His horse was found panting in the stable, as if it had been ridden hard ; a rifle stood in the east room, loaded, but moist ; and blackened with powder, as if it had been recently fired, and then reloaded without cleaning ; but there were no other circumstances which tended to fix the guilt upon him, had it not been for his oft-repeated threats. His well-known hatred to Churchill, however, prejudiced every mind against him, and before the sun rose, Walter Howland was a tenant of the county jail.

CHAPTER IV.

"All that I can do is nothing worth,
Since that my penitence comes after all,
Imploring pardon."

Henry V.

Six weeks elapsed before the trial came on, and his stern spirit sunk beneath the horrors of a lingering imprisonment. His wife had never risen from her bed since the hour when he saw her lie like a crushed worm at his feet; and just two days before the trial, the miserable man learned that she was no more. From the moment that he heard of her death, he seemed to lose all anxiety about his trial. As if life had lost every charm for him, he prepared to resign it as calmly as if he had been already convicted; and when the day arrived, he appeared at the bar to all outward seeming as calm as the most ordinary spectator.

Though at first view of the case his guilt seemed indisputable, yet, strange to say, it was found next to impossible to prove it. The evidence was entirely circumstantial, and, of course, there was as much proof in favour of his innocence as of his guilt. His acquittal or condemnation, therefore, depended entirely upon the construction given to the facts stated by the witnesses, and the responsibility of the jury was, indeed, a fearful one. His oft-expressed hatred and frequent threats, however, were strong presumptive evidence against him ; and after a long and patient investigation, he was convicted and sentenced to death. He had stood immoveably calm during the whole trial, but when he heard the fatal doom pronounced upon him as a murderer, his face became pale as ashes ; he rocked backwards and forwards for a moment as if his feet refused to bear the weight of his emaciated body, and then fell heavily to the earth. When he recovered from his swoon, he was in the convict's cell.

The consolations of religion, which had been repeatedly proffered to him, were now no longer

refused, and the remorseful spirit of the unhappy man was bowed in deep humility at the foot of the cross. The day of his execution arrived, and found him perfectly resigned. "I have but one earthly care," said he to the clergyman who attended him. "My boy, my infant boy! who will look to his safety, and rescue him from the degradation that awaits a felon's son?" His very soul seemed to quail within him when he learned that Mrs. Churchill, the widow of the man he had murdered, had promised to be a mother to his more than orphan boy. He shuddered as he fervently exclaimed, "My God reward her!" Placing a paper in the hands of the kind old minister, he continued: "This paper contains my confession; it may rescue my memory from the stain of ruthless barbarity, and it will not be made public until after I shall be beyond the reach of shame. Farewell."

The confession was in the following words:

"I shall now describe the murder of James Churchill. Yes, in a cool deliberate manner I *murdered him!* Called him from his sweet

slumbers and from the bosom of his wife—never more to return to her fond embrace—to sink him in the grave. Yes, his own floor I bathed with his warm blood, and his soul I hurried off to another world. I heard the new-made widow's groans, and the wretched orphan's cries, which pierced my flinty heart. My God forgive me, and wash the crimson stain from my afflicted soul.

"I was aggravated to this crime by injuries, personal abuses, and insults, but they are no excuse for me. I had some time calculated on his destruction, and one day, a few weeks before his death, he went to A——, and I expected him to return in the evening. I loaded a gun, and waylaid the road between his house and mine, in the woods west of M'Coy's tavern. Here I tarried until late at night awaiting his return, but he did not come. I first took my stand behind a root, and then, for my better accommodation, behind a pine-tree, and had he come, I surely should have shot him. While I here stood, I had some reflections; the sweet evening breeze gently pressed the lofty forest, and

the tall pines could bend beneath the power of Heaven, but my obdurate heart remained unmoved.

"The next day, I went to A——, and there I saw Mr. Churchill, and I felt very glad he had escaped. After reflecting on the subject and getting no satisfaction, I fixed my eye on him again, and I could not spare him. Accordingly, in December, I watched the state of the snow that I might not be tracked, and on the 29th I thought the thing was ripe. In the afternoon I loaded a rifle, and placed it in a bedroom where no person slept, and where I could reach it from the window if occasion should require. I then rode to A——, four miles east; Mr. Churchill lived about four miles west of my house. I was about the village till after ten o'clock at night. I then rode home, stopped at the bars opposite my house, dismounted, and had serious reflections on the course I was pursuing. After a considerable pause, I resolved to go; I never allowed myself to give back in any undertaking. I then went to the window, and took out the gun—no one of my family knew it—and rode

at a smart trot to Churchill's. I fastened my horse, took out my knife and rubbed my flint, that it might not miss fire. I took the mitten off my right hand, and put it in my pocket. I was careful not to drop anything whereby I might be detected. I then stepped to his door, which opened near the head of his bed, and stood five or six minutes on his door-stone. All creation seemed locked in slumber, and one dread silence reigned through all the works of God.

"Now my bold heart even trembled at the thought of an act so desperate, and every vibration of my soul seemed shrinking beneath the horrors of the scene.

"I rapped at his door, and shuddered at the noise I made, and was on the very point of retiring, when his wife, I think, awoke him, and he exclaimed, 'Who is there?' I endeavoured to alter my voice, and answered, 'I have a letter for you; have the goodness to open the door and take it.' He arose, and, as he opened the door, as soon as I saw his white dress, I shot at venture. I took no sight, and had the gun by my

side. I think the muzzle was not more than three or four feet from him. I then heard him exclaim, 'Oh, my God!' and I heard no more of him. I then returned to my horse, and every step was marked with care, lest I should fall or lose anything, as it was slippery. The shocking cries and shrieks of the family broke the midnight silence, and rent the air with horror, which I heard at a considerable distance. I then rode with great speed home. I dismounted and loaded my gun in haste, and set it into the window whence I had taken it; then I put out my horse, went to bed, and went to sleep. Before day, the neighbours of Mr. Churchill called on me and informed me he was murdered in his own house."

Before this confirmation of his guilt met the eye of his fellow-beings, the unhappy man had gone to answer for his crime at the throne of God! His fate affords a striking illustration of the fact that the love of the wine cup is not the only form which intemperance assumes. His father's appetite for strong drink may be regarded as the original cause of all his misfor-

tunes ; but in the inordinate love of gold which influenced his oppressor, and the unrestrained indulgence of revengeful passions which made him a murderer, we only behold, under different disguises, the hideous mien of the same insidious and deadly vice.

NEWTON AINSLIE.

NEWTON AINSLIE.

Not many years since a friend of mine was visiting the state prison at ——, when his attention was attracted in a remarkable degree by one of the convicts, who appeared to be officiating as clerk in the apothecary's room, which formed a part of the establishment. The man was of low stature, with a warped and shrunken body, and limbs so attenuated, that they seemed scarcely able to bear the weight of his small frame. But this distorted trunk was surmounted by a head so fully developed, it would have thrown a phrenologist into ecstasies. His forehead was high and broad, his eyes piercing and

intelligent, his features delicately formed, and, but for an habitual expression of moroseness, which seemed to brood over his countenance, it would have been eminently handsome. My friend fell into conversation with him, and soon discovered him to possess remarkable intelligence. He seemed a good classical scholar, and quite familiar with the more abstruse parts of modern learning. But the book which he was reading when first addressed showed the peculiar tendency of his mind. It was a mathematical work of a high order, and his own annotations in pencil on the margin showed that he read understandingly. It was something so strange to hear a common felon devoting his leisure time to such pursuits, that my friend was induced to make some inquiry respecting his history, but the man rather evaded his questions, telling him it was too long a story to relate with all its details, and that he would much rather discuss mathematics. Unwilling to wound his feelings, Mr. —— said no more on the subject, but when they parted he asked if there was anything he could do to ameliorate

his condition. "Only one thing, sir," said the prisoner; "I am desirous of obtaining '*Newton's Principia*,' if you will lend me a copy of that work, it is all I require." Mr. ——, who knew it would be impossible to procure such a book in that town, promised to send it to him as soon as he should arrive in New York, and writing the man's name in his pocket-book, bade him farewell. A few days after, and inscribing in it the name of "Newton Ainslie, from one who will not soon forget their prison meeting," sent it under cover to the gaoler, as the prisoner had directed.

Two years afterwards a parcel was left at my friend's door, which, when opened, was found to contain the book which he had sent to the convict. Beneath the original inscription was written "Newton Ainslie's legacy to one who has promised to remember him." The parcel also contained a manuscript, written in a clear, bold hand, which, with my friend's permission, is now given to the public.

"You were desirous, sir, of learning my history, and, as I could not then enter into a de-

tail of my feelings as well as my actions, I was unwilling you should judge me by deeds alone. I am not now about to extenuate my faults ; I only seek to trace their gradual development. My father was a farmer in Pennsylvania, who, by dint of industry and economy, managed to provide his family with every comfort. He had but two children, of whom I was the elder. While yet an infant, I met with an accident which reduced me to a state of perfect helplessness for many years. I was, therefore, necessarily the object of my mother's peculiar care ; and day after day I lay in my wicked cradle, listening to the songs which she sung and the tales which she told for the amusement of her crippled boy. Yet her household duties called her often from my side, and many a lonely hour did I spend in pain of body and weariness of spirit. I longed for occupation, even as the labourer pants after repose, and my very soul grew thick as the loud halloo and merry laugh of my brother broke upon my ear. It was in these long dreary seasons of solitude that my fierce passions were nourished. The germs

of many an evil feeling were in my heart, but had I mingled with my fellows, and endured the wholesome discipline of collision with others, many of them would have been crushed ere they sprung into vigorous life. Never tell me of domestic education for a boy ; it is fitting for a delicate girl, who would be preserved from the contamination of evil example, and who should ever be like the 'dove wearing silver wings,' but for a boy it is worse than folly. A hard and stony road it will be his lot to travel—a fierce and bitter conflict it will be his task to wage, and he should be disciplined at times for the struggle. The tender cares of a mother, her fond indulgence of every wayward fancy, are not the means by which a hardy character is formed. But when to all the evil results of domestic indulgence is added the consciousness of inferiority to one's fellows, the necessity of entire dependence on others, and the consequent envy of more favoured companions, is it any wonder that the deformed are usually distinguished by an acerbity of temper, or a morbid sensitivenes of character, which enhances their

sufferings while it diminishes the sympathy of their friends.

"My temper was naturally bad, and my mother's injudicious kindness had made it infinitely worse. I brooded over my privations, until I almost hated every one who was more fortunate than myself. My father, busied with his farm, had little leisure to think of the helpless little cripple who cumbered the chimney nook, and I had no other feeling towards him than the most entire indifference. With my brother I was always quarrelling. He used to enter the house with a bound and a shout which were almost distracting to my delicately organized brain. The sight of his robust frame and glowing cheek seemed an aggravation of my misfortune, and I envied him too much to regard him with affection.

"When I was about ten years of age, however, my prospects were materially altered. A new teacher was appointed for our district school, who was to 'board round,' as it is termed in the country; in other words, to reside a month in each family which furnished pupils,

so that the burden of his support might fall equally upon all. As I could not go to school, this at first seemed of little consequence to me. My mother had taught me to read, but our scanty stock of books offered few temptations to pursue literature as a pleasure, and I never dreamed that a solace for my privations might be found in such things. When it became our turn to receive the master, I was certainly pleased to discover that my brother had spoken truth when he said that the schoolmaster was, like myself, a 'lame hunchback.' Here was one, at least, who could not laugh at my deformity, and I felt a sort of liking for him from the first moment that he limped into the house and I beheld his shapeless shadow projected on the sunny floor beside my couch. He was a man of great learning, and much kindness of heart. Compassionating my helplessness, he undertook to instruct me after his day's task was completed, and never did a month pass so rapidly. He told me of things which my wildest fancy could never have imagined. He showed me maps, which seemed to bring the whole world

around the poor cripple's bed, and I never shall forget the exquisite delight with which I pored, day after day, over those pictured semblances of earth's remotest bounds. My instructor had the art of making study a pleasure, because he possessed, in an eminent degree, the power of simplifying his explanations, so as to adapt them to the humblest capacity. The month was quite too short for both of us, for my attachment to study had evidently won his regard, and my mother's persuasions induced my father to make arrangements for his remaining with us during his stay in the country. It was during that winter I discovered a pursuit so engrossing as to fill up every hour of my hitherto wearisome life. Mr. Hinton, my teacher, was a mathematician, and though compelled by the duties of his station to put aside such abstruse studies, he yet turned to them at every leisure moment with passionate eagerness. He found in me a pupil worthy of his attention. From the moment when the mysteries of calculation were first opened to my view, I became a devoted student. With al-

most unequalled rapidity, (for I had no amusement to distract my thoughts,) I made myself master of the elements of algebra, and having thus laid the foundation, I proceeded to erect the beautiful superstructure of science. None but a mathematical mind can comprehend the fascination of such pursuits. I no longer pined for the fresh air and the green earth. If I looked out upon the sky, it was no longer to behold its blue vault decked with the gorgeous clouds of sunset, or studded with the silver stars of night. Lines and circles, curves and angles, traced themselves on everything I beheld. My mind was replete with the technicalities of the science, and I have worked out many a problem with the heavens for my slate, and fancy's wand my pencil.

"I had been slowly recovering the use of my limbs during the period of which I have spoken, and when I was fourteen years of age, I found myself, at length, able to walk short distances with the aid of a staff. No one who has always frolicked in all the exuberance of boyish spirits, and felt the glow of health in every limb, can

imagine the feeling with which I went out for the first time *alone among the hills.* A weight seemed removed from my breast ; I breathed as if inhaling a purer air, and my heart throbbed with delight such as I had never before enjoyed. Yet even at that moment the perversity of my nature made itself felt. As I was creeping along with feeble step, my brother sprang past me, calling to me to 'stand out of his way, for he was running a race with his dog.' I looked after him with a feeling of unutterable bitterness, and, seating myself on a stone by the roadside, burst into a flood of tears.

"I will not dwell longer on my boyish life. Four years after I recovered the use of my limbs my mother died. She had lived long enough to see the result of her patient cares in my behalf, and she was spared the grief of beholding me arrive at man's estate thus dwarfed and deformed. Her death severed the only tie which bound me to my family, and when I saw the mould laid upon the bosom which had so often pillowed my aching head, I felt that I was now utterly alone on earth. My brother, who had

now become one of my father's most efficient labourers, often taunted me with my idle habits. Heaven knows, it was not idleness that chained my hands and fettered my feet when all others were busied in the labours of the field. I would have given the wealth of the Indies for the strength of limb and robust frame of those who despised me. But my pride was roused by continual reproaches, and I resolved, if possible, to provide for my own subsistence. At first I entertained the hope of becoming an assistant to my friend Mr. Hinton, but his narrow stipend would not allow this. He offered, however, to take me into the school, and teach me his method of instruction, so that I might obtain a similar situation in another part of the country. Such was my course of life during the next two years, presiding over riotous boys all day, and returning with fresh zest to my mathematical studies as soon as my task was ended.

"I soon became thoroughly wearied of such a life. My temper became still more soured by continued conflict with unruly and turbulent spirits,

and nothing but my friend's arguments prevented me from sinking into utter despair. I had almost determined to give up all idea of becoming a schoolmaster, but he told me of its many advantages in enabling me to obtain a finished education. He spoke of the certainty of my success in the higher branches of mathematics, and finally mentioned the names of the many distinguished men in our own country who owed their first rise in the world to an humble village school. These arguments were irresistible. The thought of gaining an eminence which would enable me to look down upon the objects of my present envy would have nerved me to every exertion.

"My father's second marriage at length made my home so intolerable, that I resolved to quit it. I obtained a few hundred dollars from him in lieu of my future interest in the farm, and departed for ——. Here I entered college, and supported myself by acting as private tutor to students less qualified than myself. It was a hard and toilsome life. Sixteen hours out of the twenty-four were devoted to the instruction

of others, and the prosecution of my own studies. The rest of my time was required to renovate my exhausted frame, and give me new strength for the next day's toil. I became so completely absorbed in mental occupation, that external things scarcely made any impression upon me. I ate to supply the wants of nature but rarely knew what was set before me. My book lay upon my knees, while my hands mechanically lifted food to my mouth. I walked, simply because my feeble body demanded constant exercise to preserve its frail organs from disease, but my eye wandered with vacant gaze over the beauties of the summer landscape, or the unsullied snow of Nature's winter robe. I lived in a world of thought : the outward world was a place in which I only moved and breathed. At the expiration of the allotted term I left college, a graduate, loaded with honours, and penniless.

"For some time I continued to give private lessons in ——, but my ungovernable temper, which had several times brought me into slight difficulties, at length deprived me of that means

of support. The father of one of my pupils had said something which I construed into an insult, and the severe and bitter invective with which I attacked him in the public streets incensed him to such a degree that he threatened me with personal chastisement. He was an old, white-haired man, and I should have forborne with his age; but passion overcame me, and feeble as I was, I laid him prostrate on the pavement. Fortunately, he was not injured, but public opinion was too strong against me, and I was obliged to leave the place.

"I next sought refuge in New York, that El Dorado of all hungry aspirants after wealth, and obtained a situation as assistant in a classical school. I boarded in the family of my employer, and was not long in discovering that his daughter was one of the loveliest creatures I had ever beheld. Her's was that delicate beauty that we admire for its very fragility; and her timid gentle disposition well suited her sweet countenance. I loved her not only for her beauty, but for the very gentleness which made her so unlike myself. Living in the midst of

a kind family, there was nothing to call forth the violence of my temper; and as the principal of the school was never in the same apartment with me, my impulses of passion among the boys were totally unknown to him. He found me of great assistance to him, and therefore regarded me with a degree of respect to which I had never before been accustomed. His opinion of me was greatly altered, however, when I came to ask him for his daughter's hand. It was not my poverty to which he objected, nor my station, for it was like his own, but it was my *personal appearance*. He could not give his daughter to one who seemed more like the incubus of a disturbed fancy than a man. I had been too much accustomed to contempt to wonder at his feelings on the subject; but I was not the less determined to be revenged on him. The opportunity was in my power, for I knew that his daughter loved me. It was strange, passing strange, that the fair and delicate Lucy Lincoln, whom but to look on was love, should have bestowed the treasures of her innocent tenderness on the dwarfed and

deformed scholar. There is no clue to the labyrinth of a woman's heart; but it may be that my misfortunes awakened her pity, while my intellectual powers commanded her respect; and where such feelings are combined, love is not far distant. From whatever fountain that pure affection sprung, I know that its deep, strong current diffused a freshness over my blighted life, and even in my most desolate fortunes preserved for me one green spot on which hope might bloom. Her father was a man who concealed his kindliest feelings under a stern manner, and Lucy feared, far more than she loved him. Overcome by my passionate entreaties, she consented to a clandestine marriage, and three months after he had insulted me by his rejection of my suit, I informed him that the '*incubus*' was his son-in-law. His indignation fully equalled my expectation, and we were, of course, obliged to seek another abode. I offered myself as candidate for the appointment of teacher in a district school about thirty miles from the city, and was fortunate enough to secure the situation

"There began my greatest misfortunes. Hitherto I had been restrained by the guidance of others, but I was now left to my own discretion. I had continued my mathematical studies, and had found one of my chief pleasures in the power of demonstration. There was something peculiarly attractive to me in a science which admitted of such close analysis, such exact evidence; and like most persons who devote themselves exclusively to one pursuit, I learned to look with contempt on every other. Nothing seemed to me worth attention which could not be as clearly proved as my researches into the exact sciences; and the consequence was, that I learned to doubt everything that could not be tested by the senses or explained by the intellect. In the village where I resided lived a man of no great talent, but possessing extreme subtlety in argument. This man was an avowed infidel, and had been the friend of Paine. He found me me a fit subject for his attacks, and a very short time was sufficient to convince me that Christianity was but a fable, and its followers the worst of fools. With the ill-judg-

ing zeal of a new convert, I was not satisfied with enjoying my own belief, or rather disbelief, in silence. I commenced by banishing the Bible from the school, and discontinuing the weekly scripture lessons which had heretofore been prescribed. This gave offence to some of the most influential men in the place, and I was requested to return to the old system. Instead of doing this, I attempted to prove, logically and demonstratively, that to do so would only be to fill the children's heads with vague and erroneous ideas. I tried to convince them that a child's mind should be left quite unbiassed by the religious opinions of his elders, so that, when he arrived at the years of discretion, he might be enabled to view impartially the various opinions that had prevailed in the world, and select as his creed that which seemed to him most rational. I well remember the answer of a shrewd, unlettered old farmer: 'I don't know anything about your book-learning, Mr. Ainslie,' said he, 'but I know this much—if I should leave my field to lie fallow, without putting in either plough or spade till I was

ready to sow my wheat, I should have a pretty good crop of weeds to take out before I could find room for the seed.' We parted in mutual dissatisfaction, and the result was my dismissal from the school.

"Necessity drove me to seek another home. I left my wife and infant, promising to return for them as soon as I should have obtained the means of our future subsistence; but two months elapsed before I was able to redeem my promise. I returned to witness a spectacle that almost drove me to madness. I found the house destitute of food or fuel, my wife lying in the delirium of fever, and my little one a corpse. A neighbour to whom I had once done some service, assisted me to procure some comforts for my wife, and I was obliged to wait until her recovery before we could proceed on our journey. Our new abode lacked many of the comforts which we had found in our village home. A rough unpainted cabin, which offered but slight resistance to the driving wind and rain, was the best house that my limited salary allowed me to procure. A ragged patch of

ground, overgrown with nettles, was the garden spot, and a rough common, on which the cottage stood, afforded scanty pasture to the half starved cow which a wealthy farmer had appropriated to my use. To this wretched abode I removed with my poor feeble wife. The death of our little one lay heavily upon her heart, and alas! she had also learned by this time how frail must be her dependence upon me for happiness. It is true, I was never cruel to *her; she* never suffered from my irritable temper, as I thought; but I can remember now a thousand instances of petulance and ill-temper on my part, and of gentle submission on her's. She never complained, but her joyousness of spirit was gone, her step moved heavily about the house, her cheek became more and more sunken, and her voice assumed that plaintive tone which speaks of secret sorrow.

"Under her supervision, however, our dreary home soon assumed a new aspect. The house was neatly whitewashed, vines of rapid growth were trained around the door and windows, the nettles in the garden gave place to a goodly array

of potato-vines and cabbage-heads, and before long 'the master's house' was the admiration of the neighbourhood. I had learned some wisdom by experience, and was careful not to intrude my scepticism upon the notice of my new patrons; but notwithstanding my caution in this matter, there were constant disturbances between us. My temper had not been improved by my wandering and unsettled life. Complaints were constantly made of the severity of my punishments, and I was thus led into continual quarrels with the parents of my pupils.

"Among my scholars was one of a most malignant disposition. Cool and calm, even at the moment of greatest irritation, he never forgave an offence, and never failed to revenge it. Some improper conduct in school induced me to detain him after the rest were dismissed, when I determined to obtain the assistance of a negro who laboured in my little garden, and give him a severe flogging. I locked him in the room, and went in search of the black, but when I returned the boy was gone. I looked into the room without entering it, discovered

that he had escaped by a window, and resolved to double his punishment the next day. The boys were in the habit of coming to me early in the morning for the key of the room, while I seldom visited the school until it was time to commence the exercises of the day. As I opened the door the morning after the boy's escape, I disturbed a group of boys who stood behind it apparently engaged in the contemplation of a map that usually hung there. I walked to my desk to ring for order, when, for the first time, I beheld the object of their attention. Directly behind the door, so placed as not to be seen until one had entered the room, was a large caricature of myself, drawn with a piece of coal on the white wall, and beneath it was written, 'As crooked in mind as body.' I stood speechless with rage; but just at this moment the offender entered the room. He was an athletic fellow, of perhaps sixteen years of age, and trusting to his superior personal strength in case I attempted chastisement, had doubtless come to sate his revenge by the sight of my discomfiture. As he passed me his eye twinkled with malicious

pleasure, and a sneer was on his lip. I snatched up a round ruler which lay upon my desk, and struck him with all the violence of passion. The ruler was loaded with lead—the blow fell upon his temple—a slight convulsion passed over his features, and he fell senseless to the floor.

"The revulsion of my feelings it would be impossible to describe. Terror, shame, remorse, all struggled in my breast, as I sought in vain to restore the unhappy boy to consciousness. In the mean time the alarm had been given, and while my poor wife was assisting me to chafe his temples, I was startled by the approach of a crowd of men. My first impulse was to conceal myself, and hurrying out of the back gate I hid myself in the woods. What a day was that! alone in the midst of a solitary forest, with the guilt of murder upon my conscience. The rustle of a leaf, the crackling of a branch beneath my feet, made me tremble and grow pale. When night came on, exhausted with excitement, I crept towards my home; but my movements had been auticipated, and as I

silently stole in at the gate, I found myself in the gripe of a constable.

"I was six weeks in prison before my trial came on. In the mean time the boy had recovered, but only to suffer a living death—he was a hopeless idiot!

"Oh, if I could describe the horrors of that trial, my worst enemy would pity me. Think what must have been the sufferings of my proud spirit when I was placed as a mark for the finger of scorn and loathing. Every act that I had ever committed from the impulse of passion was brought up in testimony against me: when, finally, the lawyer for the prosecution arose to speak—when his mighty intellect was exerted to heap execration on my head—when I heard the torrent of splendid eloquence, which seemed gathering its force only to overwhelm me utterly, I could no longer withstand the tumult of my feeling. Tears, ay, tears that burned on my cheeks like molten lead, fell from my eyes, and the sentence which condemned me to a felon's cell sounded like a reprieve, for it rescued me from the eyes of those who were cursing me in their hearts.

"I was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment, the first year to be spent in a solitary cell. Before six months of my punishment had expired, I was removed to a ward in the hospital, a maniac. The kind care of the attendant physician, and judicious treatment on the part of a humane gaoler, rescued me from this frightful malady, but it was long ere I recovered sufficiently to leave my bed. My wife, my gentle Lucy, had sunk under her misfortunes, and found in an early grave the peace which earth could never now afford. She left a letter to be given me in case my reason was ever restored: it contained an earnest and touching appeal in behalf of Christianity · it besought me, by the love I bore her, to search diligently for the truth, and it contained a farewell so full of Christian hope, that my heart melted as I read it. I have obeyed her dying request; I *have* sought the truth, and I have found it where alone it *must* be found—in the Book of Truth—the Holy Scriptures.

"Since my recovery, I have been employed in the hospital belonging to the prison, because my strength would not permit of manual la-

bour. Five years of my prison life are already spent, but I shall never live to breathe again the air of freedom. The lofty aspirings of an intellectual nature, the proud hopes of literary ambition, and the burning thirst after worldly distinction are all dead within me. My love for books still continues, but merely as a means of lightening the heavy burden of my existence; and as I am sensible of the gradual decay of my physical powers, I rejoice in the thought that my spirit will soon escape from the cumbrous tenement which has so long shut it out from the light of Heaven."

Thus ended the manuscript. Another hand had added the words, "Newton Ainslie died on the 15th of January, 18—."