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TO

HER MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA.

IN VENTURING TO WRITE ON THE SUBJECT

OF

FEMALE EDUCATION AND CHARACTER,

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO POINT OUT A MORE EXALTED MODEL,

FOR THE

IMITATION AND ATTACHMENT OF HER SUBJECTS,

THAN THE SOVEREIGN

TO WHOM THESE PAGES

ARE RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

BY HER MOST FAITHFUL AND MOST OBEDIENT SERVANT,

CATHERINE SINCLAIR.

THIS volume was revised and corrected by a venerated parent, now no more. His opinion was as much against books being published without the author's name as against anonymous letters, and he frequently expressed his desire, which was repeated in his last sickness, that none of his family should ever publish anonymously. It is in compliance with his injunction that the author has ventured to acknowledge her work, and to prefix to these pages a name, which must have been entirely insignificant and unknown but for its connexion with her distinguished and lamented father, SIR JOHN SINCLAIR.

133, GEORGE STREET.

PREFACE.

Various editions of this work, both in England and America, having been rapidly sold off within a very short period, the authoress trusts she does not presume too much on public favour by producing another; and having carefully revised and corrected it, she takes this opportunity to announce, that, in compliance with very frequent suggestions, she has brought forward a concluding volume, which may be read either separately or in connexion with the present story.

An opinion having been occasionally entertained that the characters sustained in this narrative were not always fictitious, the author feels it necessary to say, that no inducement could have justified, in her own estimation, the drawing of a single portrait. Where accidental coincidences of name occur, they would have been carefully avoided, had any thing personal been contemplated, and whatever resemblances have been imagined must result entirely from accident, her sole aim having been to represent classes of persons, whose trifling errors might, she hoped, be made obvious to themselves, under the disguise of an imaginary narrative, and thus Christians may be led more circumspectly to watch, as those who

must give an account, what is likely to be the effect of their example and conversation.

Nothing can be more injurious to a good cause than an indiscreet partisan; and all men are eager to repress, if possible, or to disown his officious zeal. With the best intention, such a person excites prejudice against the very individuals whom he is desirous to extol, and testifies his attachment for them in the manner most offensive to their taste, and injurious to their interests. Religion, more especially, has been exposed, without defence, to injury, from well-meaning but imprudent and intrusive friends. In the eye of indiscriminating Christians, any strong profession of attachment to Christianity sheds a sacred halo around the character, which deprives them of courage to appreciate it by the ordinary standard. This readiness to acquiesce in hasty and unfounded pretensions has been the source of incalculable mischief; because the careless multitude are misled into forming their estimate of Christian excellence from the perverted judgment and glaring indiscretion of a few confident professors; and faults of natural character, on a hasty view, seem identified with those holy principles, which, if rightly understood, would infallibly correct them.

In the following pages, actual hypocrisy is not the subject treated of, because that odious vice has already been held up sufficiently to contempt. It is intended rather to separate the essentials of religious conduct from its excrescences—to distinguish feeling from ima-

gination—to contrast the hypochondriacal fanaticism of a disordered fancy with the purifying influence of an enlightened faith—to show how frequently well-intentioned persons "know not what manner of spirit they are of"—how the Christian temper may be substantially contravened, while its dictates are professedly obeyed—and how the language of Scripture may be perversely mis-quoted to support a line of conduct, which its benign and gentle principles uniformly condemns.

An endeavour has also been made to illustrate the pernicious consequences of an undue prominence in education given to ornamental above useful acquirements, when both, proportionably to their relative importance, might be combined in the same system. Even in the present life, all the glitter of brilliant accomplishments will be but a poor compensation for the misery of ill-regulated feelings, and of incapacity for mental exercise. To provide resources of constant happiness within, is incomparably more important than to derive a transient and occasional gratification from exciting external applause.

Many good and worthy persons have objected to the elucidation of evangelical truth by fictitious narrative. They forget that if the Christian character could thus be represented as it is described in Scripture, rather than, as unhappily, it is too frequently exhibited in the world, much prejudice and opposition might be prevented. The mild, the persuasive, the dignified demeanor inculcated and inspired by the grace of God

would be more readily appreciated; while the austerity of disposition, the aversion to control, the proneness to interference, the affected language, the discontent, the self-complacency, and positiveness, which so frequently assume the holy name of religion, being discountenanced as they deserve, would impede no longer that all-important cause which they are professedly eager to advance. Nor let it be forgotten that our Divine Teacher himself has sanctioned, by his use of parables, the employment of imaginary histories to illustrate and enforce religious duty.

Nothing places abstract truth more vividly before the mind than to see it represented acting and conversing in real life. No doubt higher honour may be acquired, and more extensive benefit conferred, in the graver and more serious departments of composition; yet, to attain some degree of usefulness by the humblest work of fiction, must be ranked among the objects of legitimate ambition, however faint and unfounded may be the hope of success.

MODERN ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

CHAPTER I.

> And e'en while fashion's brightest arts decoy,
> The heart distrusting, asks if this be joy.
>
> GOLDSMITH.

NEVER were two ladies more fitted to adorn the fashionable world in Edinburgh, than Lady Fitz-Patrick and Lady Howard, who both usually came, with their families, in November, to spend a part of the winter at their town residences in Moray Place and Charlotte Square. Every body knew them, and they knew every body; their equipages, their jewels, their houses, and their establishments, were beyond the possibility of competition or criticism; and if each person's happiness were really to be measured by the opinion and report of others, we need only repeat what was daily remarked in every boudoir and drawing-room where their names were mentioned, that nothing could be more fortunate or more enviable than they both were, as they appeared to have

taken out a patent for avoiding all the ordinary vexations and discomfitures of life. These ladies were sisters, and their chief object in coming to Edinburgh, when our story begins, was to give a last polish to the education of their two eldest daughters, who were now at an age to require what is emphatically termed a finishing; few mothers being of opinion with the good divine, who remarks that the education of man can never be finished during the present state of existence. The boys of both families were scattered all over England at various public and preparatory schools, whence they only returned to riot during the holidays at home; but Eleanor Fitz-Patrick and Matilda Howard having both recently attained the age of sixteen, were now far advanced in education, according to the views which were entertained on the subject by their respective mothers, whose methods and ideas, however, were as widely at variance on the management of children, as on every other subject where fashion had established no certain and despotic law.

Lady Fitz-Patrick had once been the most celebrated beauty of her day, and having preserved her sylph-like figure and bright hazel eyes, lighted up with the assistance of rouge, she still maintained an opinion, that to feel young was the same as to be young; therefore her costume was as juvenile as ever. She disdained the use of caps or turbans, but wore her dark hair dressed with jewels, and piqued herself upon leading the "best dressed life" in the world of fashion, where existence itself seemed to her a joyous carnival of continued and uninterrupted festivity. Her whole time and thoughts were engrossed in preparing to receive visitors, and in attracting admiration when they came. She was all fascination for strangers, but unfortunately the more nearly people

were connected with her, the less she cared for their good opinion,—her heart might be compared to a well-frequented hotel, where the last comers were always the most welcome,—her conversation, her music, her dress, and her smiles, were all put on, like her diamonds, for public display; but when her husband or family wished to share in private, what was so lavishly bestowed on every one else, she complained of being languid, nervous, indisposed, or any thing that gave her an excuse for being indolent and *ennuyée*. In short, this lady was, as she wished to be, the idol of all her mere general acquaintances, who remarked with astonishment and disapprobation how carelessly Sir Richard listened to their rapturous praises of her lively and captivating manners, and how immediately he turned off the subject when the grace and vivacity of his wife became, as it frequently did, the topic of an unqualified panegyric. Sir Richard Fitz-Patrick was an easy, indolent man, fond of good eating and luxurious living, who often found his own table in such a racket of confusion, or else so delivered up to dulness, that he dined frequently at the club when he could escape from home; and his children only saw their mother when they were fantastically dressed in the evening, in order to display their various accomplishments, like so many little fantoccini, for the amusement of the company.

Lady Fitz-Patrick's house was the surest avenue to good society in Edinburgh, and whatever individual was introduced by her, might be as certain of rapid circulation as a new shilling out of the mint. Her house was lighted up for company twice every week, and no one else presumed to be "at home" on the nights when her parties took place. She was lady patroness of every public ball that was given during the season,—she could fill

the theatre on a day's notice with a numerous and fashionable audience,—and her table was covered every morning, like a snow-storm, with cards and invitations, so that she often laughingly threatened to give up residing in Edinburgh, to avoid the trouble of answering notes, or else to appoint a secretary of her own for the home department. Such a brilliant and successful career as we have described was the envy and admiration of all competitors; and though her own heart, which had naturally been endowed with sensibility, did occasionally feel some misgivings, whether the blaze of outward prosperity were a sufficient substitute for that inward peace which the world takes away, but never can bestow, she soon stifled these unwelcome emotions, and succeeded in persuading herself, that the first object in life for herself, and for her lovely daughter, was to gain applause and admiration from the surrounding world.

In Eleanor Fitz-Patrick's education, her mother did as she would have been done by, carefully teaching every accomplishment that could tend to embellish her manner, or to increase her fascinations. She was trained exclusively for the drawing-room, and it was her conduct and appearance there which alone seemed of importance to Lady Fitz-Patrick, who was in a constant fidget to exhibit her, and who kept a list, as long as a newspaper, of her delinquency, in appearance or address, for which she required to be corrected. The care of Eleanor's morals and religion was committed to the governess, with a careless remark, that these things were quite out of her own line, and as for any management of the mind and temper, that was quite too much for her to attempt; but as Eleanor had naturally great animal spirits, it became the delight of her mother to encourage every indication of vivacity. All her childish *bon mots* were

treasured up, and repeated to each successive visitor, in Eleanor's presence, and even when she did not overhear the exact purport of the communication, every one is gifted with a natural tact, which reveals at once when we are ourselves the subject of conversation, by which she discovered who was heroine of the tale. However pert her replies might have been, to any stranger who addressed her, they were generally hailed with a burst of rapturous applause, and the inherent turn for mimicry which seems natural to all children, was cultivated in Eleanor by the most unbounded commendation. If Lady Fitz-Patrick occasionally reproved her daughter for imitating the voice or manners of her friends, it was in a tone of affected remonstrance, but with a laugh in her eye, which showed anything rather than disapprobation, and the little mimic was often desired, a minute afterwards, to show how Sir Colin Fletcher walked, or Lady Evans shook her head. The capricious preferences and aversions which Eleanor expressed towards people, were also made a subject of grave discussion, and actual importance,—how she had taken a strange unaccountable antipathy to old Mrs Fortescue, and been most surprisingly gracious to Lady Montague; and the peculiarities of her temper and conduct were watched as a matter of diversion, but without the smallest idea of their being corrected or improved. "Eleanor has an odd whim of being very grave and pensive for the last few days," said Lady Fitz-Patrick to her sister one day. "I have no conception of the cause, but it rather becomes her for variety! You can scarcely imagine that her style of features would suit the contemplative mood, but indeed I can conceive no expression which would not look captivating in her faultless countenance."

Though Miss Fitz-Patrick's governess had been very

frequently changed, her mother was always fortunate enough to secure one who had educated a certain number of accomplished Lady Carolines and Lady Sophias; and as most of these pupils had since been brilliantly established in life, "that was the best criterion," she remarked, "of the young ladies having been properly brought up." In Eleanor's dress there was generally something singular and fantastic, which claimed observation, and seemed to point her out, from her earliest infancy, as an object of notice, and Lady Fitz-Patrick had been always in the habit of boasting how constantly her nurse had formerly been stopped in the street, and asked, "whose charming child she was." The peculiar cut of her bonnet might often have claimed some part of the merit, but Eleanor Fitz-Patrick was indeed an eminently beautiful girl. The regular contour of her features, the transparent whiteness of her skin, the sunny smile upon her face, and the laughing brightness of her hazel eyes, gave a dazzling brilliancy and intelligence to her countenance, which it was impossible to look at without admiration. There was a murmur of applause whenever she entered her mother's drawing-room, which the lovely object of it but too soon learned to interpret aright; and in case its import might have escaped attention, her delighted mother generally entertained the maid, when she superintended her daughter's evening toilette, with anecdotes of the admiration which "those beautiful ringlets" had excited, and how her foot had been compared to a Chinese lady's, it was so "ridiculously small."

"There is no advantage in concealing from a girl that she is handsome," was a frequent remark of Lady Fitz-Patrick in her most sensible tone; "she soon finds abundance of people to tell her so, and will become more

indifferent from being accustomed to consider herself an acknowledged beauty. We always see that persons who are born to high rank think less of it than those who are promoted late in life; and I am convinced the same rule will hold good with respect to admiration also: Eleanor is born to it, and the sooner she is aware of her birthright the better!"

Her ladyship forgot, however, to guard the information she so liberally afforded, with such an appearance of indifference as might have fortified her daughter's mind against over-estimating the gifts of nature; and when the lovely Eleanor perceived that nothing distressed her mother so much as the most transient blemish in her looks, she soon learned the too easy lesson of considering her personal appearance as the most important object in life, and would have shut herself up for a week, rather than be seen under the slightest eclipse of her usual brilliancy.

If Lady Fitz-Patrick led a life of busy idleness, laboriously, though often vainly, toiling after pleasure, which has been so truly compared by the poet to quicksilver, for it "still eludes us, but it glitters still," Lady Howard's engagements were even more unrelaxed and incessant in their exaction on her time and thoughts. She had never been a beauty like her sister, and, therefore, thinking it essential to become something wonderful in her own way, she had early in life determined to be "prodigiously clever." When a report first arose, many years before the commencement of our story, that Sir Francis Howard was to marry the blue-stocking Miss Neville, the rumour was usually received with contemptuous incredulity; and after it had been at length duly confirmed, the gossiping world in general declared, they never could cease to wonder at so unsuitable a match; while many excellent

people said (as they had remarked of a hundred marriages before,) that "after this they could never be surprised at any thing again!" Sir Francis Howard had always been considered a mere horse-and-dog man, whose studies were entirely confined to the Sporting Magazine and the Racing Calendar, varied occasionally by a peep at White's Farriery, when any of his horses were indisposed; and the chief object of his attention, when he opened a newspaper, was to know the state of the St Leger, or to read of any extraordinary run that had taken place with the Leicester or Yorkshire hounds; and whatever horses were to be sold at Tattersall's he carefully traced their pedigree, and often proved some of them to deserve a patent of nobility on account of their high lineage.

Sir Francis Howard had been an English stranger for the winter, when Miss Maria Neville made her debut in Edinburgh, and he had admired her seat on horseback, and her vivacity of look and manner, before the dreadful truth became revealed to him, that she was "blue!" His friends laughed at the discovery, and piqued him into asserting that he liked her the better for it. They tried to "show her up" on one occasion before him, and asked her a number of unanswerable questions. "If she knew what was written in the lost books of Livy?" "Whether Charles the Bald wore a wig?" and "Who commanded the left wing of the French at the battle of Spurs?" Miss Neville had tact enough to encourage the joke with liveliness and humour; Sir Francis protested that he admired spirit and intelligence; his friends laughed on, and at length laughed him into marrying her.

Nobody could conjecture what number of languages Lady Howard knew, and there was even a report that

she had been convicted of Greek and Latin. Her acquaintance with literature became obvious every time she spoke; for it was very seldom that Lady Howard did not quote some book that no one else in the room had ever either seen or heard of, so that she went for some time under the sobriquet of "The Walking Library." She was a keen politician too, and constantly received "Private Letters from London," with all the newest reports, which were "quite certain, and a great secret." Once she had known a whole day before any one at the club, that there would be a change of Ministry; and Sir Francis often lamented, on her account, the want of a Petticoat Parliament, as she would have been the greatest orator in it. Lady Howard's name was in every book-club; she collected autographs and franks; composed a little volume of Sonnets on "Ruined Towers,"—"Broken Lilies,"—and "Forget-me-nots;" contributed to Blackwood's Magazine; and once she actually perpetrated a pamphlet on the state of the nation, which was handed about in confidence amongst a select circle of friends, who pronounced it to be "well worthy of HER PEN."

Besides all this, Lady Howard patronized every body, and Sir Francis often told her, that she saved their acquaintances a perfect fortune in advertisements. If a servant needed a place,—if a friend wanted a house,—or a shop required customers, she was indefatigable, and covered her chimney-piece with cards from singing-masters who required scholars, and from decayed gentlewomen who washed lace. Her back drawing-room was a perfect repository for the sale of paintings and pincushions, to gain a livelihood for various deserving persons in distress; and it was reckoned quite a service of danger to visit much at Lady Howard's, she had so many cha-

ritable traps set, to catch all the loose cash that might be straying in her friends' pockets. Many who entered the house with a firm resolution of being quite impregnable to all assaults on their benevolence, found themselves returning to their carriages afterwards most unaccountably laden with "the sweetest little poem in the world by a poor blind cobbler;" or a pair of rickety hand-screens that had been painted by an old woman in bed; or else a dozen of tickets for the raffle of some poor man's watch, which was to be generously returned to him by any one who had the good fortune to win it. If they successively evaded all these temptations, then they generally found themselves pledged to employ, for the rest of their lives, some distressed baker with a large family, whose bread was not much sourer than other people's; or to be measured at some cheap shop for a pair of shoes that it would be impossible ever to wear.

Sir Francis professed to be the only person who never would listen to her recommendations, and he was often known to insinuate, that she must certainly levy a percentage for the trouble she took. But his cellar and his stable were both alike inaccessible to all her bargains, and he sometimes laughed his friends completely out of countenance when he saw them pinioned into a "cheap coat," or suffering under a "treasure of a cook," warranted and recommended by Lady Howard.

Her parties were of a perfectly different caste from those of Lady Fitz-Patrick, though equally select and exclusive in her own line. Any author who had ever written, or was supposed to be writing, a book, was sure to obtain a card; all artists who had pictures in the Exhibition received invitations immediately; advocates who were too busy to attend parties in general; travellers who had penetrated beyond the common orbit of Italy

and Switzerland; professors of every science; amateurs in music, mathematics, or phrenology; young ladies who could talk of taste and the fine arts; and Members of Parliament who had spoken in "the House," were all assembled and mingled together at Lady Howard's "petites soirees." Sir Francis complained that it was almost impossible to smuggle in any of his own friends, though he protested that they were generally very illustrious personages in their own departments;—gentlemen who had bagged nearly a hundred brace of grouse in a single day,—or who had driven their own carriages so rapidly as to outstrip the mail, or who could walk a mile in five minutes,—all put in their claims to be "lions," but were very rarely admitted to pass muster, and only under an embargo on their being ever asked again. In short, nobody was ever half so busy or so clever in this world before as Lady Howard; and the labour of supporting the character she assumed might have made her an object of pity to the most worn-out actress. Night and day she played her part, or occupied herself in preparing for it. She kept up a correspondence that would have wearied a secretary of state, and ran through so many books, that it might have tired the eyes of Argus to read them, or the hands of Briareus to turn the leaves over. Her mind became like the bed of a river, where every thing flowed through, and nothing remained. History, reviews, pamphlets, magazines, poems, travels, and biographies, were all strewed upon her table, waiting to be read the first leisure moment, though frequently she paid them off with the most transient glance, like an insolvent debtor, who dismisses a host of creditors at once, by paying a shilling in the pound.

When Lady Howard had got some degree in arrear of her reading, she had an instinctive dread of the fre-

quent opening question in a literary conversation,—"Have you read the last publication?" and she wished at least to be able to reply in her usual tone of decided criticism, "I began it, but the style did not please me;" or, "the little I had patience for seemed very hackneyed." Occasionally she made some governess out of place mark the most prominent passages of a new book, if she suddenly heard that the author himself was to appear at an approaching party; and Sir Francis alleged that once when a friend of her own had entrusted his manuscript poem for perusal, which she entirely forgot till he sent for the volume again, Lady Howard merely glanced down the last word of every line, to see how they all rhymed, and then wrote to him that she thought it "extremely harmonious."

Such a public-spirited individual as we have described could scarcely be expected to squander much time upon the care of her children's education, yet she was a prodigious amateur in the systems and theories by which infants can be trained into prodigies on the shortest notice. Lady Howard had already lost several of her family, who were successively the wonders of their day. Each of them knew his letters at three years old, sung and repeated hymns at four, spoke French at five, and died at six, to the surprise and grief of their mother, who lamented her hard fate, and talked much of the severity of her afflictions; but she learned no caution by experience, and educated those who were spared with unrelaxing vehemence. Sir Francis mournfully declared that his children had been worked to death; but not being gifted with sufficient moral courage to insist on his own prerogative of absolute interference, he vainly attempted to convince Lady Howard of her error, and finding she was impregnable to argument or entreaty,

he contented himself with banishing his three remaining sons to school, and resolutely determined on estranging his affections from Matilda, whom he regarded as an object of painful sympathy, beyond the reach of his assistance, and therefore inevitably a victim, like the rest, to excessive cultivation. Lady Howard's utmost ingenuity was exercised in devising plans of study for her daughter, each of which required to be tried under the dynasty of a different governess, so that, by the time Matilda Howard attained the age of sixteen, she had been successively taught by eight, all of whom were instructed in the last "method" that had been invented for making young ladies accomplished on the newest pattern; and though each of these preceptresses brought recommendations and testimonials, setting them forth as models of perfection, yet six months afterwards, Lady Howard invariably found out some fatal deficiency, which put a premature end to their reign. Sir Francis had been heard to insinuate what many people believed, that the pleasure she had in providing them with situations among her friends made Lady Howard fastidious, and still more the gratification of writing to her correspondent at Berne or Schauffhausen, for a description of all the remaining Mademoiselles, with unpronounceable names, still *en pension* in the neighbouring convents, together with a catalogue of their various acquirements, which were then emblazoned and discussed at the next committee on education amongst her literary friends.

Matilda Howard's beauty was as brilliant, and her talents were no less promising, than those of her cousin, Miss Fitz Patrick; but Lady Howard had a theory so decidedly against any girl being either seen or heard of till she was ready to be finally launched, that on the few

occasions when Matilda appeared with her governess before visitors, she was merely permitted to be present as a quiet spectator, instead of acting, like Eleanor, in the capacity of principal performer; and in the quiet recesses of her own school-room, she was governed ostensibly according to the code of laws established by Lady Howard, but in reality according to the whim or caprice of the last new administration from Switzerland.

In the fashionable world few people knew, and the few who knew seldom recollected, that Lady Fitz-Patrick and Lady Howard had an elder sister, who considered herself as much a leader, and a person of consequence in her own particular "set," as themselves; and if possible, she found more to do than either of them. Miss Barbara Neville, in her youth, had been always much overlooked, owing to the superior brilliancy of her younger sisters, and with the same love of excitement, she tried to dress like Lady Fitz-Patrick, and to talk like Lady Howard, but some how it never succeeded; she was neither gazed at nor listened to as they were, and the case seemed beyond all remedy, till at length it was suddenly announced, as publicly and decidedly as if she had been going to be married, that "Miss Barbara Neville had become serious!" From that moment she was never seen or heard of again at Lady Fitz-Patrick's balls, nor at Lady Howard conversazionés, though she henceforth mingled in a world of her own, and enjoyed a great deal of what Sir Francis called "religious dissipation." There was always some clergyman, as infallible as the pope, whose preaching it seemed necessary to her salvation to attend, and this unfortunately never happened to be the pastor of her own parish, who was merely a man of sincere but unpretending piety: and, accordingly, every Sunday a coachman and a pair of horses were de-

nied that rest which is the privilege of every living creature on the Sabbath, and obliged to convey Miss Barbara Neville to hear what she called "a sweet or a striking discourse." If any church was open for an extra sermon, before breakfast or after dinner, she preferred attending a third or fourth service to the more retired and equally essential duties of private prayer and meditation. At every missionary meeting Miss Barbara Neville secured a front seat, and would gladly have mounted on the platform if her ascent had been allowed. At the General Assembly she might have been mistaken for a *ruling elder*, her attendance night and day was so incessant; and in every company indiscriminately she was ready to talk of her *experience*, as if she were the only Christian of the party, having misconceived cant for religion, like those who fancy that the rumbling of a cart is thunder. Every new doctrine found an advocate in Miss Neville; and far from concluding that the most important topics are always most fully and distinctly enforced in Scripture, she generally seized on those which were obscure and difficult, maintaining that they were the most essential, so that a novice in controversy might have imagined that a new volume of the Bible had been recently discovered, from the zeal with which she propagated opinions which had been unknown in former ages to the humble, the teachable, the learned and the devout students, who, praying for the light of God's own Spirit, and studying His word, to *receive* the sense and not to *give* it, had lived under the influence of its precepts, and died in the believing anticipation of its promise and hopes. Miss Barbara Neville had moreover struck out a particular interpretation of prophecy for her own use, and was supposed to be writing on it for the public benefit, as she talked slightingly of Newton and Keith, whom she stig-

matised as persons of "narrow views," and she evidently thought that, for her own part, she

> "Could deep mysteries unriddle
> More easily than thread a needle."

Her very dress was religious; she wore a cottage bonnet as long and round as a telescope, a sad-coloured gown of some remarkably dingy hue, and an enormous basket on her arm, which left the imagination of spectators at fault to conjecture whether it contained provisions or clothing for a whole family in distress. Sir Francis used to complain that in church no one disturbed his devotions so much as Barbara, for if the most ordinary remark occurred, on the shortness or uncertainty of human life, she sighed as audibly as an old woman on the pulpit stairs, and if the sinfulness of our nature was alluded to, she shook her head till her long narrow bonnet vibrated like the pendulum of a clock.

There was one subject of mortification which constantly teazed and annoyed Miss Neville, beyond all power of endurance. By no possible device could she ever contrive to impress on either of her sisters that she was a religious character. All the genuine Christians among her connections or acquaintances were ready to put a charitable construction on her "little foibles," and anxious to believe her a true, though injudicious convert. Those who resembled herself in their love of religious novelties and discoveries held her up as a perfect saint, and the world in general seldom take the trouble of discriminating between real and artificial devotion, so that they were perfectly satisfied to consider any one who wore a poke bonnet without trimmings, and attended missionary meetings, as fully entitled to rank amongst the general class of Methodists. But Lady Fitz Patrick and Lady Howard affected not to perceive any change

whatever in Miss Neville, which annoyed her more than the severest persecution could have done;—in that she might have gloried, but there was no glory whatever in being addressed as a mere every-day mortal.

"Ah! Barbara, how has the world treated you since we met last?" said Lady Howard, one day, carelessly extending a finger to be shaken, when she called in Moray Place.

"It matters little to one who is above the world, how she is treated by its votaries," replied Miss Neville, angrily glancing at the solitary finger.

"My dear Barbara! you are no more above the world than myself," said Lady Howard, laughing; "we are both alike steeped in its interests and concerns, though in a different line; and we are ready to make very considerable sacrifices to obtain its good opinion. I can tell what true religion is, though, like Lord Byron, 'just skill'd to know the right, and choose the wrong.' Yours is a mere Birmingham imitation, which one would be ashamed to wear. I could fancy you very capable, if circumstances required it, of going to the stake as a martyr, or of taking the veil, or building an hospital! But to sit soberly down in peaceful insignificance, and consistently fulfil the simple duties of your own station, is a piece of religious heroism that you are quite unequal to."

"You are an imcompetent judge of Christian duties, being very little in the habit of studying them," replied Miss Neville, indignantly.

"No, Barbara," said Lady Howard, with some emotion; "I can love and venerate in others, what I might vainly wish to become myself; and you know we have, amongst ourselves, one bright example of the utmost perfection to which our nature can be brought. Were society composed of such angelic minds as hers, it would

be like heaven already upon the earth; for if there be any mortal in existence, that it were possible for ME to envy, it is one whose very presence acts like the spear of Ithuriel, in shewing me the deformity of every thing worldly, and makes me often feel, in spite of myself, that there may be a dignity and a blessedness of spirit beyond any thing that you or I have ever known, and which would be cheaply purchased at the sacrifice of all I ever expect to enjoy."

The person to whom Lady Howard alluded would have been the very last to appropriate these characteristics. Connected by marriage with the various individuals whom we have already described, she was really all that they wished to appear. Beauty, talents, and deep unaffected piety, were united in the widow of Lady Howard's only brother; and though no one could have told the precise hour at which Lady Olivia Neville first became religious, yet the earliest traditions of childhood had marked her out as one in whom the graces of the Christian character were beautifully developed. Surrounded, as she had once been, by all that could have served to gratify her vanity, or to engage her affections in the world, she had gone on in the strait and narrow path of duty and devotion, unbiassed by the allurements of the present scene, though not insensible to its events. Like the disciples of our Great Master, who plucked the ears of corn as they passed along, but yet considered it their main object to follow after Him, she kept her eye steadily fixed upon that Saviour whom it was the continual desire of her heart to imitate; and without either courting the applause of the world, or defying its censure, she conciliated the regard of all who approached her, by the gentleness of her address, and the frankness of her manner, while she yet maintained the consistency and integrity

of her own conduct. It proceeded from no motive of self-love, that Lady Olivia Neville had been wont to seek the good-will of those who might be placed within the sphere of her influence; but love to God and to her neighbour was the ruling principle of her conduct; and believing that there was no happiness for others but where it had been found by herself, she almost felt like the apostle that she could be all things to all men, so that by any means she might win some.

Advancing years perfected, in the furnace of affliction, that work of grace in the heart of Lady Olivia, which all the adulation and prosperity of the world had scarcely served to impede; and, after a succession of sorrows, which she was only enabled to survive by the consciousness that they came from the chastening hand of a Father, who would not needlessly afflict her, she at length reaped the benefit of that promise which is made to every sufferer, "The righteous shall cry, and the Lord shall hear, and deliver them out of all their troubles." Many a day of solitary mourning marked the progress of Lady Olivia's deep afflictions, but not one hour of murmuring or discontent. Grief had withdrawn her from much intercourse with the world, but she lived in it as a calm, and sometimes even as a cheerful stranger, who desired to diffuse the light of truth and happiness among all who approached her, and to pour the balm of peace and consolation into every heart that had bled like her own. In the dark hour of anguish and sorrow, all afflicted mourners felt the power of her mind,—she had but to take the hand of those who had been bereaved of what was dearest to them on earth; and while she sat, in silent sympathy, by their side, they felt that she understood their whole hearts, and had suffered like themselves. She had but to speak words of faith and re-

signation, on such occasions, when all might see that it was not the cold theory of one who knew not how to feel, but the sympathy of a heart, softened with every sentiment of tenderness and pity. Who has not found, that those who would bring comfort to mourners, must have mourned themselves; and that, in approaching our Divine Redeemer, for help in every time of extremity, it is our chief source of confidence that he has been tempted like as we are—that He hath wept like ourselves?

From the earliest period of their lives, a mutual attachment had existed between Colonel Neville, and his cousin, Lady Olivia Clifford; but the ambitious expectations of her father delayed their union, and with implicit submission to his commands, their intercourse was entirely suspended for several years; but long separation seemed only to increase that affection which was founded in perfect similarity of character and sentiment, till, at length touched by the high principle of Colonel Neville, who never attempted to see Lady Olivia without his sanction, and by her uncomplaining obedience in sacrificing her own wishes to his, Lord Hargrave, a short time before his own death, unexpectedly consented to terminate the long and painful probation which he had inflicted.

Nothing could exceed the happiness of Colonel and Lady Olivia Neville, during the years of devoted attachment and mutual confidence which succeeded their union; each anniversary was commemorated with fervent gratitude to Him whose bountiful hand seemed to lavish the choicest blessings upon them; and as time flew on, it only riveted their affection, and deepened the sympathy of their hearts. There are joys peculiar to the Christian, which can only be appreciated by those who are like-minded with himself; these Lady Olivia shared with her husband; and the few sorrows which clouded their

union only seemed to increase the tenderness and intensity of their attachment?—but

> Mortal pleasure, what art thou in truth!
> The torrent's smoothness ere it dash below.

Lady Olivia Neville had become the mother of several very promising children; and with all the indulgent tenderness of a mother's feelings, she watched over their happiness, at the same time that, with anxious solicitude, she bore continually in mind the solemn responsibility that a Christian parent must feel, in the thought of having given existence to those who shall never cease to live throughout the endless ages of eternity. While Lady Olivia encouraged her children in every innocent enjoyment, she yet made it the continued subject of her prayers and endeavours, that they should seek God early, and find in Him their chief happiness and their most precious inheritance. Her conversation with them was frequently devoted to this great object, and from the moment that their young minds were capable of receiving the simplest truths, she took unwearied pains in adapting her expressions to their juvenile capacities, and in trying to give clearness and precision to their thoughts on religion. She watched over their dispositions with anxious affection, in order to take advantage of any tendency that might be guided towards enlightening the heart or understanding,—and every little incident of the day was improved to some useful purpose of instruction. She interested them with narratives adapted to their tastes, and told them facts calculated to impress the importance of religion on their hearts, evincing, by her own example, how essential it was to the enjoyment of real happiness. Colonel Neville also found no occupation so delightful as to lead forth his children amongst the wonders and the

beauties of nature, shewing them the wisdom, the benevolence, and the glory of that Great Being whom they were called on to serve and love, while he encouraged them to converse on terms of confidence, and to trust him with all their most secret thoughts and feelings, becoming thus the companion and the sharer of their greatest enjoyments.

With respect to this world, the cares and the hopes of Colonel and Lady Olivia Neville were doomed to be disappointed, and had their views been confined to the present scene, they must have mourned with sorrow as hopeless as it was bitter; for, in rapid succession, three of their beloved children were hurried to the grave by a malignant fever which broke out in the neighbouring village, bringing grief and desolation into every house. Lady Olivia was stunned by the sudden and fearful ravages of a malady that left her almost childless. She scarcely knew which of her lovely infants was taken and which was spared, while she sat in speechless anguish watching the sufferings which she could not alleviate, and trembling over the expiring struggles of those whom she would willingly have died to preserve. Often did she raise her eyes to Heaven in deep conviction how helpless is human affection in the hour of utmost need, and she cast herself before the throne of God, in token of that resignation to His will, which her lips could not utter. No hour was so dark, but what she still clung to that gleam of consolation which the utmost extent of human suffering cannot utterly extinguish in a Christian's breast, and Lady Olivia Neville felt, amidst the desolation of all she loved on earth, that there could be but a few years to mourn, before she was called to that world where she would see cause to rejoice that the will of God had been done, however agonizing and fearful the stroke which had severed her from those she had loved so tenderly.

Let no one ever say that his cup of affliction is full, for often when we think that the utmost judgments of the Almighty have been broken over our heads, there are yet more and yet severer in reserve, that Christians may learn to testify acquiescence in their Father's will, though there be nothing left to live for, except to prove our submission under His chastisements, and our readiness patiently to survive, if such be his decree, the wreck of all that nature holds most dear. One only child was left to Colonel and Lady Olivia Neville, "the loveliest and the last." She was all that their most sanguine wishes could have desired, and to her they fondly looked for consolation, as they contemplated the opening graces of her disposition, and the devotedness of her attachment towards themselves. The sudden bereavement of her former companions gave a cast of melancholy tenderness to the character of Laura Neville, which endeared her more than ever to her afflicted parents; but having at length become very solicitous to remove any remaining tendency to depression on her spirits, they resolved after the lapse of a month, to make a tour in the north, and to spend some time at Colonel Neville's shooting box, in a remote part of the Highlands, where an entire change of air, of scenery, and of occupations, was thought to give the speediest hope of restoring the tone to their daughter's nerves, and reviving her wasted strength.

Though Lady Olivia Neville's feelings had in some degree subsided from the first sudden burst of anguish and amazement with which she had been overpowered, yet every voice which she heard in the distance was still to her fancy like the voices of her absent children, and every footstep that approached seemed to remind her of the time when they used to fly into her arms with all the jocund glee of youth and health and spirits. Her room

was embellished with their portraits, which she had not resolution to displace. The scenes they had once enlivened by their presence looked as bright as before to every eye but hers. The very flowers that they had planted had survived them, and in spite of every strenuous effort to the contrary, Lady Olivia's mind continually brooded over all that cherished and aggravated her affliction, until Colonel Neville perceived that to her also a change of scene had become absolutely essential, and he eagerly prepared to take an excursion, from which he augured the most salutary effects to those whose health and happiness were dearer to him than his own.

It was the finest season that had ever been remembered in the month of August, when Colonel and Lady Olivia Neville, with their only remaining child, set out in a light open phaeton, on their journey to Ross-shire. The clear blue sky was unclouded over their heads, the fields were covered with a luxuriant harvest, and the whole scene through which they passed was bathed in the richest tints of autumn. All was cheerfulness and beauty as they passed along inhaling the pure gales of the morning, or basking in the glories of the evening sun-set. The smiling villages stretched along the road, the gleaners scattered upon the fields in groups, the school-boys shouting in noisy glee, the children nutting in the woods, the sportsman surrounded by his dogs, and the fisherman plying his patient vocation, all called forth the sympathy of Lady Olivia, who was ever ready to participate in the feelings of others, while her exquisite taste for the charms of nature never allowed her to be satiated with admiring each bold romantic scene which successively presented itself before her. The rugged mountains, varied to their very summits with rocks and heather, the golden blossoms of the furze adorning the valleys, the

scarlet berries of the mountain ash, the deep red tints of the beech and the oak relieved against the pale bright hue of the plane, the silver stems of the birch, and the dark fantastic forms of the fir-tree, gave altogether a magic variety of colouring to the scenery, the bright mountain torrents dashing rapidly over their pebbly beds, tinged with so bright a yellow that every stone took the tint of a cairngorum, the willow and "the ladye of the woods" dipping their long festoons into the stream, and the large deep Highland lochs, in which the craggy mountains and the drooping coppice were reflected as in a mirror, and the heron and the wild deer might rest in security amidst the solitude of nature. Such scenes as these called forth Lady Olivia's thoughts from the sorrow that had so long corroded within her breast, and she rewarded the anxious solicitude of Colonel Neville by an appearance of returning serenity, and by at least concealing from him much of the sorrow she could not entirely conquer. At each place where they stopped, some glen was to be explored, or some landscape of more than usual loveliness to be seen from the neighbouring eminences, to which Colonel Neville delighted to conduct her, and whatever he proposed to promote her restoration, she unhesitatingly complied with, and seconded by her own efforts and prayers. He conversed with her often on the pleasures and duties which might still be sources of happiness to them both, and exercised all the ingenuity which tenderness and sympathy could suggest, in reminding her, that though much had been taken, still much remained to bless them both; and that no affliction could leave them utterly comfortless, while they had the mournful privilege of sharing it together. In leading Lady Olivia to look abroad on the loveliness of nature, where the majestic glories of creation were displayed in rich pro-

fusion before her, Colonel Neville remarked, how infinite was the condescension of its Almighty Lord in revealing Himself to her as one who pitied her sorrows, even as a father pitieth his children, and that thus, the very tenderness with which she mourned for her own offspring, showed more affectingly the beauty and the expressiveness of that consoling assurance.

All the sensibility of Lady Olivia's heart was soothed by the consciousness of her husband's considerate affection, and the returning health of their interesting Laura became a continual source of pleasure to her parents, so that, as they approached the cottage of Colonel Neville, perfect serenity and peace appeared to have been restored to their hearts, and they both felt that in their mutual affection, and in the love of God, they had a secure foundation for happiness, which the storms of life might shake but never could destroy.

A long precipitous hill led towards the gate of Glen-Alpine Cottage, so deep and rugged as to be often considered dangerous, though it had never occasioned any serious accident. On the evening that they reached the gate, night was fast closing in, and their servant being impatient to arrive, omitted to stop the carriage and put a drag on the wheels, which Colonel Neville did not remark till he had proceeded a considerable way down, after which it was impossible to stop their descent. The horses slipped and scrambled for a considerable way, till at length the road suddenly took a sharp turn, the carriage went off the track, and in an instant more their equipage was upset, and the whole party scattered over a bank beneath.

Colonel Neville, though he had met with a violent contusion on the head which stunned him for some time, was the first to recover consciousness, and having ascertained that Lady Olivia was severely hurt, he became

unmindful of every thing but the safety of his family, and overlooking his own sufferings entirely, he hastened to the lodge, which was still nearly a mile distant, to spread the alarm, and to bring immediate assistance. A crowd was speedily assembled from the village, who accompanied him to the fatal spot, where Lady Olivia was still completely insensible, and as her shoulder seemed to be dislocated, his first care was to have her conveyed on a shutter to the nearest house. Colonel Neville then anxiously turned to the place where his daughter had been cast. The country people and servants stood in a silent group round the spot where she lay, and when they observed him approaching, a momentary effort was made to impede his progress; but the agitated father, alarmed at their looks of grief and consternation, broke through the assembled multitude, and gazed upon the face of his child—she was a corpse—her head had evidently been dashed with violence against the trunk of a tree, and she seemed instantly to have expired.

With a groan of agony, Colonel Neville sunk upon the ground, and clasping his daughter in his arms, he became nearly as lifeless as herself. The stillness of death reigned among the sympathizing spectators, and nothing awoke him from a stupor of overwhelming grief, till the sudden remembrance of Lady Olivia's precarious situation roused up the manly energy of his character. By a powerful effort he stifled his agony, and reflected how much must be done to screen the worst from her knowledge, till she was prepared for the blow; and in silent but bitter anguish Colonel Neville withdrew from the scene of his misfortune, and placed himself beside the couch of his suffering wife, resolved that no tongue but his own should reveal to her the last and greatest of all her bereavements. Night and day he watched with fervent anxiety beside

her pillow, fearful lest some imprudent attendant, or some accidental circumstance, might prematurely disclose it all, and dreading, yet almost longing for the moment when their tears should be mingled together, and he might give vent to the deep tide of sorrow that had so nearly overpowered him.

At length all danger of fever seemed to be at an end. Lady Olivia's pulse became regular, her pain subsided, and Colonel Neville was informed that the hour had come when it might be prudent, as well as necessary, to tell the anxious mother that she was childless. Then was the time when his courage failed and his heart sunk, for he was called on to communicate to another the blow which had stunned and overwhelmed himself. The struggle for composure and fortitude was long and severe, till at length bodily exhaustion, combined with mental anguish, brought on a brain fever, of which in a few days he expired.

We must draw a veil over many years, during which the bereaved wife and mother was buried in unapproachable sorrow, while her tears would have incessantly flowed, but for the rich consolations that were still poured into her breast by the hand that is strong to smite, but omnipotent to save. There was a gulf into which she dared not look, for every past scene of happiness appeared now rising up like a scorpion to sting her, and every future hour of life was darkened down to naked waste. "If in this life only we have hope, I should be of all beings the most miserable," was the continual reflection of her heart, while she struggled to fix her thoughts on the bright scene of futurity. "Is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow," was the language of nature; for her soul was wrung with bitter remembrance of former joys; but still, like the patriarch of old, she

could say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in him."

Lady Olivia Neville had never before mourned alone, but now the eye which had watched over her with deepest sympathy was closed for ever—the hand which had so tenderly dried up her tears was cold in the grave,—the tongue that had spoken words of holy hope and pious consolation, was never to be heard again. "But, oh! the thought that he is safe!"—that was what first enabled Lady Olivia to contemplate the past and the future with composure. "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me! A few short years of evil past, and death-divided friends shall meet to part no more."

It is in so dark a night of desolation as had gathered around Lady Olivia Neville, that the bright star of heavenly promise shines with redoubled lustre, and seems to point our way towards the Saviour, who veiled His glory in an earthly form, that he might teach us how to suffer, and where to seek for help. She meditated on His agonies till her own appeared to become lightened,—she remembered the sympathy He has promised to His afflicted children, and felt that she was not alone in her sorrows;—she contemplated the glory with which He is now for ever surrounded, and anticipated with fervent desire the time when faith should be swallowed up in sight, and hope in enjoyment. But though she trusted that the night was far spent, and that the day was at hand, she yet remembered the example as well as the promises of her Redeemer, and tried, like Him, in every hour of temptation and sorrow, to pray, and constantly to remember, that while she lived, much was given her to do as well as to suffer, and she must work the works of Him that sent her, as the hour would come when she could work no more.

CHAPTER II.

> Yet in my dreams a form I view
> That thinks on me, and loves me too;
> I start,—and when the vision's gone,
> I weep that I am all alone.
>
> ODE TO SOLITUDE.

"THE heart will break, yet brokenly live on." The affections may be blighted by sorrow and bereavement, but they never become utterly extinguished in the human breast; for while life remains, we must have something to love, and something to live for. Lady Olivia looked abroad upon the desolate waste around, and all that had been nearest and dearest to her was swept away. She felt like "a withered scroll, a scattered leaf, seared by the autumn blast of grief."

An ordinary mind must have sunk beneath the weight of such accumulated calamities, but though her wasted form and pallid cheek bore painful testimony to the depth of her sorrows—and none who saw her could suppose any earthly joy might ever reach that heart again—yet there survived in her spirit that general feeling of benevolence, which created a desire to diffuse amongst all who came within the sphere of her influence such happiness as she was never herself to know again, and wherever she heard of sorrow or suffering in her neighbourhood, she left the privacy of her own home, to place herself in the midst of a scene, where those who mourned often found their first consolation in pouring out the whole feeling of their hearts to one who was ready to

unite her tears, as well as her prayers, with every afflicted sufferer, and whose words were the more impressive, on account of the feeble frame and fading colour, which seemed to tell that she would lead the way towards that happier state of existence, to which she so earnestly directed her fellow-travellers.

But the warmest earthly affections of Lady Olivia Neville soon became centred in her two young and lovely nieces, for it seemed almost like the revival of a mother's tenderness, when she gazed on their bright and happy countenances, and heard their cheerful voices calling on her to rejoice with them in all their juvenile enjoyments. No human eye ever witnessed the tears she often shed at the remembrance that her own Laura might have been such as they, nor the prayers and the efforts that it cost her to meet them with that smile of benignity and affection, which invariably marked her reception of Eleanor and Matilda, whenever they were sent to visit her. It would have been difficult to say which was the most beautiful and fascinating of Lady Olivia's nieces, who were thought by strangers to bear a remarkable resemblance to each other. Matilda's eyes rivalled the hue of the violet, and Eleanor's were hazel, but the same classical outline marked their features, and the same transparent complexion was conspicuous in both. Their superb hair flowed in silken ringlets over their fair white foreheads, and the laughing smile that dimpled their cheeks, and lighted up their countenances with perpetual sunshine, attracted such admiration, that each was thought the most lovely and animated when her cousin was absent, and both were acknowledged to eclipse every competitor for the palm of beauty and grace. This likeness between their daughters gave additional interest to the keen rivalship between Lady

Fitz Patrick and Lady Howard, which of them should enjoy the greatest advantages in future life, and be the most universally admired. "I only wish our uncle Sir Philip could see Eleanor!" said Lady Fitz-Patrick, with a glance of approbation at her beautiful daughter; "he is such an enthusiast about symmetry of features and elegance of accomplishments, that I am sure he would appreciate her"

"As far as the hands and feet can be cultivated, she is certainly unrivalled," replied Lady Howard sarcastically, "and that is all Sir Philip will ever trouble his head about; but my system comprehends rather more than yours,—and by the time I have finished reading all the books on education that are now on the table, I hope to have completed my new method, and that Matilda will have some mind, as well as manner, before she goes into the world."

Being desirous to see much of her nieces, Lady Olivia Neville resolved to settle, while they were in Edinburgh, at Ashgrove, a cottage only two miles distant, which had belonged to her husband, and where she had spent many of her happiest years, before the afflicting period, when their children had withered, like blossoms of spring, in her arms, and the beloved partner of her sorrow had himself been so suddenly snatched away. It was a lovely retreat, which an artist would have desired to paint, or a poet to sing, as the appropriate refuge of innocence and peace. The house was smaller than might have been required with her very liberal income, but it was well adapted to Lady Olivia's secluded habits; and its rustic elegance, and cheerful aspect, pleased the taste of all who saw it. The wide casements of the windows were wreathed with China roses, passion flowers, and garlands of clematis, and the porch was embowered with

luxuriant jessamine, varied by the gayer blossoms of the golden budliah, and the crimson fuschia, while the air was perfumed with the aromatic flavour of the delicious verbena, and the luxuriant sweet-briar. A lovely green lawn sloped to the edge of the deep blue sea, and was washed by its waves,—the garden was covered with a rich and brilliant tapestry of flowers, and a grove of lofty sycamores and beeches varied, by their dark embowering foliage, the brightness and gayety of the surrounding scene, while the patches of light that stole through the branches gave variety to the velvet turf beneath. Not a sound was to be heard but the song of the blackbird and thrush,—the deep cooing of the wood-pigeon, the sighing of the breeze, and the roar of the ocean. Lady Olivia delighted to dwell amidst the sounds, as well as the sights of nature. The wild cry of the sea-bird was music to her ears, at a time when her blighted heart would have recoiled from more harmonious tones. The conflict of the elements reminded her of Him who rides in the whirlwind; and the dashing of the mountain stream over its pebbly bed, brought to her remembrance that voice which has been compared to the sound of many waters. There was not a changing hue in the smallest leaf which she did not view with interest, as connected with Him who orders each revolving season,—there was not an insect beneath her feet in which she could not trace her Maker's hand,—and the sublimest features in the surrounding landscape acquired grandeur and interest in her conception, when she reflected that they had been called forth from nothing by the word of His power.

"This earth is said to be but a leaf in the forest compared with countless worlds by which we are surrounded," thought she; "and I am one individual among the generations that are successively swept from its surface.

With what an oppressive sense of nothingness should I be overpowered by such a reflection, were it not for the merciful assurance of God's own word, that in His eye no human soul is insignificant, and were it not for the mighty proof He has given of His care over us, in sending His only Son to die, that we might live in His presence for ever?"

As Eleanor and Matilda had masters for every hour of every day during the week, it was at length granted, to the earnest entreaty of Lady Olivia, that each Saturday should be spent with her; and nothing could exceed the eagerness and joy with which they both anticipated that morning which was destined to gild the gloom of the whole preceding week, and give them some hours of natural enjoyment, after the heartless toil to which they were incessantly inured. Lady Olivia seemed to forget every care, from the moment they arrived at her house, except that of affording rational and varied amusement. She entered into all their diversions, and continually planned new pleasures that never would have occurred to themselves, so that all the joyous recollections of happy childhood became connected with their visit to Ashgrove. She laid out gardens for both of them, which were embellished according to their individual directions, and to which she carefully attended herself during their absence. She had poneys for them to ride, and poultry and pets of every kind, which belonged entirely to themselves, and by such a continual sympathy with their juvenile tastes, she acquired unlimited influence over their affections.

When Eleanor and Matilda were one evening taking leave of their aunt, she was surprised to observe an unwonted cloud of disappointment and chagrin on their usually animated countenances, of which she had some difficulty in ascertaining the reason.

"Aunt Barbara wished us not to mention what she said," replied Matilda, when Lady Olivia affectionately inquired the cause of her vexation.

"But I hate small secrets, and there can be no good cause for keeping this," interrupted Eleanor. "Aunt Barbara says, that since there is to be a sermon in church next Saturday, previous to the Sacrament, we shall be an interruption by coming here, and that therefore it would show a proper degree of consideration for your engagements to remain at home."

"My dear girls! how glad I am that this is explained, for the disappointment would have been quite as great to me as to yourselves," said Lady Olivia affectionately. "My duties, on the present occasion, though very solemn and important to myself, cannot interfere with your coming, especially as I am confident you will gladly conform in some measure to my circumstances in the prospect of so soon attending the Sacrament, and that our conversation in the evening may be rather of a more serious nature than usual."

If Miss Neville had dropt the most distant hint of a "serious" conversation, both Eleanor and Matilda would have dreaded something very much resembling a scold; but with Lady Olivia they felt safe, and only anticipated a more interesting discussion than usual of that one great subject, which was more or less connected with all she ever said to them; and therefore on the following Saturday, they entered her room with their usual expression of joyful hilarity, which was reflected in the looks of Lady Olivia when she tenderly embraced and welcomed them. "Before you ride, or go to the garden, my dear girls, I wish to produce the present that I promised you lately," said she, displaying two large and splendidly bound Bibles, which Eleanor and Matilda

received with the most joyous expressions of gratitude and pleasure, examining the ornaments and the type with the air of connoisseurs, and expressing themselves completely satisfied with both, and delighted to possess such treasures.

"Many fervent prayers have accompanied them," said Lady Olivia in a voice of tremulous emotion, "and many more shall often ascend before the throne of grace, that you may always place a due value on the contents of that book. I have frequently advised you each to read the Bible as a message to your own soul, and as if it had been written for no other individual in the world but yourself; and I trust you pray frequently, that He who sends it as his best gift to man, will also grant the teaching of His Holy Spirit, which can alone enable us to understand and appreciate it."

Matilda placed her hand affectionately in that of her aunt, and gazed at her with earnest and grateful attention, while Eleanor continued to examine her own recent acquisition, and to admire its elegant decorations, and beautiful title-page.

"We are living at a period, my dear girls, when but too many Christians are 'more curious than devout,' more occupied respecting 'new nothings than old truths,' and I am anxious to take this opportunity of warning you against endeavouring to be wise above that which is written. While others dispute, let us enjoy, for be assured that one spark of love to God is worth a folio volume of opinions."

"Yes!" said Matilda; "'Out of the heart proceed the issues of life;' and I recollect your saying, that a person who can talk fluently on religious subjects, without feeling them, knows no more than if a blind man discussed the beauties of nature, which he had never seen."

"Precisely," continued Lady Olivia; "and it is impossible to express how much I am often astonished and distressed to hear the spirit of vehement and angry warfare in which many people read and debate upon those blessed Scriptures which awakened the earliest affections of my own childhood, and seemed even then completely adapted to my taste and capacity,—which afterwards followed me in my happiest hours, with still brighter promises of hope, and in all my sorrows cheered me with sympathy and consolation, so that they have seemed continually like the eyes of a picture that were directed towards myself in every changing scene of life;—but now, how sadly have I seen them perverted into food for violent contention and presumptuous speculation!"

"I often feel the truth of that remark when we have visitors at home," said Matilda; "they seem, as you once observed, so full of definitions and metaphysical distinctions, that they are like people who could not quench their thirst with a draught from the purest spring, unless they could analyse its contents,—nor rest their wearied frame on a couch, without proving that it was intended for themselves, when both appear so suited to their necessities, that it would be most natural at once thankfully to make use of the refreshment they offer."

"True, my dear Matilda, most true!" replied Lady Olivia, contemplating her animated countenance with the tenderest interest. "The Bible seems to me a medium, clear as glass, through which I can trace, with daily increasing pleasure, the glory of God our Father, —the mercy of Christ our Saviour,—the purity of the Spirit our Sanctifier, and the happiness of heaven already begun upon earth, in the character and feelings of those who are rightly prepared for it. I see in myself, that the sufferings of life are most justly deserved, being

chiefly caused by our own evil hearts,—and that all the peace I have ever known comes immediately from God; and I thankfully believe, that in his own good time and way, He will perfect that work of mercy in my soul, which I have so long and so earnestly prayed him to accomplish. I can trace back, through the remembrance of many past years, the wise and necessary discipline of a Father's hand;—it is not yet completed;—but what is once begun on my behalf, will yet be perfected by a power far greater than mine; and I can confidently await the purpose of God's providence towards me, in every unforeseen circumstance of life, desiring that each wish of my heart may be implicitly prostrated before His will, and that he would order all things as shall be most for my own real good and for his glory."

"Eleanor and Matilda! my dear children—the only children now remaining to me—it is seldom I dare trust myself in conversation with even a transient glance at the past; there are inward sorrows that never leave my thoughts, but are buried there in perpetual silence; yet, for once I have desired to open my heart to you both, in the full belief and hope, that it will the more securely confirm our mutual confidence and affection. You already know how the whole sunshine of my existence became suddenly darkened,—how all earthly hope was crushed at once,—how every succeeding year has been one of loneliness and sorrow; but you cannot know how the afflictions that were ready to destroy me have been alleviated. Could any ray of hope have cheered me in this world, seeing that the husband and children, who were dearer to me than life, can never be restored; yet in this precious volume I read of promises which are daily drawing nearer to their fulfilment,—many of which have been realized to me already, and which I expect to

find sufficient in that hour, when all else that I could have ever known or trusted to must fail. May neither of you, my dear girls, ever need the consolations of Scripture so much as I have done; but in every emergency I cannot wish you more than that they prove as perfectly sufficient as I invariably find them, for truly these words of Scripture cannot fail to be fulfilled, 'He who trusteth in God shall never be put to confusion.'"

CHAPTER III.

> Talking is not always to converse—
> Not more remote from harmony divine
> The constant creaking of a country sign.
>
> COWPER.

It may be easily imagined, that amidst the vortex of gayety and business in which Lady Fitz-Patrick and Lady Howard involved themselves, they very rarely snatched a moment to look in at the quiet retreat of Lady Olivia Neville; yet both these ladies felt an involuntary respect and affection for her, which kept them in a continual state of self-reproach whenever she occurred to their recollection, with the usual remembrance of "what an age it was since they had seen her;" and their ingenuity was continually exercised in the composition of apologetic notes, written on pink and blue embossed paper, setting forth how inconsolable they felt, that the most indispensable business had occupied them constantly during the last few weeks, or that they had been actually on their way down to visit her when one of the horses fell lame. A great impediment in the way of their going to Ashgrove more frequently was, that both Lady Fitz-Patrick and Lady Howard had an instinctive dread of visiting there alone. Lady Olivia had never made a censorious remark to either of them, but yet the tenor of her own occupations, pursuits, and opinions, was so obviously at variance with theirs, that the whole course of her existence was inevitably felt as a sort

of tacit reproach to themselves; and they could not avoid occasionally placing their minds in the same elevation from which she viewed the busy scenes of life, and perceiving for a moment, with her eyes, the insignificance and folly of all that occupied and interested them.

There was a degree of peace and serenity in the aspect of Lady Olivia's retired little dwelling, that insensibly spoke the language of nature to their hearts, for it seemed like the breath of morning to a fevered soul, or like the calmness of healthful repose after the tossings of delirium, when their eyes rested on the refreshing sight of nature's loveliness. At no season of the year did that solitary retreat appear otherwise than beautiful, whether it were in the depth of winter, when the crisp hoar-frost had spangled the turf and the ivy with a light unbroken powdering of purest white, or when the richest tints of autumn were first beginning to glow upon the surrounding woods; or in spring, that brightest season of all, which seems to break upon our delighted senses anew every successive year, as if we had never before witnessed its joyous opening, enlivened by the sunny hedge-rows bursting into life; the fresh bright tints of the forest; the early blossom of the fruit trees; the tufts of primroses and violets, the lilacs, rhododendrons, and laburnums, the snow-drops and hyacinths, enamelling every bank; the soft gentle breeze; the clear blue sky, and the chorus of a thousand songsters. Even the hackneyed minds of those like Lady Fitz-Patrick and Lady Howard, whose joys were all artificial, could not but pause in such scenes for a moment, to ask themselves whether the tumultuous pleasures of their existence were not dearly purchased at the price of such peace as the world knows not of, and which they had never experienced themselves, though they could trace its existence and its influence in the

calm and dignified countenance of Lady Olivia Neville, whose whole aspect and deportment showed the serenity that reigned within, undisturbed by a single care respecting the busy competitions and petty rivalships of fashionable life, and only anxious to preserve that peace in her heart, and in her home, which she felt to be the true secret of happiness.

Whatever length of time might elapse between the visits of her sisters in-law, Lady Olivia received them with invariable kindness. She expressed no surprise at their absence, but welcomed them with the most cordial affection, and patiently listened to the whole torrent of their apologies and regrets with a satisfactory aspect of credulity and good humour. On similar occasions, Miss Barbara Neville generally overwhelmed her sisters with bitter civilities and sarcastic remarks, "wondering that they could find any time at all to waste on such an insignificant person as herself, remarking how lonely she must have felt, but for dear Lady Such-a-one, who never neglected her friends when they required attention;" and sometimes affecting not to recognise them, when they first entered the room, and then dryly observing, that "really when people met so seldom, it could not be wondered at if her memory failed, and she expected they would soon be strangers altogether."

When Lady Howard did venture to Ashgrove, she made a point of always arriving brimful of news, taking it for granted that nothing could be more delightful to a hermit like Lady Olivia, than to be put *au courant du jour* about the affairs of the world, and to be informed what had been thought of the King's last speech to the House of Commons, and when parliament was likely to be dissolved. She generally brought all the most recent newspapers and pamphlets in her hand, to leave at the

cottage, and recommended a perfect library of new books, which it was absolutely essential for every mortal to read. Religion being a branch of literature, was sometimes introduced also for Lady Olivia's edification, and most fluently discussed. There was generally some point of deep controversy, which had caused a great deal of wit and learning to be recently expended, and wherein squadrons of texts were drawn up against each other in hostile array; and in whatever form the attacks or replies might be laid before the public, Lady Howard brought the whole packet of them as an appropriate gift for her sister-in-law, who found great difficulty in politely evading the promise which was often nearly extorted from her, that she would carefully study the subject, and mark the passages she approved of!

Lady Fitz-Patrick was equally kind and communicative in her own line, during her visits to Lady Olivia, for whose amusement she generally began with announcing a long list of marriages between persons whom her auditor had never seen or heard of, with an elaborate description of the *trousseaux* and settlements. She had frequently some quarrel with her milliner to give the particulars of—or a new lady's maid, whose qualifications must be described. Sometimes, also, she enlarged at great length on the splendour of her last new carriages, or on the magnificence of some recent addition to her jewel-box, being scarcely able to persuade herself that such a recital should not awaken some degree of that interest and envy in the breast of Lady Olivia which they infallibly excited in ordinary minds; but the mere spectacle of life had never at any time power to raise the most transient emotion in one who acknowledged no happiness but that which sprung from the heart; and Lady Fitz-Patrick little thought it was only when she

made some passing allusion to her husband or children, that a sigh rose from the inmost feelings of Lady Olivia, when she reflected, that if hers had been spared, no splendour could have added to her happiness, nor any poverty diminished it. Occasionally in her conversation, Lady Fitz-Patrick stumbled on some anecdote of the theatre, which was hastily suppressed, as not being suitable to her auditor; but there was another ground upon which she always felt perfectly secure. Every instance she could mention was carefully hoarded up for her visits to Ashgrove, of the dreadful crowds she had encountered to hear some celebrated preacher, and of the rapturous admiration with which he had filled her. His style, his language, his voice, his manner, were all described and commented on with the most enthusiastic delight, and she generally wound up the whole by eagerly insisting, that LadyOlivia ought to drive to town the following Sunday, and enjoy such a treat as she had described.

There was often an air of good-humoured patronage in the tone of both Lady Fitz-Patrick and Lady Howard, when they took leave after paying what they considered a successful and entertaining visit, and their repeated promises to return very soon were reiterated in a voice which plainly shewed what a favour their coming at all really ought to be considered. If they arrived, as was often the case, during Lady Olivia's dinner, they smiled at her early hours and simple diet, but she was always ready to join in the laugh, aud to insist on its being their luncheon, as she maintained that her own country fare ought to be an agreeable variety, after the "*toujours perdrix*" to which they were accustomed at home. "You certainly mean to live for ever, Olivia! as one might suppose that Sancho's doctor had banished all your dressed dishes every day," said Lady Howard,

laughingly, drawing in her chair opposite to her hostess, one afternoon at Ashgrove. "There is surely a stereotyped edition of this roast mutton in your house, for I see it so often here."

"'When unadorned, adorned the most,' is a favourite motto in my kitchen," replied Lady Olivia, smiling; "I could always resist the machinations of your French cook, with his *patés à la merveille,* and his *soufflets à l'outrance,* for I really think my own good honest Mrs. Millar worth all the Monsieur Chef-d'œuvres that ever were imported; I like always to have some guess what we are eating, and my housekeeper's dinners are about as plain and unsophisticated as herself."

Mrs Millar, to whom Lady Olivia alluded, was quite a domestic of the old school. Devotedly attached to her mistress, whom she had served for more than twenty years, she was a perfect enthusiast in all that related to her own department, and managed to inspire the same spirit into all her assistants. No one was ever known to excel Mrs Millar in the excellence of her preserves; she had gained a prize at the Highland Society twice for her balm and gooseberry wine, and her cakes and jellies were beyond all comparison the best in the whole neighbourhood. Lady Howard seldom failed to gratify the honest pride of Mrs Millar, by visiting the housekeeper's room, where large presses of snowy damask were ostentatiously thrown open for her inspection, and an extensive range of fine old china displayed with unconcealed exultation. On these occasions, Lady Howard always pretended to mistake Mrs Millar's elderwine for champagne, and generally poached upon her preserves, as she called it, by carrying away some jars of sweatmeats for breakfast next morning. Mrs Millar employed all the old women in the neighbourhood to spin,—she assisted Lady Olivia in

superintending her Sunday School, and acted as the doctor's deputy in the village. But her chief glory was in her poultry yard and dairy, which she kept in exquisite order; swarms of bantams, turkeys, ducks, peacocks, and guinea fowls, answered to her call, flocking around her in cheerful animation, and the pride of her heart was to take Lady Howard and Lady Fitz-Patrick to admire the pyramids of new-laid eggs, and of cheeses meant to pass for Stilton, which were ranged on the white marble shelves of her dairy, along with dishes of the richest cream and of the most exquisite butter, bearing testimony to the skill and activity of her management.

Mrs Millar's cares, however, were not confined to any one department of the house, for they extended over every thing,—the exquisite neatness of the rooms, the spotless whiteness of Lady Olivia's muslins and laces, were all owing to the active zeal of Mrs Millar, who would have abridged her natural rest rather than have left a single servant without her own careful superintendence. "I believe you would start out of bed at midnight, if you suspected that a grain of dust was lurking in any part of the house, and never rest again till it was dislodged," said Lady Howard one day, in a tone of good-humoured raillery; "pray tell me candidly, Mrs Millar, have you forty-eight hours in a day, or how do you manage to get through all your clerical, medical, and magisterial duties in this house?"

"Why, Madam, I always consider it a Christian duty to be active in whatever is given us to do, within our own sphere," replied Mrs Millar, in a tone of honest satisfaction. "As worthy John Newton says, my lady, if a Christian man is appointed to be only a shoe-black, he will try to be the best shoe-black in his parish."

Equally active in his own place, and far more conse-

quential, was Harley, the old butler, whose reverence for Lady Olivia seemed the mainspring of his whole existence. She often smiled to see the fresh flowers he gathered every morning to decorate her breakfast-table, and he made a point of serving up her simple fare with as much form and taste as if she had been surrounded by a whole troop of domestics. When Harley attended on his mistress at dinner, in his silk stockings, buckles, and well powdered hair, no one would have supposed that his mornings were devoted to the garden, where he might be seen by the peep of day toiling amidst the straggling honeysuckles, or drilling a whole regiment of carnations. Lady Fitz-Patrick usally fell into raptures with all the finest camelias, chrysanthemums, heliotropes, and geraniums, which Lady Olivia delighted to see her gather, and answered all her apologies for doing so, with the heartfelt assurance that she felt better recompensed for the trouble of rearing flowers, if they gave pleasure to another, than when they wasted their sweets in the desert air.

Lady Howard always expressed her wonder that Lady Olivia had not purchased some new plant which was recently invented, or imported from Terra incognita, without which no conservatory could be worth a glance. She ridiculed the garden for its contracted dimensions too, and once remarked on its being so limited, that if ever there was too much rain, Harley might shelter it all with an umbrella. Lady Olivia never seemed in the least degree annoyed with either the raillery or the condescension of her sisters-in-law, but cheerfully entered into their jests, when these were merely directed at herself. She had been long and painfully sensible that her words were listened to with restraint and distrust, whenever she attempted to introduce any thing tending to seriousness

in conversation, and that the smallest item of a religious sentiment was looked upon as the giving out of a text, which must inevitably be followed by a sermon; and therefore she tried to conciliate their confidence and regard, by attending to whatever they said with affectionate interest, and by evincing, that however trifling it might have appeared as relating to herself, yet in so far as her friends felt affected by circumstances, they became important to her; and Lady Olivia patiently awaited the time when God in His good providence would, she trusted and believed, give her a favourable opportunity of imparting that light and peace to her nearest connections, which she had been so often the means of communicating to comparative strangers.

Sir Francis Howard was the most good-natured, easy man in the world, and dropped in continually upon Lady Olivia, at all hours and in all weathers, without fear, doubt, or apprehension on the score of their religious differences. "I don't know what you call a Methodist," he often said, drawing in his chair at Ashgrove; "but if they are all like you, Olivia, I shall join the society myself." When she spoke upon religion, he leaned back in his chair, with smiling resignation, and patiently waited till Lady Olivia concluded, without making any reply or objection, having discovered that expedient to be the easiest way of getting over the subject, and then he talked about the game laws, and his own preserves, described the last day's hunting, and made her the confidante of all his grievances. If Sir Francis had his dogs ill-broken, or if his moors had been poached, there were no bounds to the sympathy and commiseration he expected. "Poor soul!" said he to Lady Howard one day, "it does Olivia good when I invade her solitude now and then, to remind her that there is another human

being in the world besides herself; and if she likes to prose a little occasionally, it is well meant, and all fair, in return for the patience with which she listens to me. Lady Olivia certainly has had great distresses, like other people; and I never shall forget how kindly she entered into my feelings this morning, on the loss of poor Petruchio!"

"Is Petruchio dead!—that noble horse for which you paid two hundred guineas last year; how very teazing!" exclaimed Lady Howard. "I am sure, Sir Francis, the vulgar proverb about being as strong as a horse cannot have originated in your stable, where they appear to do nothing but die. We shall soon be absolutely ruined."

"So much the better!" replied Sir Francis. "Nothing can equal complete bankruptcy for setting one above the world, and all its trifling cares. You will see a rich man driving a hard bargain for his place in an omnibus, but a ruined man travels with post-horses, and his wife has always the prettiest little poney-carriage in the world. You may have every thing in splendour when I have been whitewashed by paying a shilling in the pound."

"There is some truth in what you say," answered Lady Howard. "I observe people who have been considered perfectly ruined, ever since I can recollect, and who never find a necessity for denying themselves any thing. It is a secret known only to the initiated how they get on so well; but my old-fashioned idea of ruin, when people used to retrench, is quite exploded now, even among milliners and shopkeepers, who rise superior to the frowns of fortune, and expand into more splendid dimensions than ever, after being gazetted."

"I remember seeing a book of Cobbett's to show how a man may live well and keep his carriage on L.500 a year," continued Sir Francis; "but some of my own

friends are much cleverer, since they live well, and keep half-a-dozen hunters upon nothing at all; so I must apply to them for a hint or two upon ways and means, if your prophecy be ever realized, and we give up attempting to keep within the trammels of an income."

There were few things in the world that Sir Richard Fitz-Patrick thought so seriously about as his dinner, and the cook had not more trouble in preparing ragouts than he had himself in preparing an appetite. Dr. Mansfield once jocularly told him, his only chance of health would be to live on sixpence a-day, and to earn it himself, as he required so much exercise; and therefore occasionally, when Sir Richard felt rather "off his feed," as sportsmen express themselves, he extended his constitutional walk as far as Ashgrove; but he considered it a waste of time to sit down above ten minutes, and, with compliments to Lady Olivia on the appetizing effects of sea air, and a steady refusal of any refreshment that might endanger the full enjoyment of his approaching meal, he generally hastened on, giving a glance of anxious solicitude at his watch, to ascertain whether he had left ample time to reach home with his usual punctuality for dinner. If Sir Richard Fitz-Patrick could have been gifted with an unlimited power of eating and sleeping, his life would have been divided between these two states of enjoyment, for he knew nothing else that deserved the name of pleasure, and was often heard to declare, that the only thing in the twenty-four hours worth living for was the sound of the gong. With such a person, it was difficult for a mind like Lady Olivia's to find any subject of common interest. But, independently of her kind feelings towards every one, she considered her connexions as having been given to her by Providence for some wise purpose—that it was in the sphere where He

had placed her that her most immediate duties were to be found, and that such influence as she should gain over the mind of Sir Richard Fitz-Patrick, by showing him all the kindness and courtesy in her power, was a trust which she must endeavour to preserve and to exercise for the advancement of religion in his heart, whenever an opportunity offered of impressing its importance, or of recommending its blessed influence, either by her example or her conversation.

One morning, soon after Lady Fitz-Patrick and Lady Howard had arrived, to settle for the season in Moray Place, Lady Olivia was, as usual, quietly seated in her boudoir, surrounded with books and work—the table covered with flowers, and the sunshine streaming in at every window—the tame robins hopping on the balcony, and not a sound to be heard but the autumn leaves rustling in the wind. It was the solitude she loved, and her eye rested pensively on those portraits that hung on the opposite wall, which were still the favourite companions of her thoughts. She meditated on the blessed ages of futurity, when every cherished hope of her existence would certainly be realized, and when, in the presence of that God whom it was her happiness to serve, she should yet be restored to all that she had loved and mourned upon earth. The remembrance cheered her of many around, whose sorrowful hearts she had comforted, and though weaned entirely from the world, and living entirely for another, she still occupied her thoughts with plans of unwearied benevolence, and generous kindness to all whom she could benefit.

With such a heart, it was impossible that Lady Olivia could feel herself alone;—wherever she turned, there was some object of interest, and whatever she did had a motive in it, which animated her to exertion: Hers was

no dull and heartless routine of duties; but whether in prayer, in solitary meditation, or in active employment, her chief pleasure was to do her Master's work, and to feel that it was towards a world of endless glory, whither she was hastening herself, and endeavouring to allure others by her example and her influence. If there was any pleasure in the world which Lady Olivia Neville supremely valued, it was the privacy she enjoyed in her own home, the hours of peaceful retirement and holy meditation, which she spent, as we have described, in the solitude of her boudoir,—and a shade of deep regret passed over her countenance when she opened her writing-desk on the morning in question, and wrote a letter of considerable length, which she hastily sealed and instantly despatched. "It must be done," thought she with a sigh, as Harley closed the door; "let no selfish consideration interfere with this duty;—ought not I rather to rejoice that something can now be sacrificed as a proof that it is not in mere idle words, but in deed and in truth, that I place all I have, and all I enjoy, at the disposal of Him who appoints every trial, and who will give me his blessing only in the line of duty, and of cheerful obedience?"

Soon after Lady Olivia had resumed her reading, the door was unexpectedly thrown open by Harley, to announce Lady Fitz-Patrick and Lady Howard, who called so much earlier than they had ever done before, that his curiosity was evidently aroused, and he stirred the fire, which was already in a blaze, and lingered for some moments to arrange the tables, though they were always in perfect order; but Lady Howard waited impatiently till his manœuvres were exhausted, and the instant he left the room she began upon the object of her visit in a tone of great anxiety and vexation. "My dear Olivia! we

are come to request what you seldom offer, though you can always give it of the best quality when required—I mean a little morsel of good advice. You have heard no doubt of Barbara's misfortune! it turns out to be quite certain that her agent has failed, and all her little fortune is utterly lost!—she is at this moment quite pennyless! Now we know, that whatever is most judicious and most generous will at once occur to you, and we mean to place ourselves entirely in your hands, to act towards her on this occasion as your wisdom and kindness may suggest."

"Thank you, Maria," replied Lady Olivia, warmly. "I heard what you tell me last night with sincere regret, and was anxious that we should all consult together what is best to be done. In one respect, I have perhaps anticipated you both. I need scarcely remind you," she added in a tone of deep but suppressed emotion, while the colour glowed for a moment on her sorrow-stricken countenance,—"I need not remind you who would have been Barbara's kindest friend, and her natural protector now, had he been mercifully spared. I know that in such a case her home would have been in her brother's house, and I have therefore written this morning to beg that she will come here immediately, and remain as long as it suits her."

A pause of speechless surprise, on the part of her visitors, followed this unexpected declaration.

"Impossible, Olivia! are you distracted?" exclaimed Lady Fitz-Patrick, in a tone of animated remonstrance. "I never heard of such a rash act in my life! Why! she may stay with you perhaps for ever!"

"So I expect, and perhaps it is better that she should," replied Lady Olivia, calmly; "we are told it is not good for any one to be alone; and you know, Sophia, it may

be more cheerful at dinner to hear another knife and fork in action besides my own, and my solitary tea-cup will look less deserted at breakfast with another to keep it in countenance."

"If you thought so, Olivia, there are always many of your own selected friends ready to take advantage of your slightest invitation. I know how they all prize your society," said Lady Fitz-Patrick, "and you will never be able to have them here in peace or comfort again."

"This plan will never do!" observed Lady Howard, emphatically; "for my own part, I would give up half my income to Barbara with pleasure, but as for tolerating her society during more than half an hour in the day, it is an utter impossibility; and how much more insufferable must she be to a mind like yours? Barbara is a perpetual parody upon yourself, Olivia—and if ever I am inclined to admire the Christian character in you, I have only to look at her and be disgusted."

"Why should you look at either of us?" said Lady Olivia, earnestly; "no human being can ever fairly represent the Christian character,—we are at best but faint and blundering copies of that great and perfect original, which was once exhibited on earth for our imitation; and instead of lamenting the failures, or even emulating the success of those around, is it not better to keep our attention fixed on that divine portrait which the Scriptures hold up to our view, till we can appreciate all its beauties, and imitate its perfections?"

"Say what you please," continued Lady Howard, smiling; "but you and Barbara together will inevitably remind me of the unfortunate prisoners who were chained by Mezentius to a dead body!"

"No, no," replied Lady Olivia, seriously, "we shall suit each other much better than you imagine, particu-

larly now that your sister is unfortunate. I know she is sincerely interested in religion, and that, though we differ in some points, we shall agree with respect to its infinite importance and its inexhaustible consolations."

"Well, Olivia, on this occasion, as on every other, you judge more charitably than any one else," said Lady Howard, affectionately. "Barbara's religion, if she had any, would be like the blazing of a comet, and yours shines like a star with mild unchanging lustre, which never seemed more lovely to me than at this moment. All you ever say is suitable to the dignity and seriousness of the subject; but whenever my sister speaks of religion, I think she is as completely out of good sense and good taste as the pious well meaning old woman who said she had one foot in the grave and the other in the stars."

"What carriage is this that I see approaching?" asked Lady Fitz-Patrick, from her seat in the window.

"I had ordered mine to convey me to Edinburgh," replied Lady Olivia; "but since you have not yet called on Barbara, we may as well go together, and send my chariot away."

"Thank you," said Lady Howard, dryly, "but I would rather not face Barbara yet. She knows I dare not fly out upon her in the midst of all these misfortunes, so she would be tremendously sententious to-day, and very probably bestow a volley of admonitions on myself. No, Olivia—you are the only person on earth who could have patience to stand the first explosion of Barbara's common-places; so pray go alone, and set us an example of martyrdom."

"Say every thing kind and civil from me," added Lady Fitz-Patrick; "we shall certainly call some day soon; and in the meantime settle what you please as to pecuniary affairs, for Sir Richard has been exceedingly

genteel on the occasion, and says he will concur with myself in any arrangement you suggest."

"I have been calculating this morning," said Lady Olivia, "that the income which remained to Barbara beyond the amount of her house-rent was so very trifling, that by sharing the expense amongst us, we might very easily settle an annuity upon her for life, equal to what she has lost."

"Agreed," exclaimed Lady Howard; "only I must move one amendment in our little committee on ways and means, that the honourable member who spoke last shall be exempted from any share in the subscription, having already done only too much."

"Remember, Maria, whom it is that I represent on this occasion," said Lady Olivia, mournfully. "I have fewer claims on my purse, and on my time, than you, and it will gratify my whole heart if either of them can be serviceable to one who was the companion of ——— of his childhood, and whom I know he sincerely loved."

"Then, if you will not take my advice, I shall at least take yours," replied Lady Howard; "and whatever is the amount of our settlement on Barbara, Sir Francis says he shall consider it as his annual tribute to all sorts of schools, and to every branch of every society that ever was, or ever may be established."

"Barbara's money has always been very liberally bestowed," replied Lady Olivia, gravely, "and, as far as she could, she made it useful."

"Look me in the face, and say you are quite serious," exclaimed Lady Howard, in a tone of incredulity. "My dear Olivia, your own charities are so judicious, that you cannot surely approve of all the novelties on which Barbara scatters her funds. I admire your Bible and Mis-

sionary Societies, where the means are in some degree adequate to the undertaking, and some foreign objects are well deserving of attention; but as for my sister —why, her whole fortune goes for the education of Greek children, and to establish schools in Greenland and the Cape de Verd Islands,—our own poor Highlanders are much too accessible to be fit objects for her compassion. She would spend L.50 in sending a schoolmaster to the banks of the Mississippi, but not a guinea to establish one in the wilds of Argyleshire; and would prefer a scheme in favour of Timbuctoo to one for the benefit of India, because it is more inaccessible. She is secretary to a society of ladies for transporting all the people of colour from America to the coast of Africa, of whom she assured me that there were not above 20,000, and the expense only L.3 for each man; but she would not find the same excitement in subscribing to enlighten and feed the starving and ignorant population of Ireland. Many ladies, whom I know and respect, unite such active benevolence, and such cautious discretion in their charities, that, though they are unknown to the world in general, their influence is felt wherever sickness or sorrow, or even guilt, can be enlightened or relieved, among the destitute of their own sex; they personally superintend those institutions which are for the good of others, and without any peculiarities of dress or of idiom, might justly be designated as Protestant Sisters of Charity; but I like to see people's schemes of benevolence within the sphere of possibility, otherwise their plans are no better than if they took the fuel out of a grate to diffuse its genial warmth more extensively by scattering it over the ground."

"Still, though some of the fire might be wasted, more would remain than where no effort whatever is made in

the sacred cause," replied Lady Olivia, "I always encourage people to bestow as much as they are inclined to part with on charitable errands, for whatever be the object, the more they give, the more they will be inclined to give again; and you may feel assured that, to the best of her judgment, Barbara will be a faithful steward of whatever our better fortune enables us to spare."

"As usual, Olivia, you remind me of Mr Allworthy in the novel, where it was said that the judgment of the best of heads was often misled by the tenderness of the best of hearts," replied Lady Howard affectionately; "if all the world were like you, we should already feel as if heaven were come upon earth."

"Maria," said Lady Olivia, "you must not be entirely blinded by partiality, for I shall feel guilty of hypocrisy if you think better of me than I deserve; the only thing in which I approach to what I should be is in the knowledge of myself, and that keeps me humble. But if we could suppose the world to be peopled with such perfect beings as you have imagined, let us recollect that we should still want what is the first object of every Christian's desire—the enjoyment of God's presence for ever in heaven."

CHAPTER IV.

Some quit their sphere and rush into the skies.

Miss Barbara Neville out-did Lady Howard's utmost anticipations, during Lady Olivia's visit of condolence. She talked of her trials as if no human being had ever suffered before; and she spoke volumes of beautifully expressed resignation, though at the same time she could not but say it was a mysterious Providence that she should be deprived of all means of usefulness, while others, who wasted their substance in luxury and dissipation, were still left to enjoy prosperity and comfort.

Many were the vain attempts that Lady Olivia made to be heard; for her gentle tones were invariably drowned in the superior volubility of Miss Barbara, who always answered her own remarks, and fancied that she could anticipate what was to be said, or that her sententious reflections and long-winded sentiments would be still more suitable and interesting than any thing that could possibly be elicited by another. An hour had nearly elapsed before Lady Olivia could attract Miss Neville's attention to the arrangement which had been made for her future comfort by Lady Fitz-Patrick and Lady Howard, to whom their ambassadress gave all the credit that was possible, and rather more than was their due in the business.

"I hope, my dear Barbara," she continued in a sooth-

ing tone, "that you will soon feel but slight cause to regret this little vexation, as it occasions no actual change to you, except that we shall be more together in future than we have ever been before."

"That is a mutual advantage, certainly," replied Miss Neville; "and it will be some consolation on this trying occasion, if, in return for the comfortable home you have offered me, I may yet hope to be a great means of usefulness to yourself. There are many important points, my dear Olivia, on which I have long thought you extremely defective; and nothing is more profitable to any one, as I am sure you will be the first to acknowledge, than to associate with farther advanced Christians than yourself; it will therefore give me real pleasure to introduce many of my sweet inestimable friends to your intimate acquaintance; and I hope soon to see you quite one of ourselves."

"I cannot answer for that," said Lady Olivia, in a mild but firm tone. "Your friends, Barbara, shall always be most welcome at Ashgrove, whenever they choose to visit you there; and I have desired my little boudoir to be prepared that they may be received at all times in it, without restraint or interruption. But as to my own visitors, the few intimate friends with whom I now wish to hold much intercourse must be chosen by myself. We shall have many opportunities together of discussing whatever you think likely to benefit me; and by uniting to study the Scriptures with fervent prayer and deep humility, we shall both obtain that teaching of the Spirit, which can alone enable us to distinguish truth from error, and right from wrong."

"True," answered Miss Barbara, in an indifferent tone; "but," added she eagerly, "I have a sweet tract to show you, by dear Miss Rachel Stodart, proving

that in every text of Scripture, without exception, we may find three meanings—literal, figurative, and prophetical. You must do me the favour to study it carefully, and I am confident there are many things in it that never struck you before."

"Very probably," said Lady Olivia; "but you know, Barbara, that the Bible, in its clearest possible interpretation, is the only test I acknowledge of the truth or importance of any doctrine. It was not written merely for metaphysicians or philosophers to exercise their ingenuity on, but we are told that it is meant to teach us a safe and simple path, in which the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err. Let scholars and divines explore for us those heights which no human intellect can entirely reach, and those depths which the utmost wisdom of man has never been able to fathom, but a woman's place, as represented in the gospel, is always one of simple devotion, and of humble though active duties."

"You give us rather a narrow sphere," replied Miss Barbara, in a tone of pique; "but my mind is not so easily tethered as yours."

"Recollect the examples of all the most eminent women in Scripture," continued Lady Olivia. "Mary stood by the cross of Christ, when all the courageous and learned among his disciples had deserted him, but we never read of her entering into any controversies; Dorcas clothed and visited the poor; Mary Magdalene anointed the Saviour's body; and the sister of Lazarus sat at Jesus' feet. Such are the feminine characters that are held up to our imitation; and I feel assured, that the question which Christ asked of his disciples, will be the great test by which our lives will be tried—'Lovest thou me?' May both of us be enabled, by divine grace,

to answer as Peter did, 'Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.'"

Miss Barbara Neville looked much dissatisfied, and a little contemptuous. "You are but on the first step of the ladder," she said, as Lady Olivia was about to take leave; "by the time I have been a few weeks at Ashgrove, you will see your way more clearly."

"Are you not rather afraid to soar above the light and strength that are given to us?" replied Lady Olivia earnestly. "There are very narrow limits to the capacity of man, which should make us extremely apprehensive of presumption in our interpretation of Scripture. It has been well remarked, that the very difficulties we meet with in studying the Bible are a tacit promise of immortality, since God does nothing in vain, and what the human mind cannot comprehend now, is reserved for us in our glorified state hereafter. Let us then be satisfied to seek God in simplicity, and he will be found of us, and bless us, in ourselves and in our families."

"You would shut us out at once, then, from all the most interesting subjects of speculation," interrupted Miss Barbara, indignantly,—"the origin of evil, necessity, and free-will, the intermediate state of the soul, and many other topics of endless discussion, which Miss Rachel Stodart says, she thinks no one can be safe without fully understanding."

"There are many mysterious depths of doctrine which wise and learned men have spent their whole lives in investigating," said Lady Olivia, very seriously. "On some occasions they have received a rich reward, in the most sublime conceptions of the divine nature and government, and in the clearest revelation of much that has been hid from mere superficial Christians; but I consider that few women have sufficient metaphysical

clearness fully to comprehend the doctrinal distinctions which are frequently essential, when they attempt to go beyond a safe and simple creed, the chief articles of which should consist in love to God and to our neighbour."

"There I have you!" exclaimed Miss Barbara, with argumentative eagerness; "you cannot possibly mean to forbid our understandings from being exercised in the study of prophecy?"

"No, certainly," replied Lady Olivia; "as far as the prophecies are clearly shown to have been fulfilled, it is one of the most cheering occupations for a devotional spirit to trace the hand of God working out, according to his own will, the events which had been so long and so truly predicted ages before. But it requires such a knowledge of biblical language, of the original tongue, and of past history, to understand even those parts which are already come to pass, that I believe we shall best comprehend what is to be learned on the subject by reading the works of those authors who have really studied them deeply. You know the wren found she could mount as high as the eagle, but that was only to be done by getting on his back. As for the study of future prophecy, all coming events are so carefully veiled from our sight, that it seems no better than fortune-telling to anticipate them. It is revealed to me for certain, that at some period or other I shall die; but if I were to begin guessing the time, place, and circumstances, you would probably see me equally mistaken in them all; and we must never pledge the truth of sacred Scripture on any random conjectures of our own. It is very important, Barbara, to notice on the subject of ancient prophecy that it was of two kinds; the one was literal, such as when the Jews were told that in a certain number of

years Jerusalem would be destroyed; and this they anticipated with certainty and precision; but the rest was given in types, which could not possibly be understood until the key was given: and predictions were often far advanced towards fulfilment before being laid open We have our book of prophecy now, but the key is not yet given to us, and no one can tell how near or how distant may be the complete accomplishment, until, like the Jews, we have those mysterious types explained. I am satisfied with the words of our Saviour himself on the subject: 'This I tell you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass ye might believe.' It is not for us to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."

Now, Miss Barbara Neville had already calculated to an hour, with the assistance of Miss Rachel Stodart, when the millennium was to commence, and sighed for the "narrow views" of Lady Olivia, who retired to spend a last evening of quiet retirement, in peaceful and happy consciousness, that whatever be the future events of this world, she was in the safe and everlasting keeping of Him who orders them all, and with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

If the visits of Lady Fitz-Patrick and Lady Howard had been rare at Ashgrove formerly, they seemed, from the time of Miss Neville's arrival there, to have entirely ceased; and any stranger who had seen all their letters of apology, would have pitied them as the most unfortunate beings upon earth, they appeared to live in such a succession of disasters; nervous headaches, sick children, lame horses, drunken coachmen, broken springs, and troublesome visitors, were all quoted and commented upon, as insuperable obstacles to their venturing off the stones. Miss Barbara very soon collected nearly a quire

of these apologetic notes, and returned them in a parcel to Lady Howard, remarking that it was a pity she should waste her ingenuity in composing new ones, when she had only to alter the dates of these, and they would suit equally well a second time. But Lady Olivia, on the contrary, appeared as good-naturedly blind as ever to their truant habits, and persevered in sending her sisters-in-law specimens of the rarest flowers and earliest vegetables. She always defended Lady Howard and Lady Fitz-Patrick from the censures of Miss Barbara, as if she had been one of the offending party herself,—indulgently finding out excuses for them, or giving additional weight to those which they had appropriated to themselves; but vainly did she sometimes try to soften the asperity of their sister's animadversions, for it seemed only to add fuel to the fire.

"Cold, heartless, selfish beings!" exclaimed Miss Neville indignantly, throwing down the last note that Lady Howard had penned; "I may be thankful never to have known such prosperity as they have, if it would have made me resemble them."

"I have a great dislike to invective, Barbara," said Lady Olivia, mildly. "If we were in real want of society, I am confident your sisters would make a point of being more here; but they know we are both very independent, and that therefore they need consult nothing but their own convenience at present, which you see must have been greatly sacrificed, had they come when you expected."

"If they stay away till I need their society, it may be long enough indeed," replied Miss Barbara, bridling; "we have very little in common to make my intercourse with them at all profitable; and with such a circle of highly gifted friends as those whom it is my privilege

to enjoy, it seems a waste of precious time to associate with any one who is not qualified to unite with us."

This observation was meant to cut two ways, and in case its edge should not be properly felt, a glance and an emphasis accompanied the words, which conveyed their intended meaning to her auditor. The fact was, that nothing mortified and astonished Miss Barbara Neville half so much as the very sparing advantage which Lady Olivia took of her own society, and that of her associates, who thought it an unspeakable advancement for any person to be admitted into their clique, which was, in general, on as exclusive principles as any fashionable preserve in London. Each of Miss Barbara's friends appeared, by her own description, to be almost superhuman, in some way or other; and, amidst the pity and indignation with which she viewed the follies of all other people, it seemed her greatest consolation to exalt the perfections of her friends, and to derive additional lustre to her own virtues from the reflection of theirs. Much of the conversation in Miss Neville's society consisted of confidential communications respecting the mental state of their nearest relatives; and each individual came prepared to sacrifice some of her own connexions at the shrine of spiritual pride. All the party professed to hate scandal, and to despise gossip; but Miss Rachel Stodart frequently confessed her anxiety as to the rather unsatisfactory state of her brother's mind. Mr. Harvey, in return, imparted to her sympathizing attention, how deeply he was afflicted on account of the discomfort he had in associating with his father, who differed most lamentably from himself; and Miss Barbara Neville was universally communicative—under seal of the strictest secrecy—about the incurable worldliness of her sisters, respecting whom she was considered to be suffering deep

and continual affliction. She also hinted mysteriously about the trials she had with Lady Olivia; but as no specific charge could be brought forward, a general feeling of disapprobation and suspicion throughout the whole circle was all that ensued. One thing was very evident, that few of Miss Neville's friends had parents or relatives who were fit for them to live with, and that much as they were inclined to acknowledge, in general terms, the wisdom of their Creator, they were yet far from perceiving, that the connexions whom He had ordained for them were well or wisely appointed, and that to them their first duties of charity and affection were so strictly owing that nothing could cancel the debt.

Miss Rachel Stodart had so many superlative duties to do, that little time was left at her disposal for common ones; and her brother's "very unsatisfactory state of mind" was certainly not likely to be brought round in consequence of the discomfort to which he often found himself consigned at home, while she attended to the wants of any one else in preference, as she had a continual tendency to do every other person's duty rather than her own, and felt more excitement in conferring her attentions upon strangers than in bestowing them where they were a right, in her own home—for the words of our Saviour to the poor man at Decapolis seemed to have been entirely overlooked in her study of Scripture, "Go to thine own house, and there show the great things which God hath done for thee."

It was a frequent subject of self-congratulation with the exclusives of Miss Neville's coterie, to boast of "their familiarity with Scripture;" but as familiarity has been thought to lead, on many occasions, towards irreverence, that rule would not have been thought, by judicious observers, to have found an exception in their case. The

names by which our Divine Saviour has permitted himself to be known to his creatures on earth, were used with such expressions of intimate endearment as are only allowable in general between those friends who live on terms of equality; and the great name of Jehovah, the Creator of the universe, which should be approached with awe and veneration by his creatures at all times, and which some good men have felt it so solemn to pronounce, that the excellent Robert Boyle never mentioned the name of God without preceding it by a visible pause,—that holy word was spoken with a degree of carelessness, that seemed to Lady Olivia very nearly approaching the sin of taking it in vain. The jests which were in common circulation at these assemblies were an equal subject of surprise to Lady Olivia Neville. Anecdotes of clergymen, whatever their nature or tendency might be, were invariably received with animated interest by the whole party,—stories were told of those who had blundered in the midst of their sermons; of others who had excited the risibility of a whole congregation by ill-timed jests; and of many who had tired their audiences, or irritated them, by the extraordinary length of their addresses. Laughable accounts were related also of any ignorance which might be betrayed of Scripture by their former associates—of the violence of their opposition to the gospel, —of the perverted use that had been made of the sacred Scriptures, and of the various apologies and evasions by which their relatives had contrived to excuse themselves from attending the ordinances of God. Miss Rachel Stodart described one day how her uncle had said, he was never in church but once in his life, to be christened, and that he did not propose going again until he went to be married; but instead of ever affecting the deep regret with which such a sentiment ought to have been heard

by one who professed to know the value of an immortal soul, she brought it forth like any ordinary piece of gossip, and a smile passed round the whole circle of her auditors when she concluded. Mr. Harvey mentioned as an amusing circumstance, that in a country church in Wales his old mother had once taken her knitting, because it helped to keep her awake, and that she was extremely indignant when forbid to continue the indulgence; and a profusion of anecdotes were thus detailed and enjoyed, of a nature which Christians in general would have heard with the same mournful commiseration for the souls of others, that would have been excited if their bodies had been endangered by some mortal disease to which they had voluntarily exposed themselves.

There were some favourite expressions in continual use with Miss Neville's friends, among which the term Sweet seemed to be literally a word of-all-work. There were sweet books, sweet feelings, sweet moments, and sweet tea; there were people who lived sweetly, and who died sweetly.

Lady Olivia was equally astonished at the perverted use Miss Neville and her associates made of the word "resignation," for they seemed to bring a thousand misfortunes on themselves by their mismanagement or imprudence, and then they sighed and declared their entire submission to "the will of Providence!" One lady who had utterly neglected the education of her children, so that they turned out ill, expressed her "resignation;" another who had over-tasked her strength, till her exertions almost amounted to a gradual suicide, was continually talking of her "resignation;" and Miss Rachel Stodart, who had quarrelled with all her family upon unnecessary punctilios, talked with a strange kind of arrogant humility about her "trials" and her "resig-

nation." None of these persons seemed to consider that it was their duty, if possible, to avert such afflictions, for it can only be considered the will of God when we suffer privations which our own utmost efforts could not have prevented, and then we must endeavour, with pious, enlightened, and cordial resignation, still to " serve God, and be cheerful."

Each of these individuals inculcated patience on others, and bore the misfortunes of their neighbour with submission, but they all considered themselves separately as objects of painful sympathy, on account of the exaggerated view they took of their own trials. It was even a subject one day of consideration at Miss Rachel Stodart's, whether it was right that Christians should wear mourning for each other, and there was a sort of emulation in the coterie, who should exhibit the greatest example of rejoicing that their friends had been released from such a world of woe; but Lady Olivia simply stated her own opinion when called on, that as Christ had wept for the death of Lazarus, we were privileged to indulge the natural feelings to a certain extent, and that no one could be considered amiable or Christian without them. She remarked, that it was impossible to endure our own personal sufferings too patiently or too cheerfully, if it were no more than the drawing of a tooth, but that when parents and children were able to bear the loss of their relatives with extraordinary firmness, it often proceeded from a natural hardness and coldness of heart, which was not commendable, and that in the much-admired case of Brutus condemning his sons to death, she would have thought his patriotism more unquestionable had it involved the amputation of one of his own limbs. "If it become hereafter the etiquette of fashionable life," said she one day to Miss

Neville, "to take no notice whatever of the death of our nearest relatives, I should see little to admire in the achievements of those who could actually mix in society without exhibiting any visible feeling, and we should take care never to attribute to religious principle any thing which may proceed from natural defect of sensibility; for it is too nearly the case already, as was once anticipated by the old Duke of Argyle, that at last no one would stay at home on account of any death, except the corpse. In this respect, as in most things, the good old way is still the best, to retire amidst those who suffer with ourselves; to be reserved in communicating with strangers, and deeply as we may mourn, to seek most for the sympathy and consolation of our never-absent Saviour. The love of display and of excitement are so very insidious, that I begin to fear there was more knowledge of human nature than I was willing to credit, in the French author who maintained, that a man would return with elated spirits from the funeral of his best friend, if he managed it, and performed the most conspicuous part himself."

Lady Olivia Neville felt frequently surprised also at the very prominent place which was given, in the conversation of Miss Barbara's friends, to the subject of forgiving their enemies. She was not conscious of having any herself, and had never found a moment's effort in pardoning the petty acts of malice, unkindness, or ingratitude, such as all are liable to suffer from in their intercourse with the world, but the continual profession of forgiveness would, in her estimation, have seemed to imply a lurking animosity, and a recollection of trifling vexations, which she thought it her best comfort to forget; and, therefore, within her peaceful breast there lived not the remembrance of a single individual whom

she would have felt the slightest difficulty in meeting with cordial feelings of good-will, while she made a duty of praying, that IF she had enemies they might be forgiven, and that if any real injuries were hereafter inflicted on her, they might be readily pardoned.

A favourite doctrine of Miss Neville and her party was, that the human character was capable of being brought to perfection on earth, and that it was possible to live in the world without sin. The sin of spiritual pride,—that leak in the vessel which sinks so many fair and promising characters—seemed in this instance to have completely escaped their remembrance, as many believed that they were actually living in this state of moral purity, and Miss Rachel Stodart declared she had certainly done so for a week. Once or twice Lady Olivia attempted to combat this idea by a reference to Scripture, showing the corruption of human nature, and that even the prophets and apostles are represented as distrusting their own hearts, and fearing temptations to the very last; but she was answered with such angry asperity, that she allowed herself to be silenced, though she could not be convinced. "Alas!" thought she, "if we were endowed, for one hour, with such unerring judgment as that with which God views all our actions and motives, how would the fabric of self-esteem, with which we are so prone to clothe ourselves, vanish at once, and we should then acknowledge, with more ardent gratitude and deeper humility, that our brightest hope is, to be spared, for Christ's sake, according to the multitude of God's mercies."

Lady Olivia generally seized the earliest opportunity of absenting herself from Miss Neville's CAT-terie, as Sir Francis called it, when any unavoidable circumstance had entangled her amongst them, though her manner, as

long as she remained, was full of urbanity and kindness. There were some that she certainly distinguished more than others in the number, but to Miss Neville's surprise, it was neither Miss Rachel Stodart, nor any of those who were reckoned most "eminent;" the leaders of the party shook their heads at Lady Olivia's want of "spiritual discernment;" and it was disapprovingly observed, that she never made the slightest approximation to the use of that peculiar idiom in which all the initiated among Miss Neville's circle were accustomed to converse about their "frames," and to discuss every event in "the religious world," as they designated themselves. The manner and disposition of Lady Olivia Neville had always been so frank and accessible, that on the shortest acquaintance people were apt to imagine they knew her perfectly, though the intercourse of a lifetime served only to show those whom she admitted to her intimacy, that truly to estimate such a character as hers would have required "long converse and the scrutiny of years." Hers was that polish of the manners which proceeds from the polish of the mind, and with the kindest feelings towards every one in society, she considered it due to all with whom she had any communication, that if it were to last but for half an hour of their lives, that half hour should be as pleasing and as improving as possible; not that Lady Olivia was always forming resolutions to be agreeable or edifying, but it was her habitual desire, as the pilgrim who advances towards his home is not continually renewing his purpose to go thither, though every step that he takes carries him forward by natural impulse. After a very few transient interviews, the friends of Miss Barbara Neville felt themselves competent thoroughly to appreciate her, and pronounced their

final verdict, that she was a "sweet woman," and it was a thousand pities she still remained in darkness.

"Barbara!" said Lady Olivia, rising from breakfast on the first Sunday after her being settled at Ashgrove, "we shall be in very good time for church by setting out in half an hour, when the bells begin to ring; it is only a ten minutes walk."

"I do not propose attending church at all, while I am settled here," replied Miss Neville, with a self-satisfied look.

"No!" exclaimed Lady Olivia, in an accent of the most unfeigned astonishment.

"No!" answered Miss Neville in an oracular tone. "I consider that Mr Arnold does not preach as he ought to do."

"My dear Barbara! I trust you are not serious," replied Lady Olivia in a tone of earnest remonstrance. "Pray consider what you are about! Mr Arnold is the established clergyman of this parish, deservedly beloved and respected by all his congregation, to whom he acts the part of a faithful and diligent pastor."

"That is YOUR opinion!" said Miss Neville dryly.

"And that of all who see his worth and excellence, as I do," added Lady Olivia. "He has long known each individual amongst his congregation personally, and, far from confining his ministrations to the pulpit, he teaches, exhorts, and prays with them in their own homes, and watches as one who knows he must give an account. Mr Arnold may not be exactly according to your taste as a preacher, but he gives us good, plain, wholesome diet, and is himself a most sincere and exemplary Christian."

"There is always a strong tinge of Arminianism in

what he calls the practical exhortation at the end of his sermons," replied Miss Neville, shaking her head, "and that will never do for me."

"But, Barbara, we have no other church within reach," said Lady Olivia in a persuasive tone. "It must surely require much stronger objections to justify your forsaking the assembling of ourselves together."

"Let me tell you," replied Miss Neville, in a confidential voice, and with a very significant look, "Mr Arnold is still quite in the dark."

"Do you really mean, then, always to remain at home on Sundays?" inquired Lady Olivia, in a tone of unaffected regret.

"Not exactly," answered Miss Neville. "Some of my friends who live in this neighbourhood are to meet on alternate weeks at each other's houses for conference and prayer, when Mr Harvey has agreed to preside."

"Mr Harvey, the friend of Sir Francis!" exclaimed Lady Olivia, with astonishment, almost amounting to incredulity.

"Yes!" said Miss Neville, decidedly. "Mr Harvey, who was once a friend of Sir Francis, and of many others whom he now abjures. He is, as Miss Rachel Stodart says, 'a splendid Christian.'"

"You cannot surely be in earnest, Barbara," replied Lady Olivia. "Why! it is but a short year since he began to consider these subjects at all! What can he teach you that will not be still better enforced within the house of God, by one who has been a pious and conscientious clergyman of our church for thirty years? Oh, Barbara! beware of false teachers and false prophets; let us be diffident of our own judgment, and careful to ascertain that we have the sanction of God's own word for all we do, and His glory as our first ob-

ject. One thing more you must pardon me for hinting, with the most sincere regret if it should at all hurt your feelings. Viewing this subject as I do, it is my earnest request that no meeting, such as you describe, may ever be held in this house."

"Any one will have much to answer for, Olivia, who impedes Mr Harvey's usefulness," said Miss Neville, in an admonitory tone. "He is a deeply experimental preacher."

"Rather too experimental in one sense, I should imagine," replied Lady Olivia. "Does he never remind you, Barbara, of that text in Scripture, 'clouds they are without water, carried about of winds, and trees whose fruit withereth?' Let us remember the advice of the prophet to 'stand upon the old ways, and see which is the right and good way, and walk therein.'"

"All you say merely confirms my own opinion, as it shows me how little you can appreciate Mr Harvey; but I must take you to one of our meetings some day, and then you will be astonished," said Miss Neville, in a patronizing tone. "He completely explains the Prophecies from beginning to end."

"Do you believe that to be possible?" asked Lady Olivia. "It is more than St Augustine, or Calvin, or any of the sages or saints of antiquity, ever thought themselves competent to do; they respectfully received those truths which were revealed to their understandings, and silently adored the mysteries which it was not meant that they should yet comprehend. They did not set themselves up as judges in these matters, but trusting more to faith than to human reason, their respect for divine revelation was not lessened by its being difficult. The Revelations of St John are, as Saurin has remarked, 'un des plus mortifians ouvrages, pour un esprit avide

de connoissance et de lumiére; mais un des plus satisfaisans pour un coeur avide de maximes et de preceptes.'"

"I know you would forbid the study of prophecy!" exclaimed Miss Barbara indignantly.

"No! by no means," replied Lady Olivia. "As I observed to you lately, the study of those predictions which are already fulfilled, forms as safe and interesting a subject of contemplation as any that a Christian mind can engage in; but we should take warning by the Jews on this subject, who have so deeply suffered for hasty and literal interpretations of prophecy, which prevented their recognising the real Messiah when he came, because their minds were so filled with false expectations of his temporal splendour, on account of their mistaken reading of the Old Testament, that they could not recognise the Saviour of the world, when He appeared on earth as 'a man of sorrows,' and as one whose 'kingdom was not of this world.'"

"Then I suppose you never read the Book of Revelation at all?" said Miss Neville. "How can you justify such an omission?"

"On the contrary, I study it continually," replied Lady Olivia. "There is no book in the whole oracles of God more sublime, or more deeply interesting. Amongst much that is symbolical and mysterious, there is also much that the most ignorant may understand and meditate on with advantage. We there distinctly trace the majesty of Almighty God—the power of Jesus Christ—the formidable attempts of Satan against the church—the terrors of the last day, the remorse of the reprobate, and the consummate happiness of the saints in heaven. In short, my dear Barbara, we may feel assured that every prophecy contained in that book will be fulfilled in its appointed time, and that then we shall perfectly

understand them, but not sooner. Meantime, we may study the sublime revelations of Scripture now for saving knowledge, without entering into curious speculation. It is astonishing to read in history of the flagrant blunders into which good and well-meaning people have been led, by venturing presumptuously to guess the future purposes of God. They seem to have been punished for attempting to pluck from the tree of knowledge what they were not warranted to seek. You must recollect the well-known fact, that in the year 1000 so universal an expectation had been disseminated of the world coming to an end, that people could hardly be persuaded to sow any corn, or to cultivate their fields."

"It has not many more years to last now," said Miss Neville, in an oracular tone. "The signs of the times," as dear Miss Rachel Stodart says, "indicate that the end of all things is at hand."

"I observe, both in religion and politics, people are always apt to fancy that the period of their own existence must be the grand crisis of the universe," said Lady Olivia, smiling. "It is impossible to believe that events can go on in an every-day manner while we are in the world, and something wonderful must happen to mark the period of our existence, which of course appears to us the most important era in history. But nature continues its course, while crowds successively appear on the stage of life, and vanish silently away, and all things shall continue as they were till the number of God's people is completed, which he alone can know. This world will be spared, like the cities of Lot, so long as there remain ten righteous men, whose probation it may be the will of God to continue here; and for ourselves, we need only bear in mind, that to us the end of all things is indeed at hand, for every day brings our short span

of existence nearer to a close, and there can be no uncertainty as to that, nor any danger in our contemplating it too much, or thinking it too near."

"Your views are extremely unsatisfactory," replied Miss Neville, in a tone of conscious superiority. "But what can be expected from any one who attends such a drone as Mr. Arnold?"

"Barbara," said Lady Olivia, seating herself once more at the breakfast table, with a look of anxious kindness, "let me for once speak my whole mind to you on this subject, and then I shall implicitly commit our difference of sentiment, with fervent prayer and entire submission, into the hands of God, trusting that he will pardon all our errors of judgment, and enable us to prostrate our opinions, as well as all our desires, before the sovereignty of His word and will."

"Well, say on," replied Miss Neville, impatiently. "Only let me premise, that if you expect to persuade me that it would be better to take pot-luck with Mr. Arnold, than to hear such a man as Mr. Harvey, you will only waste words and time upon a vain attempt, as my mind is made up only to attend where I find satisfaction."

"It is a serious step, Barbara, in any one to renounce their allegiance to that church which has been the very gate of heaven to thousands who have gone before us, and who have thought that one of their highest blessings and privileges was in belonging to it," said Lady Olivia, in a tone of impressive seriousness. "God has, at all times that we read of, been worshipped under a settled form in public; the Almighty laid strong injunctions on his people of old not to worship him in 'every place,' and the Jews (even while they wandered in the wilderness) were commanded to have an established clergy. God appoint-

ed these, and it was the people's duty to recognise and follow them. When the temple was built, they were on no pretext to forsake it,—and who that reads Solomon's dedication of that house to God, would not feel the importance of prayer being offered up within its walls, and that God's more immediate presence was to be expected there?"

"It is the preacher, and not the place, I am objecting to," said Miss Neville; "and you know the sons of Aaron, who were appointed to be priests in those days, were consumed for offering strange fire on the altar."

"True," replied Lady Olivia, "but that was an immediate judgment of God, for the congregation of Jews had no power to depose or condemn their priests. We live under a different dispensation, but still under the same superintending Providence; and though the clergy of our church are not appointed immediately by the Almighty himself, yet they may be considered as lineally descended from the apostles, who were selected by Christ, and who ordained their own successors. These have appointed others in regular array, from the time of our Saviour to the present hour; and it is a beautiful confirmation of our faith, to trace this lengthening chain through every successive age, when God has never left himself without a witness, according to his own promise."

"Your view of the subject is very popish," said Miss Neville dryly; "we shall hear next, I suppose, of an infallible church."

"No," replied Lady Olivia, "but I consider our parish church as the ordinance of God to us, and unless our clergyman teaches contrary to the word of Scripture, we must on no account abandon his ministrations. As long as he directs us to a crucified Saviour, and to the Holy

Spirit for guidance and comfort, there can be no cause for disunion. We read, in the Revelations of St. John, that God's message to the seven churches of Asia was delivered to the minister of each, but not directly to the people,—and when the centurion was favoured with a direct inspiration from God, it did not tell him what he was to know, but desired him to send for Peter, who would deliver the message of his Master. As a father should provide for the religious education of his children, so should a government for the instruction of its subjects. This should teach us to look for edification only from legitimate sources, and to expect it most in the path of humble and implicit obedience. If there were but one spring of water in this neighbourhood, you would feel obliged to partake of it, though the refreshment might not be equal to what you had derived in other places, and, at all events, it would be preferable to any draught which was suspected of being noxious and intoxicating."

"Meaning Mr. Harvey's discourses," interrupted Miss Neville, indiguantly; "let me tell you, he would soon preach Mr. Arnold 'bare to the very sexton,' for such a blaze of eloquence is seldom to be heard in a church, and will soon make itself known and admired. No, Olivia! you will never make a formalist of me, though I am sorry to think what a mere church-goer you are yourself. It is an easy way to secure the world's esteem by conforming to its customs in that respect, but such approbation I have no desire to possess. Indeed, if every body spoke well of me, as they do of you, I should be apt to suspect there was something amiss."

"I apprehend no danger that the world will ever think either of us too faultless, Barbara," replied Lady

Olivia, smiling; "it is seldom so lenient a judge of any one; and at the same time I would observe that, though Christians must make no sacrifice of principle to obtain the good opinion of others, yet we neither can nor should exterminate that desire for the esteem and affection of our friends and neighbours, which enables us to serve them the more, if we exert our influence for good, and which is natural to every one who is capable of benevolence or good feeling."

"But, as our whole nature is depraved, whatever is natural to us must be bad," replied Miss Neville; "it is no defence of any propensity to say it is natural,—the most important characteristic in a Christian is nonconformity to the world in all respects."

"We must certainly be a 'peculiar people' in many ways, and especially in our zeal to do good," said Lady Olivia; "but I would only wish to be peculiar in what is really essential, and not in trifles, for which I think many well-meaning people are too ready to contend, often indulging a naturally arbitrary temper, or an interfering disposition, under the cloak of religious duty; and perverting the name of devotion for what is merely the enthusiasm of an excited imagination."

"I see what you mean," replied Miss Neville, rising; "but I shall never sit under any clergyman, unless his doctrines and preaching are exactly such as I approve."

"Then, Barbara, you will be like a kite without a string, blown about by every wind of doctrine," said Lady Olivia, rising also; "but I trust you will still keep in view that anchor of safety to us all, secret prayer and meditation. Try to compose your mind in solitude, my dear Barbara, on this important subject which we have discussed to-day; avoid all excitement for a time, and

let me hope you will not be pledged to any sect or party, till you feel assured of being so on grounds that are perfectly sufficient and scriptural."

Miss Neville silently left the room, but Lady Olivia had soon many vexatious evidences, that nothing was farther from the intention of her guest than to pursue that cautious and rational line of conduct which she had suggested.

One afternoon, having rung for Mrs. Millar at an unusual hour, she obtained no answer till after repeating the summons several times, when at length the drawing-room door was hurriedly opened, and the housekeeper entered in breathless haste. "I beg your pardon, my Lady," she said, "but Miss Neville had not quite finished her exposition when your Ladyship's bell rung, and I could not interrupt the meeting."

"I merely rung to settle this bill with you," said Lady Olivia; "but what did you say about an exposition?"

"I thought your Ladyship had known," replied Mrs. Millar, "that Miss Neville assembles us all every evening in her room to explain the Scriptures, and to teach us Mr. Harvey's new views, which are most surprising, and quite different from any thing I had ever known formerly."

Lady Olivia looked up from her writing desk with extreme astonishment, and paused in silence for some moments. "Pray, Millar, how long have you been in the habit of hearing Miss Neville expound?" she said at length, in a tone of some anxiety.

"Ever since she came here, Madam," replied Mrs. Millar. "I hope your Ladyship will not be displeased, for we all fancied you had known it, or not one of the servants would have attended."

"No, Millar, I was not aware of this," said Lady Olivia; "and am very glad to have been informed of it now, though you need not suppose that I blame any one, as it is all intended for the best. I must, however, observe, that as there have been so many wise and good Christians before us, it is most probable that any entirely new views of religion must be entirely wrong, and that we should beware of being like the men of Athens, who were always inquiring for some new thing. God originally promised never to leave himself without a remnant of true believers on the earth, and it is not probable that he will reveal now what has been hitherto concealed. But I shall converse with Miss Neville on this subject to-morrow, and in the meantime, I think, Millar, that as we have family prayers here twice a-day, it may be as much as you can do with advantage to attend these, along with the more private devotions, in which, I hope and believe, you regularly engage."

Mrs. Millar respectfully withdrew, and Lady Olivia took the earliest opportunity which occurred of speaking to Miss Neville, though she did so with that painfully nervous feeling which is common to every mind of sensibility when duty obliges them to discuss or criticise the conduct of another. "Barbara!" said she, the following morning, in her most conciliatory tone, "I understand you have begun a course of reading to the servants, which I am sorry you did not mention, that I might have been present also. It has occasioned me much regret, since your arrival here, that you have never joined my family circle at prayers, and I shall be happy now to make some arrangement by which we may divide the duty, and enjoy the pleasure together, if that would be agreeable to you."

"Our views are so very different," said Miss Neville,

"that your presence would rather restrain the freedom of my expositions."

"We might at least agree in the importance of studying the Scriptures," replied Lady Olivia; "and I have no objection to confine myself to these for the present, if it will induce you to join me. Where explanation is desirable, you may name the works of any ordained clergyman you please, and I shall be happy to coincide in reading them; but, my dear Barbara, I consider myself answerable for any instruction which is imparted in this house to my servants, and on so serious an occasion as that of being taught from the word of God, I cannot allow them to assemble without being present myself."

Miss Neville's look was more in anger than in sorrow at this declaration, and feeling herself extremely ill-treated, she soon after left the room, while Lady Olivia's countenance assumed for some moments an unwonted expression of chagrin and anxiety, which soon yielded, however, to its usual look of calm and peaceful meditation, while these words occurred to her thoughts, "Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am there ye may be also." "Who would willingly forsake such a simple belief as this teaches," thought she, "for all the learned controversies of the present day! Here are doctrine, precept, and prophecy, all comprised in a single page, and level to every capacity; I could meditate for ever on this one text, and there are hundreds to be found in Scripture of equal signification and interest. It holds out a balm for every worldly sorrow; and if I find it sufficient, surely there are few hearts upon earth that can need it more." Lady Olivia glanced around her

silent and solitary drawing-room, while the images of her husband and her children crowded into her thoughts, and the tears insensibly flowed down her cheek. "I believe in God, therefore I am comforted," thought she, covering her face with her hands, and struggling for composure; "I believe in a Saviour, and therefore I feel myself pardoned and pitied. I look to the mansions where those whom I loved will yet dwell with me in eternal blessedness, and I feel that my hour of sorrow is short and easy. I think upon the path of suffering through which Christ went on his mission of mercy, and I long to follow Him, and to rejoice in his presence for ever. Oh! surely these consolatory thoughts are indeed to me the fulfilment of that Scripture, 'My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in thy weakness;' for these words give to me that 'peace' which Christ bequeathed as His last best gift to His disciples, and which is like the white stone mentioned in the Revelation, 'which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.'"

CHAPTER V.

Her maternal care
Incessant watches o'er the feeble frame,
And bids the changing scenes of life prepare
Our rising nature to a nobler aim. COWPER.

SOME weeks after Miss Neville had been domesticated at Ashgrove, Lady Olivia was one morning alarmed and grieved to receive a letter from Lady Howard, mentioning that Lady Fitz-Patrick's son having recently had a severe typhus fever, she had invited Eleanor to take refuge at her house, but that, in spite of every precaution, both the girls had been seized with that dangerous complaint in its worst form, and were considered to be alarmingly ill.

It was many years since Lady Olivia had left her own house, but without a moment's delay she proceeded to Barry's hotel, accompanied by Miss Neville, and prepared with all a mother's anxiety and tenderness to take her place by the bedside of the beloved invalids, and to watch over them with the same deep solicitude and affectionate care which had once been so unavailingly exerted for her own children, who were scarcely more dear to her than Eleanor and Matilda.

"There is a right and a wrong way of doing every thing," as the Frenchman said, who wrote a book on the best way of blowing out a candle; and nothing in the world shews greater diversity of character and disposition than attending a sick-bed. Every affection of the heart is then called forth, and must be accompanied with

fortitude and prudence to impart that comfort and support to the sufferer which we often require at the same time ourselves. Few are capable of entirely neglecting those who need their care; but, on the other hand, fewer still can give all the consolation that might be expected on such an occasion, because there is a perpetual danger of officiousness, and still more of being ostentatious in conferring attention on those whose situation obliges them to be under incessant obligations. A mind of true delicacy will carefully screen from observation all the labour and care which her attendance occasions, while the fretfulness of pain and dependence may be a continual trial to the temper, in causing peevishness and misrepresentations from those whom it is the first object of solicitude to relieve and comfort. No one ever attained more perfectly than Lady Olivia Neville that total forgetfulness of self which is the first essential in an attendant on sickness. She seemed to have no thought on earth beyond the sick-room, and to see no object in it but the two beloved invalids. If they were feverish, she soothed them; if they slept, she seemed scarcely to have life or motion herself; if their spirits were depressed, she whispered words of encouragement and comfort; and when their sufferings were beyond the reach of her alleviation, they saw by her looks of silent distress how deep was her sympathy; and often a short but fervent prayer breathed from her lips, brought the light of another world to shine npon the darkness of the present.

To Eleanor and Matilda, Lady Olivia's entrance seemed always the harbinger of peace and consolation. Their first thought on awakening was to ascertain if she were near; and they closed their eyes to sleep with an additional feeling of tranquillity when they saw her watching with gentle, but unobtrusive care. She added

to their comfort by a thousand contrivances which occurred to no one else; for truly those who have watched much over the sufferings of a sick-bed, become fearfully ingenious in anticipating and relieving its wants.

Eleanor and Matilda scarcely needed to express their wishes, for they had only to lie still, like the Prince in the Arabian Nights, who was waited upon by hands, and every thing was done by an invisible agency. The invalids could often only guess to whom they were indebted for what afforded them pleasure or relief, but they never found themselves mistaken in attributing every instance of considerate kindness or watchful care to Lady Olivia Neville.

It was far otherwise with respect to their aunt Barbara, the very sound of whose footstep ascending the stair made the patients shrink with anticipations of future endurance; and when she entered the room, it was with an air of conscious merit that seemed to tell what an act of duty and of kindness she was about to perform in visiting the sick, and in braving the infection of a fever, the danger and contagiousness of which became her favourite theme. Whatever might be the state of their nerves, or of their pulses, she made a point of asking the invalids a train of questions and cross-examining them. If they felt better? If they felt worse? If they had slept well? If they had taken their medicine? If the doctor had been there lately? If their heads ached? and whether they felt prepared to die should their illness be fatal, which she frequently hinted was more than probable. Miss Neville generally ended her visit with a selection of trite and common-place remarks on the necessity of patient submission to suffering, on the shortness of life, and on the certainty of death.

If Dr Jones came in, Miss Barbara scarcely let him

speak to his patients, she had so much to say. She told him how they were; descanted on her own excessive attention and skill, suggested various remedies that she wondered he had not prescribed, and asked him whether it was probable they should recover or not. Whatever position Eleanor or Matilda might be lying in when she entered, Miss Neville invariably thought she could make them more easy, and insisted on their altering it. "My dear! how can you stay in bed with your head so high? Let me remove one of those pillows," said she one day to Eleanor, "and pray turn your back to the light, which would be much more comfortable."

"Aunt Barbara! do let me be miserable my own way," replied Eleanor impatiently; "it is not the sun that is annoying me most at present, but something much more teazing and unwelcome."

The invalids often pretended to be asleep when Miss Neville entered the room, in hopes of being allowed to repose in peace; but this expedient scarcely at all availed them, as she generally peered into their faces to ascertain if they really were so, and seemed willing to awaken them in order to inquire how they slept.

Miss Barbara Neville was quite an adept at that peculiar sort of whisper, which seems the established mode of communication in sick-rooms. It is just low enough to excite attention, and loud enough not to balk it. There is a mysterious and impressive earnestness in it which commands the most intense curiosity; and the invalid who is supposed to be too weak or too drowsy for listening to anything, is generally kept in a feverish state of interest and anxiety by its continual sound near his bed, and learns by means of it, all that ought to be most cautiously concealed. In vain did Lady Olivia try to discourage Miss Neville's loquacity, for the invalids,

either sleeping or waking, only experienced a change from the sound of her voice at its full pitch, or when reduced to that irritating whisper which they dreaded more than the drone of a bagpipe at their ears.

"I see poor Matilda is asleep at last," whispered Miss Neville across the bed to Lady Olivia, who was quietly seated at her work on the opposite side; "she has had a dreadful day of it! Indeed, I am sorry to mention, Dr Jones thinks it a great chance if she can survive this night unless her pulse falls."

Lady Olivia made signs to stop Miss Neville's imprudence, and clasped her hands with an imploring look, to show how earnestly she begged her silence; but it was all in vain.

"She is quite sound asleep, I assure you," continued the whisperer; "and I am very thankful to see it, for that is her only chance of coming through."

"I am not asleep, aunt Barbara!" said Matilda, faintly; "I hear all you say."

"My dear girl! how sorry I am! Did I disturb you? Have you slept at all? Do turn yourself round, and try to be composed."

A gentle hand was laid upon Barbara's arm, and Lady Olivia led her towards the door. "It is, as you know, a case of life and death this night, and quietness is our only hope," said Lady Olivia, impressively, as soon as they were beyond the possibility of being heard; "excuse me, Barbara, but for your own sake, and that of all who love the dear girl, I cannot allow you to remain another moment in that room."

Lady Olivia hastened instantly back, and found Matilda in a state of alarming agitation. Her whole frame was trembling, and she entreated her aunt not to stir out of sight for a moment, but to talk to and comfort

her, and to try if she could lead her mind into a state of composure and peace, as the idea of death, so nearly impending, had never before been impressed on her thoughts.

"You often told me formerly, my dear aunt, when I talked presumptuously of being ready to die, that death at a distance or near, was as different to our apprehensions as if we saw a lion painted on a sign, or met him roaring in the forest; and I now feel painfully sensible how true it is."

Lady Olivia laid herself down on the bed beside Matilda, and affectionately folded her in her arms. "My dearest child," she said in an under tone, "you and I have often talked of death, and thought of it formerly; and we have prayed together that God would be with you in the hour of danger and of suffering. These prayers will all be remembered now, when you cannot speak the language of supplication yourself. The Holy Spirit of God will intercede for you, and the Saviour is ready to bless and to preserve you. Place your whole trust in his all-sufficient merit; and be thankful that it is his merit, and not your own, that you now depend upon. Try to sleep, my beloved Matilda, and be assured I shall remain here and pray for you till you awaken again."

Nature had been so nearly exhausted by fever and restlessness, that all the soothing cares of Lady Olivia were for some time unavailing; but still Matilda felt encouraged and consoled by her presence; and a calm insensibly stole over her spirits, when she gazed on the countenance of her aunt, which was so peaceful and so sanctified, that all human passion seemed utterly extinct there, except when she turned a look of fond and anxious solicitude on the object of her affectionate care. Gra-

dually the perfect stillness of all around, and the growing composure of her inward thoughts, had the desired effect, and Matilda at length dropped into a quiet and refreshing slumber, which brought the crisis of her fever to a favourable termination. It was not without tears of joy and thankfulness that Lady Olivia learned from Dr Jones, on the following morning, that both the young ladies might be considered out of danger, and that in a few weeks he was confident they would be perfectly restored.

Never did Matilda Howard afterwards forget that hour, when the gulph of eternity seemed suddenly to have opened beneath her feet, and when all her terrors had been soothed and allayed by the message of gospel mercy. The more she meditated on it, during the time of her convalescence, the more she saw its adaptation to her wants, and the more truly she loved its Author. Many days were afterwards spent in deep and earnest conversation with Lady Olivia, during which her mind seemed visibly to expand, and she received a degree of pleasure and interest from these interviews, of which her whole future life showed the salutary impression.

Lady Fitz-Patrick professed to be so occupied with her son at home, that she could seldom come to see Eleanor; and she indulged a most unconquerable terror of infection also, which combined with other things to render her visits both few and hurried. The apartment was always carefully fumigated before she entered; her pocket handkerchief was steeped in Eau de Cologne for the occasion; her gloves were changed after she left the room, and she kept cloves in her mouth the whole time she spoke. Sometimes she did not venture to enter, but thrust her head in at the door, and held a dialogue from thence, to ascertain how her daughter felt.

"I would come in with pleasure, my love, but it could be of no use to you," said Lady Fitz-Patrick one day; "and being so lately from the fresh air, would make me very liable to catch the fever. I hope you have every thing necessary, and that you will soon be quite well."

Lady Fitz-Patrick's head was then hastily withdrawn, before there was time for any answer, and she returned home to tell Sir Richard that Eleanor was really wonderfully better, and she could see no good reason for their sending an apology to Lady Amelia Douglas.

Lady Howard was as clever in the science of physic as in everything else. She had studied profoundly in Buchan's Domestic Medicine. She knew the Code of Health and Longevity by heart, and had read "Every Man his own Doctor," and "The infallible Shield against Sickness and Death," several times over. Her well-stocked medicine chest was of most portentous dimensions; and she had even invented a pill of her own, which was a secure remedy for every sort of incurable complaint. She quacked herself by the newspapers continually, and sent for a trial of almost every new discovery in physic which was advertised, declaring she or some of her friends had undoubted symptoms of the disease it professed to cure. Lady Howard's children also enjoyed the benefit of her prescriptions. Many a Nabob, whose liver has been fried in India for twenty years, never swallowed more calomel than Matilda. If she looked flushed with exercise and animation, it was administered to cool her; if she felt languid with fatigue, she must require it for being bilious; and if she were undeniably well, there was nothing more effectual as a preventive of disorders than calomel. On the occasion of Matilda's severe illness, Lady Howard was determined to shine. She had a theory of her own for fevers, and was with the greatest

difficulty prevented by Dr Jones from following it out in her treatment of the invalid, and he felt often nearly in a fever himself with the trouble she occasioned him. Every draught that was sent to the house she made a point of tasting, in order to ascertain its ingredients, and generally threw out a rough guess when next he called, that she might impress him with a due sense of her discrimination.

"I rather suspect, Dr Jones," said she one day, "that there was laudanum in the composing draught you sent for Matilda last night, which is a thing I never allow my children to take; so we merely administered the half of it, which was fortunate, since I rather think it did her harm. Do you never prescribe Valerian instead?"

Another day she said, "Would there be any risk, Dr Jones, in doubling the dose you prescribed last night? It did some good, and I conceive the contents are merely antimonial wine and hartshorn, disguised in a little rose water."

"Madam," cried Dr Jones in a paroxysm of vexation, "either you or I must give up practice in this house, for Miss Howard could not survive a week of your treatment."

"Olivia," said Lady Fitz-Patrick, one day when she saw her leaving the sick-room, "how I envy your nerves! they would be fit for a sick-nurse at the Infirmary. You appear to have no fear of infection, so it is quite safe for you to brave it! but as I live in constant terror, you know I am much more liable to be seized with the complaint than any one else. You have always been, in every circumstance of life, a strong-minded person, who could bear any thing. If you could form any idea of my acute sensibility on all occasions, you would really

pity me; but it is what, I should think, you can scarcely even imagine."

Lady Olivia coloured deeply at this implied accusation of insensibility, and turned silently away, for her heart was too full to speak. "Alas!" thought she, "'The heart knoweth its own bitterness;' how many fervent prayers, and how many solitary struggles, has it cost me to attain that outward calmness which shrouds from her view the anguish and sorrow that have long been buried in my breast, and which must last 'till mourn'd and mourner lie together in repose.'"

"You really have quite a genius for a sick-room," said Lady Howard drawing in her chair, "and I often think, Olivia, how unlucky it is that you never tried to pick up a little knowledge of medicine; it might render you still more useful in attending upon invalids, which you seem to be so fond of doing."

"We should scarcely agree quite so well as we do now, Maria, if I took out a diploma," replied Lady Olivia, sitting down beside her. "I believe Esculapius himself would be puzzled in your well-stored laboratory, and I certainly am completely so; however, in medicine, still more than in any thing else, it is most true that a little learning is a dangerous thing; and it is too late for me now to acquire all the skill and practice that you have."

"You are pleased to be satirical," said Lady Howard, laughing, "and as a punishment, I prescribe for you to read carefully through this invaluable work upon diet, entitled 'The Life Preserver.'"

"Thank you," answered Lady Olivia; "but I never feel in such danger of becoming fanciful about my health as when I begin to study the subject; and the most incurable complaints of all are those of the imagination.

I once read the description of a polypus in the nose till I actually felt as if it were beginning to grow in my own."

"I perceive that your chief deficiency as a sick-nurse, Olivia, is rather a want of activity," said Miss Neville, in a tone of perfect self-complacency. "I thought, moreover, that you lost several opportunities, when the girls were at their worst, of saying something striking and impressive, whichthey would have remembered the longest day they had to live."

"Do you think so, Barbara," answered Lady Olivia, in a tone of reflection. "I can acquit myself of an intentional omission, but we have so solemn a responsibility to promote the glory of God, and the good of those we love, that I never can feel satisfied it has been fully performed, and am quite ready to coincide with you, that more might have been done, though I trust our endeavours, such as they were, will have the blessing of God, which can alone render them effectual."

"To do you justice, my dear Olivia, I see no one who has so varied and interesting a method of talking to children as yourself," interrupted Lady Howard, affecting not to notice that Miss Neville, who had risen to leave the room, was going to speak; "you never tease them when they are unfit for it, like some people; and when you do give religious advice, it is administered to them, as their medicines are, so wrapped up in sweetmeats, that one can scarcely pity them for being obliged to swallow it."

"You know, Maria, afflictions have been called present medicine for everlasting health, and I was anxious to take advantage of their illness, to impress both upon Eleanor and Matilda, the importance of being freed from that moral disease of the soul which each of us is born

with—which causes all the sufferings they ever see or feel—which brings death to our families and to ourselves—and which must send us to everlasting destruction, if we do not apply to that great Physician who is able and willing to cure us."

"Well, Olivia, I have positively thought, very often, after hearing you talk to Eleanor, that if by tossing all my novels and visiting cards out of the window, or by shutting myself up in a dungeon, or cutting off my right hand, or any other desperate effort you please, I could all at once become as pious and amiable as you are, I should almost be tempted to try it," said Lady Fitz-Patrick, sighing, while she threw herself full length on a sofa; "but as for settling the whirl of my mind into a calm, and all at once sitting down to be 'good,' that is quite out of the question."

"If you expect to find strength in yourself to do so, it certainly is impossible," said Lady Olivia, earnestly; "the man has never yet been born who could conquer the enticements of this world by his own unassisted efforts. Sin, in some shape or other, governs every human being, till the grace of God gives us a victory which we never could accomplish ourselves."

"I cannot but think, however, in spite of all you have ever said on the subject, Olivia," said Lady Fitz-Patrick, "that if we only do our best, that is all which can possibly be expected."

"And yet, do you recollect the case of Cornelius in the Bible," replied Lady Olivia, "a devout man, who feared God and gave alms to the poor, but a vision was sent to him, in order that he might become a Christian; he seems to have been doing his best, as far as nature could enable him, but he still required the light, and grace, and comfort of the Gospel."

"I know no one whose life is visibly under its influence except your own, Olivia," said Lady Howard; "but with you every action seems dictated by religion, which is as continually prevalent in all you do, as we observe vanity, and selfishness, and ambition, to pervade every thought, word, and deed, of worldly men. Do not contradict me, Olivia—I know all you are going to say; but let me for once speak out my whole mind while I am in the humour of being so candid. You often remind me of that image of virtue which the poet describes as being placed before the eyes of condemned souls in purgatory, to shew them the glory that they have lost; these are represented as turning aside continually, but they cannot close their eyes against its dazzling brightness. And let me acknowledge what I never confessed before, and never would say to a living person but yourself, that the graces of your own character sometimes force themselves in a similar way on my thoughts, till I feel unable to shut my eyes to the contrast there is between us."

"What a strong figure of speech, Maria," said Lady Olivia, calmly. "It is worth while to be your friend, as that always blinds you at once; but recollect we are warned not to measure ourselves by ourselves, nor compare ourselves with ourselves. You are aware how much sorrow I have had to estrange me from loving this world too well; and that so many of its dearest ties have been broken, that it would be extraordinary if I found any difficulty in withdrawing from its scenes. But, Maria, we may be quite indifferent to this world, and yet be very much unprepared for a better. If you knew the snares into which I am every hour in danger of falling, you would see that while life remains, sin and temptation continue to assail us. They find a ready access to the

heart of even the most devoted Christian, though by the grace of God they may be more and more subdued."

"Then, my dear Olivia, since you are in danger of falling, what is to become of me?" exclaimed Lady Fitz-Patrick. "If an eagle cannot rise to a sufficient elevation from the earth, what can a mere butterfly do?"

"The same Almighty hand forms and sustains us all," replied Lady Olivia, impressively. "The wise men who saw that star in the heavens which was to guide their steps to a promised Saviour, lighted no lamps of their own to help them by the way, and the Bible is sent to be our sure and sufficient guide to Christ. If we steadily fix our eyes on the light that is there revealed to us, our path will become plain and easy. We shall then see the heavens, as it were, opened, and the Spirit of God descending into our hearts, to strengthen, to purify, and to enlighten them. It will be like the morning light, becoming brighter and brighter unto the perfect day; and though we shall have to mourn frequently and deeply that we have fallen into sin, we shall still have the means afforded us of being preserved from utter condemnation."

"That is a distinction without a difference," said Lady Howard; "all sin is said to be utterly condemned."

"Yes!" replied Lady Olivia; "but yet let us remember that though God hates all sin, He loves the souls of men, and while we were yet sinners, He gave His only Son to bear the punishment of our transgressions. An atonement must be made for every offence we commit, but our Saviour's is sufficient, if we can place our whole reliance in him, though, at the same time, a true Christian's conduct will exemplify as much purity as if his salvation depended on his own actions. I look not to myself but to Jesus Christ, and nothing can shake my belief in His ability and willingness to save me. If my

guilt appear odious in my own eyes, I know that it is not in my nature to hate sin, and that my abhorrence of it is, in itself, an evidence that the grace of God has begun that good work in me, which I now humbly trust he will accomplish."

"My good friend, to hear this *façon de parler,* one would suppose you had committed some unheard-of crimes," said Lady Fitz-Patrick; "and I really do not believe you are any worse than ourselves. Now, what temptations have we? I never broke one of the commandments in my whole life."

"You think so, from not having fully considered all they require," answered Lady Olivia. "Unless people actually worship images, or commit murder, they are apt to fancy that, by keeping from extremes of sin, they are not infringing the law at all."

"Let me be your father-confessor, then, Olivia, and tell me a catalogue of your greatest offences," said Lady Fitz-Patrick. "I assure you the worse they are, the better I shall like you, because the chief objection I have to you is, for being too faultless."

"It is easy to appear so before our fellow-creatures," replied Lady Olivia; "and if God were such an one as ourselves, who only saw outward actions, it might be possible to deceive Him also; but he sees our motives likewise. These are often hid from ourselves, so it is no wonder if they be concealed from the knowledge of all but God. If we seek for honour to ourselves, rather than to Him, it is yielding to the temptation which Satan held out to Adam, and desiring to be 'as gods.' If our prayers are merely to escape from the punishment rather than from the power of sin, then He sees in us the fear of a slave rather than the love of a child; and if we give way to spiritual pride, which is generally the final temp-

tation that assails the Christian, it is like the crime of Moses and Aaron, taking merit to ourselves for what is the work of God."

"On the score of spiritual pride, I may acquit you, Olivia, for never in my whole life did you say to me, by word or look, 'Stand by, for I am holier than thou,'" observed Lady Howard warmly; "and it is that humility on your part which makes me so ready to see and acknowledge the difference. It is impossible, my dear Olivia, to look into the mirror of such a mind as yours, and not to feel, as I have sometimes done, that, after all, you have chosen the better part, not merely for a future world, but even now."

"Last time we had a conversation of this kind," said Lady Fitz-Patrick, "if you will believe me, I positively sent an apology to several balls during the following week, was denied to morning visitors, and read through a whole volume of tracts; but it did not succeed, for no tongue can tell the weariness I felt, surrounded with sermons, and every day like a Sunday."

"I can easily believe it," replied Lady Olivia, unable to repress a smile. "Only imagine a young lady desired to spend her whole day with a harp and piano-forte which she had never been taught to use, and how little enjoyment she could have in them; but Eleanor, who is accustomed to create the most delightful harmony for hours together, and never to tire, how differently she would feel if she were shut up with nothing else for any length of time. It is the same with all the enjoyments of religion. To those who do not understand them they are an intolerable restraint; but to those who practise the exercises of devotion, how sublime are the emotions—how unfailing the resources they supply."

"No doubt you find it so," answered Lady Fitz-

Patrick, suppressing a yawn; "but I have not energy or resolution now to change my habits of living and of thinking."

"Still the old mistake, Sophia, trusting to yourself instead of to God," said Lady Olivia earnestly. "Oh, if you would but pray for that change of heart which makes every sacrifice easy, and every duty delightful, then you would see no cause to despair. The door of religion is open to all, and yet they wish to climb in at the window, without assistance. You might read sermons night and day, but it would be as useless a penance as that of the Egyptian fanatic who meditated his whole life on the summit of a pillar. It is not the mere service of the body—it is not the mere labour of the mind that will please God, but it is the devotion of the whole heart—it is that sincere love and confidence which He inspires into the heart of all who desire to feel it, and which must be accompanied with humility to acknowledge, that in ourselves we cannot so much as think a good thought."

"Ah! there is another difficulty," cried Lady Fitz-Patrick. "I take myself regularly to church, and read the Bible generally once a-day; but as for thinking about either of them with that pleasure which you have sometimes described, that is quite out of the question. I once even began to copy out some parts of the Bible in my own hand-writing, in hopes to acquire a greater knowledge of it, but—in short, I never was born to be religious."

"We are all born with an aversion to it, replied Lady Olivia, "and it is the peculiar mercy of God to each individual who is happy enough to become otherwise. How delighted it has made me this evening to hear you express a wish to increase in the knowledge and love of God, for no heart can conceive how fervent

and how frequent my prayers are for you both. My chief object on earth now is, the happiness of yourselves and of your dear children; and the only remaining wish for which I desire to live is, that I may yet see you all safely rooted and built up in Christ. Each of us is building for eternity, and the storm and the tempest must soon arise which are to try whether we have built on a foundation of rock or of sand. Let us often anticipate that awful hour—that day when we shall either call upon the mountains to fall on us, and the hills to cover us from the wrath of an eternal God—or else arise with songs of joy and rejoicing, to tune our voices for an anthem of everlasting praise and thanksgiving. My dear sisters, if I transgress on your patience to-night, excuse me, as we are soon to part; and before I return home, let me tell you how constantly you are in my thoughts, and how often, when my heart has been but too cold and inanimate in commending my own soul to the care of our Almighty Father, it has been awakened to new life and energy when I thought of you and your children, and the tears have flowed from my eyes while I implored for you the same blessings that I had asked for myself."

"You are only too kind, Olivia," said Lady Fitz-Patrick in a tone of some feeling; "and I will say this, if any good ever comes of me, your gentle forbearance has done more for me than if you had rung the church bells in my ears every day, as Barbara does. My heart always opens at once to you, and shuts up instantly at the sight of her. She has such a disapproving look, as Sir Francis calls it, and cavils so constantly at every thing I say or do, that it is impossible to feel any confidence or comfort when she is present."

"What is it that makes so wide a difference between Barbara and you, Olivia, when you both profess the

same thing?" inquired Lady Howard. "She seems always to be weighing her own merits against mine, as if we were in a pair of scales, and that the lower she depressed my conduct, the higher she elevated her own."

"It requires long experience of our own deceitful hearts to keep us humble," replied Lady Olivia; "and persons who are converted late in life generally make themselves more conspicuous than those with whom the dawn has been gradual. It is like a blind man receiving his sight in the meridian day, they are so apt to be dazzled by the glory that is revealed to them."

"I am quite of that opinion," exclaimed Lady Howard. "Barbara is, as you say, a mere owl in the sunshine."

"My dear Maria!" interrupted Lady Olivia, in a tone of remonstrance.

"Yes!" continued Lady Howard, speaking rapidly, "she had never any thing generous or comprehensive in her mind since I knew her. Barbara's very virtues have something diminutive and contemptible about them; she never 'rives an oak,' but she spends her life in 'picking up pins, and carving heads upon cherry stones.' Sir Francis declares it his serious belief that Barbara is expecting her memoirs to be written and published when she dies, and I know she keeps copies of her letters on purpose for the biographer. She is certainly one of the most voluminous controversial writers of her day, for I never see one of her weekly despatches to Miss Rachel Stodart that is not longer than any newspaper, and will look splendid in the printing-press. She actually lives as much for fame as Frederick the Great did; and as small vessels are more easily filled than large ones, her mind is as full of vanity in her small way as —"

"Pray stop, Maria! let me say one word," said

Lady Olivia. "I was reading an author lately, who observed, that if every individual knew exactly what is said of him behind his back, no two people in the world would be on speaking terms. It was a painful view of human nature, and not, I trust, at all warrantable; but surely the friendship of sisters at least ought to be such as might survive that ordeal."

"Yours would, I know," replied Lady Howard, taking her affectionately by the hand, as she rose to leave the room; "and in return for the lenient view you take of all my own failings, Olivia, I promise henceforth to wink as hard as I can at Barbara's oddities. In short, I shall be 'to all her faults a little blind,' or completely so, if you prefer it. Adieu for the present. I knew that our conversation would come to an untimely end whenever my sister appeared on the tapis, for I cannot resist giving a critique upon her, and you never can bear to hear it. You have the worst opinion in the world of human nature in general, Olivia, but the best opinion in the world of every individual in the creation; so I must ascertain some day how such a contradiction can be reconciled."

CHAPTER VI.

In her thy well-appointed proxy see,
Armed for a work too difficult for thee;
Prepared by taste, by learning, and true worth,
To form thy child, to strike her genius forth;
Beneath thy roof, beneath thine eye to prove
The force of discipline, when backed by love;
To double all thy pleasure in thy child,
Her mind informed, her morals undefiled.

COWPER.

THE evening before Lady Olivia and Miss Neville proposed returning to the cottage, Sir Richard and Lady Fitz-Patrick joined Lady Howard's family circle at tea, when the whole party seemed to vie with each other who should contribute most to the pleasure and animation of the conversation. Sir Francis began with telling all his best anecdotes of massacring game, and Sir Richard exchanged some valuable information about the most scientific mode of dressing it. Lady Olivia endeavoured to look as if she were interested—and Miss Barbara tried to show she was not. At length Lady Fitz-Patrick and Lady Howard got complete possession of the field, by starting the only subject in which they had a common interest, and which was perfectly inexhaustible between them when once it was begun. A volume could not have contained all the anecdotes they had to exchange, showing the torment they both endured from abigails and governesses, most of whom were as usual in the act of departing.

"It would save one-half the trouble, Maria, if you and Lady Fitz-Patrick would effect a monthly exchange of all the 'treasures' that I continually hear you are expecting home," said Sir Francis; "for, as Dr Johnson or some of your people used to say, 'nothing is lost that a friend gets.'"

"It would be the shortest plan to keep none at all, as I do," said Miss Neville, sharply. "I would not become so helpless as Maria to be a duchess."

"My reason for parting with Phillips at present is, that her officiousness is quite unbearable," continued Lady Howard, without noticing these unwelcome remarks. "If you will believe me, she yesterday washed my Mechlin lace cap without leave, though I had intended sending it to be done at Madame Debris', whom I am so anxious to patronize."

"Intolerable!" exclaimed Lady Fitz-Patrick, drawing her chair still nearer Lady Howard's, while Miss Neville took up a book to show how tired she was of the subject. "My maid Darrell has become completely spoiled. The other day when I rung several times in vain, she came up at last saying, that as the house-keeper had not made the move after dinner, when I first summoned her, it was impossible to stir! I am told, too, that she drinks beer and eats with her knife."

"Pray, Lady Olivia, if we may ask, how long has Millar served you?" asked Sir Francis slyly. "We change our attendants like our dresses, at all the four seasons regularly."

"I have had Millar for twenty-five years," replied Lady Olivia, "and I hope she will remain with me always."

"How fortunate you are!" exclaimed Lady Fitz-Patrick with a sigh; "indeed, I have often intended to

beg, that if she ever leaves you, I may have the first offer of Millar—there cannot be a greater treasure."

"No, no, Sophia," replied Lady Olivia, laughing, "you would not keep her a month. Millar has many faults and deficiencies, but I have made up my mind that every one must have some. It is strange that the only persons in whom we expect to find perfection are our servants."

"Yes," interrupted Sir Francis. "We allow for the faults of our friends—we palliate our own; but an unfortunate abigail must have every virtue under the sun, or she is good for nothing. It is not amongst ladies' maids that one would expect such 'a faultless monster as the world ne'er saw;' I should as soon go hunting in search of a fox with two tails. By the bye, we are in full cry after a governess also,—are we not, Maria?"

"Yes, and so is my sister," answered Lady Howard, trying not to be out of countenance. "Mademoiselle Bernstein has become intolerably susceptible of affronts, and is always imagining them to be intended, which is the only reason for my parting with her so soon. If I am reading a newspaper in the evening, and do not observe her entrée to tea, she comes up with the air of a tragedy queen, to hope she has not offended my Ladyship. When I talk of girls who have been ill-educated, she takes it for granted I level all I say at her, and is sorry Miss Matilda's proficiency does not satisfy me; and if I admire any young lady's manner or accomplishments, she tells me how very hard she has worked lately, but that 'Miss Matilda has been sadly mismanaged.'"

"True enough," muttered Miss Neville, in an under tone.

"I must really send Eleanor to some school in England, or to some convent abroad, rather than encounter

all the vexation of another Madame Pirouette," said Lady Fitz-Patrick; "it will be the joy of my life when she makes her congé, for her tongue is so incessantly active that she talks in her very sleep."

"I will venture to mention a request of mine, without binding you at all to grant it," said Lady Olivia, in a tone of some diffidence and hesitation. "Perhaps one of my sisters may be disposed to indulge me, and if that is not convenient, let us forget that I have mentioned the subject, for I shall press it no farther. The person whom I once hoped to have employed in my own family as governess, is now in want of a situation, and I believe if she were engaged in that capacity, you would soon think I had conferred as great a favour as I feel myself to be asking on her behalf, if you are prevailed upon to try her qualifications for teaching. I do not ask you to retain Miss Porson a day longer than she gives satisfaction, but it would gratify me much if you would engage her by way of experiment."

"We can at least let her walk through the schoolroom, as so many of her predecessors have done already," said Sir Francis. "I think the governess before last remained a year; and poor Matilda was so unaccustomed to keep one so long, that she shed tears at her departure."

"A governess!" exclaimed Lady Howard, looking aghast; "and of course, by the name, Miss Porson must be of British growth."

"Does she play on the harp and sing in perfection?" asked Lady Fitz-Patrick, who professed the most enthusiastic love of music, and generally interrupted it with a profusion of affected exclamations; 'Ah! and Bravo! and Charming!' coming in at the most inappropriate places, and nodding time with her head in regular

measure, but usually half a note out of time. "Music is my chief requisite in a governess, and quite indispensable."

"Miss Porson performs on the piano-forte admirably," replied Lady Olivia, "and she would be most diligent in superintending any masters you might engage."

"Excuse me then," exclaimed Lady Fitz-Patrick, shrugging her shoulders and making a grimace. "She could be of no use to Eleanor now; and besides, I am already more than half engaged to take Miss Marabout from Lord Fitz-Arran's. Her pupil, Lady Sarah Jenkins, was married not six weeks ago to the old Duke of Orton."

"We must take better care of Eleanor," said Lady Olivia, smiling; "it was a sad fate for Lady Sarah, at eighteen, to throw herself away on a notorious gambler."

"Miss Marabout is quite a prima donna among governesses," continued Lady Fitz-Patrick, "but her terms are so enormous, I almost hesitated. She has a voice that might fill the opera-house, and indeed I have heard she was originally intended for the stage."

Miss Neville sighed audibly, but Lady Olivia was not addicted to sighing. Miss Neville shook her head, but Lady Olivia's remained unmoved; yet a shade of deep disappointment and anxiety clouded her usually placid countenance, while she listened to Lady Fitz-Patrick's triumphant panegyric on Miss Marabout. "I hope she will give all the satisfaction that is possible," replied Lady Olivia; "but I should have felt more sanguine if you could speak of her qualifications for forming the heart and understanding. It has been well observed, that the care of a governess is like that of a bird for its young; for she knows that whenever her pupils are grown up she must abandon them, and her sole anxiety

may be directed to the outward accomplishments, on which her own credit depends; but a mother's solicitude should be chiefly devoted to the formation of a character with which she is to be connected for ever."

"As for her disposition," said Lady Fitz-Patrick, indifferently, "Eleanor is really a very good average sort of girl. At her age they are all rather irritable and self-sufficient; but with this new patent governess from Lord Fitz-Arran's, I expect she will become all I could desire, and do me great credit in the world."

"I have been thinking that it must be several weeks before my letters arrive from Berne," said Lady Howard, observing the regret and disappointment with which Lady Olivia had listened to her sister; "and in the meantime I have no objection to your sending me a sight of Miss Porson, that we may talk over her 'method,' and hear what 'system' she follows."

"Hers is a very simple one," replied Lady Olivia, "With a judicious mind, and an active but kind-hearted disposition, she suits her plan to the varying circumstances and tendencies of those she instructs. Christian principle is her ruling object in every thing, and she has the art of inculcating it with all the occupations that interest her pupils."

"Then she must be something like yourself, Olivia! and that ought to be an ample recommendation," replied Lady Howard, warmly; "let her come to me to morrow."

"It will be the best consolation I can have for not requiring her services in my own family, if she is useful to Matilda," said Lady Olivia, with some emotion. "I trust, dear Maria, you will never have cause to regret having indulged me on this occasion. In essential points I know Miss Porson to be all that a mother's heart should

desire; and with respect to those graceful and ornamental accomplishments, which are at best the mere frame to a picture, I believe her teaching will be such as to satisfy your utmost wishes."

"As for Miss Marabout," cried Miss Neville, bitterly, "I have no doubt she is some superficial dressed up fine lady, who cannot speak her mother tongue correctly."

"For once, in a way, you are right, Barbara!" exclaimed Lady Howard, laughing. "I observed, in the peep that Sophia gave me of her letter, Miss Marabout said that she would not be 'af-fraid' to 'except' the situation. Now to do her justice, I really believe she would have been incapable of committing blunders so flagrant in either French or Italian."

"Well, we cannot have every thing," replied Lady Fitz-Patrick, impatiently; "and there are thousands of people who can spell correctly for one who can sing like Miss Marabout. I have no desire to make a *bas bleu* of Eleanor."

"My dear Sophia, you must not undervalue the importance of a literary education," said Lady Howard, in a tone of dignified remonstrance; "consider how it strengthens the faculties—how it enlarges our resources for happiness and occupation—how it acquaints us with ourselves, and with all that is noble, elevated and interesting in the past history of man, or in his present character and circumstances."

"Addison or Johnson, hem!" said Sir Francis, laughing.

"Maria, all that you say on the superiority of literature over mere accomplishments is very true," observed Lady Olivia; "but if the one excels the other so infinitely, how much more do religious principles outweigh all that can be said of what is merely for the present

hour. You will find in Miss Porson one who can discriminate the relative importance of them all, and who, while she will neglect nothing that it is your desire Matilda should learn, is peculiarly capable of guiding and improving her taste in reading."

"I have always considered that reading aloud well is an extremely pretty accomplishment for girls," said Lady Fitz-Patrick, looking very intellectual; "and when Eleanor has time, I mean to have Mr. Barnet, the elocution master, for an hour every week to keep her in practice."

"Miss Porson tells me," continued Lady Olivia, "that she considers one of the most important means of instructing girls to be by conversation. Young people often attend but slightly to what they read, but always remember what they hear. They frequently take up confused or mistaken notions from books, which a judicious friend may soon discover and explain in the course of discussion; and it exercises their judgment in forming and expressing their opinions, which so few girls are accustomed to do, with any clearness or precision."

"So much the better!" exclaimed Sir Francis; "I never wish to see a girl with opinions of her own; it only makes her tiresome and pedantic. I like nothing so much as the agreeable nonsense of young ladies, who never think or reflect for an hour of their lives, and you will ruin Matilda entirely by making her too sensible. She will do nothing but speak moral sentences, like Joseph Surface, and be just as little in earnest as he was. I detest all humbug."

"So do I!" replied Lady Olivia, smiling at the vehemence of Sir Francis. "I quite coincide in your enjoyment of a little lively persiflage, and would be sorry to see Matilda's present gayety and animation smothered

under a mountain of good sense. But still there is a time for every thing; and as you see that the brightest colours look the gayest on a dark ground, so I am convinced that the liveliest spirits come out with the most effect from a mind where the ground-work is sober and rational reflection. Miss Porson lays aside some part of every day for a calm and serious discussion of all her pupils' studies, occupations, and plans—not merely for a lecture, but she encourages the girl herself to talk. If her opinions are correct, she receives them with deference; and where they are not formed on right principles, she endeavours carefully, but very gently, to rectify them."

"Well! it sounds all vastly judicious," said Lady Fitz-Patrick, laughing; "but, as Sir Francis observes, I would not give much for the opinions and reflections of a young philosopher like Matilda, scarcely yet sixteen years old."

"What plans or objects could she have in view," added Sir Francis, "except to be admired for a certain number of years, and then married at last?"

"Probably nothing better, unless she is carefully instructed," replied Lady Olivia earnestly. "Every thing depends upon the understanding being cultivated and enlarged, and on the heart being directed aright. When I see an unfortunate girl who is blindly driven on in the acquisition of her various tasks by a governess who holds out no right motive for the efforts of her pupil, it reminds me of a race-horse, mounted by a skilful jockey, and whipped and spurred along the course. The poor animal cannot perceive the design of all this heartless labour, except that he is surrounded by competitors whom he is evidently expected to outstrip, and encouraged and urged on by acclamations and applauses from all the assembled spectators."

"A very graphic description," said Sir Francis; "and I am sure both Eleanor and Matilda seem to be fairly entered for the sweepstakes."

"But, on the contrary," continued Lady Olivia, earnestly, "if you fully point out to a girl the evils of ignorance, she will long to be freed from them. Hold out to her the pleasure she may confer in her own domestic circle, by the exercise of her accomplishments, and she will desire to excel in them. Explain to her the dignity of character and the peace of mind which result from laying aside the petty rivalships and jealousies that must degrade those who seek for the world's applause, and she will soon rise above its influence. Impress upon her the blessedness that may be found in the sure prospect of everlasting felicity, and, by the grace of God, she will at length know from her own experience, that there is no other foundation on which we can rest our happiness with security."

"What you say is really excellent," replied Lady Fitz-Patrick, suppressing a yawn; "but it would take more time than we could possibly spare, considering all that Eleanor has to do. I shall be grievously disappointed in her, if, two years hence, when she is to come out, my daughter is not perfect mistress of French, Italian, and German."

"You should give her a different language for every day of the week!" interrupted Miss Neville satirically.

"She must paint flowers, landscapes, and miniatures, like an artist, besides playing on the harp and piano-forte in perfection," continued Lady Fitz-Patrick. "She is now practising the guitar, and will certainly be a first-rate singer. Whatever leisure Eleanor may have she devotes to embroidering, in which I am really anxious for her to excel; and I think it of great importance that

s he should keep up her dancing, and calisthenic exercises."

Sir Francis groaned aloud. "What a tread-mill the poor girl's mind is in! The arts and sciences must be thrown into a state of picturesque confusion during the twenty-four hours in which she has to study them all. Why, Sophia, a professor thinks his life laboriously occupied in mastering one branch of art, but our friend is to be perfect in them all before she is eighteen."

"Eleanor is fully more eager than myself," observed Lady Fitz-Patrick, dryly; "she would not abate one of her tasks on any account."

"Ah! very likely, for all girls have so much vanity, they will make any exertion to excel," continued Sir Francis. "It is a curious fact, that the willing horse in a mail-coach is always shorter lived than those that are indolent, for he overstrains his powers. But I need not speak of Eleanor—she gets off cheaply compared with my own Matilda, who is destined, besides all you have named, to acquire a 'supercilious' knowledge of history and mathematics. She must repeat the name of every captain of cavalry at the battle of Blenheim; and her last governess was dismissed for ignorance, because she could not recollect how many children Queen Anne had, though not one of them lived a year."

"Keep to facts, Sir Francis," interposed Lady Howard, "I have a great dislike to embellishment."

"Can you deny, then, that I caught Matilda in tears over a primrose the other day, because she had called it a monopetalous corolla, instead of some other designation equally insignificant to her? It made me mournful really to contrast the poor girl's feeling with my own juvenile associations, when the sunny primrose banks of

spring used to fill me with such rapture, that even yet the sight of one makes me young again."

"I agree with you in lamenting," said Lady Olivia, "the years of joyous youth and natural pleasure which are often sacrificed, that a child may accumulate those accomplishments which it will probably be the first act of her liberty to relinquish, while no time is left for observing what is around us, or for exercising the charities, the affections, and the duties of life."

"Yes!" interrupted Sir Francis, "the education-fever must have nearly reached its crisis now, for every young lady makes her debut with a mass of accomplishments,—a threatening of spine complaint, a confirmed tendency to headachs, and her own particular diet, which she cannot exist without observing."

"I never remember our being so nearly of the same opinion on any subject before, Sir Francis!" said Lady Olivia, laughing; "but I agree with you perfectly in grudging the happy hours of childhood that are now sacrificed to vanity, at a time when the mere consciousness of young and joyous existence gives a spring and elasticity to the spirits, which often pervades all our remaining years. The salutary exercise and necessary repose of young people are constantly circumscribed, their faculties are overstrained, and when they stop to take breath after the long career of emulation and discipline, their first impulse will probably be, to relax into the unbounded enjoyment of that rest and leisure which they must so often have longed to taste."

"It is singular," observed Sir Francis, "how many of the most celebrated men have had great disadvantages of education to struggle against, so that we never should have expected them to attain eminence at all. But I

suspect we often destroy the vigour of intellect by too incessant cultivation."

"I believe you are right," said Lady Olivia. "Every one must have remarked, that the instinctive love of self-preservation in children among the higher classes, is seldom so active as in those who are less objects of care and solicitude, because, being accustomed to depend on the watchfulness of others, they lose that quick perception of danger which is as natural to infants as it is to animals. The eagerness for knowledge also, which is born with all children, becomes surfeited by over-indulgence, and enervated by too much aid. But the curiosity of young people should be excited on all useful subjects, and ought to receive such assistance as shall encourage their own minds to work out the rest."

"Yes," said Sir Francis, "nature is too much out of fashion now in education—she has her faults and deficiencies, certainly, but I would be for guiding and correcting, without utterly exterminating her."

"Above all," added Lady Olivia, "I am apprehensive that the habit of quiet meditation and self-examination, which is one of our chief duties, will scarcely ever be acquired, and that, where there are so many studies to call the thoughts abroad, they will seldom be profitably employed at home."

"How very strangely you talk, Olivia!" exclaimed Lady Fitz-Patrick. "I could fancy the celebrated Hervey going out to meditate among tombs, but nothing on earth would puzzle me more completely than to be set down for an hour's solitary reflection; and as for Eleanor, it is absolute nonsense to talk of it."

"I know that meditation is one of our most difficult Christian duties," replied Lady Olivia, "but, at the same time, it is one of the most important. We can read or

hear a dozen of books more easily than we can meditate properly on one; but yet our inward thoughts are the only tests by which we can know the real state of our minds. Whatever we turn to naturally when alone, is the thing that engrosses most of our regard, and therefore we should often look inwards to ascertain if our hearts are stored for eternity, and how far they are devoted to the service of God. Religious meditations have been compared to the blossoms on a tree in spring, many of them fall off, come to nothing, and end in vanity; but yet they are the first things in which spiritual-mindedness consists, and there can be no fruit, good or bad, but what proceeds from our thoughts."

"My poor Matilda! we shall have her soon in a state of excruciating reflection, under the superintending care of Miss Porson," said Sir Francis, laughing. "I should like to see them like Mahometan Souffees, wrapt in sublime meditation from noon till midnight."

"Dear Olivia," said Lady Howard, with an air of superior wisdom, "like the plans of all mere amateurs in education, yours have but one fault, that they are quite impossible."

"Let us beware," said Lady Olivia, gently, "of one very common and dangerous device which Satan has frequent recourse to in the world. When there are any Christian duties or doctrines to which no rational objection can be made, he leads us off into caricatured views, and either makes them appear so intolerable a restraint on ourselves, or in so extravagant a light by the conduct of others, that we are tempted to abjure them altogether. I pity as much as you do those visionaries who are delivered up to the power of imagination."——

Lady Howard gave an expressive cough, and glanced at

Miss Neville, whose eyes had been for some time fixed on the ceiling, in profound abstraction; but Lady Olivia endeavoured not to notice this mischievous application of her words.

"At the same time," continued she, "I think there can be nothing truly great or good in any one who has not a habit of steady reflection, which it must be the result of many persevering efforts to acquire. It need not often interrupt the busy occupations of life, but it should frequently accompany them, till at length a truly reflecting mind becomes like the alchemist, who turns all he touches into gold."

"Or like the lady in the Fairy tale, who dropped pearls and diamonds at every word she spoke," added Lady Fitz-Patrick; "I have always envied her that talent, and could we only impart it to Eleanor, she need learn nothing else in this mercenary world."

"Excuse me, Sophia, if I have been too serious at present," said Lady Olivia, glancing round on her auditors, who were all in different attitudes of weariness, "but it will be an important crisis in Eleanor's life when she recovers entirely from her late alarming illness, and resumes the progress of education. She has to be formed for eternity,—her tastes and habits are still undecided, and it remains with you to give them their future bias; all around her must be transient and fleeting, but those become every day more unalterable, and will be permanent for ever. Oh! pause one moment, and consider what you and your precious child will think of this important choice, when the short dream of our lives is ended, and we are about to awaken in eternity! Do every thing, dear Sophia, in subservience to her immortal interests, and you will never have cause to regret it. Many pleasing accomplishments are like trinkets, suitable to

Eleanor's station in life, and perfectly proper for her to have, if they are agreeable to you, and to be laid aside in after life, if she tires of them; but the chief object is, to strengthen her understanding, by teaching her how to act and feel in all the various circumstances of life, as shall be most for her happiness and for your own comfort."

CHAPTER VII.

———School friendships are not always found,
Though fair in promise, permanent and sound;
Each dreams that each is just what he appears,
But learns his error in maturer years,
When disposition, like a sail unfurl'd,
Shows all its rents and patches to the world.

COWPER.

WHEN Eleanor and Matilda were sufficiently recovered, they recommenced the labours of education, superintended by Miss Marabout and Miss Porson, each of whom acted according to such expectations as might have been formed from the preceding conversation, and before many months had elapsed, an obvious change was perceptible in the character and conduct of the two young ladies, though they continued to attend some of the same classes, and in a few instances to pursue similar studies. Much was outwardly alike, but that which gives its stamp and value to every thing, the motive that guided them on all occasions, was different.

Eleanor Fitz-Patrick gradually had her masters so multiplied around her, that if she could have had one for each of the two and thirty separate faculties with which phrenologists have gifted us, it appeared as if Lady Fitz-Patrick would have made them work simultaneously to prime and load her daughter with accomplishments, that the final explosion might be greater. She soon became the admiration and the boast of all those innumerable teachers who vied with Miss Marabout in the most enthusiastic praises of their pupil.

Eleanor was, from this time, the show-scholar of every class, and it was as good as an advertisement in the newspapers for any master to say she was his pupil. If a stranger inquired how Mr Crotchet taught music, Miss Fitz-Patrick was requested to play her grand sonata; or when Monsieur Dumont had a public exhibition of his French scholars, she generally received as rapturous bursts of applause for recitation as ever Talma did on the stage. Eleanor's drawings were framed and hung up in the school-room, that every one might be witness to her extraordinary genius, and Lady Howard sarcastically observed, that it was well worth while to pay a shilling for the exhibition; but no one ever received a hint either from Eleanor or Miss Marabout, that the outline and shading had been corrected and finished by Mr Crayon himself. Her embroidery was also displayed for universal admiration, and excited the greatest applause, being so exquisitely fine that it might have been examined through a microscope; but no acknowledgment was deemed necessary that the more difficult parts were done by Miss Marabout herself. Before long, Eleanor Fitz-Patrick had been invested with as many medals and ribbons as any general officer in the service, and she acquired a conceited self-satisfied look, which was obvious to the most superficial observer. She laid down the law about painting and music as if it were impossible for any one to understand more on the subject than she did, or to support a different opinion when hers was known.

Eleanor could not bear the slightest criticism on any thing she had done, and even "faint praise" was intolerably offensive to her. One day, having shewn a drawing to Lady Fitz-Patrick, for which she obtained but slight commendation, as her mother happened to be occupied at the moment, Eleanor angrily threw it into the flames,

saying, "If you can pronounce no better judgment than that it seems nicely done, an expression better suited to a mutton chop, it can only be fit for the fire; I never wish to show a mediocre drawing in my portfolio!"

If any one spoke in an audible voice while Eleanor performed on the harp in company, she tried as much as possible to show the annoyance it occasioned, and sometimes stopped altogether, saying "that the noise made her so nervous she could not proceed." "Eleanor!" whispered Lady Fitz-Patrick one day, "how dreadfully passionate you have become!"

"No wonder!" replied she, hastily, "I never played so well in my life as this evening, and some of the most beautiful passages were utterly lost, owing to the perpetual motion of old Sir Colin Fletcher's tongue."

"But, my dear Miss Fitz-Patrick, you should try not to show any ill temper, even when you feel it," added Miss Marabout; "it is a bad thing to get the reputation of being irritable, and I have known many girls whose fortune in life was completely spoiled for no other reason than that they could not command their temper in company."

"If a medal were to be given for good humour, I am sure Eleanor would be indefatigable in trying for it," said Lady Howard, laughing sarcastically; "but as there is no particular object to be gained by self-control, she thinks she may indulge her temper with perfect impunity."

In dress Eleanor outshone all contemporaries, and the fashion of her costume was a continual object of notice and imitation wherever she appeared, and in every schoolroom. At home, however, the scene was very different, for the hair *en papillotes*, and her shoes often slip-shod, bore witness to the indifference she entertained for anything but the ostentation of dress, because in all things

it was inculcated on Eleanor Fitz-Patrick, that it signified less what she really was than what she appeared to be in the eyes of others; and that her own self-respect was of little importance compared with the respect and admiration of strangers, before whom she showed herself in a continual masquerade, adopting the opinions and manners most likely to please them, instead of those most natural to herself.

From this time Lady Fitz-Patrick's favourite subject of conversation became a dissertation on the merits of Miss Marabout, and, of course, by implication, on her pupil. In every company that she entered it came in, *à propos* to any thing or to nothing; and while she spoke with all the eloquence of enthusiasm, the hands and eyes of the surrounding ladies were turned up in admiration and astonishment, to think of her good fortune in having secured such a "treasure."

"I really cannot say enough in her praise," was the usual conclusion, in Lady Fitz-Patrick's most sensible tone. "In fact, I need never have an anxious thought about Eleanor while Miss Marabout has charge of her, their time is always so well employed. Her manner of teaching stimulates my daughter's energy to such a degree, that she will hardly stay long enough in bed to recruit her frame. Before the last French examination Eleanor slept every night with a dictionary under her pillow, that she might commence her studies by peep of day; and she was detected with a candlestick concealed in her closet once, that she might get up before five in the morning to practise some difficult cadences of a new song for Madame Andanté's exhibition on Saturday."

During the harangue of her sister, Lady Howard sat upon thorns, and looked the picture of vexation, as she felt herself for once in her life totally eclipsed.

"Miss Marabout is certainly quite a pattern governess, *la femme comme il y en a peu!*" said she in a tone of some irritability; "Eleanor will be quite an Admirable Crichton, and I wish you joy of having secured such a prodigy as you describe. With respect to Miss Porson, she really is so excellent a creature, that there does not appear to be a single point on which I could hang a pretext for parting with her, but she does not quite satisfy my wishes. There is nothing brilliant or striking about her,—nothing new in the 'method' she pursues, or in the style of her instructions. Yet the smallest hint I give is so well received and so carefully attended to,—all Matilda's lessons are so regularly learned, and so fully understood, that I never know where to criticise. My daughter herself is so distractedly fond of Miss Porson, that I have scarcely the heart to cause a separation, and yet I am very desirous of finding some one who would spur her on a little faster."

The lovely countenance of Matilda Howard seemed to brighten with a new expression of life and animation from the moment that Miss Porson took charge of her education; and every day increased the pleasure she felt in her own progress, which became easier to her than she could possibly have anticipated; for there was a facility and clearness in Miss Porson's explanations and manner of teaching, which Matilda, in all her extensive experience of governesses, had never before remarked. Education became no longer what is called at Oxford "a cram;" but Miss Porson considered that much has to be drawn out, as well as to be put in, when the mind is properly cultivated, and that the soil may be enriched while the plants are taking root. If any subject was to be studied that exercised the understanding, Miss Porson gave no more assistance than was

absolutely necessary, that it might be worked out by her pupil, but she never allowed a lesson to be laid aside till Matilda had fully mastered every difficulty. There was a distinctness and precision in all that Miss Porson said, which scarcely left her pupil a single question to ask; and when her instructions were over, she encouraged the amusements that suited Matilda's years, and spared no trouble to promote the sprightliness and vivacity of her holiday hours.

The only thing in which Matilda was at all remarkable at the classes was the regularity of her attendance, and the perfect correctness with which she executed her tasks. No clandestine assistance was afforded by Miss Porson, who always recommended such music as it was quite within the compass of her powers to perform, and who would never allow any of her drawings to be improved by Mr Crayon, as she had an objection to what Lady Howard called "Eleanor's masterpieces."

Miss Porson thought the first object in education should be to inculcate a love of truth, without disguise or embellishment. "Whenever you make any person believe what you know is not the case, that is a falsehood, whether it be done by an actual assertion, by implication, or by evasion," said Miss Porson; "and on that account I would not put a stitch to the embroidery, nor add a line to the drawing that is to be shown as your performance. I see the importance of accuracy in every statement so strongly, as almost to make me agree with Dr Johnson, that if a child relates any occurrence, and mentions that it took place in one window, when it really happened in another, he ought to be set right."

When any master found fault with Matilda, Miss Porson was so attentive to rectify the error, that it was

seldom they had to make the same remark a second time. But the scene was very different when Eleanor had to be corrected, for Miss Marabout always vehemently defended her pupil, and repeated within her hearing every panegyric that had been pronounced upon her extraordinary acquirements, by the complaisant and frequently mistaken visitors of Lady Fitz-Patrick.

In her dress, there was not an hour of the day at which Matilda Howard could have been caught untidy; yet from the moment she left her dressing-room, not a thought seemed ever to rise on the subject of her appearance, for she became so fully impressed with Miss Porson's opinion, that simplicity and neatness alone were requisite.

The modest diffidence of Matilda's manner gave an interest to all she said; and whatever might be the topic of conversation in company, she generally listened with an air of intelligent inquiry, and frequently obtained fuller and more interesting information afterwards from Miss Porson, than it was possible to do in the slight and superficial notice of any subject which is usually taken in society. She read many of the standard works in French and English literature with her governess, who pointed out the beauties for which they had become celebrated, and the defects for which they had been criticised. Miss Porson often sketched out all that was known relating to the character and circumstances of the different authors they studied together, in order to explain what had probably led them to write and think as they had done. She pointed out the peculiarities of style and arrangement in every new book they read, and she made a continual reference to the effects that each writer had been supposed to have upon religion and morals. "It has been well observed," she said, "that

books may be merely a tree of knowledge, or they may become to us a tree of life, if we pluck from them with discretion, and study them with a continual reference to the Divine will, and to the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Everything is useful to us or the reverse, in exact proportion as it inspires love to God or otherwise; and those books are chiefly to be studied which teach us to reflect on our present duties and our future hopes."

It was in a very different light that Miss Marabout viewed the subject. "I hate what is called 'solid reading,'" she said one day to Eleanor; "and good sort of books are generally like good sort of people, very dull; but nothing passes time more delightfully than a novel. If ever there is any subject on my mind that I wish to forget for a few days, my infallible resource is, to bury myself in the pages of a good romance."

Miss Marabout frequently rewarded the successful efforts of her pupil by allowing her to choose a volume at Chambers's Circulating Library, to which she constantly subscribed; and Eleanor read it clandestinely, with a proviso from her governess, that if Lady Fitz-Patrick entered the school-room, she should be ready immediately to substitute in its place either Chambaud's Exercises, or her portfolio of drawings. Before long Miss Marabout and Eleanor discovered that no subject suited them both so well for discussion during their walks as a dissertation on the merits of the last novel they had read—the heroes and heroines of which were discussed and commented upon with the same interest and animation as if they had really existed and been their most familiar friends. All the *dramatis personæ* were examined in detail; their actions were criticised, their misfortunes lamented, and their virtues admired, in the most energetic terms. Eleanor remembered their

names, and discriminated their characters with surprising accuracy, and could repeat the *bon mots* and repartees of a whole dialogue with astonishing precision. The very dresses in which her favourite heroines had appeared on particular occasions were recalled and described many months after she had closed the book; and it was truly lamentable to see a memory capacious enough to have been stored with all the wisdom of ages, frittered away upon what had better never have been known, and could not have been too speedily forgotten. Miss Marabout's favourite subject for confidential intercourse with Eleanor was to describe, in animated terms, all the admiration she had met with herself, and all the arts by which it could best be secured and preserved. Many were the anecdotes Miss Marabout related of her own cruelty in rejecting former lovers, who seemed to multiply in number the oftener Eleanor listened, and the more she appeared interested in their fate. From time to time some new history was disclosed under seal of the strictest secrecy; and one tale of sensibility in particular which Miss Marabout related of herself, was so full of tragic interest, that Eleanor thought it might have been immortalized in three volumes at least, and only wondered her governess had survived the unhappy attachment she then professed, and which she described with glowing eloquence. But nevertheless Miss Marabout invariably talked with such unmeasured horror of old maids, that it was very evident she would not willingly add to their number, and only desired a favourable opportunity to forget her first love, though she protested it was quite impossible.

Miss Marabout and her pupil occasionally opened a newspaper also, in much the same spirit of inquiry with which they would have dipped into the Newgate Calen-

dar. They had both a prodigious relish for the jocular style of trying culprits which is now in vogue, and were entertained with reading all the newest and most approved methods of swindling and robbery; but foreign news or home politics they entirely abjured, and always regretted the meeting of Parliament, when the debates occupied so many columns which would have been better filled with dreadful accidents and atrocious crimes.

Eleanor's visits to Lady Olivia became gradually from this time almost discontinued; and she at last appeared to look back upon the pleasure of her former excursions to Ashgrove as an amusement of childhood which she had completely outgrown. Sometimes she went under shelter of her mother's wing, and was glad to make a hasty apologetic exit along with Lady Fitz-Patrick; but her visits on Saturday were entirely relinquished; there was always the excuse of a children's ball, where she was obliged to appear; or she had been promised leave to attend the theatre as the reward of her last brilliant display; or she was going with some gay party of pleasure, who were to remain in the country from Saturday till Monday, enjoying a succession of delightful festivities. It was far otherwise with Matilda. Lady Howard disapproved of girls being much seen before their debut, giving it as her decided opinion that young ladies should blaze out at once, if they were to make any sensation in society. Matilda was therefore carefully secluded from public view; and as her chief enjoyment consisted in visiting Lady Olivia, and partaking in the various pleasures of country life, the frequency of her excursions to Ashgrove was redoubled, and no exertion seemed too great, if she could reap for a reward the privilege of being allowed to spend, if it were no more than half an hour in her garden, or in the society of her

aunt. Lady Olivia gradually accustomed herself to treat Matilda as her chosen friend and companion, whom she always welcomed with affectionate regard and unlimited confidence. On many occasions she consulted Matilda's taste, constantly referred to her opinions, and entrusted her with the execution of any plans and improvements at the cottage. But what the warm and affectionate heart of her niece valued above all else, was the perfect openness and candour with which Lady Olivia disclosed her most private thoughts and feelings; while she seemed to delight in revealing the treasures of her cultivated understanding and sanctified affections to one who gradually learned to appreciate their worth, and to emulate what she so greatly loved.

Matilda felt elevated by the consciousness of Lady Olivia's esteem, and valued it above every other earthly blessing. On all occasions she endeavoured to act and think as her aunt would have done in similar circumstances. They conversed frequently for hours together, and Matilda's young heart was warmed with a glow of happiness, when she one day said that her loneliest and saddest moments were cheered and comforted when she thought of her beloved Matilda, who supplied that place in her heart which no other living being could have done since the loss of her lamented Laura.

Matilda's conversation was no longer like that of a child, merely made up of facts and incidents; but she had learned to draw inferences from all she read or observed, and to form opinions with originality and judgment, which gave interest and novelty to her remarks. With Lady Olivia she could venture at all times to think aloud, in the full assurance that her ideas would be received with indulgence; where they were founded

aright, that they would be duly appreciated; and that in discussing them they would acquire a degree of clearness and strength which she felt that, in her own unassisted mind, she could not have given them. The gay vivacity of her spirits never seemed so buoyant as when she hastened to the cottage with a feeling of anticipated joy, and thought of the cheerful and affectionate welcome which awaited her there; and her longest absence from that cherished spot only showed more clearly that it was the home of all her warmest affections, and of all her happiest hours.

"Matilda," said Eleanor Fitz-Patrick one morning when she was passing a long Christmas holiday at Lady Howard's, "how can you waste so much precious time in reading that prosy little book of 'Advice to Young Ladies?' I could give you an abridgment of the whole contents without so much as glancing at one of its pages. Chapter I.—On the Improvement of Time. Rise very early in the morning, and never lose a moment all day afterwards. Chapter II.—On Conversation. Never speak till you are spoken to; invariably talk sense, and praise every human being who is ever mentioned, without exception. Chapter III.—On Dress. To be neat, but not gaudy,—elegant, but not expensive. Chapter IV.—On Morals. To aim at every impossible perfection, and to pretend that you believe all other persons come nearer to it than yourself. I think, Matilda, that whenever one wishes to see twaddle and sententiousness in their utmost extent, a sure way would be to open the first volume that falls in your hands, of 'Essays on the Conduct of Ladies,' or, 'Letters from a Mother to her Daughter,' or, 'Advice to the Young and Beautiful.'"

"The last would precisely suit you, Eleanor," said

Matilda, good humouredly, throwing aside her book. "Suppose you try to write a volume better worth reading on this subject."

"No, my good cousin, example is better than precept," replied Eleanor; "and I am already perhaps held up as a warning occasionally in some school-rooms that you know of, Matilda."

"Eleanor! believe me you might be present to hear every word that is ever said of you by Miss Porson or me," interrupted Matilda earnestly. "You may read my whole heart, and see nothing there that would displease you."

"I do believe it!" answered Eleanor with momentary feeling. "You are sincerity itself, and you deserve to be trusted and confided in implicitly, as I really do. But it does enchant me sometimes to set dear worthy Miss Porson's hair on end, with giving her my views of life and manners, for I know she would make our existence a mere tread-mill, with nothing to enliven us but a dull routine of duties never ended, but always beginning; a circle, in short, like a Devonshire lane."

"What a provoking mistake!" replied Matilda eagerly; "we enjoy quite as much in our little way as you do in yours. Remember papa's conundrum last night, when he asked us, 'Where is happiness always to be found?' and the melancholy answer—'Only in a dictionary!' But I really think as large a share of enjoyment is to be met with under Miss Porson's jurisdiction as it is possible for this world to afford."

"Oh, of course! you are bound to say so, and to maintain it; but what you call diverson would seem to me the greatest bore imaginable. Only fancy the idea of your going last Saturday and superintending a tea-party at Lady Olivia's Sunday School; spreading bread

and butter for sixty-eight hungry children, and pressing them to eat! What an amusement!"

"Consider, Eleanor, that you and I both attended the menagerie last week to see the lions fed, which was very diverting, and a little in the same line, only on that occasion there was no feeling of sympathy and kindness such as I experienced at the joyous little festival on Saturday, when it would have done your heart good to see aunt Olivia showing such kindness to all her happy little guests."

"Ah, Matilda! I prophesy that you will some day be heroine of a penny tract, with the frontispiece exhibiting your figure as Lady Bountiful distributing blankets and flannel; but I shall expand into three volumes octavo, surrounded by shoals of lovers, and all sorts of interesting embarrassments—ending in either death or matrimony, as novels must inevitably do."

"I wish you a pleasanter fate, because, in my small experience of romances, I have never yet discovered any heroine with whom I should have consented to change places, nor a hero whom I would have married."

"That shows how little you know upon the subject," replied Eleanor. "I could point out fifty pattern lovers who would suit me exactly, and yet no one can imagine that I shall be more easily pleased than you. All that is essential in my intended you shall hear; immense fortune, noble family, brilliant talents, unimpeachable temper, elegant manners, handsome appearance, and devoted attachment."

"Amongst other requisites, you must add good principles and sincere piety, or I shall not give my consent to your accepting him; and one might even abate some other recommendations to secure these 'indispensables.'"

"That is all taken for granted," replied Eleanor in-

differently; "but the idea is so VERY NEW, Matilda, that you must have found it in that original little volume of Advice to Young Ladies; so pray continue to benefit by your studies, and I wish you no worse fate than to meet with some such specimen of insipid perfection as would be recommended to you by the old gentleman, or the old lady, who has penned that volume of wholesome dulness; but take my word for it, people with no faults have no virtues. I often lament that there is not a censor of the press to prevent dull people from writing dull books, especially when they are upon religion and morality, which ought to elevate any intellect that is directed to subjects so sublime. Shall I ever forget the dreary hours we spent with my first governess at home, on Sunday, staring into 'The Child's Companion,' or 'The Mother's offering,' or 'The Father's Gift,' or these two volumes bound in black, that you were continually poring over, entitled 'Early Piety,' in which all the children died so invariably about the age of nine or ten, that I really at last imagined it impossible for any religious child to survive, and that it would be condemning myself to death if I became truly pious? There should be more such books for children as the good, worthy old Pilgrim's Progress, the Fairchild Family, Mary and her Mother, Abbot's Young Christian, and others I could name, which display intellect as well as piety, and life as well as death; and then children would all be much sooner fond of reading than I was, and connect their views more willingly with religion. Aunt Olivia says much that is very true about the natural enmity of our hearts to all that is connected with futurity; but she acknowledges that a little adaptation to juvenile tastes and feelings might be quite consistent with her most enlight-

ened views of evangelical piety, and make it much more attractive."

"You should set up a review, Eleanor, and give us your criticisms in detail," said Matilda, smiling. "As a lady conducts the Sporting Magazine now, pray follow the example in a different line."

"Why not? Ladies think no more of writing books now than our grandmothers did of writing letters. I should like to put half the modern volumes into a cheese-press, and to see the whey run off, though in some cases very little solid bulk would remain. I have dipped into several of the Memoirs on aunt Olivia's table lately, and it is amazing to see how the author holds his reader by the button with long-winded preliminaries. They generally begin by tracing a careful pedigree of the individual in question, for four or five generations back, enlivened by a panegyric on his great-grandfather, and an account of some long-forgotten book of which the old gentleman was supposed to have been the author. Then follows the precise date of the mother's marriage, with her descent and perfections duly set forth. After that comes a list of the hero's nine or ten brothers and sisters, with the year and month in which they were born and died, and an account of what professions they followed, and with what success. Usually, one of the sisters who married has unfortunately dropped out of sight, and the author makes an apology for his deficient information, and forms some interesting conjectures what became of her. By the time your patience is nearly extinct, the good man himself is at last produced, probably the fifth or sixth son; and we are treated to an elaborate discussion which of two or three villages he was born in, and what profession he originally designed

to follow before he entered the church. Then come several very indifferent verses, written when he was under ten. But I have been sworn at Highgate never to read bad poetry when it can be got good; so I generally conclude with a glance at the frontispiece, to see the respectable old gentleman putting as good a face on the matter as he can; and I really give him my warmest sympathy on having his memory so tarnished by the folly and indiscretion of surviving friends."

"I have lately discovered that old books on religion are like old wine, always the best," replied Matilda. "There seems to be more body in them; for divinity really so very flimsy is often published at present, that with the assistance of a good Concordance to suggest appropriate texts, any child might supply the string of Goody Two-Shoe's reflections by which they are united."

"The chief characteristic of modern writing and conversation is tediousness," said Eleanor, yawning; "and after the age of fifty I mean always to speak with a stop-watch in my hand, to remind me when I have exceeded the limits of ordinary patience, and never to remember any thing that occurred to me above ten years before."

Miss Marabout had been several months at Lady Fitz-Patrick's before she felt disposed to accompany Eleanor on a visit to Ashgrove; but one leisure day, the weather being remarkably favourable for a long walk, and several persons having recently mentioned Lady Olivia Neville as a most superior person, with whom it was a great privilege to be acquainted, she became suddenly seized with a longing desire to see her, and resolved for once to make the effort of calling and showing herself to that lady, whom she determined to fascinate completely. She piqued herself particularly on her *maniére de societé*, as

she called it, and had no doubt that, as Lady Olivia was so discriminating a person, she would at once see her infinite superiority to Miss Porson, of whom Miss Marabout persuaded herself she had the greatest contempt, though that feeling had in it an unaccountable tincture of jealousy. With mingled feelings of exultation and curiosity, this elegant and accomplished lady equipped herself for the proposed excursion, complaining, as she went along, of the extreme distance, and of the filthy roads, for she rather entertained Quin's opinion, that the country ought to be all paved. Miss Marabout wondered often to Eleanor, as they proceeded, whether Lady Olivia would really turn out to be all that report had prepared her to expect. "Quite a Madonna, I suppose," said she, "like the pictures we see of Lady Rachel Russell, in her widow's cap; or like one of the marble figures we put on a tomb-stone, her head reclining on her hand, and a sigh breathing from her lips. I can perfectly fancy your aunt already,—a voice scarcely audible, and a figure so fragile, that this cold breeze would utterly annihilate her,—with a melancholy cadence in all she says, like the touching tones of an Eolian harp." . . .

"Not at all!" interrupted Eleanor, laughing; "my aunt appears to ordinary visitors rather cheerful than otherwise; walks out in all weathers, and dresses precisely like other people."

"How very strange!" exclaimed Miss Marabout, indignantly; "after such excruciating sorrow, it takes sadly from the interest of her story, if she can ever banish it one moment from her heart."

"I have heard my aunt observe, that by sharing other people's affliction she feels relieved from her own," said Eleanor. "Lady Olivia thinks no one obtains a portion of happiness in this world sufficient to satisfy his own

heart unles he can share in the joys of others, and that no sorrows would ever overwhelm us if we could also participate in the trials of our neighbour. She acts upon this principle, and I should say from the result that her judgment is right. None but the selfish can ever be utterly miserable, was a maxim she very often inculcated on me, for in 'seeking other's good we find our own.' I talk like a parrot now, only by rote."

"Well! *chacun a son goût*," replied Miss Marabout. "In Lady Olivia's place I should have sat in a darkened room, with my husband's miniature in my hand, a few select friends admitted occasionally to weep with me, my harp unstrung, and some volume of pensive interest as the soothing companion of my lonely hours."

"That would look beautiful for a week," said Eleanor, laughing; "but you must not survive much longer, or I am sure no one could keep it up. However, I hope you will some day be an inconsolable widow, and then I shall hasten to see whether you act the part better than my aunt. No eye can gaze on that wasted countenance without seeing that there exists a corroding sorrow within her breast, which lives there in perpetual remembrance, yet she does not willingly obtrude it on the notice of any one; and, as she more particularly screens her feelings from the every-day sympathy of strangers, there will be nothing in her manner at first which will at all satisfy your expectations."

"All I say then is, that Lady Olivia must be deficient in sensibility, which is undoubtedly the greatest defect that any one can have," replied Miss Marabout, sighing. "There are people who scarcely shed more tears for their own greatest sorrow, than I have wept over the Trials of Margaret Lyndsay, or the Woes of Constance de Beverley."

"Aunt Olivia remarked to me one day, that the more people sympathise with fictitious grief the less they feel that which is real," answered Eleanor; "and I have actually seen her more melted by the affliction of some old woman in a smoky hovel, full of dirt and wretchedness, than ever you were by our favourite refined pictures of woe. She never hears of distress in the neighbourhood without rising at once and hastening there, to ascertain whether it be a case where any alleviation can be afforded by sympathy or kindness."

"How fortunate it is that some people are born with such resolution of character and stern self-control, that they can conquer what is overpowering to the more sensitive feelings of others," continued Miss Marabout, sighing, with a look of evident self-complacency; "I have always had too much refinement willingly to enter on such scenes as you describe, and I wonder that Lady Olivia does not rather commission her maid to visit the cottages instead of going herself."

"My aunt never does good by proxy," replied Eleanor; "and I have heard Matilda remark, that she thinks Lady Olivia's dignity and elevation of character never appear more graceful and impressive than in the lowly dwelling of a suffering fellow-creature, where she seems to identify herself with the unfortunate, and to remember only that we have one common lot of affliction, and one common lesson to be derived from it; that though in this world there is tribulation, yet we have hope in Him who came to share in all our sorrows, that he might finally deliver us from them. I reverence Lady Olivia's whole conduct and character, as every one must who has been a single hour in her society; but I never can hope to resemble her, and do not even attempt it, as Matilda does. It is this consciousness of my deficiency that makes me

detest the very thought of entering Ashgrove, though there is no danger of any reproach, except that of my own heart, for Lady Olivia often helps out my excuse for neglecting her, when I am rather at a loss to invent one myself; but here we are, in a place where I used to be happy, though my taste for it is now over; and there," said Eleanor with a half-contemptuous laugh, "there is my cousin in what was once our garden, working so busily with her rake that she has not even noticed our arrival. What a rural-looking figure she is!"

"I really wonder that Miss Porson allows it," said Miss Marabout, indignantly; "such a waste of time, when gardeners in abundance could be got to put the whole place in order for a shilling; but I never felt so sensible as now, Eleanor, of the infinite advantage it is to you having been placed under my superintendence; and time will show the difference between a pupil of mine and a piece of home-manufacture, such as Matilda will be under the care of your aunt, and good, well-meaning Miss Porson."

Miss Marabout had time for a minute and approving scrutiny of the china, books, and pictures in Lady Olivia's boudoir, and had even extended her investigation to the notes and visiting cards which lay upon the table, before the sound of an approaching footstep caused her hastily to take a seat, and to adopt her most graceful attitude on the sofa; for Miss Marabout's ideas of grace were very similar to those of a dancing-master, and she thought no one could be thoroughly elegant who did not study an attitude on all occasions in which she might have sat for a picture. Elegance so simple as that of Lady Olivia Neville the scrutinizing visitor had never seen before, and for several minutes after their introduction, she insensibly experienced the effect of a mind and

manner superior to her own. At length, however, Miss Marabout's usual self-sufficiency broke loose from restraint, and she resolved to put forth all her fascinations, and to charm Lady Olivia completely by her conversational powers.

"Your ladyship has probably been much surprised that I have not sooner done myself the honour of calling here," she began in a deprecating tone. "Indeed, I have often blamed myself for it, and resolved at last to overcome every impediment. Miss Eleanor's education takes me up incessantly, and I am quite *accablée* with friends of my own to visit; besides which, we have really been overpowered with engagements for some time past, so that altogether it has been quite an absolute impossibility for me to snatch an hour for visiting here. I trust your ladyship sees it in the light I wish, and that you will not suppose any want of respect on my part has made me so long a stranger here."

"I am not inclined, Miss Marabout, to make any supposition of the kind you apprehend," replied Lady Olivia, with gentle dignity; "no one has ever been deficient in such respect and attention to me as are requisite, and I am confident they will not be wanting on your part."

"It is very obliging of your ladyship to say so," continued Miss Marabout, rather at a loss what to answer. "I am anxious for the good opinion of every one, and am happy to feel assured of your ladyship's, for the bright example you hold forth to society has ever been the subject of admiration to all, and more especially to me, as——as——"

"Excuse me, Miss Marabout," interrupted Lady Olivia, indifferently. "Did you find the walk very fatiguing this morning."

"Not so overpowering as I expected, or we should

have sooner attempted it," replied Miss Marabout. "Tell Lady Olivia, Miss Fitz-Patrick, how very much concerned you have been lately that so many unavoidable circumstances have concurred to prevent your calling here oftener; our excuses are not merely *bien trouvées,* but my pupil may declare with perfect truth that———"

"No more apologies, if you please, Miss Marabout," said Lady Olivia, smiling. "I hope Eleanor and I will never be on terms so ceremonious with each other as to begin an interchange of speeches and civilities; the next step would be to leave her visiting card for me when I am out. No, I never call in question my niece's affection, nor allow myself to doubt that something insuperable has occurred when she does not give me the pleasure of seeing her; so never be distressed with any useless anxiety on the subject."

Lady Olivia took her niece affectionately by the hand, and Eleanor coloured with a feeling of conscious guilt, when she perceived the unsuspecting confidence with which her aunt relied on the continuance of her very inconstant attachment.

"This is really a charming spot, Lady Olivia," continued Miss Marabout, glancing around the cottage with an air of patronizing approbation. "I have quite a passion for retirement, and could fancy myself getting romantic here in a very short time. Indeed, as I observed to Miss Eleanor a few minutes ago, if ever I were to be buried before I am dead, this is the very place I should prefer. Still, your ladyship must find it rather out of the way and very lonely. I shall make a point of bringing Miss Fitz-Patrick oftener here, and shall be most happy to come myself as frequently as possible; but the fact is, my pupil and I have seldom a moment we can call our own; from the time we rise in the morning till we go to bed

at night, Miss Eleanor is on a perfect rail-road, she gets through so much. It is a point of conscience with me to neglect nothing, and I hope your ladyship will agree in thinking that more could not be expected from a person in my situation."

"Nor in any other," said Lady Olivia, smiling. "To neglect nothing is certainly a difficult attainment in the right use of our time."

"I must do Miss Eleanor the justice to allow that her progress is perfectly surprising," continued Miss Marabout rapidly. "She merits all I can say on her behalf, and certainly gets so much admiration from every quarter, that it will be the strongest and best motive to encourage her future exertions as well as my own."

Eleanor, though accustomed to applause, felt elated in the highest degree at hearing this panegyric, and looked at Lady Olivia to see her own feelings of pride and pleasure reflected in the face of her aunt; but she was almost startled to observe the expression of sorrowful commiseration which met her eager glance, and the grave and anxious look with which Lady Olivia contemplated her countenance. It was seldom now that any look but of approbation was turned upon that lovely form—it was seldom, too, that any language but of praise was addressed to her ear; yet the heart of Eleanor Fitz-Patrick told her for the moment, how undeserving she was of it, when she saw a tear hastily brushed away from the eye of that friend who loved her the most truly of any upon earth, as Lady Olivia suddenly averted her countenance to hide her emotion. With a transient pang of regret, Eleanor now remembered, like a dream of former days, the humble and teachable spirit with which she had once attended to the mild, enlightened, and affectionate instructions of her aunt, the pleasing influence of

whose tender care had been since exchanged by her governess for an intoxicating draught of injudicious and indiscriminating panegyric.

"Your ladyship would have been delighted to hear all that Mr Crayon said of Miss Eleanor's last head in chalks," continued Miss Marabout. "I meant to bring the drawing here for inspection, but it might be so very easily destroyed that we could not venture. The last group of flowers that she embroidered seems as if it might be picked up from the canvass; and if we had but a harp, you would be astonished at Miss Eleanor's execution. She practises three hours a-day, which your ladyship will not think too much, on account of the importance and the difficulty of accomplishing it in perfection."

"Miss Marabout! considering that our acquaintance is so very recent, and that there are some important points on which I already perceive we differ, let me request that you will not take my opinions for granted on any subject until I have expressed them. They are not always precisely what you anticipate," said Lady Olivia; "and the harp seems to me . . . . . ."

"I quite agree with your ladyship that there is a risk," interrupted Miss Marabout eagerly. "It has been frequently objected that so many young ladies become quite deformed owing to an indiscreet zeal in practising that instrument to excess; but, as your ladyship knows already, I never lose sight of any thing. I have had some very serious conversations with Lady Fitz-Patrick on the subject, who has kindly agreed to bespeak a new harp at Erard's on a plan of my own. Miss Eleanor would have played you her last new overture on the piano-forte, but I perceive this is a cabinet one. I almost wonder that your ladyship can exist now without a grand piano-forte!"

"I dispense with many things that are much more essential," said Lady Olivia, unable to repress a smile. "*Quand on n'a pas ce-que l'on aime,—il faut aimer ce que l'on à.* You will find that a good rule on many occasions, Miss Marabout, and not so difficult to practise as one would be apt to expect."

"Very true," replied Miss Marabout. "I am glad your ladyship is not offended at my taking the liberty of remarking on your piano. I have the most inveterate habit of speaking out my mind on all occasions; but openness and candour, your ladyship will allow, are generally best. Miss Fitz-Patrick, my dear, I see Lady Olivia looking perfectly shocked at your elbows; try to sit more gracefully."

"I must again entreat, Miss Marabout, that my sentiments may never be anticipated," said Lady Olivia decidedly. "With respect to Eleanor's mode of sitting, I had not remarked it; but at all times I am such an admirer of simplicity, that whatever is most natural appears to me best. If a wire were placed in every leaf of a tree, it would not hang more gracefully than it does by nature, and I think we often spoil what we are over anxious to improve."

"Your ladyship is quite right," answered Miss Marabout in her most complaisant tone. "Miss Fitz-Patrick is naturally very graceful. It would have charmed you last night to see her brilliant appearance at Mrs Fortescue's ball, where my pupil really looked *belle comme le jour*. The whole room was in rapture with her dancing, and several of the company stood upon benches to watch her, quite *à gorge déployée* with admiration. It was a happy moment to Lady Fitz-Patrick, and fully as much so to me, for I must do myself the justice to say that I always identify myself completely with my charge during

the time I am with her. She afterwards spoke French for more than half an hour to Count Caskowhiski, and I scarcely think she made a single mistake in grammar. Truly there is very little left for Miss Fitz-Patrick to learn now, and she will soon deserve the epithet of '*La plus savante des belles,—et la plus belle des savantes.*'"

"Eleanor, you ought to be covered with blushes," said Lady Olivia. "So unqualified a panegyric might do for a tomb-stone."

"Certainly none of my pupils ever promised to do me more credit," continued Miss Marabout. "When I left Miss St. John, indeed, she was the most accomplished young lady in London; but I regretted to hear that, after her marriage to Lord Piccadilly she entirely gave up every sort of occupation, except a little embroidery now and then. It was a sad mortification to me, and must disappoint her husband extremely, as he is distracted about music; but we might have expected it, as really no young ladies every keep up accomplishments after they marry."

"That is too much the case certainly, but not an invariable rule," replied Lady Olivia. "Did you ever hear Dean Swift's advice to young ladies, that instead of employing time in preparing traps for their husbands, they should rather try to prepare cages? for he seems to insinuate that those who spend a lifetime on the embellishments of education, will find, when they lay these aside, that nothing else remains. I wish much to take this opportunity of saying a few words with respect to Eleanor's education, Miss Marabout. You are aware that I have long been accustomed to consider her as a child of my own, and perhaps you may kindly attend to

some suggestions from one who has all the affection, though none of the authority of a parent."

Lady Olivia's eye rested on Eleanor for some time with a look of tender but mournful interest. "You are performing a very arduous task, Miss Marabout," said she, in a tone of kindness, "and I respect the zeal and activity with which you have entered upon the duties of instruction, according to your own views of what these duties are."

Miss Marabout gave a self-satisfied smile, and drew her chair closer to Lady Olivia's with a look of profound attention.

"It would have made me happy to see any one placed with Eleanor who thought as I do on education, and who had as much perseverance and energy as you exert in following out your own ideas on the subject," continued Lady Olivia, in a conciliating tone; "but surely, Miss Marabout, if Eleanor were setting out on a long journey, you would think her scantily provided if she had only a ball dress to wear; and the manner in which you are preparing her for entering into life seems quite as deficient—there appears to be nothing done to strengthen her understanding—to exercise her faculties, and to improve her disposition. I was reading an admirable work lately on the mental powers, in which it was proved that, of those who lose their intellect entirely the far greater proportion are devoted to sculpture, painting, or music, because in these there is nothing to occupy the mind—learning languages is also very mechanical, for the head is loaded with a quantity of indigestible dictionaries and vocabularies, while the intellectual faculties may be actually smothered."

"Nothing is so much improved by exercise as the

memory," interrupted Miss Marabout, "and too much pains cannot be bestowed upon that, which I consider the chief object of education."

"It is important certainly, but yet it should be kept in subordination to what is still more essential," replied Lady Olivia. "A very great memory, unless it is united to judgment, usually renders people tedious and prolix in conversation, and at the best it has been well compared to a cistern which merely preserves all that is put into it; but the reasoning and reflecting powers are a spring that can never be exhausted, and by directing these aright, they enrich and fertilize the mind with inexhaustible stores of moral feeling and steady principle. I should consider it a real obligation, Miss Marabout, if you would consent to let Eleanor go through a course of reading in English and French literature on the same plan which I lately sketched out for Matilda and Miss Porson, and with which they have both expressed themselves much pleased."

"I have no doubt of that," replied Miss Marabout, evasively, "and when Miss Fitz-Patrick's time is a little less engrossed, we shall be most happy to avail ourselves of your ladyship's acknowledged judgment and taste. I perfectly agree in opinion that reading is a very great resource, and I scarcely dare trust myself with a book, for it is impossible to tear me away when I have once got thoroughly interested. Miss Eleanor is precisely the same too—she would read from morning till night if I allowed her."

"It would be a subject of interesting discussion with my nieces, when we meet, if they pursued the same studies," continued Lady Olivia, earnestly. "I generally read what Matilda is engaged in, that we may converse upon the subject afterwards, and it would redouble our

enjoyment to have Eleanor with us. The two girls are equally dear to me, and though their expression of countenance has become rather different of late, I still think they resemble each other like sisters, and would wish to see them brought up as much as possible the same."

"Your ladyship is quite right—they are very like," said Miss Marabout, absently, "particularly Miss Eleanor."

"The first wish of my heart is with respect to their religious principles, Miss Marabout," continued Lady Olivia in a tone of emotion, which recalled her auditor's wandering attention. "In the short span of our existence here, trifles that immediately surround us rise into such magnitude, that we forget the mental perspective which would lead to a comparison of their littleness with the distant but far greater objects of futurity; and the pages of Scripture alone teach an accurate measurement of present and coming events, in both of which we are equally to have a part. My earnest request then is, that you would . . . . ."

"I enter into your ladyship's views entirely," interrupted Miss Marabout, rather impatiently; "*Cela va sans dire*, and you may depend upon me for neglecting nothing. Miss Eleanor attends church with the greatest regularity, and we have a beautifully bound volume, into which she invariably writes down the sermon of the day on Sunday evenings. Your ladyship would be quite astonished and pleased to see how she appears to have the whole subject, *aux bouts des doigts*. I think we almost made out six pages of recollections one night, and several friends to whom we always show them in confidence are perfectly astonished. I shall bring the manuscript for approval next time we call, and Miss Eleanor must take an early opportunity of repeating her

chapters, for she knows several already. Whenever she is condemned to do a task, I take the opportunity of making my pupil learn some verses of the Bible by heart."

Lady Olivia coloured with vexation, and a pause of some minutes ensued, during which Miss Marabout sat back on her chair with a look of good-humoured satisfaction and conscious merit, perfectly convinced that she had impressed on her auditor the highest opinion of her judgment and skill as an instructress in morals as well as in accomplishments, and Lady Olivia remained for several minutes in perplexed and silent meditation.

"Miss Marabout," said she at length, in a tone of agitation and of deep solemnity, "where the eternal interests of one so dear to me are at stake, I must not hesitate to explain my opinions more fully. The Bible was never intended to be a mere task, but its pages are sent as glad tidings, which our chief delight should be to read and to understand; it is imparted for higher purposes than to be made sermons of, though these are precious, in so far as they enable us to understand it better; but nothing can be more injurious than an early habit of reading the Scriptures without properly estimating our own near connexion with them as our passport into eternity; and who can reflect upon all they contain, without feeling that religion is not a mere ordinary lesson to be learned in an ordinary way, but that it should be the business, the pleasure, and the glory of our whole existence to study and to understand them aright."

"What your ladyship says is perfectly true," replied Miss Marabout vaguely, as she hastily rose to take leave. "I am afraid, Miss Eleanor, we have rather exceeded our time; but your aunt's conversation makes one forget every thing else. Good morning, Lady Olivia; we have

spent a most delightful hour here; I hope to enjoy many opportunities of discussing my pupil's studies, as I shall always be happy to have the advice and opinion of so competent a judge; meantime, you may rest assured, I shall neglect nothing."

"Before you go, Miss Marabout, let me request you to accept this little volume," said Lady Olivia, presenting her with an elegantly bound copy of Mrs Hannah More on Female Education; "there is much in it deserving of attention."

"I am happy to receive such a mark of your ladyship's esteem," replied Miss Marabout, looking exceedingly pleased with the unexpected gift; for nothing is more universally popular than a small present.

"Eleanor," continued Lady Olivia, affectionately taking her niece by the hand, "I wish to converse with you for a single moment alone. My dear girl," she added, as soon as they had reached her dressing-room, "you need not be told of the deep interest with which I watch over every change in your character and circumstances, for no mother ever loved her own child more than I love you, and therefore you cannot but imagine the daily fervent prayers with which I continually commend you to God for his best and most permanent blessings. Miss Marabout tells me much about the applause you have met with from the world of late; but, dear Eleanor, I wish for once to remind you, that it is when we are of the world, that the world will love its own, but its flatteries are dangerous in the extreme; and when you consider all the sacrifices of time, and thought, and principle, which are exacted from its votaries, we can scarcely wonder that the Bible so solemnly warns us of the woe that awaits those of whom all men speak well."

"You have more need to beware of that woe than any

one," said Eleanor, smiling. "I am always proud of hearing your name mentioned, aunt Olivia, it is so sure to draw forth a panegyric."

"You may depend upon this, dear Eleanor, that the surest foundation for happiness in the world is Christian humility, which can suffer no mortification nor disappointment, believing whatever we have is above our merits, and that the approbation of God is alone permanent or desirable. I trust that praise or blame from those who merely judge superficially can never now cause me much emotion; but you have still that lesson to learn, and it is long before we are taught to estimate justly the world's opinion. I can scarcely suppose that you will not be allured to seek admiration, and that you will not be dazzled by what has already been a snare and a destruction to so many. Even now, Eleanor, I see in you an air of self-complacency which is new to me, and far different from the humility and self-abasement of a Christian. You are exchanging the praise of others for that peace of mind which might be your own, and which would last when all we now behold is passed into oblivion; but this is not the time, Eleanor; I need not speak now. Let me only say, that whatever alterations may happen in you, none can ever take place in my affection. Come to me at all times with the same confidence you have ever shown me—let us not be estranged by any circumstances, for I know what the enticements of the world are, and I can scarcely expect that you will yet rise superior to them, but never imagine that I shall meet you in a censorious spirit. Come when you will, my dear girl, and believe me there is no day nor hour in which I shall not rejoice to receive you as my own child, and always have you nearest to my heart, where Matilda and yourself fill up a place that no one else can ever now supply."

Lady Olivia embraced her niece, and Eleanor was moved by the unwonted emotion which she saw in the usually calm and untroubled countenance of her aunt, who was seldom betrayed into any display of sensibility when it could possibly be kept under control, which gave the more interest to every expression of feeling that might be unwillingly drawn forth.

When they returned to the drawing-room, Lady Olivia and Eleanor were for some moments unobserved, owing to the violent altercation which was taking place between Miss Marabout and Miss Barbara Neville, who had returned a few moments before from her walk.

"The March of Intellect!" she exclaimed, in a tone of angry vehemence, "the march of folly and nonsense rather! Do you think life was given us for no better purposes than to be twirling about like tee-totums, and singing like tea-kettles from morning till night? I don't care to hear Eleanor speak a perfect Babel of languages, if she is to understand no more of her mother-tongue than you seem to do, with that piebald mixture of French and English that you always talk. Indeed, if my niece has nothing better to say than she has now, I think one tongue may serve her purpose well enough."

"Lady Fitz-Patrick is perfectly satisfied, and I am not bound to consult the wishes of any one else," replied Miss Marabout in great irritation. "I believe, without vanity, that she could never find another so competent to bring up a young lady of fashion as myself, and her ladyship knows it. Miss Eleanor will become an ornament to her family and to society under my tuition; and whether I enjoy it or not, I shall deserve the gratitude of all her connexions."

Miss Marabout swept gracefully out of the room, with a respectful courtesy to Lady Olivia, and an angry

glance at Miss Neville, whom she had before heard of as a Methodist, but whom she resolved henceforward, at all hazards, to avoid, as well as every one whom she suspected of similar sentiments.

"Lady Olivia is a most interesting person," she said to Eleanor, as they walked homewards. "That pale alabaster countenance, and those exquisitely chiselled features, are so classical, that I could gaze at her for ever. All her movements are graceful; and then her voice is music itself. I am a great connoisseur in voices, having always been considered to have a remarkably melodious one myself; and nothing can be a surer index of the character. Miss Neville's is singularly discordant."

"Eleanor! Eleanor!" cried Matilda Howard from a distance, whose tone of eager animation attracted instant attention. "Dear Eleanor! surely you are not going without a single glance at our garden! I have been busy all morning weeding the flower pots, and little thought that you were sitting in the house without once asking to see me!"

Matilda held out her hand to Eleanor with an affectionate smile when they met, and she entreated Miss Marabout to return, if it were only for a single moment. "I know it would make Eleanor so happy!" said she anxiously. "Every thing is in order and beauty this morning," continued she, turning to her cousin. "The scarlet geranium has grown amazingly since you saw it last, and the new calmia is very thriving. I am sorry to mention that my grafted rose-tree met with an accident yesterday, and the fuschia is really dying after all our care. But——"

"My dear Matilda, any one would suppose you had a large family of children, and were telling me their whole history," exclaimed Eleanor, with a satirical laugh.

"It diverts me to see how keen you still are about our 'little landed property,' as we used to call it; and you really seem to be as much a child as ever about it. As for myself, I continue to be passionately fond of plants, but would not take the trouble you do in rearing them for the world. If it had occurred to me, however, I really would have searched in the green-house to investigate whether there were any flowers fit to make a bouquet for Lady Montague's ball to-night."

"Then I have luckily anticipated your wishes," said Matilda, uncovering a brilliant group of the most beautiful camellias. "I gathered these this morning, thinking there might be some opportunity of sending them to town before evening; but I little thought to have the pleasure of presenting them to yourself, for we meet so seldom now, Eleanor, and it makes a sad blank to me. I daresay you lament as much as I do the 'gay old times,' when we were so merry together; and now that Miss Marabout has once found her way here, I hope she will frequently come back. I should think no one could ever go away from this dear place without wishing to return often."

"Oh, certainly!" replied Eleanor, in a very indifferent tone. "I quite doat upon the little hermitage! But it will be ages before we are able to see it again, as I am engaged for several weeks to come; and really the walk is a serious undertaking! I would not retrace the two or three steps you wish me for a principality, being already wearied to death."

"How old and frail you are become, Eleanor!" said Matilda. "You used formerly to think the business of the day only begun when we had reached Ashgrove. I came here this morning long before breakfast, and have been busy ever since."

"I blame Miss Porson very much for allowing such a thing!" exclaimed Miss Marabout. "It is vain to suppose that a large bonnet will be any sufficient protection from the sun, for before twenty, I prophesy, Miss Howard, that you will have the complexion of a gipsy, and an appetite that would shame a grouse-shooter."

"How very alarming!" said Eleanor affectedly. "I am sure you will cure Matilda of her love for gardening by such a threat, at least mine could not have survived it an hour. Well, many thanks for the camellias! What a liberal supply this is! But you know, Matilda, I was always like the Lord Mayor's fool, who liked every thing that was good, and the more the better. Now, good morning, for we must homeward plod our way, without putting off any more time. Adieu, *au revoir!*"

"Farewell, dear Eleanor. It never occurred to me that you were in haste, or I should not have caused this delay; but I have a thousand things to say, so it is lucky you put me in mind, or I might have detained you for an hour."

"Or perhaps two," replied Eleanor laughing; "but it is worth while to remain for such a bouquet as this—a bucket of flowers, as our gardener calls it. Good bye."

Matilda stood for some moments looking after Eleanor with a vague feeling of disappointment. The tears unconsciously gathered in her eyes, and she returned to the garden, chilled in heart, and grieved in her inmost spirit; for there was a sense of loneliness amidst these gay and blooming scenes which she had never experienced before, and which was caused by the irresistible consciousness of her cousin's indifference.

"I always thought that Eleanor's estrangement was entirely owing to Miss Marabout," thought she, sorrow-

fully; "but there is an alteration in her own feelings also, for which I cannot possibly account. Her manner was cold and absent, compared with what it used to be, and she seems to take no interest in any thing now, not even in the recollection of our former happy days. What can it be that has wrought such a change in so short a time! Scarcely a year has elapsed since every thought of our hearts was in common. But now!"——

Matilda wiped away the falling tear, for she saw Lady Olivia and Miss Porson approaching, and she would not for the world have breathed a thought to the disparagement of Eleanor's affection, which she yet hoped to see revived.

CHAPTER VIII.

They who know the most,
Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth,
The tree of knowledge is not that of life.
COWPER.

ONE morning Lady Olivia was surprised at the unusually consequential manner in which Miss Neville entered the dining-room to join her at luncheon, and observed her swallow what she ate with such vehemence, that evidently some emotion of no ordinary kind was working within. Miss Neville felt obviously in a state of great excitement; and there could be no doubt it was of an agreeable kind, from the triumphant expression which glittered in her eye, and pervaded her whole manner. Still, whatever might be the subject of her meditation, she seemed disposed to make an entire monopoly of it, as she persevered for some time in a dignified and unbroken silence. Lady Olivia never allowed curiosity to get the better of good-breeding; and as no possible conjecture that she could form seemed sufficient to account for the heightened colour and excited appearance of her companion, she contented herself with dropping out occasionally a few leading observations on the fineness of the day for walking—on the advantage of the wind having so unexpectedly changed to the west—and on the beauty of a rainbow which had appeared an hour before. Miss Neville for some time preserved silence, being one of those sublime characters who must not be

suspected of interesting themselves in trifles, or of ever entering into the rudiments of conversation.

"I think this day has been a mere ague of hot and cold fits," said she at last. "There has not been much to admire in it, but you are always easily pleased."

"A good habit to cultivate," replied Lady Olivia. "And I really believe, that in every thing the less fastidious we are, the more it will tend to our own happiness and advantage, for you know we have the highest authority for saying, that 'contentment is great gain.'"

"Yes! contentment with godliness. But what do you say to contentment without it? I must always speak my mind plainly, and cannot omit this opportunity of remarking, Olivia, that in respect to the preaching you hear from the pulpit, I do think a little more fastidiousness would be very desirable on your part. I have felt it my painful duty," continued Miss Neville, evidently swelling with importance, though she assumed a tone of dignified humility—"I have felt it my painful duty to call on Mr. Arnold this morning, and to state the grounds on which I decline sitting under his ministry."

"Did you indeed!" exclaimed Lady Olivia, colouring with surprise and regret. "I should scarcely have imagined such a step could be necessary or even justifiable."

"It was both the one and the other," continued Miss Neville in a determined tone. "Mr. Arnold could not be otherwise than surprised, when Sunday after Sunday elapsed without my having appeared in church."

"But possibly he was not aware of your having come to reside with me," replied Lady Olivia, "as we have never met since your arrival."

"Mr. Arnold knows more about what occurs in his parish than you give him credit for," replied Miss Neville,

drawing herself up. "Let me tell you, he is very well informed of our motions, and not particularly pleased to have either Mr. Harvey or myself going about so much in the neighbourbood as we have done lately; for I am told it has thinned his congregation already."

"Barbara!" exclaimed Lady Olivia in an accent of astonishment, "what can you mean?"

"No matter at present," replied Miss Neville hastily. "But on the subject of my visit, I must do your friend Mr. Arnold the justice to say he conducted himself with great propriety on the occasion. I spoke to him for more than half an hour without stopping, and could have gone on as much longer, but he honestly confessed that I had got beyond his depth completely."

"I daresay you had," said Lady Olivia ironically; "we are all beyond our depth, Barbara, when we attempt to penetrate too far into the philosophy of Christianity; and in nothing do I see more plainly the wisdom of Him who adapted the Scriptures to our use, than in their divine simplicity. St. Paul desired only to know Christ and Him crucified; but it is such preaching as his that is always most distasteful to the generality of hearers. The time of the millennium, instantaneous assurance, universal pardon, modern miracles, and all your favourite topics of discussion, involve controversies so complicated and useless, that if safety depended on comprehending them fully, our path would be more difficult and precarious than if we had to cross Mahomet's bridge of a single hair."

"Say what you please! but I would not have let Mr. Arnold off so easily, if he had not mentioned an indispensable engagement to visit one of his congregation who is dying," continued Miss Neville. "I ended by hinting that his visit would be of little use without a

change in his doctrine; but though I spoke out to him so plainly, we parted on good terms."

"That proves his temper at least to be truly Christian," said Lady Olivia; "and by their fruits ye shall know them."

"Very true," replied Miss Neville abruptly, while she rose to leave the room. "I must now write an account of this controversy for Miss Rachel Stodart and Mr. Harvey, whom it will interest exceedingly. Mr. Arnold said a few words at parting, about his desire to act and teach according to the light that was given him, and added some very common-place sentences to myself on the necessity of being humble and teachable, much in the style of what you would have said on similar occasions, and then he hurried away before I could fix the time for our next interview; but I am not done with him yet!"

"Since you decline hearing my venerable friend in the pulpit, how can he be expected to hear you elsewhere?" said Lady Olivia. "You ought at least to attend him in church next Sunday, after his extraordinary patience and forbearance to-day."

"I have told you once for all, what I hinted very plainly to himself this morning," said Miss Neville, "that if Mr. Arnold obstinately adheres to his old opinions, after all I have said to him, he can expect no countenance from me—or mine."

"Including Mr. Harvey, I suppose," replied Lady Olivia. "But, Barbara, in my opinion, it remains to be proved where the obstinacy lies in this case. It is always the most positive person that accuses another of being so, because the only way to live at peace with those who are themselves obstinate is to yield every opinion to them at once. You remind me at present of

the Duchess de la Ferté, who said, '*Je ne trouve que moi qui aie toujours raison.*' Mr Arnold could bring a thousand names, venerable from their antiquity, their learning, and their acknowledged piety, to sanction his doctrines; but where is there a single precedent for those on which you differ from him?"

"I do not go upon precedents, like a lawyer," said Miss Neville; "but Miss Rachel Stodart and I are both of opinion that these are the latter days, when we live under the radiance of a clearer light than was ever revealed before."

"There is no warrant for our expecting new revelations or new apostles," said Lady Olivia; "let us rather gratefully and reverently devote ourselves to the contemplation of what they have already taught; and when we converse together, Barbara, it is my earnest request that we may, if possible, avoid all vain speculation, and keep to the essentials of Christian faith and conduct."

"Then we need never converse at all, for the very subjects that you term visionary are those which can alone be interesting to elevated minds," replied Miss Neville, in a determined tone. "I would rather never speak on religion again, than be confined to the mere rudiments of the subject, as you propose. I had hoped to enlarge your views, but now you close them up entirely."

"Must I consider myself completely excommunicated, Barbara?" replied Lady Olivia, smiling. "Surely there are many things in which we have one common interest, connected with a future world, as well as with the ordinary affairs of life, to form materials for our conversation."

"The less that these last occupy our thoughts and discussions the better," replied Miss Neville austerely.

"Indeed, we differ so entirely upon every subject, and you see all my opinions with so jaundiced an eye, that the only way to preserve peace between us will soon be never to converse at all."

"But, my dear Barbara, I could not consider myself at peace with any near connexion who was not on terms of familiar and confidential intercourse with me," said Lady Olivia kindly; "it is a debt of nature that we owe to each other, and there are few things I would not sacrifice to facilitate it, on any subject but your own peculiar opinions. We might as well attempt to walk without touching the ground, as to live in the world without friendship or interest in it, and you will find no one more sincerely anxious for your happiness, both now and hereafter, than myself."

"Still our intercourse must inevitably be very general, when it is confined within the contracted limits you propose," replied Miss Neville; "and my warmest interest is reserved for those with whom I can have a sympathy of views and sentiments."

"Then you differ from the early Christians," said Lady Olivia; "none of the apostles or their cotemporaries showed that exclusiveness in religious society which we see in the present day. Some sects in modern times seem almost as if they would wish for a city to themselves, or to go out of the world entirely, which St Paul notices as an absurdity to which he gives no sanction."

"Well," answered Miss Neville, "you may be very glad to take part with us yet."

"Barbara," replied Lady Olivia, "I believe there are many amongst your friends who are sincere though mistaken, and with them I would much rather be classed than with those who are living in presumptuous indiffer-

ence to the immediate presence, and the impending judgments of an all-powerful and an all-seeing God. You may each be saved in spite of your false opinions, though not in consequence of them; and you need scarcely be assured that you have the benefit of my prayers as sincerely and fervently as I hope to have yours. We both believe each other in error, and I should be sorry that you thought me censorious when I wish only to be candid in pointing out where we differ. I consider time to be worse than wasted in judging another where I have so much for which to judge myself; and the hour is not far distant when we shall stand before the searching eye of God, and the mistakes or offences of our neighbours will appear then as insignificant as they ought to be now, for our own sins will stand in fearful array against us, to the exclusion of every thought connected with others—yet, while our day of probation lasts, I cannot but feel anxious for the safety of all I love, exactly in proportion as I do love them; and you, Barbara, must be an object of peculiar interest to me, as the near connection of those we both have loved, and shall never look upon again. There are few on earth now to sympathise in my past sorrows; but you, who had a portion in them yourself, must still remember them with mournful regret. It is often a load upon my heart, in hours of solitary grief, to feel as if I alone were the depositary of their memory, and that the names which were once so dear and familiar to me are never now heard on earth. My heart clings to every human being who knew them; and it appears that I might still find part of my former happiness in talking of the days that are past. I feel, Barbara, as if you were the only living person who could share those precious remembrances, and by looking back with me on the past

and looking forward to the future, alleviate the mournful sadness of the present hour."

Lady Olivia held out her hand affectionately to Miss Neville, and her voice deepened into a tone of melody and softness while she looked at her companion for a glance of sympathy or an expression of tenderness, but sighing with deep regret, her eye was instantly averted. Barbara's features were hard, and her manner was impenetrably cold, so that though she betrayed a transient emotion when addressed in terms so touching, she instantly subsided, and allowed Lady Olivia to take her hand without any temporary relaxation of her usual reserve; it was a cold, stiff, formal hand, and it dropped at her side when Lady Olivia relinquished it, almost as listlessly and indifferently as when it was taken.

"I am a great enemy to the indulgence of useless grief," said she, in a sensible, measured tone. "Nothing could exceed my sorrow at the time when we were so tryingly and unexpectedly afflicted, but I have been wonderfully supported since; and you were thought to have endured it all with such fortitude at the time, that I wonder you have not got over it better. We betray a want of submission to the will of Providence, by treasuring up grief to such an excess; for you know all our sorrow can never bring back those we have lost."

"If it could, my tears would have restored them long ago," said Lady Olivia, in a tone of heart-broken sorrow. "But let it still remain between myself and my God, for in Him I have ever found my only consolation, and there alone let me still continue to seek it, desiring nothing for myself but that God's glory may be promoted in me and by me, whatever his will may ordain. And now, Barbara, when will you be disposed to go with me, and return Lady Evans' visit?"

"I do not mean to call on Lady Evans at any time," replied Miss Neville, dryly; "she can never be a friend of mine, and I have no time to cultivate mere acquaintances."

"Can you be serious!" said Lady Olivia, in an accent of real surprise. "Consider, Barbara, Lady Evans was the friend of your mother, and is now upwards of eighty. She is a kind-hearted, well-meaning person, and made an effort, in the midst of deep anxiety and sorrow, to come and welcome you into her neighbourhood. Let her be what you please as to difference of sentiments, but even in this case the Bible should be our guide, for it tells us to 'be courteous' as well as to 'be pitiful.'"

"Life is too short for all the ceremonies you would burden it with," interrupted Miss Neville, in a tone of superior wisdom. "If I were to call on all the 'kind-hearted well-meaning' old ladies in the world, my visiting list would be most unmanageably extensive. No; my sympathy and attention must be reserved for those on whom they are well bestowed; and besides, I am already engaged to spend the morning with dear Miss Rachel Stodart—when Mr Harvey has promised to call and give us an account of his visitation to the condemned cell. He says that poor Butler is in a most delightful frame of mind, and that nothing can be more edifying than his whole conversation and deportment, for the exhortations and instructions of our dear Christian friend have elevated him quite above his situation almost into a state of rapture."

"Do you mean Butler who murdered his wife in so atrocious a manner last month?" inquired Lady Olivia. "I trust he has indeed most deeply repented of his aggravated guilt; but surely, Barbara, the terrors of an awakened conscience would be more suitable to his

awful state than such joys as you describe. Is there no danger in building up at once the hopes of a being who has so much to fear? It is but a few weeks since his hands were imbrued in blood; and though there are no bounds to God's mercy in Christ, when a sinner comes to him in a spirit of penitence, yet pardon should be sought with humility by all, and especially by such as have flagrantly broken through every law, human and divine."

"I suspect you are still a mere legalist," replied Miss Neville. "In my estimation Butler's sins are now as if he never had committed them. He is, and he feels quite sure of his salvation, and that very certainty is a sufficient evidence of the fact."

"I trust Butler is indeed a true penitent," replied Lady Olivia; "but there are two kinds of sorrow for sin, godly sorrow and the sorrow of the world. How do you know which of these is the feeling of this unhappy criminal? Does he hate sin, or does he merely hate the punishment of sin? You are aware that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, and that repentance is so indispensable that there can be no salvation without it. In the case of this unfortunate criminal, I should fear, from what you say, that penitence had not been sufficiently inculcated, for the Scriptures tell us to 'repent and be converted,' showing the inseparable connection which exists between them."

"Dear Mr Harvey would soon set you right about that," observed Miss Neville. "I wish you would accompany me this morning; he said there were some most interesting remarks of Butler's to be communicated on the occasion, and desired as many of our friends to be present as possible."

"What strong temptation there seems in all this to vanity or hypocrisy on the part of poor Butler," said Lady Olivia. "Do you see no danger, Barbara, in his being made an object of so much observation and interest? The clergy of Edinburgh visit him regularly, as their duty directs; the chaplain of the jail is a man of sound and enlightened piety. Surely attention so incessant from qualified instructors must be sufficient without his being brought thus prominently into notice by the officiousness of strangers?"

"Better any strangers than those who are strangers to sound doctrine," muttered Miss Neville.

"It has often been a matter of serious consideration to me, Barbara," continued Lady Olivia, "how much the natural love of distinction in man must be flattered by the sudden celebrity to which even the worst criminal stands forth, who is eminent for nothing but the greatness of his crime. He has perhaps lived a life of obscurity and want, till by some hideous act of atrocity he becomes the temporary hero of the day. Every newspaper is then thought insipid that has not a column devoted to him; his most trifling actions become objects of intense and universal interest; we are told how he eats, and drinks, and talks, and sleeps. He is visited by the most eminent Christians; he is assured of the certainty of future blessedness. When the day of execution arrives, crowds assemble to witness his conduct and to admire his heroism. The sympathy of thousands is excited—all gaze in breathless expectation to hear the least sound of his voice, and he dies like a martyr rather than a criminal. You know, Barbara, there is a degree of vanity in our nature which the approach of death itself can scarcely overpower; and if ever there be a temptation to hypocrisy, or an occasion when hypocrisy is danger-

ous, it is on such occasions as these, when a multitude beholds the greatest of criminals almost canonized as a saint; the least relic of him is carefully treasured—the very rope on which he was suspended becomes an object of inestimable value; and we saw, on a late occasion, that when the offender became sufficiently notorious, he was finally represented on the stage. Consider, Barbara, how many hundreds are longing for celebrity, how willingly men will sacrifice their lives for fame, and that not a few would rather be thus known for their crimes than not known at all."

"You are no competent judge of this subject without hearing all that Mr Harvey declares," replied Miss Neville, hastily. "Miss Rachel Stodart thinks that upon this point he is quite unanswerable; but it is very strange that on no subject in the world do we ever agree; it seems as if you had really voted a resolution that nothing I think, say, or do, can possibly be right."

"The practical improvement of all I remarked, Barbara, was merely intended to be, that some of the sympathy you lavish on this unfortunate criminal might be bestowed on your good old friend Lady Evans, and that I still wish to spare her the mortification of not having her visit returned when you must pass by the door at any rate," said Lady Olivia, placidly. "But, Barbara, do not bring me in guilty of a factious opposition to your opinions, as I assure you it is always an effort of principle over inclination to assert my own so decidedly as I have done to-day."

Miss Neville hastily left the room without reply, and there was an *empressement* in her manner of closing the door which indicated a storm within. She passed Lady Evans' gate without the most transient thought of entering, and triumphantly proceeded to confide in the sym-

pathizing bosom of "dear" Miss Rachel Stodart how much she had to put up with from Lady Olivia, and how painful were the dependence and poverty which obliged her to associate constantly with a mind so uncongenial and so unenlightened.

"Argument is of no avail," said Miss Neville bitterly, "for she seems to have made up a bundle of opinions for herself, which are the standard on every occasion; they are such as we have exploded ages ago, but she has a plausible way of supporting them that makes it difficult to reply, so I have given up the point, and shall say not one word more except on the most ordinary topics."

Lady Olivia, the unconscious object of these animadversions, proceeded, after Miss Neville's departure, to enjoy her own solitary walk towards the village, where her errands of mercy and benevolence may be left in the privacy to which she always consigned them, within her own breast. There charity reigned in its most extended sense, with a power which time seemed to increase, and to which the lapse of years only added fresh energy, since it cheered her with the near prospect of that sacred rest to which she looked forward, as "the twilight of her sorrows, and the dawn of future bliss"—that period when faith should be swallowed up in sight, and hope in enjoyment.

CHAPTER IX.

One would imagine, by the common modes of female education, that life consisted of one universal holiday, and that the only contest was, who should best be enabled to excel in the sports and games that were to be celebrated on it.—HANNAH MORE.

ABOUT two years subsequent to the commencement of our story, the time was at hand when Lady Fitz-Patrick and Lady Howard were to estimate their success in educating their respective daughters, by that only test which either of them considered at all important—the applause with which the world would hail their début, and the splendid settlement which each might finally secure in life.

Lady Howard, as a measure preparatory to the approaching winter, shut up Matilda more carefully than ever from public view, that she might at last raise the curtain with more effect; but, on the contrary, Lady Fitz-Patrick blazoned forth Eleanor at every party where there was any excuse for producing "a mere school-girl, who was not come out yet." She was taken to concerts, that her taste in music might be improved; to small parties, because they were small parties; to balls, because Lady So-and-So made such a point of seeing her there; to the theatre, because she ought to know by sight all the most celebrated actors of her own day; and to exhibitions, that she might be exhibited herself. Eleanor's bust was sculptured in marble, and pronounced by

enraptured amateurs to be perfectly classical; her miniature was taken by Mrs Robertson, and thought to be the best painting she had ever executed; and Lady Fitz-Patrick became quite intoxicated with the enthusiasm her daughter excited, especially because much of it reverted on her own head, owing to the complaisance with which her visitors mingled their admiration of Eleanor with herself.

"It seems the strangest thing to me having a grown-up daughter," said she, pulling out her long dark ringlets, and laughing, to display her still beautiful teeth!

"If we had not seen her mother formerly," said old Sir Colin Fletcher, bowing profoundly, "I must have pronounced Miss Fitz-Patrick the greatest beauty that I ever beheld."

This was exactly suited to the taste of her to whom it was addressed, and the fame of Eleanor's brilliant appearance became more an object of interest in Lady Fitz-Patrick's estimation than ever. "She is very like what I was," she remarked, with a glance of admiration at her own graceful figure in an opposite mirror.

"Or rather say, she is like what you are," replied Sir Colin; "I could scarcely have believed you were more than her elder sister."

"Say, my younger sister at once, when you are about it," interrupted Eleanor in an angry aside; "It is best, as Americans say, to go the whole hog, if you are sure of its being palatable."

A prolific subject of irritation between Lady Fitz-Patrick and her daughter had lately sprung from the former insisting that Eleanor should always be dressed nearly the same as herself; and her spirits were often elated for a whole day, after some near-sighted person had accidentally mistaken her, through the medium of a

black chantilly veil, for her young and lovely daughter. Little *contretemps* of this kind were invariably repeated to every visitor during the following day, with a few faint disparagements of her claim to such a compliment; and though there were many complaisant friends ready to protest that it was a most natural error, which could cause no surprise to any one, Eleanor was far from enjoying the joke, and observed the whole scene with a look of grave, contemptuous displeasure.

Notwithstanding all the accomplishments which Miss Fitz-Patrick had so laboriously acquired, she became the wretched prey to ennui and idleness, whenever any accidental circumstance threw her, during a single hour, on her own resources for occupation. Though Miss Marabout continued nominally in the capacity of governess, she understood her own interest too well not to have long since been transformed into a mere companion and *confidante;* so that, except walking out with her pupil every day, in the most frequented streets and gardens, she scarcely took any charge of her whatever. Unless Eleanor had some party in immediate prospect, at which she was expected to perform, she never touched her piano-forte or harp as a means of private entertainment. Sir Richard, who was passionately fond of music, seldom heard the most distant sound of her instrument, which she always closed hastily at his approach, because his favourite composers were Handel and Correlli, whom she had long since condemned to oblivion as antediluvians, whose compositions she pronounced it a penance to play. Her portfolio was already filled with a sufficient collection of drawings for exhibition to all visitors, and in fact Eleanor knew that without the assistance of a master she could not have finished any more. Her select library of French, Italian,

and German authors, had been conspicuously arranged round the table, whence they were never discomposed; and a large piece of unfinished embroidery was frequently displayed as the result of her labour, though it never seemed to make any progress; her silks were all entangled—her pattern was lost—but nothing could be more beautifully begun.

The fable of the hare and the tortoise were nearly illustrated in the relative progress of Eleanor and Matilda's education, for the latter had almost equalled her brilliant cousin in some lighter accomplishments, in which she really delighted as a relaxation from more serious occupation. To Eleanor nothing was a recreation, because her whole time was spent in seeking for it, and therefore her mind never knew the luxury of resting from labour; but Matilda's day, on the contrary, was frequently varied from quiet study and intense application to the free enjoyment of her naturally buoyant spirits, so that what was the business of Eleanor's life formed only the amusement of hers; every natural enjoyment and every natural feeling retained their youthful freshness in the character of Matilda, but with Eleanor all her original disposition was extinguished, and the candour and sensibility of youth were exchanged for a studied affectation of both.

Matilda Howard had grown up a Christian in the most beautiful sense of that character—active in duty, contented in spirit, seeking with unwearied assiduity to promote the cause of godliness in all, and testifying to even the most censorious observers, by the whole tenor of her conduct and conversation, that her thoughts were habitually under the direction of that Spirit to whom she looked on every occasion for guidance and comfort. There was no distinction in Matilda's mind between the

faith and the practice of the gospel, for they seemed to her as inseparably united as the light and the warmth of a fire, which cannot exist at all without producing both. Her almost daily walk was now extended to reach Lady Olivia's residence; and as Matilda and Miss Porson cheerfully traced their steps along the quiet and secluded road which led to Ashgrove, they beguiled the distance with so many interesting subjects of discussion, that they were scarcely conscious of fatigue, and the cordial animated reception they invariably met with at last would have more than rewarded them for a pilgrimage of twice the distance. There was not a plant in Lady Olivia's garden which had not a place in Matilda's affection; there was not a family in the neighbouring village in whom she was not warmly interested; and to her willing ear Lady Olivia imparted all her projected improvements, all her plans of beneficence, and even all her sorrows. By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better, and the tears which Matilda occasionally shed over the afflictions of one she loved so well, gave a deeper tone to her sensibility, and added a new grace to the expression of her interesting countenance.

That resemblance which had always subsisted between the two cousins, still remained in their features, which could not have appeared in more beautiful symmetry and proportion had they been chiselled by Chantrey or Canova; but there reigned a dignified repose in the expression of Matilda's eyes which was wanting in those of Eleanor, who seemed too incessantly occupied about the sensation she expected to excite, not to exhibit a look of consciousness whenever any one happened to glance at her, and a fidgetty restlessness of manner if ever she remained for a moment overlooked; in short,

Eleanor always so evidently canvassed for admiration and applause, that each individual felt he had something to give or withhold at his own caprice, which was essential to her vanity, and therefore she became in a manner dependent on every body's humour. Matilda, on the contrary, had her attention habitually directed to a plain path of duty, and pursued it steadily, without ever glancing around to watch whether the applause of others would follow what she considered it right to do. Her spirits had thus a natural lightness which was wanting in Eleanor's, who felt so anxious to be admired for liveliness and vivacity of expression and manner, that her animation was often forced and affected in company, which could not but be obvious to all who had any tact in observing the disposition and motives of those whom they met in society. The characteristic of Eleanor's conversation, when in her liveliest spirits, was wit—and of Matilda's, humour; Eleanor's wit became often as brilliant and as startling as an explosion of fireworks, and equally short-lived; but Matilda's vivacity enlivened like sunshine, without astonishing or dazzling those with whom she conversed, and it was never exhausted. Eleanor delighted at parties to collect a little coterie of her own in a remote corner of the room, and to fancy herself an object of envy to all who were excluded, when they gained a distant glimpse of the mirth and diversion which prevailed around her; but the few times that Matilda had been in company she generally found some one individual amongst Eleanor's despised "detrimentals," whose conversation was far more interesting and more truly entertaining than the "all laugh and no joke" of the circle beside her cousin.

It was about this time that Lady Fitz-Patrick one

morning summoned Eleanor into her dressing-room, with the look of one who has something of great importance to communicate.

"My dear girl," she said, "I have this moment heard a most interesting and extraordinary piece of news which very nearly concerns you—at least, by the way, I must not say that, for I am forbid to tell—but, in short, it may very probably be a circumstance of the utmost consequence."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Eleanor, eagerly, whilst all the innumerable wishes and unreasonable hopes she had ever indulged darted at once into her thoughts, and seemed on the point of being accomplished. "Are we going to London at last? have you fixed to give the fancy ball that I asked for? or do you intend"——

"Stop, stop, Eleanor, not so fast," cried Lady Fitz-Patrick, aughing; "pray, moderate your anticipations or you may be as sadly disappointed with all I am allowed to tell, as the old woman in the fairy tale, who expected to have every desire of her heart gratified, and only got a yard of black pudding after all."

"What is it then?" said Eleanor impatiently; "you know I can bear anything rather than suspense."

"Patience, my dear girl! We have had letters this morning from my uncle Sir Philip, mentioning that he and Lady Barnard are to return home from Italy by the next packet," said Lady Fitz-Patrick. "He has lived abroad for his health, and for the indulgence of his enthusiasm about paintings and music, ever since you were born, and I never expected to get a glimpse of him again, as they were both so old, and this foggy climate destroys him; but since the melancholy event of their only son being killed in a duel at Paris, Sir Philip has

taken a sudden longing to see me. I was always his favourite niece, and other family circumstances, which cannot be explained, induce them both to venture here."

"And this is all the mighty event!" exclaimed Eleanor in a tone of angry disappointment; "merely that a respectable old gentleman and his wife are bringing home their bones to be buried in the family vault. I cannot trace how it very much concerns me, unless they are generous enough to bring us some splendid presents from abroad. You know, mamma, I am sadly in want of ornaments."

"Your mind may be set at rest without delay on that score, as they will certainly bring nothing; and you cannot feel very deserving of gifts or trinkets if you experience so little pleasure at the prospect of seeing my nearest relations, Eleanor," replied Lady Fitz-Patrick, with a frown of transient displeasure on her usually good-humoured countenance. "But, my dear girl, I must explain that it really is my anxious wish you should do every thing imaginable to fascinate Sir Philip. He has heard volumes about you in my letters, which have been filled with such favourable accounts of your appearance and accomplishments, that he already calls you '*la petite Corinne,*' and I am most anxious you should justify the appellation. It is of more consequence than you can possibly imagine, and particularly important to eclipse Matilda Howard in his estimation."

"It would be no great stretch of partiality to take it for granted that I shall certainly succeed if that be all you desire," replied Eleanor conceitedly. "I wish we were more equal competitors, that our rivalship might have some interest: Matilda and I are scarcely society for each other now; we are so totally different, that we have not two ideas in common. I almost fancy that aunt

Olivia must intend her to take orders, she is teaching her to be so very good, and all that sort of thing."

"Well, my dear, luckily it will terrify Sir Philip; and he is rather prejudiced against her already, having always disliked my sister herself for her pedantry and blue-stockingitiveness," said Lady Fitz-Patrick. "My uncle is quite a beau of the old school, and was the greatest connoisseur of beauty in his day—he will know at the first glance if your features are the breadth of a hair out of perfect proportion; and he will listen, entranced with ecstacy, to your music from noon till midnight."

"But what sort of taste can a man be supposed to have who is eighty at least? sans teeth, sans eyes," exclaimed Eleanor contemptuously. "I really wish there were some more interesting object to gain, and I should exert myself to oblige you with greater energy and pleasure."

"Perhaps, Eleanor, if you knew my real motive," replied Lady Fitz-Patrick mysteriously, "it might not appear so very trifling an object to please Sir Philip."

"I guess, mamma, he means to make me his heiress," cried Eleanor eagerly. "Now I am sure by your face that I really have accidentally been my own fortune-teller."

"Nonsense, Eleanor," said Lady Fitz-Patrick evasively; "your aunts and I are nearer relations than you, if my uncle has any thing to leave."

"If he has!" replied Eleanor laughing. "I thought you had agreed with Sir Philip long ago, that I was to have married his son had he lived, and you know I could not have abated a farthing of L.10,000 a-year, so he must be rich; and looking upon me as in a manner widow of that favourite son, I am in fact his nearest connexion, and ought to be provided for accordingly."

"You are not very far wrong, to confess the truth, Eleanor," said Lady Fitz-Patrick smiling. "Sir Richard and I had agreed that it would be prudent not to mention these expectations, in case of their turning your head, and ending in disappointment; but I never could keep a secret in my life, and here it is come out in spite of myself. Sir Philip's agent, who brought me letters this morning, took the opportunity of dropping a hint, that on the death of Frederick Barnard a will was immediately executed in my favour, and as your brother is well provided for already, the estates are all left in remainder to you; but Sir Philip has since entertained some idea of dividing his fortune, making Matilda a co-heiress with you; and it is in order to see you both that he is now *en chemin* for England."

"Oh, mamma! how could you conceal this news a single instant, for every moment I was in ignorance was a moment of ecstacy lost," exclaimed Eleanor, all radiant with joy. "What splendid jewels I shall get—what equipages—what horses—what crowds of admirers"——

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"Not admirers worth having, if they seek only what Sir Philip can give you," said Lady Fitz-Patrick gravely. "Young ladies are not very enviable, my dear girl, when any motive beyond their own attractions causes them to receive attention in public; and an heiress is generally much to be pitied, she occupies such a false position in society."

"I shall suffer with pleasure *tous les embarras des richesses*," replied Eleanor laughing. "The brightest jewel is always improved by being set in gold. But let me fly to tell Miss Marabout the glorious news."

Nearly at the same time Lady Howard imparted the intelligence of Sir Philip and Lady Barnard's return to

her daughter Matilda, but without attaching to that event anything like the same importance or pleasure that had been expressed by her sister.

"How glad you must be!" said Matilda, with animation. "I cherish quite an old-fashioned love of relations, having never known any yet whom I could not be attached to; and already I feel my heart warming towards poor Sir Philip, who has suffered so severe an affliction. His son's death must have been a dreadful blow; and what pleasure we shall feel in consoling one who needs sympathy so much."

"Why, really, to say the honest truth, it will be rather a bore, with all my numerous engagements," replied Lady Howard peevishly. "Sir Philip expects prodigious attention, and Lady Barnard is by this time deaf beyond assistance from all the trumpets that were ever invented, besides being so infirm she cannot stir without support. I quite dread the thoughts of it. Sir Philip is so *exigeant* with his love of music and painting, that altogether the pair will be a perfect oppression. But *à propos* of arts and sciences, Matilda, I am extremely desirous that Sir Philip should be as much pleased with your accomplishments and appearance as Eleanor's; and I make it my particular request that you will do more than is possible to equal or excel your cousin."

"Why should there be any rivalship, mamma?" asked Matilda with surprise. "We shall both, of course, exert our utmost to please Sir Philip, and I shall be quite happy to assist poor Lady Barnard, who seems by your account, to stand in so much need of comfort."

"I do not care about Lady Barnard at all!" said Lady Howard impatiently; "but there are reasons of consequence why Sir Francis and I are both anxious about the impression you make on Sir Philip."

"That is quite a sufficient inducement for every effort," replied Matilda; "but consider, mamma, how impossible it is for me to have a chance of eclipsing Eleanor, especially in the estimation of such a person as you describe Sir Philip to be."

"Perhaps you are right," answered Lady Howard bitterly; "but if I had conceived the most distant idea of such news as we have heard to-day, no power on earth should have induced me, not all the persuasions of Lady Olivia, nor your own entreaties, to have retained Miss Porson."

"Oh! do not say so, my dear mother!" exclaimed Matilda, with unusual earnestness; "you will make me too eager for success. There could not be a stronger motive than the desire to please you; but I shall feel additional anxiety now on account of Miss Porson's credit; for if you do not find me in all respects what might be expected, the fault is far from being hers. The unwearied pains she takes with me would really astonish you; and I consider it one of the happiest circumstances in my whole life to have been placed under her charge."

"Quite an oration!" said Lady Howard, "and very much in the school of 'aunt Olivia;' but you might resemble worse people, Matilda; so I shall let it pass for the present. But pray, my dear, never make me a 'set speech' again. Nothing can be a greater mortification than to observe how Eleanor outshines you in accomplishments, for these are, in fact, the only criterion by which a girl's education is ever appreciated. You will find in all societies, Matilda, that strangers feel privileged, in half an hour's acquaintance, to put you through a perfect catechism upon your acquirements. 'Are you musical, Miss Howard? Do you play on the piano-forte?

and also on the harp? Can you sing? Have you a guitar?' Then after the question of music is fairly settled, you will be cross-examined on painting and languages; but no such probe can be applied to the understanding or the temper, and Eleanor will pass better through the world without either of them than you will with both, on account of her superior *éclat* in externals, especially with such people as my uncle."

CHAPTER X.

Little things are great to little men.
GOLDSMITH.

Ognuno ha i suoi gusti.

SIR PHILIP and Lady Barnard were received with a perfect storm of joy by Ladies Fitz-Patrick and Howard, who vied with each other in warm expressions of their felicity on the occasion of meeting with friends whom they professed to have long and almost hopelessly desired to embrace. Even Miss Neville seemed resolved on this occasion not to be outdone, and relaxing as much as possible from the cold rigidity of her natural manner, she hastened to Barry's Hotel along with Lady Olivia, and presented an "address of congratulation" on the safe return of her friends to a "Christian land."

A long course of family dinner-parties now took place, according to established custom on a re-union of relations, who then seem to try their powers of wearying each other, by congregating the same circle, to discuss the same subjects in continual succession for a given number of days, with unrelaxing assiduity. Sir Philip Barnard had resources of conversation which were not easily exhausted. The pictures, statues, bijouterie, and antiques which he had purchased during a twenty years' residence abroad, were all to be described and commented upon, so that Eleanor complained it was duller than reading a volume of Eustace's Classical Tour all dinner time, to hear such raptures about his Carlo Marattis,

Salvator Rosas, and Corregios; his vases by Benvenuto Cellini; his terra-cottas, and his tables of verd-antique and mosaic.

"I hate people who are always acting having been abroad," said she, yawning. "I can't open my mouth to them without having Mount Blanc thrust in my teeth, or the Falls of the Rhine poured down my throat. It is really odious: and whenever I am appointed to regulate society, no one shall be allowed to mention any place out of this country, nor any anecdote of what occurred longer ago than last week."

Lady Howard talked with her uncle for ever about the Vatican and the Louvre, while Lady Fitz-Patrick contrived occasionally to divert his thoughts into a discussion of dress and fashion, for she gladly discovered that Sir Philip spoke as eloquently on the merits of a new sleeve as of an old picture;—he could comment one moment on the grouping of a Vandyck, and make an easy transition the next instant to the gracefulness of a favourite opera dancer; and whether Cardinal Montralto's pictures or Princess Rimini's diamonds were under consideration, he was equally graphic in describing them all. There remained abundant evidence, on canvass and in marble, that Sir Philip Barnard had once been handsome, and art still substituted what nature would have denied to more advanced years, for his whole appearance was, as Eleanor remarked, "a falsehood," which the most lynx-eyed observer could scarcely detect in the shade, though he was observed always carefully to avoid the full glare of day-light. His manners were extremely elegant, and he did all in his power to disguise from himself as well as from others, that the lapse of more than half a century had left any infirmities behind.

"I declare, Sir Philip, you are younger than ever!" was Lady Fitz-Patrick's premeditated exclamation when he arrived; and it was pronounced in so natural and impromptu a tone, that no one could have supposed her remark not to be suggested at the moment. Upon hearing it, however, Eleanor gave a satirical glance towards Miss Marabout, and walked a few steps behind Sir Philip with a ludicrous imitation of his tottering walk and very antiquated bow, till an alarming look and a cautionary frown from Lady Fitz-Patrick caused her hastily to desist, and to affect an air of grave decorum.

There could not well have been a greater contrast than between the gay, flippant, lively manner of Sir Philip, who appeared in a continual flutter of enjoyment, and the silent broken-hearted wretchedness that was depicted in the whole expression of Lady Barnard's countenance, who seemed to have withered beneath the corroding influence of deep, unmitigated sorrow, and to shrink from the possibility of any thing like cheerfulness and joy. It was strange that two persons who had equal cause to mourn for the same sorrow should feel so differently, that it never appeared present to the recollection of the one, nor absent from the thoughts of the other; but Sir Philip had all his life been in the practice of driving away disagreeable ideas, boasting frequently that he had attained perfection in the art of forgetting. Disagreeable acquaintances, unpleasing events, and serious anticipations of the future, were all forcibly ejected from his mind; and like the *Malade Imaginaire,* who was ordered never to be contradicted, he gave it peremptorily out that he was never to be annoyed with any thing. He seemed to look upon the grief of Lady Barnard as an injury to himself, because it served as a perpetual memento of what it was his determined purpose to bury in oblivion; and not hav-

ing sympathy enough to imagine feelings which he had never experienced, Sir Philip fancied that the affliction of his wife for the loss of their only child might have been as easily conquered as his own. He had travelled away every domestic affection; and his happiness having always been independent of feeling, and resting solely in amusement, he conceived little more idea of being attached to any person or place than a carriage-wheel might be supposed to have, so that nothing but the most transitory emotion had any chance of sympathy from him. "*Non isvegliamo il can che dorme,*" was the motto which Sir Philip invariably quoted.

Lady Barnard evidently felt accustomed to be reckoned a bore, and never seemed to expect more attention than she received, which was very little. After being supported into the drawing-room by her maid, and placed so near the fire that a woodcock must have been overdone for dinner in less than a minute, she was left to the full enjoyment of her solitary meditations—Sir Philip being so happy to badiner with his agreeable nieces, and to be the idol of their little coterie, that he seemed unconscious of any thing else.

A look of restless weariness was perceptible in the countenance of Lady Barnard, which it became painful to observe; no appearance of reflection lighted up her eye, which wandered vacantly about the room, or rested on the faces of those around, seeking some object of interest, but evidently finding none that could for a moment occupy her thoughts; and the gay laugh which occasionally echoed through the room made her feel only more lonely. Her deep mourning dress, in contrast with the gay costume of her husband, spoke at once to the affectionate heart of Matilda Howard; and the first evening that she met Sir Philip and Lady Barnard at Sir Richard Fitz-

Patrick's, she stole silently away from the lively party round her uncle, and placed herself beside the solitary sufferer, trying, with unwearied assiduity, to modulate her voice so as to suit the inaccessible ears of her aged relative. Many vain attempts were made, but by dint of frequent repetitions, and very marked articulation, she at length succeeded in becoming audible; but as they had few subjects in common, Matilda soon found an equal difficulty in supporting a conversation on her own resources, for Lady Barnard afforded but very languid attention, and scarcely exerted herself to make any reply. Matilda, however, ingeniously caught up the topics that were most prominently under discussion amongst the joyous party near, and repeated extracts of their lively badinage with patient perseverance, hoping to divert the thoughts and to engage the attention of one who seemed so greatly in need of kindness and sympathy.

"Sir Philip is amusing my aunt with a description of Captain M'Tartan's adventures at Florence, how he was devoted to the fine arts, killing time in the morning at the gallery, and murdering his music afterwards at home."

"Murdering his music master! I never heard of it before!" said Lady Barnard, rousing her attention; "What could induce him to do that? but he was always a strange being!"

"I say that Sir Philip mentions his having murdered his music," replied Matilda, as plainly as she could articulate.

"Well, my dear! I hear you quite distinctly—he murdered his music-master; but what was the provocation? I wonder it did not make more noise abroad, for I never heard of it before; but nobody ever tells me anything now," said Lady Barnard, sitting back in her chair with a look of peevish abstraction.

"Eleanor!" said Lady Fitz-Patrick, in a tone of great animation, "do you remember Captain M'Tartan's first appearance many years ago at our house in the country? He had been studying fashions in London for a short time, and observed that gentlemen always came in with a hat and stick before dinner, so he determined to be quite correct, and as long as he staid with us in Argyleshire, Sir Philip, he regularly marched in before dinner with his hat and stick! My daughter was a perfect child at the time; but shall I ever forget the fright she gave me, entering behind Captain M'Tartan with a hat and stick also, and making the most ludicrous imitation of his angular bows! You were a sad girl then, but you have learned better now."

"I am not sure of that, if a good opportunity offers," replied Eleanor, stealing a mischievous glance at Sir Philip. "There are some people that I could take off yet with great satisfaction."

"Sir Philip says that Captain M'Tartan offered to take pot-luck with you one day at Paris, and called it '*la fortune du pot*,'" cried Matilda to Lady Barnard; "and that when he was arguing with a French general about the comparative merits of the two nations at Waterloo, he closed the discussion with a knowing wink, saying, '*Monsieur! le* PROOF *du poudain est dans le mangeant.*'"

"Matilda! you are not a good echo, for that story has lost half its point since Sir Philip told it in his droll humourous way," said Lady Howard. "Hardly any person should venture to raconter, for the best anecdote on earth becomes as flat, when it is repeated, as a glass of champaigne the second day."

"But you are not supposed to overhear what we say," replied Matilda, good-humouredly.

"Then your conversation is like an aside on the stage, which is generally louder than any other part of the dialogue," said Eleanor laughing. "I am sure every note of the gamut has been tried to-night!"

"You really have a twenty-horse power in conversation!" added Lady Fitz-Patrick satirically. "I shall get you appointed interpreter to the Deaf and Dumb Institution!"

The seat at dinner next to Lady Barnard, which was eagerly avoided by every one else, became invariably the place reserved for Matilda, who felt perfectly satisfied and happy to secure it; and though no one took the trouble to consider why or wherefore this was the case, it seemed to become soon a matter of course that Matilda's arm must be ready if Lady Barnard chose to walk, and that her voice was to be in requisition when she wished to hear. The first time that Matilda took her place at dinner next to Lady Barnard was a great test of her nerves and good humour, as she had seldom before appeared at her mother's table, and she felt as shy as if all eyes were upon her; but still she resolved to conquer her diffidence, and exert herself to beguile the melancholy of one whom she pitied so much.

"This soup is very hot!" said she, turning to Lady Barnard.

"Eh? what did you say?"

"This soup is very hot!" repeated Matilda, colouring.

"Pray, speak more distinctly!" cried Lady Barnard angrily; "you forget that I am a little deaf?"

"I merely remarked that the soup is hot!" continued Matilda with smiling patience, trying to make her unlucky sentence more audible, but in vain, and the colour

dyed her cheeks to crimson when she was asked to repeat it once more,

"Bennet! bring my trumpet from the drawing-room," said Lady Barnard in an irritable voice to her footman. "I must hear what you said!"

"The soup will be cool enough now," said Eleanor, laughing at her cousin's increasing embarrassment. "Could you not vary that original observation a little? Tell her that the Emperor of Morocco is dead, or any thing else that will cause a sensation."

When the trumpet came, and Lady Barnard at last ascertained what Matilda had remarked, she looked up with an expression of indignant surprise. "Was that all! I really expected something worth hearing," said she; "but people lose less than they imagine by being deaf."

Whatever services any one constantly renders to another soon come to be looked upon as a right; and Lady Barnard, before long, appeared fretful and peevish at the most trifling omission on Matilda's part, and sometimes even complained of fancied neglects, though Eleanor's total indifference never caused any irritation or surprise. "Your cousin has not at all the way with me, and seems thoughtless about paying those little attentions that are necessary; but I really expected more from you, Matilda, than to be left alone at Barry's all yesterday morning, when you knew that Sir Philip had gone to the steeple chase."

If no better inducement had influenced Matilda than a desire to secure gratitude or approbation from others, she must soon have relinquished the vain attempt in disgust; but Christian principle supplies a motive for doing good when all others fail, and she pursued her self-appointed task of compassionate kindness with un-

diminishing perseverance during many tedious months, amidst the peevishness of Lady Barnard's unhappy temper, and the ridicule of her satirical cousin.

"Matilda," said Eleanor one day in a tone of languid affectation, "will you be so obliging, when Lady Barnard comes down stairs, as to mention that there is a dog of the Blenheim breed to be had from my friend Lady Susan Danvers, if she still wishes for one to engage her affections?"

"Indeed, Eleanor, you must tell her all this yourself," replied Matilda, laughing good-humouredly, and taking up her work, "Your tongue has not yet fallen into such a lethargy that I must fetch and carry messages between you and Lady Barnard in the way you seem to propose."

"Pray, do!" pursued Eleanor, assuming a tone of affected earnestness; "my voice would be broken for ever if I attempted to hold a conversation with her; indeed it would cost me less effort to sing a whole opera, than to shout through that odious trumpet all day as you do. I would not undertake such a task for the reward of half-a-crown a minute."

"You might be still better repaid by a sense of usefulness," answered Matilda; "and, Eleanor, we have as yet had very few opportunities of experiencing it."

"Aunt Olivia to the very life! But, Matilda, I do hate all those Joseph Surface kind of sentiments and extra-superfine feelings, which are perfectly absurd when you and I are alone, and quite among friends; so let me speak out my whole mind without disguise or embellishment, and tell you that nothing on earth can ever make the very sight of either Sir Philip or Lady Barnard tolerable to me. I never did see such a couple of old horrors," continued Eleanor with increasing energy;

"they must be mummies from Egypt who were revived by steam, and it makes one ill to look at their haggard old faces. Lady Barnard was actually going to kiss me when they arrived! but I pretended not to be aware of it, and thrust my bonnet in her face. I cannot conceive what will become of me if they remain longer! Don't you suspect that wrinkles are infectious? for my flesh seems to creep whenever the old pair come in, and I gladly fly to the glass to see something human again."

"Or something that you think rather more than human," said Matilda slyly. "But seriously, Eleanor, Lady Barnard appears to me a very picturesque old woman, exactly the sort of figure that Rembrandt would have delighted to paint; her profusion of grey hair, her high cap, and her very white handkerchief, are all so neat. She was once, you know, a great beauty, and I can trace some remains of it in the delicate outline of her nose."

"Pshaw!" said Eleanor, "you will allow that I understand these subjects rather better than you, Matilda! Lady Barnard may possibly have once been young, but handsome she certainly never was."

"Surely you have forgotten her very beautiful miniature that Lady Olivia showed us," persisted Matilda; "there she is represented with the face of a perfect Hebe—her long dark hair flowing down on her shoulders in massy ringlets; her smiling lips disclosing the most splendid teeth; her brilliant eyes quite riants with animation; and her skin as delicate as the finest porcelain china; but time and sorrow have committed fearful ravages on all that was once so lovely."

"Now for a few moral reflections, Matilda! The subject is so very new and inviting that it would be quite a treat. Do revive some of our old lessons out of the

copy-books, with notes and annotations, taking as an instance, 'Beauty quickly fades!' For my own part, I do not wish to survive one single day after age and ugliness overtake me; for it really seems no bad plan of the Hindoos, who put people to death whenever they become no longer useful or ornamental—poor Lady Barnard would have been off long ago?"

"And yet, Eleanor, there is some wise purpose of Providence for which she is spared," said Matilda; "and if either of us live to be as helpless as Lady Barnard, we may still have the consolation of believing that our remaining on earth is not utterly in vain. I remember hearing of an ignorant old woman who was so wearied of life, that she said, 'Surely death has forgotten me!' but we know that every day our existence is continued by special permission for some merciful purpose, and that when we cannot be active in doing the will of God, we may still show a useful example by suffering it patiently."

"Like poor Lady Barnard, who grumbles all day," said Eleanor, heedlessly. "But Sir Philip is certainly not so tired of life as the old woman you mention, for I am told that he ransacked every village church-yard in his way down to ascertain how many people had lived to be ninety, though I really wonder that he is not already ashamed to be seen alive so long. Sir Philip seems to have known every body's grandfather; and how provoked he appeared when I pointed out that he was always two generations before the present day when he inquired for any old acquaintance. It is unpardonably stingy of him to bring us nothing from abroad! Whenever I hear of a rich old uncle, I always connect with his name the idea of India shawls, gold bracelets, and diamond earrings, especially now that he has no family. *A propos*

Matilda, how diverted I was yesterday when you listened so intently to Lady Barnard's praises of her unfortunate son, as if he had been some future lover of your own. I actually fancied you were in tears about him at one time."

"Perhaps you might have been so likewise, Eleanor, had you heard all that I did from the poor afflicted mother," said Matilda; "nothing could be more deeply touching than her description of his last hours. You often say that there is no sensation so pleasing as being moved by a tragedy; but this is a more touching story than any that could be represented on the stage, and it would soothe Lady Barnard's feelings if you would ask her to repeat the melancholy narrative again. It will only cost you the trouble of listening: so do try."

"How can you propose such a thing, Matilda!" exclaimed Eleanor yawning. "I was always quicker than you, and never could endure prosing. You might have known me better!"

"I shall know you better another time," said Matilda, reproachfully. "Dear Eleanor! can you wonder if I am slow to believe that you do not compassionate sorrows so accumulated as poor Lady Barnard's, cut off as she is from the possibility of holding much intercourse with others, and having no subject for her solitary thoughts to dwell upon with interest except the grave of her only child? You might do much to cheer her spirits—few people are so gifted for the task as you are; and, Eleanor, there are no amusements that could deserve to be compared with the hope of being serviceable to her. By accustoming Lady Barnard to your voice, it becomes scarcely an effort to make her hear; and she has allowed me to select some books that we may read together—pray, assist me, for the pleasure is greater than the exertion."

"To such a hard-working good creature as you, I daresay it may," replied Eleanor, taking up a novel; "but *Il dolce far niente* is my motto; for I am really getting indolent now, and, as the man said who was handsome, 'I can't help it.' One thing, however, I must hint to you, Matilda, that next time you attempt to treat Lady Barnard with music, it would be prudent to shut all the doors and windows for the credit of the house, because those trumpery Scotch airs that she doats on, thundered with the loud pedals, would be enough to set all the bears in the street a-dancing. She asked me once to perform them, but I took care to be nearly inaudible, and just enough out of time and tune to make her never desire such another serenade; for I would rather break stones on the road than hammer the chords of a defenceless piano-forte so atrociously. You should make a vow, as I did long ago, not to play any music, on whatever pretext, that has once been ground on a hand-organ."

"I am glad to give pleasure on any terms. Consider, Eleanor, the trouble and time it has cost me to acquire some knowledge of music, and that as I am not competent to gratify such epicures in the science as you can, it is something to be thankful for if I can entertain any one."

"Matilda, I am afraid you are going to become one of those people who set up for being 'too good for this world,'" said Eleanor, satirically. "I know two or three already who are upon that plan, and it is perfectly intolerable. They pique themselves upon doing every thing that no one else would do, and make a great ostentation of having amiable weaknesses. If a stranger does something atrociously wrong, they profess to believe that he had certainly some good motive in spite of ap-

pearances; they make a point of praising their enemies more than their friends; and if any one is universally odious, they take him under their peculiar patronage, and tyrannize over the conversation by allowing no one to speak of him according to truth, or to tell a story of him, without saying that they would like to hear both sides of it, which is a thing that for my own part I never wish to do, as I always find that the first edition has the most point. And these people delight to be imposed upon by beggars or impostors, and to tell the story against themselves with a sort of 'too-good-for-this world' expression on their countenances, and a concluding remark that they would rather be taken in a thousand times than become suspicious. I am gifted with a talisman that reveals to me in whatever corner affectation may lurk, and it certainly does get into very odd and unsuspected hiding-holes occasionally, Matilda."

"If you ever detect any symptoms of it in me, in thought, word, or deed, drive it out instantly," replied her cousin good-humouredly. "I shall search my own mind with double diligence, for nothing can be worse than the smallest departure from the candour and simplicity of right feeling."

"Matilda, you are good-natured, and that is worse than anything," said Eleanor, laughing. "I never was so angry at any one in my life as at old Lady Susan Danvers, when I once heard her call me 'a good-natured girl;' and I am sure she will never venture to do so again. Good-natured people are never supposed to have anything else in the world to recommend them; and though I have seen several who really had some very respectable virtues besides, yet the instant they are

branded with the name of 'good-natured,' every one in society feels privileged to talk of them, and to apply that epithet with a tone of contemptuous patronage, and to take all sorts of impertinent liberties with their carriages, their horses, and their time, without feeling the same obligation that they would express towards any one else who was not supposed to have a similar convenient facility of temper."

"This is quite a new code of morals, and requires consideration before I become one of your pupils."

"It would save you a world of trouble to do so at once," said Eleanor. "Did ever any one waste so much time as you do to maintain the character of being obliging? If any old lady has a son going to India, you wear out a pair of eyes with copying his miniature for her—if any new manuscript song is in circulation, upon which every young lady who has it writes 'not to be copied' in the largest and most forbidding characters, you promise a scroll of it to every friend who asks you —I would rather communicate one in confidence to any dozen of other girls than to you; and if you get a new dress from London, or a bonnet that is admired, it is generally half-worn out with people taking off the pattern before you have ever had it on. I often think how much the better you would be of the discipline which a young ensign goes through the first day he joins a mess-table. When he rises to help himself to anything, there is a general conspiracy that he shall never be allowed to sit down again during the rest of dinner. One officer begs him to reach one thing, another entreats him to help something else, and a third is ready with some subsequent request, till dinner is cleared away, and the unlucky debutant is generally cured for ever of any inor-

dinate desire to oblige. As for the time squandered on Lady Barnard, I cannot imagine how you answer that to yourself; but, Sir Philip, to do you justice, engrosses but little notice."

"Because he really does not require it. As long as mamma and my aunt talk to him, he is independent of every one else in the world."

"They talk to him!" repeated Eleanor, laughing, "What a mistake! No one can speak to Sir Philip, but all may listen who choose. He is one of those arbitrary talkers so common now among those who are reckoned, or who reckon themselves, entertaining, who never attend to what is said by any one else, and have no more idea of altering the current of their conversation, on account of a story or remark from another quarter, than a pedestrian would have of changing his course if he wished to cross the road, and felt unwillingly obliged to wait till some lumbering waggon had passed. He recalls the point of his own story with partial fondness, when every one is laughing perhaps at the humour of some one else; and he resumes the thread of what he said before, as if the interruptions of other people were only made that he might have time to take breath. There is more selfishness shewn in conversation than in many much more important things in life; and you may depend upon this, if Sir Philip ever dies of laughing, it will be at a joke of his own."

"But, Eleanor, you know mamma got him to hear out her favourite story yesterday about Captain M'Tartan so nearly throwing down the Venus de Medici at Florence last year."

"True, but he kept up a sort of *obligato* accompaniment all the way through, of contradictions, and corrections,

and doubts, and little Italian sentences, merely to dim your mother's brilliancy, and to prevent her from outshining himself. There is a want of fairness in all this. Conversation is a common property, and every one feels perfectly competent to contribute his own share. In a charitable subscription, we are as careful to collect the poor people's halfpence as the rich people's sovereigns, and in this case, each individual is still more willing to subscribe his mite. Aunt Barbara is also a most refractory listener. I went to her room three times last day we were at Ashgrove, to tell something it was of consequence for her to know, and I came away fairly defeated by her volubility. It was like opening the door in a blast of wind when I entered, she had such a hurricane of words."

"What were they all about!"

"Can you seriously wish to know what Barbara ever says?" asked Eleanor incredulously. "She was in a state of vehement indignation at Sir Francis for having narrated some ludicrous stories of long ago, relating to 'Frank Harvey,' as he will persist in calling him; and she spoke in most moving terms about the whole affair as a persecution of herself and of him, though I protested that my uncle had certainly no recollection at the moment of her having any peculiar interest in the subject. This of course she would be most unwilling to believe, as she is constantly on the *qui vive* for affronts; and I made the matter worse, having accidentally picked up a pamphlet of Miss Rachel Stodart's, and thrown it rather contemptuously down again; but she would not have missed that either on any account, because it will tell so well at the next meeting, and be dignified with the name of 'a persecution' also. I wish people would only call things by their right names; and as for your father's good-humoured jests being ever taken up as a

serious affair, it really is like raising a storm in a tea-cup."

"So I think," replied Matilda, smiling; "and it was a thousand pities aunt Barbara made such an uproar as she did upon the subject, hinting about enemies, and slanderers, and forgiveness, till papa became seriously irritated. If aunt Olivia had not so judiciously set sail on a new tack, and carried papa along with her, a regular bombardment would have ensued on both sides, ending, in all probability, with an irreparable breach."

"And Barbara hoisting her colours higher than ever, supposing herself undoubtedly in the right," added Eleanor, leaving the room. "The only thing that vexed me was to see Lady Olivia really agitated and distressed. She changed colour once or twice during the altercation, and considering her evidently declining health, every thing that wears it out is deeply to be deplored by us. The sword is already too much for the scabbard, and will soon destroy it altogether. 'Oh, why has worth so short a date!'" sighed Eleanor with transient emotion as she closed the door.

"Ah, why indeed!" thought Matilda, while a tear gathered in her eye; "but as the poet goes on to say—

The monarch may forget the crown
That on his head an hour has been;
The mother may forget the child
That smiles so sweetly on her knee;
But I'll remember thee, my friend,
And all that thou hast done for me."*

Sir Philip Barnard had given great offence to Eleanor at an early stage of their acquaintance, by criticising her skill in Italian. "She is fluent enough," he said, turning to Lady Fitz-Patrick, "but her pronunciation is

* Burns.

dreadfully provincial—Matilda Howard's is the same. It is a thousand pities their time has been so wasted, for I would rather never speak the language at all than use such a perverted accent."

Matilda expressed no surprise, though she felt some mortification at her uncle's unqualified censure, but Eleanor's indignation was beyond control, and the greatest affront of all was to be levelled with Matilda, to whom she reckoned herself incomparably superior.

"I am quite astonished at what you say!" replied she, endeavouring to force a laugh. "Many people have declared they could scarcely believe I had not spent my life on the continent."

"These complaisant friends of yours probably never were abroad themselves," replied Sir Philip, dryly. "Imagine, Eleanor, any two girls from Somersetshire or Cumberland, attempting to speak English in London, and you may then conceive the sort of appearance you and Matilda would make at Florence—you must both spend a winter abroad, or never let me hear the sound of your voice again in any language but English; though really, to give every one their due, Matilda seems tolerably well acquainted with the Continent, and knows what are the lions at any town I mention. She has an idea likewise of the most celebrated pictures, which I hope she will live to see, for nothing improves the taste so much as visiting and studying in galleries abroad."

"It is in vain to talk of improving people's taste who have naturally none," said Eleanor, pertly. "Matilda's taste is like Dr Johnson's estate in Yorkshire, which he always quoted when people talked of having lost what they never possessed. I have to set her right almost every day at the painting academy, and often choose what

pieces she ought to copy, because her own selection is so indifferent."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Sir Philip, satirically, "*Secondo voi!*"

"Yes," continued Eleanor, "Matilda seldom disputes the point with me—and Mr Crayon frequently appeals to my judgment and taste in his own sketches."

"There is infinite good taste in your saying all this, Eleanor," interrupted Lady Howard, laughing; "and if we were each to be sold at our own estimate of ourselves, I believe Matilda would go as much below her own real value as you would go above yours; but it will all pass in the world, where people generally are appreciated according to what they assume."

Lady Fitz-Patrick had talked so much of her daughter's drawings, that the well-hackneyed album and portfolio were one evening produced at the request of Sir Philip, who drew in his chair and put on his spectacles, exhibiting the air of anticipated pleasure with which he might have been supposed to prepare for privately inspecting some celebrated work of art.

The first few drawings he cast aside, evidently considering them such as it was impossible for him to look at. "Ah! copied from Claude; tolerably good," exclaimed he at length in a patronizing tone, "but that cloud is like a feather bed. Ruins! you have taken this from the Pironesi; the touch is too minute, very laboured indeed. Your hand is cramped with drawing so frequently on a small scale. Why do you work in an album? *Faremo un buco nell' acqua.* Show me some of your large bold sketches—they are the sort of things for a beginner. You should never be allowed to finish a drawing till you have learned a more correct outline—

this man must be seven feet high at least, and that steeple is leaning like the tower of Pisa."

"I wish Sir Philip was suspended from the top of it," whispered Eleanor angrily to Matilda.

Lady Fitz-Patrick with alarm observed a gathering storm on her daughter's brow, and hastily exclaimed in a deprecating voice, "You forget, Sir Philip, that these are not an artist's performances which you are inspecting."

"I am not likely to forget that in the present instance," muttered Sir Philip, still turning them hastily over with a transient glance of disapprobation; at length he started up, and pushing the whole collection contemptuously aside, exclaimed, "*Assai pampini e poc'uva!* But are we to live for ever without music? I have not endured such a fast for ages before. Let me make an overture to you, Eleanor, for some airs in the last new opera. If your notes could be coined into gold, I would rather live, like Orpheus and Eurydice, on the harmony of sounds, and my expectations have been raised above measure by the fame of your performance."

"Indeed you can hardly be disappointed," whispered Lady Fitz-Patrick in an under tone, which Eleanor affected not to hear. "Count Valdareighenstein, who dined here very frequently last winter, fell into perfect raptures, and protested he could come with pleasure every day to hear her."

"The Count liked a good dinner no less than good music," said Miss Neville dryly; "and I suspect Eleanor's playing was not the worse of being accompanied by claret and champagne."

"Baron Trottoir also," continued Lady Fitz-Patrick, without noticing this unwelcome remark—"Baron Trot-

toir assured her he had one evening sent his apology to another party, knowing that Eleanor never performed except at home, and that therefore the music in this house must always be better than anywhere else; he remarked likewise, that he would give up his stall at the opera in London, if he could only hear her every night in private."

"Well done, Baron Trottoir!" said Miss Neville, sharply, "he knows also which side to butter his bread upon—but make what fuss about it you please, I have been told that a very constant application to music undermines the understanding."

"Are you musical, aunt Barbara?" asked Eleanor, tuning her harp; "I never suspected it till this moment."

"Recollect," added Sir Philip, "I am quite *il fanatico per la musica* myself, and cannot allow your sweeping clause, Barbara—but I certainly have known persons abroad who played admirably, and were yet very little removed from idiots. Come now, Eleanor, as Shakspeare says, 'If music be the food of love, play on.'"

With an expression of the utmost self-complacency and giving a careless glance round the room, Eleanor drew the harp towards her and ran over a brilliant prelude. "I suppose you are a great performer on some instrument yourself?" asked Eleanor maliciously, for she knew it to be a subject of mortification to Sir Philip that he was not so.

"No! I had too good an ear to endure the torture of learning," replied he. "I tried once to scrape an acquaintance with the violin, but was ready to hang myself on the fiddlestick often when a discordant note came out; but you are quite one of the light-fingered gentry," continued Sir Philip, putting on his spectacles, and seat-

ing himself close beside her with an air of delighted expectation *ascoltare!* "Pray, give me some of my favourite airs in the opera of *Il Colibri.*"

"I never heard of that opera before," replied Eleanor superciliously. "I play chiefly the music of Beethoven and Weber."

"You might as well talk of Handel and Clementi!" exclaimed Sir Philip impatiently. "These composers are quite out of date on the Continent now; have you got nothing of Cardellini's or Solerti's, or ———"

"No," said Eleanor in a tone of pique; "it was unlucky you did not bring me some of their music from Rome, as they appear to be such favourites, and then I should have been happy to practise it. The last new piece I learned was the grand concerto in A by Maccheroni."

"Well, pray let me have it," said Sir Philip in a tone of resignation; "last time I heard that piece it was executed by Signora Genovesi, the first harpist in Europe, at a concert given by Prince Neufchatel to the Crown-Prince of Bavaria."

Nothing daunted by Sir Philip's reminiscences, Eleanor commenced the piece with an air of nonchalance which showed the most perfect confidence in her own powers. Sir Philip knit his brows, folded his arms, and composed himself into an attitude of profound attention, while Lady Fitz-Patrick and Matilda both watched his countenance with exultation, as they anticipated the pleasure and astonishment in which he would soon be entranced. "Piano! *Adagio non correte,*" exclaimed Sir Philip, suddenly raising himself with a start. "*Adagio!*" continued he, audibly beating time on the table with his spectacle case, "*non andàte in tempo.*"

"You will put me quite out!" cried Eleanor peevishly,

and Matilda trembled for what her cousin might say next, seeing her visibly irritated; but fortunately Lady Fitz-Patrick contrived to give her a cautionary glance, which had its due effect for the time, and she proceeded a few bars farther without interruption, till at last with a contortion of horror, and something very much resembling an Italian oath, Sir Philip eagerly exclaimed—

"Ah, Piano! *Pianissimo! Mi fate allegare i denti!* Observe, Eleanor, it is marked *espressivo!* Genovesi could scarcely be heard here; she seemed twenty miles off, and yet every note was so distinctly articulated you might have counted them."

"I do not pretend to perform like Signora Genovesi," said Eleanor in a tone of pique; "but when Miss Marabout plays this concerto, you would allow that few can excel her; and she always executed this passage quite forte, it adds so much to the effect. Every person of taste who has heard me agreed in the same opinion."

Sir Philip uttered a loud "Pshaw!" of contempt, and shrugged his shoulders with a grimace that might have done for a Frenchman. "*Tuono!*" said he satirically; but Eleanor thundered on, and the piece became more intricate; while she continued to tear the strings and to run up the half notes with marvellous rapidity, but very little attention to time, till at length, having exhausted all the difficulties and "new effects" in the science of music, she safely arrived at her final crash.

A dead pause ensued, which seemed more obvious from its having been preceded by such a clamour, and the silence was never likely to be broken; Lady Fitz-Patrick waited anxiously for Sir Philip's opinion, and looked full of expectation, but, if there was a subject on earth in which he felt incapable of showing complaisance, it was music—he thought it too sacred and important a

business for the common courtesies of life, and therefore, muttering to himself some sentences of Italian, which were quite inaudible, he hastily took Eleanor's book from the desk of the piano-forte, and having slowly replaced his spectacles, he began carefully turning over the pages.

"I hope you are pleased on the whole, Sir Philip, with my daughter's performance," said Lady Fitz-Patrick, in an unwonted tone of diffidence, after she had vainly waited for the burst of applause that she had expected; "Eleanor has spared no pains to excel."

"Why!——a——she has certainly a brilliant touch; but there is a fatal want of accuracy about her playing *che danno!*" replied Sir Philip in a tone of sorrowful reflection. "I was glancing over this concerto at the moment you spoke, because I am pretty certain that the fourth bar of the third page was incorrect as to time; but I scarcely read music well enough to count it, so do me the favour, Eleanor, to try over this passage once more—I am sure it is half a note deficient in the way you play it."

"Excuse me!" said Eleanor, whose beautiful countenance was glowing with suppressed indignation, "I am like Paganini in one respect, never to be encored. Perhaps," added she sullenly, rising from her seat, "it is all wrong from beginning to end."

"If you had but learned abroad, Eleanor," added Sir Philip in a conciliatory tone, "you really have very good capabilities; and might have been a splendid player. One year of Bucher's tuition would do something for you still. It is only in Germany or Italy that musicians ever learn a good style. Any thing may do for English ears, though, after remaining long on the continent, we become sadly fastidious; and I often think that music

has caused me more torment than pleasure; it drives me so distracted to hear an indifferent performer."

"How unfortunate that I have laid such an infliction on your nerves!" replied Eleanor, angrily pushing aside her harp; "but rest assured that nothing shall ever induce me to do so again."

"About this passage where I wished to set you right," continued Sir Philip, unconscious of Eleanor's growing indignation, "I have looked it over, and find, as might be expected, that I was in the right."

Lady Fitz-Patrick saw a storm gathering on the brow of Eleanor, and fearful that it might burst forth to the occasioning of worse discord than any that Sir Philip had yet encountered, she hastily turned with an imploring look to Matilda. "My dear girl, you have played nothing yet; is there any music here that you could favour us with?"

"Mine is all much too difficult for Matilda!" interrupted Eleanor conceitedly. "She is still merely working in the tread-mill of scales and sonatas."

"And if Sir Philip finds any thing to criticise in your music, I may well despair," added her cousin, smiling, when she saw him look eagerly round. "Indeed, Sir, I am unfit to turn over the pages for Eleanor, and you would not be able to remain in the room above three minutes."

"Well, you can but try," replied Sir Philip; "I admire a little modest diffidence, and shall endeavour to make due allowances. Here is a pretty simple air by Rossini; suppose you give it us."

Eleanor generally required as much pressing before she would perform as if she were to have a benefit concert the following day, which she did not choose to anticipate; but Matilda never waited for a prelude of

entreaties when any one wished for music, and without indulging in the customary disparaging protestations of incapacity, and being out of practice, &c., she instantly sat down, though greatly intimidated by the look of criticising attention with which Sir Philip prepared to listen.

Eleanor hummed a tune, and strolled contemptuously towards the window, while Lady Fitz-Patrick stirred the fire, arranged her books, moved about the chairs, and did every thing in her power to show that she expected nothing; yet still Sir Philip listened on; he beat time, and Matilda uttered no remonstrance; he hummed a rather discordant accompaniment, and she did not look annoyed; he corrected a difficult passage, and she repeated it over again till he was satisfied; and when the whole piece was concluded, she turned round with heightened colour, and her usual frank, good-humoured smile, saying—

"I really did not feel all the beauties of this air before, but now it will give me new pleasure in practising; and perhaps when you do me the favour to hear it again, Sir Philip, I may be able to show that this lesson has not been entirely thrown away."

"You would never make good scholars, Sir Philip, for it is a bad plan to be so very discouraging," observed Lady Fitz-Patrick, glancing anxiously at Eleanor, who had sullenly seated herself in a distant window. "You make no allowance for anything short of perfection!"

"Why!" replied Sir Philip, "I scarcely look for that in this country—you might as well expect to hear a sparrow sing like a canary-bird. To do Matilda justice, she promises well, from not attempting too much. Possibly she might, with very great perseverance, become a tolerable player; but Eleanor has been wretchedly taught

—she actually has no more music in her than a velocipede, *ciò fa drizzare i cappelli.*"

"I think much of the modern music is utterly devoid of interest," said Lady Howard; "there is nothing that touches the feelings, or that can be remembered and dwelt upon afterwards with pleasure. As some learned scholar once said, it often sounds to my ears like 'nonsense verses,' being all in perfect time and tune, without any meaning or any soul in it; you carry away nothing when the tumult is over except a vague sensation of surprise, such as I felt lately when the Indian jugglers exhibited their quickness and dexterity in throwing and catching their balls."

"Perhaps, Sir Philip, if you heard Eleanor sing a duet with Matilda,"——————————— said Lady Fitz-Patrick anxiously.

"No, no!" interrupted he, putting his fingers to his ears, "I have suffered enough for to-day. That would be *esser fra Scilla e Cariddi.*"

Matilda laughed; but Eleanor angrily quitted the room, and did not return during the rest of the evening.

"How I do detest that old quiz!" she said the next time they were alone; "he becomes more odious every day. Now say not a word, if you please, Matilda, about moderation and forgiveness; I am determined to let Sir Philip see my abhorrence *coute qui coute*, and to show him up the very first opportunity, being quite of opinion with worthy old Dr Johnson, 'I like a good hater.'"

"What mark is so fair as the heart of a foe!"

CHAPTER XI.

"Since few can save or serve, but all may please,
O! let th' ungenerous spirit learn from hence
A small unkindness is a great offence;
———Large bounties to bestow we wish in vain,
But all may shun the guilt of giving pain."

"So our old friend Lady Amelia Douglas is in town!" exclaimed Sir Philip Barnard one morning, when paying a visit to Lady Howard. "She has set her heart upon my taking Matilda and Eleanor to the gay *déjeûné* she gives next week on the occasion of her son Sir Alfred attaining his majority. He is, I am happy to hear, a very promising young man."

"Of course," replied Lady Howard. "Did you ever know an eldest son, come of age, who did not promise to be the ornament of his generation? or a younger son enter any profession, who was not the most 'rising young man' in it?"

"But Sir Alfred was head boy at Eton, took a double first class at Oxford, and really is a distinguished scholar."

"Then he must be a DUNGEON of learning, for I never knew any young man in society so reserved," replied Lady Howard. "Some people have hinted indeed that he is a little of a saint, but I would on no accouut be rash in crediting such a rumour, as the world is so ill natured.

His mother has certainly been rather uneasy about it occasionally, however."

"Indeed!" cried Sir Philip. "How grieved I should be if our good friend Lady Amelia had any thing so truly distressing in her family; but we must hope the best, and at all events it cannot last after the young man mixes in the world. *E' una contafávola.*"

"He has a friend with him at college to whom the mischief has been greatly attributed," continued Lady Howard, "and I have no doubt Mr Leicester was the original cause."

"Very probably," replied Sir Philip, rising to take leave with an oracular shake of his head; "great care should be taken with whom young people are allowed to associate. *Dimmi chi pratichie ti dirò che sei.*"

"Yes, indeed," said Lady Howard bitterly; "there is nothing in the world I dislike more than people being better than their neighbours, and becoming outrageously good."

"That feeling is but too common towards us," cried Miss Neville, looking off from her book, and immediately assuming her favourite St Cecilia expression, with her eyes turned up, to indicate that she considered herself persecuted.

"You were the very last person on earth that I was thinking of," replied Lady Howard, dryly. "How often I forget, Barbara, that you are by way of being at all different from common. But, Sir Philip, about this *déjeûné* at Lady Amelia's, I hope you will not insist upon the removal of my embargo on Matilda, for it really is out of the question. I never shall allow her to be hacked about like Eleanor, who is already a perfect veteran in parties and flirtations, She visited my daughter this morning in a blaze of delight about the approaching

gayeties, but I put a decided negative upon Matilda's hopes. I am resolved she shall not be let out of her shell till she is perfectly fledged, or it will be impossible to get her in again. Girls should never be seen or heard of till they are quite grown up, and then the more eclat they have in society the better."

"Might not a slight rehearsal be desirable before she finally appears on the boards?" asked Sir Francis, slyly. "It would have softened a heart of stone this morning to see poor Matilda listening to Eleanor's rapturous description of joys in which she was never to share, and, far from the contrast exciting Eleanor's pity, she rose into greater sublimity of description the longer she spoke—Lady Amelia's beautiful villa—the military band—tents—refreshments—company; nothing was forgotten, and the whole would have been an invaluable paragraph in the Morning Post. Pray, relent, dear Maria, and let me announce the good news to your poor prisoner up stairs—she is probably at this moment seated on her straight-backed chair, with her maps on one side, her dictionary on the other, and her book in the middle, poring over the pages of some tremendous encyclopedia, but her whole heart and thoughts bent on the approaching festivities."

"How very absurd you are," said Lady Howard, peevishly; "but my mind is quite determined upon this point,—and here comes Olivia in very good time to confirm the sentence. I told Matilda, in case she felt anxious about this affair, that I was quite certain her aunt would highly disapprove of her going, and that settled it completely."

"Ha, ha, ha!—that is so like you, Maria," exclaimed Sir Francis, laughingly turning to Lady Olivia. "Whenever there is any intolerable penance to be inflicted on Matilda, that her mamma would avoid bearing the

entire odium of herself, she invariably quotes a supposed opinion of 'Aunt Olivia,' and the poor girl never remonstrates any farther. Your name is an infallible quietus, and I really believe if Matilda were assured that you disapprove of eating she would starve to death."

"Then pray be sparing in the use of my influence, for I should be sorry to exercise it too extensively," said Lady Olivia, smiling. "On this occasion Maria would not certainly have obtained my vote and interest against Matilda's enjoying her little excursion: I am no advocate for being exceedingly rigid with young people. It was well observed by an excellent bishop, that the way to make the minds of children go awry is to lace them too tight: it seems dangerous to lay any painful and unnecessary restraint on youthful recreations till a taste for better pleasures can be substituted."

"How true!" interrupted Sir Francis. "I shudder yet at remembering the time when 'Aunt Betty' tried to make a 'good boy' of me, and our Sundays were such penances, that I used continually to be asking the maids in confidence when it would be Monday."

"What a sad mistake so many good, well-meaning people fall into of starting needless scruples about trifles, for it really injures true religion, and withdraws our attention from what is essential," said Lady Olivia. "I remember hearing that your aunt never would even stir the fire, nor walk out, except to church, on a Sunday; and the impression of these peculiarities upon your mind seems not to be salutary, but rather to have raised a prejudice against much that is of real importance."

"She was an excellent good woman, though I could not endure her myself," continued Sir Francis. "Shall I ever get over my remembrance of all the listless ennui and creditable idleness in which our Sundays were passed

at Barnston Lodge—my dogs all chained—my companions forbid the house—my only walk in a measured pace to church and back again—scarcely a book allowed me to read—my dinner cold—and almost every subject I spoke upon discouraged, as inconsistent with the sanctity of the day—in every direction the most rigid privations awaited me; and one only indulgence I enjoyed, peculiar to Sunday—the privilege of invariably stealing off to bed an hour earlier than usual. If some employments or pleasures peculiar to that day had been substituted, I might have thought differently; or had discretion been allowed me to act for myself upon the principles that were taught, I should have felt real satisfaction in imposing on myself many restraints that were exacted from me by another, but it was only in obedience I was exercised, and not on my convictions of duty."

"It is unfortunate," said Lady Olivia, "that few parents see the difference between dragging their children along the right path of duty, and teaching them to walk in it of their own free choice. We can only direct them at the very outset, and by rendering it uninviting or repulsive, and carrying them on, reckless of inclination or taste, they become ready to leap over the hedge when opportunity offers, and to escape altogether from control."

"Ah! you remind me of old Colonel Armstrong's address when I joined our regiment," said Sir Francis, laughing. "'I am told you have been very rigidly brought up,' he said, 'and therefore you will of course become for some years the wildest young fellow under my command, for I invariably find that clergymen's sons, and those who are never allowed to be boys, or to act on their own responsibility, are the most unmanageable scapegraces on the face of the earth in after life, and

have all their wild oats still to sow.' It proved as he said; for if I had not fallen out of Scylla into Charybdis, by putting myself under Maria's yoke, instead of good Aunt Betty's, I should have been running as wild a career yet as Mazeppa on his untameable horse;—my monitor's eye having been withdrawn, and her continual prohibitions no longer sounding in my ears, I had been unused to look any farther, and to seek in my own mind for restraints and for convictions of personal duty. Aunt Betty acted like Sancho's physician at Barrataria, and every time she stretched out her rod to withdraw some indulgence, my appetite was whetted by the unexpected and apparently unaccountable privation. If Matilda is a worthy descendant of mine, she must be at this moment tearing her hair with vexation, and ready to burn her books, and to break her harp-strings to tatters."

"Not quite so violent, I hope," replied Lady Olivia; "but I really do believe, that to our young and lively friend, there could scarcely be a severer trial than the disappointment of to-day; and after the pressing invitation she has received, and the fanciful description that Eleanor has given of the splendours to come, our best chance of its being entirely disenchanted is to let Matilda go. I am convinced, Maria, that she has natural sensibility and religious principle sufficient to prevent her happiness being placed in mere amusement, and on this occasion you might safely let her partake of it along with Eleanor, knowing for certain that the Barmecide's feast, when it comes, can never equal the expectation of his hungry guests; and I fully agree with Sir Francis, that the consolation young people have, in resigning what they are taught to consider injurious, differs most widely from the irritation which it must cause them, to find it

snatched away by the apparent caprice of another. As I have already been supposed a party on this occasion, let me take advantage of the privilege implied, to use my vote and interest on the side of indulgence. I fully believe that with a girl like Matilda, experience will soon teach her indifference to such pleasures, and the most perfect willingness to relinquish them."

"But why should she ever learn any such lesson?" exclaimed Sir Francis. "I never wish Matilda to become like a nun without a veil, denying herself to all the joys of routs, balls, *conversazionès*, and tea-parties, —no, I never could consent to any such Barbara-ism, and let me hope, Olivia, you neither wish nor expect it of her."

"On the subject of mixing in society, and refraining from it, we find no arbitrary rule laid down in Scripture," replied Lady Olivia. "We read that John the Baptist lived in a desert, and that our divine Saviour associated with all men, while the world found fault with the actions of both. The same spirit of animadversion still watches and criticises the conduct of all Christians in the present day; but when we look to the plain rule of duty, it tells us not to set our affections on the earth, and therefore whatever seems likely to ensnare us into an immoderate love of pleasure and amusement, is dangerous, and may become sinful."

"Some persons may venture on what is hazardous to others, who are more easily engrossed by trifles," observed Lady Howard, "and it is impossible to judge of people by their outward conduct. I know many who keep aloof from society merely because they are indolent, and who think it meritorious to lay up a stock of apoplexy for future use, by sleeping away that time on a sofa which others are spending in active enjoyment; and, on the

other hand, I have often been astonished to discover deep sentiments of devotion in those from whose manner of life you could not easily have anticipated it."

"I believe that some are Christians in the eye of God who are not yet known to be so in the eyes of men; but a very useful test of our attachment to religion is, to examine in what our conduct and habits differ now, from what they would naturally have been if no revelation had existed at all," said Lady Olivia; "and unless every desire and every motive be purified, we can scarcely hope that our hearts are under the influence of that Spirit which is not of this world. If Matilda's principles be right, her actions will be right also, like a watch with good workmanship, which invisibly directs the handles without our requiring continually to rectify them. Matilda soon attains an age when she must inevitably judge and act entirely for herself, therefore it is the more desirable that she should begin now to emerge from that retirement in which she has lived so long, when it can be done, as in this case, without infringing on her more important engagements, or causing her to keep any unnatural hours."

"I am glad you are not one of those, Olivia, who desire that the moment people become better than their neighbours they should retire out of sight," said Sir Francis. "There is as much exclusiveness in the world of religion as in the world of fashion, and I sometimes doubt whether it proceeds from as different motives as we ordinary people are expected to believe, for you know nothing can be more lamentably common than the 'pride that apes humility,' and I have often formerly seen a great deal of it in the select group assembled at Barbara's. They confess their sins humbly before God, I have no doubt, but forget that, after rising from their

knees, humility has also to be practised and exhibited in their intercourse with men."

"There are very dangerous extremes, both in going out too much in the world, and in remaining too rigidly aloof from it," continued Lady Olivia, who always evaded any discussion of Miss Neville's friends. "I feel convinced that no one individual can lay down precise rules for another."

"No," said Lady Howard, "not more in social habits than in diet, for many people may eat with impunity what would kill me without their being injured, and all that I can say to those who ask a prescription is, that many things are known to be pernicious of which they must not partake, but that every one should learn by experience what is injurious to himself, and refrain from it, if he wishes to keep his body in health; and it is the same with mental enjoyments—we must study our own case, and adhere to whatever seems the best remedy against lethargic indolence on the one hand, or ill-directed activity on the other."

"And let us not trust too implicitly to our own judgment, seeing that no patient is ever thought fit to prescribe for himself, but examine diligently what is said by the Great Physician of souls," added Lady Olivia. "On all essential points the Scriptures lay down so direct a line of duty that it cannot be exceeded without an immediate consciousness of having transgressed its obvious limits; but on other points we are like prisoners on our parole of honour, and must judge for ourselves whether we overstep the bounds of our freedom or not; and this should be an additional motive to circumspection. With regard to mere amusement, I feel confident that no one whose affections have been placed on the world to come can long feel an engrossing pleasure in the glittering

scenes which entice and mislead those who know no better."

"I rise to agree with the last speaker," said Sir Francis, starting from his chair, "and as it appears that the question of Matilda's going to Lady Amelia's *déjeûné* has been carried nem. con., I move that the house do adjourn, being impatient to announce this good news to her myself. I am delighted with all you said on the subject, Olivia, for though I never yet saw the individual who could make me change my opinion on any occasion, yet I would rather hear it confirmed by you than by any one else in the world. My idea of a clever, sensible person is, that he shall have exactly my own ideas and views upon every subject, but that he shall be able to express and to maintain them better than I can, which has been precisely exemplified in your remarks to-day."

"Your criterion is nearly universal in the world," replied Lady Olivia; "and I hope we shall continue to agree very frequently, and to admire each other's good sense more and more every day."

"I cannot answer for that," returned Sir Francis. "This is the first time that your mind has acted like a mirror to reflect mine, and such a wonder is not likely to occur again. But I am really obliged to you for assisting to bring round Maria. She knows that in general I might as well whistle a jig to a mile-stone as try to make her yield to my wishes or opinions on any point relating to *our* children."

The brilliant look of surprise and pleasure with which Matilda received her father's unexpected news fully equalled his expectation, and he was delighted for some moments to watch her changing colour and sparkling eyes, while she eagerly inquired a thousand particulars of what her aunt had said, and how Lady Howard's con-

sent had at length been obtained to her attending the fête, and who was to chaperon her on the occasion.

"So you are really glad to go!" asked Sir Francis, looking affectionately at her animated and beautiful countenance: "I thought you would rather have preferred the literary retirement of your school-room! Well, I am pleased to find that there is a little girlish nonsense remaining yet, in spite of mamma and her whole troop of mademoiselles. Recollect, however, as Dr Johnson said, or at least ought to have said, all preconceived pleasures end in disappointment."

Much of Matilda's joy upon this occasion might have been justly attributed to the gratification of seeing Sir Francis take such an interest in her enjoyments, for it had frequently been a subject of deep mortification, since she had been old enough to observe, the slight and transitory notice he ever bestowed on her, and the careless indifference with which he received all her attentions. Matilda had long been accustomed to see so many successful rivals for his notice and his affections, among the inmates of the stable and of the kennel, that Eleanor had one day jocularly said, "she only wished to see Matilda treated like a dog;" but since our heroine was now so nearly emerging into life, and could no longer be considered a mere plaything, she felt herself in imminent danger of escaping his remembrance altogether; and the tears often started into her eyes when she thought that a whole day had passed without his having paid her more attention than merely a good-humoured nod over the margin of his newspaper, or eliciting a jest occasionally at the expense of Miss Parson, as he delighted to call her governess, or seemed pleased for a moment, at the ready laugh with which she greeted all his sallies of humour, and the ingenious tact with which she some-

times led the way to one of his favourite bon-mots or stories. Lady Howard had allowed Sir Francis to exert so little influence in the management of his daughter during childhood, that he seldom appeared to feel more interest in her than in any other well-dressed, quietly-disposed young lady who might happen to be hovering about the drawing-room. If he wished to present her with a dress, it was never exactly what Lady Howard would allow her to wear; if he bought her a book, some insurmountable obstacle was raised to Matilda's being permitted to read it; and if there was any trifling indulgence which she had obtained his permission to enjoy, he generally saw her in tears of disappointment afterwards, upon discovering that her papa's leave was far from being considered as warranting any expectation of success. Lady Howard had no particular intention to alienate the mind of Sir Francis from his daughter, but being devoid of sympathy, she could not enter into his feelings, and perceive the vexation she caused him, nor the inevitable consequence which ensued, of estranging his regard from Matilda, when he learned to consider her a person over whom he could exercise no control, and to whom he had not the power of showing any patronage or kindness.

The admiration which Eleanor Fitz-Patrick excited amongst all his friends at the club, had piqued Sir Francis Howard into an ambitious desire of seeing Matilda share the commendations to which he felt conscious that she was equally entitled; and it was with new feelings of pride and pleasure that he observed her intelligent countenance sparkling in all the brilliancy of youth, health, and high expectation. "My dear girl! you look like a violet under a hedge, so fresh and so lovely! I am resolved to order a dress at Madame Devi's similar to

that of your cousin, for the fête, that you may eclipse every competitor at once, and that Eleanor may hide her diminished head for ever," cried he, in a tone of good-humoured raillery. "I shall go to the party myself, and introduce you as a daughter, whom I am not ashamed to show. 'This is my eldest daughter, Sir, her mother's only care,'" said he, humming a song as he left the room.

But Sir Francis did not long persevere in his project of escorting Matilda to the villa of Lady Amelia Douglas, for Lady Howard produced a fit of angry chagrin at the very outset, by putting an outrageous negative upon his whole scheme of presenting his daughter with an elegant new dress for the occasion; and protested, that as she had most unwillingly consented to this premature appearance in public, she was at least resolved that *her* daughter should be as nearly as possible incognita, and excite no observation that could be avoided. In a dress, therefore, so extremely unadorned that it appeared almost like an affectation of simplicity, Matilda Howard made her first entré into the gay world with Sir Philip and Lady Barnard, who were also accompanied by her splendidly-attired cousin. Eleanor's elaborate toilette had certainly contributed to embellish the transcendant brilliancy of her appearance, though it also gave her the look of being several years older than Matilda; and this effect was produced still more by an air of perfect confidence and self-possession, when she presented herself in the saloon at Douglas Priory, contrasted with the retiring timidity of her cousin, who felt completely abashed on entering a scene of so much novelty, and plunging at once into a crowd of strangers, not a single individual of whom she had ever known before.

It has been truly remarked, that the feelings of a gene-

ral, commanding a victorious army, of an orator ruling in a senate, or of a young lady shining in a ball-room, are equally proud and elated for the moment. Certainly in the case of Eleanor Fitz-Patrick, no conqueror ever took possession of a city with more confidence of victory, than she felt in entering the scene of her anticipated conquests at Douglas Priory.

Matilda wished, with juvenile eagerness, to see every thing—the splendid exotics, the gallery of paintings, the beautiful china, and the brilliant dresses of the assembled guests; but Eleanor only cared to be seen. Wherever they wandered, Matilda was amused and delighted, but Eleanor invariably thought they might be placed to more advantage elsewhere, and insisted on moving on. Matilda gazed around with untiring admiration and wonder at all she saw; but Eleanor thought only of the wonder and admiration she excited herself. Every eye seemed, in her estimation, to pay homage due to her surpassing loveliness, and every step that passed appeared to linger while she remained in view, as if it were impossible to lose sight of such charms for a moment without regret. Eleanor scarcely attempted to conceal her gratified vanity; and the exultation which she felt in perceiving what a sensation her appearance had excited, was considerably enhanced by the presence of Matilda, towards whom she had frequently experienced a feeling of jealous rivalship, which all the unaffected diffidence and simplicity of her cousin had never been able entirely to disarm; and she now perceived, with irritation and impatience, that Matilda felt so completely preoccupied with examining Lady Amelia's beautiful aviary, that she was insensible to the notice bestowed upon Eleanor. To imagine that any share of the admiration so lavishly whispered around could be intended for Matilda, never

crossed Eleanor's thoughts for an instant; but whatever might be said, she was ready in her own mind to cry, "that was levelled at me;" and she at length determined to make her cousin a partner in her meditations.

"How these people do stare!" she exclaimed, taking Matilda by the arm, and glancing conceitedly round; "they have certainly found something better worth looking at than the African partridges and Java sparrows which you appear to be so captivated with."

"So I perceive," replied Matilda, turning in the direction to which Eleanor called her notice. "If you feel annoyed we can move to the green-house. It is curious that no one ever feels abashed at being observed through a pair of spectacles, but when it is an eye-glass, or rather a whole battery of them, the case is certainly very different."

"My dear friend, you have nothing to complain of," said Eleanor, laughing, in a jocular tone; "only stay with me, and I shall answer for nobody looking your way. I must bear my fate with resignation, and, like the eels that were skinned, I shall probably get used to it at last."

"Let me lend you my chantilly veil," replied Matilda archly, "and by wearing it doubled during pleasure, you may be certain that the Venus de Medici herself might pass through the crowd unnoticed—do try."

"Thank you—how very considerate!" said Eleanor. "Matilda, you might certainly venture to shew your face if mine were under such an eclipse; but I fear you must wait till then."

"I shall consult my friends about that," answered Matilda in a lively tone; "perhaps there may be room enough in the world for both 'thee and me.' But seri-

ously, Eleanor, you have taken out a special licence for your tongue of late to say the most conceited things I ever heard. I begin to apprehend you may at last be like poor old Lord Danvers, who fancied he was so transcendently handsome that he must keep out of sight, and actually shut himself up in the house, with a covered walk in his garden to exercise in, that he might not turn everybody's head."

"No, no!" said Eleanor laughing. "I really do sometimes feel ugly, Matilda—after getting up early in the morning for a journey—or after sitting up all night at a ball—or riding out in a cold frosty day without my veil; I have been quite out of countenance when I saw myself, and it was the most strange uncomfortable sensation in the world. How I do pity ugly people! But here we are in the green-house, and now for your inaugural lecture on botany. What is the Latin designation of nine syllables at least, for this little plant next the door?"

"It is nothing more rare than tobacco, which is unlucky for me, as I lose the opportunity of being grand and pedantic with a long name," replied Matilda. "This is the largest plant of the kind I ever observed."

"Lady Amelia Douglas always grows her own cigars," said a gentleman, turning with an expression of humourous gravity to Eleanor.

"Mr Grant!!" she exclaimed, giving a sudden start of surprise and pleasure. "You always appear when one least expects, and I had understood for certain that you were now smoking cigars at Grand Cairo."

"So I was, and have this instant returned; indeed my appearance here is quite as much an agreeable surprise to Lady Amelia as to you, but I heard by the merest accident of her fête, and determined at once to

afford my respected relative all the support and patronage she merits. What a splendid conservatory this is, containing all that is most to be admired in the world!" continued Mr Grant, with a sly glance at Eleanor. "One might live a hundred years, like an aloe, and see nothing so beautiful again."

"Yes," replied Eleanor, "there are some remarkably fine Coxcombs flourishing near me."

"I suppose they have nothing better to do; and really the atmosphere is so excessively heated here, that I shall very soon begin to grow myself," answered Mr Grant; "we have nothing half so oppressive in Egypt."

"Ah! do tell me all about Egypt," exclaimed Eleanor eagerly.

"A most comprehensive question indeed," said Mr Grant, assuming a look of grave reflection. "Shall I begin with the language, antiquities, dress, habits, and manners of the people, or with a dissertation on their religion and government?"

"Spare me all these till I see you in the press and speedily to be published; for, of course, the importunity of friends will soon produce the usual effect, and bring out your 'Personal Narrative,' or your 'Rough Notes,' in three volumes octavo. I shall read them then," answered Eleanor; "but I really have a great curiosity at present to hear something extraordinary. How it would enliven society if now and then every person were called on to come forward and describe the most wonderful thing he has ever seen—the most incredible fact that he is willing to stake his veracity upon: I do so greatly enjoy a little touch of the marvellous, which reminds me that I am dying to hear about the magicians in Egypt, of whom such wonders are related by modern tourists. Is it actually true that they can produce in an

instant the representation of any person you choose to name, and exhibit what they are about at the moment?"

"If that had been the case, I should certainly have had the pleasure of seeing you at Grand Cairo often," replied Mr Grant; "that would have been quite a sufficient inducement to make me study the black art, which is really practised there as a profession, and taught as a science."

"How very useful!" exclaimed Eleanor. "I wish you had learned enough to produce before me at this moment Sir Alfred Douglas, the hero of the day, for I am watching to gain the most distant glimpse of his shoe-tie, but he really seems to have adopted invisibility this morning."

"Do you know him by sight;" asked Mr Grant, "or do you expect to recognise him by inspiration?"

"I have it upon the most unquestionable authority, from his mother, that he is, without partiality, the handsomest man of the age; so of course we could not fail to distinguish him at once," replied Eleanor. "Lady Amelia seemed to say, that even his very shadow has something superhuman about it!"

"There he is then, I protest! within a yard or two," said Mr Grant.

"Where, where!" exclaimed Eleanor eagerly.

"Don't you see that Adonis in a green coat standing near the Cape heath?" said Mr Grant; "he precisely realizes my idea of a 'mamma's prodigy.'"

"What! that tall overgrown youth with his hair like a door mat!—Pshaw! Mr Grant, you always like to tease me; I was in hopes you would have learned better manners abroad; Sir Alfred Douglas is the very model of perfection, or I shall never believe common report again."

Matilda being completely *hors du combat* in conversation, as Eleanor never introduced her to any one, felt more at leisure than her cousin to notice all that was passing; and for some time she had observed two gentlemen in deep conversation on a neighbouring bench, one of whom was seated with his back to her; but at the mention of Sir Alfred Douglas, he suddenly turned round with his brows knit into a look of scornful attention, while he listened to the lively nonsense of Eleanor's remarks. There was something so very dignified and impressive in his features and expression, that he at once attracted the whole observation of Matilda Howard, who had a peculiar talent for discriminating character, and was always delighted when any uncommon trait of manner or appearance promised to exercise her penetration, and to call for a more than usual exertion of her powers. Sir Alfred Douglas, for so she at once guessed him to be, looked considerably older than she had anticipated. The manly contour of his figure, and the air of deep reflection that might be traced in his handsome countenance, would have led her to conclude that he must have long mingled in society, which he seemed so calculated to adorn. His clear black eyes were overshadowed by thick clusters of raven hair, and his high majestic forehead wore an expression of deep thought, which suited well with the grave and almost haughty aspect of his countenance. His whole manner and appearance were noble and commanding, free from the petty littleness and vanity of affectation, but apparently conscious that he wanted no adventitious lustre to add to the native dignity and grace of his appearance. It was evident that his conversation was of engrossing interest to the gentleman seated beside him, whose plain and diminutive figure might have made Matilda ready

to fancy that he had been purposely chosen as a foil to the striking and majestic form which rivetted her attention, and which would have served as the model of an Apollo.

Meanwhile a number of gentlemen had grouped themselves round their party, and Eleanor seeming utterly to forget Matilda's presence, no longer paid her cousin the most transient attention, but continued to support a lively dialogue with the surrounding beaux, which soon took an exceedingly satirical turn. Not a curl or flounce in the room escaped her lash; and when Matilda remembered how very unobservant Eleanor had appeared amidst the beautiful scenes of nature which they had been so recently viewing, she could not but contrast it with the acuteness of her perceptions now, when the minutest trifles were remarked with a microscopic glance; and our heroine wondered that the one should excite so much more interest than the other.

"The lady in black velvet has certainly been dressed by an undertaker. Her bonnet has so many plumes, it will soon take flight altogether," said Eleanor, glancing towards a respectable-looking chaperon who stood near. "Poor little Charlotte Clifford, with her scarlet dress and enormous white feathers, reminds me so vividly of a shuttlecock, that it is fortunate for her we are not armed with battledores. How Miss Montague is loaded with millinery to-day! her bonnet is like the epergne for a dinner-table, it supports such a pyramid of flowers—a perfect garden of roses! Do, somebody pluck me a bouquet out of it, which would never be missed."

"Your tongue might almost be sharp enough to cut it," whispered Matilda, gently. "Dear Eleanor, they will certainly overhear you, so pray be cautious."

"If it would but teach them better taste another time, I have no objection. People who cannot dress themselves, ought to be voted incompetent to manage their own affairs, and put into the hands of a jury of milliners," replied Eleanor, turning hastily again to her circle of admirers. "Pray, observe that Arcadian-looking couple with countenances so prodigiously sentimental, and the girl with a black and gold dress, like a chimney-sweeper's on May-day. Her companion has evidently gone mad in white satin, she is such a grotesque-looking figure, and her long white veil, flowing all on one side, is like a cascade. I wish Lady Amelia had stationed me at the door, with full powers to turn back such of her guests as were unfit to be seen, and I should soon have thinned her party down to a more moderate size, by rejecting all candidates for admission who were too fine, or too shabby, or too tall, or too short, or too fat, or who had red hair, or red hands, or red eyes, or any thing in their appearance that it bores one to see. I was born with an antipathy to ugly people, and should really like to blackball them out of society."

"What would you appoint as the regulation standard of beauty?" asked Captain Foley of the Lancers, "because if nothing be admissible that comes short of your own perfection, the party would be very limited indeed."

"I shall certainly keep a place for you, to reward such discrimination," replied Eleanor; "but there are really some oddities here, on whom it would be worth while to settle an annuity, as long as they will keep out of sight. Poor old Sir Philip, for instance—the late Sir Philip, as I always call him, for he must have been dead, and buried, and dug up again. Do you see him now, tripping past with an agonizingly tight shoe drawn over his gouty foot, as active as a parched pea, and making

such delightfully antiquated bows to Charlotte Clifford, whom he is by way of admiring! But let me show how he reads his newspaper at breakfast, eating all the time, and trying to do without spectacles."

"Lady Barnard is opposite," whispered Matilda, hastily.

"Yes! but so deaf she cannot hear a word. How I hate all your caution and circumspection, Matilda. Do you not know that the fairy who presided at my birth forgot to gift me with any of these shabby little virtues?"

"Still, I am almost sorry to acknowledge your mimicry is so excellent that no one could mistake whom you meant to represent. Be prudent, Eleanor, for once, though it is beneath you in general. I see Lady Barnard pointing us out at this moment to Sir Philip. Pray turn the subject to any thing else. Look what a beautiful cactus is growing near us!"

"The most valuable plants seem always the ugliest, and it is really no better than a collection of cucumbers awkwardly stuck together with pins. I never saw any thing less to be admired. But *à propos* of awkwardness, who can that strange-looking, little man be, standing near us? what long helpless arms, and still more helpless hands! his dancing master should be put in the pillory, if he ever had one; and as for his hair, I wish we had it to stuff our dining-room sofa."

"I think he is speaking to Sir Alfred Douglas," interrupted Matilda, anxious to divert the current of her cousin's animadversions; "at least the gentleman looks as papa described him to us, 'dismal and gentlemanlike.'"

"So he is," exclaimed Eleanor, eagerly, "the most aristocratic looking person, without exception, that I

ever saw! he appears quite like a hero of romance, and really the pair together remind one of Beauty and the Beast? How very conceited it is to select such a friend, that every body may make the remark, which of course they must. I wish you were a better foil for me, Matilda."

"Thank you! that is quite a concession," replied her cousin smiling; "you are getting too complimentary, Eleanor."

"Every one who comes near you must be a foil inevitably," whispered Captain Foley of the Lancers, in an under tone, not meant for Matilda's ear; "but with respect to Sir Alfred, I really do not think he is so very a —— a ——."

"Superior!" added Eleanor, with sly emphasis; "but I was comparing him to no one except his red-haired friend, who must be, I think, one of the red Indians newly caught, and not much accustomed to clothes, he wears them so awkwardly—perhaps he is 'The last of the Mohicans.' Can any body tell me who that is, and he shall be handsomely rewarded?"

Matilda tried eagerly to stop the current of Eleanor's remarks, by pointing out that the victim of her criticisms was actually within hearing, and colouring with embarrassment, but she felt so intoxicated by the animated laughter of all the gentlemen, and more particularly by the grave and observant attention of the handsome stranger, that these remonstrances only added zest to all she said. Meantime, the object of her ridicule, in making an effort to escape beyond reach of observation, started up, but on attempting hastily to glide past the tittering group, he struck his arm against a splendid scarlet heath, which was instantly precipitated to the ground, and its brilliant blossoms scattered in every direction. Matilda

instinctively started forward with a vain attempt to save it, and eagerly assisted the unfortunate author of this unforeseen calamity to raise the prostrate plant, and to gather the broken fragments of the flower-pot. At this moment Lady Amelia Douglas advanced with smiling cordiality to where Lady Barnard remained in silent weariness, gazing at a scene which it was impossible for her to enjoy, and longing to retire when the whole gay pageant should be ended, and when she might again have Matilda's consoling attentions, which even now she was half angry to find remitted.

"Where are my two young beauties?" exclaimed Lady Amelia. "I long to introduce Sir Alfred to them both. But what is the matter here? you have met with a catastrophe, Miss Howard."

"It was certainly very unfortunate, but the stem is not injured, I believe," replied Matilda, anxiously examining the plant. "I am sorry to say that there are some sad fractures and contusions among the branches, which will make amputation necessary you see upon this side."

"Allow me to perform the operation, then," said Sir Alfred Douglas, approaching with a peculiar degree of grace and animation. "Perhaps Miss Howard will do my friend Leicester the honour to wear this trophy of his achievement."

As Sir Alfred Douglas presented Matilda with a brilliant cluster of scarlet blossoms, a smile glittered for the moment in his dark eye, and gleamed like sunshine over his handsome countenance, but he instantly relapsed into the grave and almost stern expression which his features usually wore. A lovely blush glowed upon the young and beautiful face of our heroine, as she looked up with sudden surprise at this unexpected action of Sir Alfred's,

and as she accepted the offered flower with modest grace, the long silken fringes which shadowed her brilliant eyes could not entirely conceal the gratification which she felt, though a sensation of embarrassment at the moment deprived her of utterance, and left all she felt to be read in her countenance.

"Do let me have a cutting from that exquisite heath also!" exclaimed Eleanor, starting forward. "I doat upon flowers, so pray give me this beautiful branch to enliven my bouquet."

Sir Alfred Douglas did not appear conscious that these words were addressed to himself, but silently transferring his pruning-knife to Mr Grant, who eagerly seized it, he strolled off in another direction, without casting a glance towards Eleanor's supplicating attitude, whose whole expression instantly changed to a look of anger and mortification, when her eye followed his retreating figure till he disappeared into a distant grove of trees.

"Might I be permitted to present Miss Fitz-Patrick with this little sprig?" said Mr Leicester, in the softest tones of a peculiarly pleasing voice. "I think that in a certain fairy tale with which we seem all familiar, it would have been my privilege to present the beautiful heroine with a flower, and to have been immediately afterwards transformed into a perfect Adonis."

Eleanor was covered with confusion to find that she had been overheard, and felt for the first time in her life at a loss for an answer.

"That transformation," she stammered out at last, "was, I have no doubt, the mere effect of an agreeable manner, as one would never think of criticising those they like."

"You are not perhaps aware, that in the Mediterranean fleet a medal is awarded every year to the ugliest

person there, Miss Fitz-Patrick, and the competition for that prize is as keen as for any other distinction," continued Mr Leicester, in a tone of good-humoured raillery, "I had very nearly become a candidate myself, when Sir Alfred and I were last in that direction, and perhaps if you will warrant complete success I may venture it yet."

"No! no!" replied Eleanor, trying to laugh off the awkwardness of her situation. "I rather begin to suspect you are like Wilkes, who boasted that a handsome man never had above ten minutes the start of him in any person's estimation; so let this beautiful sprig of heath serve as an olive branch between us, and pray forget all that you ought not to have heard today."

The sound of a gong having summoned all the party to a *déjeûné* in the tents, Mr Leicester offered his arm to Matilda, who found herself seated, some minutes afterwards, between him and Sir Alfred Douglas. The conversation which ensued was animated and interesting to such a degree, that time flew rapidly past, unnoticed by any one of the trio, till at length Eleanor hastily summoned Matilda to follow, as Lady Barnard's carriage was waiting, and their chaperon herself was in agonies of weariness, impatient to get home.

"What a tiresome day we have had!" exclaimed Eleanor, throwing herself peevishly back in the carriage. "I always hate morning parties, they are so very long and tedious!"

"Do you think so!" exclaimed her astonished auditor. "I never enjoyed any thing so much in my life!—the music, the plants, and the people, were all delightful."

"That is because you know nothing better," replied Eleanor sharply. "I observed you talking prodigiously

to Mr Leicester, and that sublime-looking personage Sir Alfred Douglas, who seems the most proud, arrogant, self-sufficient, and disagreeable of human beings. He looks as if his very shadow durst not follow him. I really pitied you for being placed near such a statue, though I guess your conversation was like the handle of a jug, all on one side."

"I found no cause to regret my seat. Both Sir Alfred and his friend seem to be very agreeable; and though I took little part in the conversation myself, I have seldom heard one better supported."

"Matilda, all your geese are swans," interrupted Eleanor, angrily; "you praise everybody and everything, which is the most tiresome fault a person can have. I dare say you admire Sir Alfred's frown, and Mr Leicester's red hair."

"You know Queen Mary wore a red wig, and no one was more admired in her day," said Matilda, in a jocular tone.

"It does not signify what Queen Mary did, for people were no judges of beauty so long ago," replied Eleanor, conceitedly. "I have never seen a picture of her yet that I could wish to resemble. How astonished Captain Foley was, to hear that I had never sat to Colvin Smith yet! but I really must speak to mamma about it to-morrow."

"Well! I would rather have people surprised that my picture was not taken, than wondering why it was, which might probably be the case, if I did sit."

"Very possibly!" replied Eleanor, laughing. "You know, Matilda, that young ladies are divided into only two classes in the whole world—those who are admired, and those who are not admired; so let us each find out for ourselves which we belong to."

"Are we the best judges?" asked Matilda; "or shall we summon a jury of our equals?"

"That could not be found, unless the Muses and the Graces were all revived."

CHAPTER XII.

The broad unfeeling mirth that folly wears,
Less pleases far than virtue's very tears.

"BARBARA," said Sir Francis one day, with assumed gravity, when he and Lady Howard were calling at Ashgrove—"Barbara, I do not think our friend Miss Rachel Stodart has published any thing new lately. I fear she is growing lazy at her pen."

"That would be a subject of sincere lamentation to many," replied Miss Neville, bridling; "and it would be well for some people if they studied her works more than they do."

"I am waiting for the complete edition, with her portrait as a frontispiece, which is sure to come out as soon as she wipes her pen for good. But, Barbara, I have been thinking whether Miss Rachel Stodart could possibly be prevailed on to show herself, for one night only, and by particular desire, at Maria's *conversazioné* next Tuesday. We are sadly in want of a new lion. Lady Jennings' two novels are beginning to be forgotten, and nobody will read Mrs Dawson's poetry any longer; but I could answer for your friend having a run for the evening, with all the help towards celebrity that we could give her!"

"Miss Rachel Stodart only goes into society where she is sure of being appreciated," answered Miss Neville, angrily.

"Well, could any thing shew a higher estimate of her merits than my proposal?" continued Sir Francis, with a look of perfect naiveté. "Sir Colin Fletcher, I could depend upon for shewing about Miss Rachel the whole evening. By the way, Maria, his admiration of notoriety increases every hour. I have long told you, that the 'History of Sir Colin Fletcher's Arm' would be a most diverting narrative, and I really mean to write and publish it myself. Whatever lady in company is most conspicuous for anything, is sure to engross his whole attention. Yesterday I found him escorting the good Lady Ashton round all our charitable institutions; before dinner he made a sudden rush to hand Madame Cantadini, the opera singer, down stairs; during the evening I saw him in profound discourse with Lady Jennings; and my last glimpse of our friend was, handing Mrs Sturton to her carriage, whom not a single lady in the room would speak to. The poor arm goes through great vicissitudes; but whenever I see any person leaning on it, I know she must be worth looking at, as being the best or the worst character in company; and in one of these capacities, Barbara, we could palm off your friend upon him for an hour or two, if she will only honour Maria on Tuesday night, and give us her countenance."

"As Miss Rachel Stodart's books have never been admitted into my house, it is scarcely necessary to remark that I am by no means desirous to see herself," interrupted Lady Howard, angrily. "You are aware, Sir Francis, that I consider it my privilege to invite my own company."

"And Miss Rachel Stodart has always enjoyed the power to choose hers also," added Miss Barbara, colouring with irritation.

Sir Francis shrunk into the farthest corner of his arm-

chair, and put up his two hands as a screen, with the half-frightened look of a mischievous school-boy, who expects a shower of snow-balls, in return for a volley from himself; and he stole a woful glance at Lady Olivia for sympathy, who intended to inflict a reproachful look, but it broke off into an irresistible smile, when she saw the irritated aspect of her two sisters-in-law, who eyed each other with mutual indignation.

"Does Miss Stodart read much?" continued Sir Francis, with reviving audacity, "or does she trust entirely to the fertility of her own mind?"

Miss Neville was too angry to reply immediately, and Lady Olivia hastily anticipated the storm that seemed ready to explode, by changing the subject of discussion.

"Pray, Sir Francis," said she hurriedly, "did you call at Rankin's, as I requested, to inquire about the patent lamps for my dining-room?"

"Have you not enough of new lights in the house already?" answered Sir Francis, dryly; "I am sure some of them are very easily set fire to, and burn fiercely enough for the time! So you think, Barbara, there is no chance of Miss Stodart shining as a star in our constellation next Tuesday?"

"Sir Francis! it is full time for us to be going," cried Lady Howard angrily, rising. "You really seem to have a slight touch of delirium this morning."

"I drove Maria here in my curricle, but you see she means to take the reins in going back," said Sir Francis, shaking hands with Lady Olivia, as he left the room. "We shall have a stormy drive homewards! Good bye, Barbara; the next time you see Frank Harvey, give him my best regards; he was one of the pleasantest fellows on earth; and if he wants 'a mount' any day, he has

only to ask me, which is more than I would say to most men. It is too bad of you to make such a monopoly of my old friend as you do; but he was always quite a lady's man, and I only hope you mean to take him altogether. I can scarcely fancy Frank, with that grave face he has assumed lately, calling himself 'the happiest of men.'"

Lady Amelia Douglas became so charmed with the brilliant éclat of her first party, that she announced an intention to continue them in succession during summer; and as they were to take place every Saturday afternoon, Matilda obtained permission to accompany Eleanor on several occasions, till at length the two young and beautiful cousins were objects of universal admiration, and of continual comparison.

Eleanor never appeared at the Priory for an hour without being instantly beset by crowds of eager candidates for her notice, and she generally contrived to find amusement and attention for them all. Her spirits were indeed almost overpoweringly animated; but she was listened to with delighted interest, and with evident admiration by all who looked upon a countenance so lighted up with youth and conscious beauty. No one could rival Eleanor in the humourous tone with which she described every event of the day; she repeated with almost dramatic effect any amusing scenes she witnessed; with ready tact she detected all the weak points in every character, and could draw forth an unconscious display of their peculiarities with irresistible humour; and whatever might be the news or gossip in circulation at the time, she threw in so many droll observations upon it, and related what she heard with so many apparently accidental touches of humour, and with a naiveté so well-assumed, that even the serious and grave Mr Leicester

often laughed where he could not perfectly approve. Life itself seemed in her estimation a merry farce, where she might laugh off every vexation; and as for weeping, she often said that people called this earth a vale of tears, but, for her own part, she could say like Voltaire, "*apres tout c'est un monde passable.*" She had been very agreeably surprised in the pleasures of existence, and thought it was people's own fault who could not enjoy themselves in it. "One must get old to be sure," added she, "but I shall learn to knit and play at whist before then, and if the case be very desperate, I may perhaps take snuff, and go a dowagering airing daily within sight of the Portobello turnpike."

Those who felt wearied by the glare of a character like that of Eleanor, which seemed "by no shadow made tender," gladly found a quiet refuge with Matilda Howard, whose modest diffidence of manner could not entirely conceal the mild lustre of a cultivated mind, and whose cheerfulness appeared, like sunshine, to emanate from inexhaustible though invisible resources. The sensibility of her expression at once bespoke confidence from all who approached her, and the delicacy of tact which might be observed in all she said, evinced a continual deference to the feelings of every one with whom she associated. Few people thought Matilda so brilliantly lively or talented on first acquaintance as they afterwards discovered her to be, and the longer she was known the more her superior qualities were discerned and appreciated. But Eleanor's mind was like a shop in Cranbourn Alley, with all that she possessed ostentatiously displayed in the window, and it often required her utmost address to conceal the scantiness of her stores. If the family circles of both had been a criterion by which they were to be appreciated, no doubt would have remained in

the mind of a single individual that Matilda had far more companionable and entertaining qualities; her whole powers of conversation were put forth at home, and on many occasions the bright sallies of Eleanor's vivacity were borrowed from lively perceptions and gay remarks with which Miss Howard had enlivened Lady Barnard, or amused her father the evening before. Matilda's quick discrimination of character and motives had been denied to her more volatile cousin, and she was often startled at the hardihood with which Eleanor adopted as her own observations, and promulgated for the amusement of others, little traits and incidents which she had merely pointed out in the confidence of their private intercourse. No instance of what was amiable in others escaped the ready eye of Matilda, who had the same pleasure in contemplating a well-regulated character as connoisseurs in painting have in viewing the beauties of a finely-touched picture; but, on the contrary, Eleanor only cared to watch for defects, and listened with a look of wearied incredulity when Matilda traced to self-denial or generosity some of those trifling actions which are all that the ordinary intercourse of society permits us to observe, by which may be appreciated the worth or goodness of those with whom we associate. In defending an absent friend—in disproving an ill-natured story—in attending to a neglected acquaintance—in turning off a laugh from the blunders of another—even in relinquishing a seat, or in returning a salutation, Matilda had been taught to believe she might discover the germ of a disposition which, if circumstances required it, could carry that moral courage to the highest efforts; and which, on such trifling occasions, as well as in the greatest emergency, appears absolutely essential to exemplify the Christian character.

Lady Fitz-Patrick considered herself the most fortunate

of mothers. She complained on some occasions that Eleanor was dreadfully wilful about dressing according to her own very peculiar taste, and accepting or refusing parties at the instigation of every unaccountable whim; and once or twice, in a fit of transient irritation, she wished her daughter was more like "that good excellent creature Matilda Howard;" but it was with no permanent consciousness of any want in Eleanor, as few circumstances had yet occurred to try her heart and understanding, or to betray that the golden fruit which shone in colouring so attractive concealed nothing better than ashes. It is said that women have a fibre more in their hearts than men, and a cell less in their brains; but the heart of Eleanor Fitz-Patrick was not so constituted, for though she professed great sensibility, and was always in a state of either ecstacy or torture, her feelings could only vibrate to one touch, and that was the unchangeable selfishness which prevailed alike in her head and heart, occupying and engrossing them both with unlimited sway. Lady Howard one day remarked, that if Eleanor had been like the epicure who first discovered the best cut in a shoulder of mutton, she would have concealed it, like him, till her death-bed; and that if she could cause the sun to shine only on herself, she would gladly consign every one else to darkness, that they might be solely occupied in contemplating her superior good fortune.

When Eleanor Fitz-Patrick wished particularly to fascinate any one of her numerous admirers, she frequently got up an imaginary quarrel with him, which she supported with persevering animation and pretended vindictiveness for a whole evening, and sometimes even renewed it with fresh vigour on several successive occasions, which was an easy way, in her experience, to sup-

ply any want of wit, wisdom, facts, or opinions, such as are usually supposed to be necessary ingredients in an entertaining conversation.

"Mr Grant," said she one evening at Lady Montague's quadrille party, "I never mean to speak to you again!"

"Indeed!" exclaimed he, putting on a suitable start of alarm. "Pray retract your sentence or I shall die."

"No! never while I live," replied Eleanor, ominously shaking her head, "or at least not for a week."

"Ah! a week is a lifetime indeed to be under your displeasure, and I shall pine away to a shadow before then," said Mr Grant, trying to look melancholy. "Surely, Miss Fitz-Patrick, no culprit in this country can be condemned to what is worse than death without being told his crime, and I demand in justice to hear your accusation."

"Why, it is almost incredible! but you actually rode past our carriage yesterday without bowing to me, or even glancing in our direction."

"But did I see you?"

"That is nothing to the purpose; a gentleman should have all his eyes about him continually, and observe the very shadow of one's shoe-tie; you will find that I never allow it to be 'cut and come again' with my friends."

"Is there no hope of pardon? perhaps I could prove an alibi. At what hour did the offence take place?"

"Precisely ten minntes past three, when we were stopping at Blackwood's."

"Then by the merest good fortune I happen to recollect, that exactly at the moment you mention I was eating a basin of soup at Barry's."

"Remember, Mr Grant, this is a court-martial, and you are upon your oath."

"True, but I am certain the clock struck three as I entered the hotel, and it invariably takes me twenty minutes to finish my soup, finding fault, scolding the waiter, and all other stoppages included."

"How frightful it is to see the want of veracity in this world, Mr Grant! I might have been doubtful as to your identity, since I only saw the crown of your hat, but I am never mistaken in a horse, and I am positive it was your bay hunter Scatterbrain. I remember you looked in passing as much as to say, 'this is too cold a morning for my horse and me to be standing and talking nonsense at a carriage window, so I shall turn another way and see nobody."

"There must be prodigious expression in the back of my hat, which seems to have been, by your confession, all that could be visible; or was it my horse which appeared to be thinking what never could have entered my own head?"

"You need not deny it, for I have an instinctive knowledge of people's thoughts, and the only possible excuse for you is, that we were in a new britschka, with the head up and my veil down; but still it was very atrocious, and not to be forgiven."

"Then I suppose you will positively refuse to dance the next quadrille with me?" said Mr Grant, offering his arm with the air of one who felt tolerably sure of being accepted. "Will you do me the honour?"

"Not for the world!" replied Eleanor, rising to accompany him; "at the same time you know I said nothing about never dancing with you again."

"Very true; but we are to go through the quadrille in solemn silence of course; yet I am not certain that either of us could do so, if our lives depended on it."

"Speak for yourself, Mr Grant; but as for me,

you will find that I have '*un grand talent pour le silence.*'"

"It is the only talent on earth that I do not give you credit for, and which I hope never to see you exercise; but there is one infallible receipt for making you talk whenever I please."

"Impossible! you might as well ask the sun to stand still, as attempt to get a syllable from me, when it is my whim for the moment to be silent. I am not like an echo, always ready with an answer, Mr Grant."

"Miss Fitz-Patrick, what a remarkably ill-constructed, awkward-looking animal your little grey Arabian is—his paces have so much of the riding-school air,—he looks, in fact, like one of the horses you see in toy-shops. What! no reply? if you do not take fire at this, I may really begin to despair. How unlucky that you did not secure the graceful brown poney Miss Howard rides."

"Now, Mr Grant, how can you speak such absolute nonsense! the two horses are no more to be compared than —— than their riders."

"You should have left that for me to say; but I admire a little modest diffidence beyond measure, so you were right to prompt me, in case the idea might possibly not have occurred in time. Comparisons are always so odious, that I could not have ventured to draw one at all between you and your beautiful cousin."

"No! nor between me and anybody else," said Eleanor, with a conceited laugh. "I would not resemble a single living being that I ever beheld in my life for the world."

"How very odd," replied Mr Grant, slyly, "knowing how much you are considered to resemble Miss Barbara Neville. I always fancied that you piqued yourself particularly on the likeness; at least so she always says."

"Mr Grant, if I recollect right, we are not on speaking terms already, or that observation would have been your *coup de grace.* Aunt Barbara is the very opposite of me in every respect, and that is my own best panegyric; we are antipodes in appearance, dress, manners, tastes, and opinions."

"Then I happen to know she particularly detests me, so what is the natural inference that I may be permitted to draw, Miss Fitz-Patrick?"

"To say the truth, that is the one only thing in which she and I fully agree," replied Eleanor, maliciously. "You know there are exceptions to every rule, Mr Grant; and I recollect spending the only pleasant hour we ever enjoyed together, during our joint lives, in abusing you, for the most conceited, ridiculous, odd, eccentric, care-for-nobody ——."

"Stop there! I plead guilty to the first four counts of the indictment if you please—but the last!!! only say it was Miss Neville's accusation that I may pardon her, but from Miss Fitz-Patrick it would be intolerable. If she chooses to say that I care for nobody else, it may be allowed to pass, but to care for nobody in her society is impossible!"

"Now, Mr Grant, let us begin to be silent," said Eleanor, colouring and taking her place in the quadrille.

"How I do mourn to hear the music of that beautiful opera distorted into a quadrille! I shall really dance to it with tears in my eyes."

"Can any music be too perfect for such dancing as it is intended to accompany?"

"Mr Grant! what has come over you to-night! am I dancing with the ghost of Sir Charles Grandison?"

"Happy man! after seven volumes of misery and suspense, he succeeded at last," said Mr Grant, laughing;

"but I could not survive beyond a third volume, so pray remember, Miss Fitz-Patrick, that as the poet says, 'Nature's mightiest effort is, to wait.'"

"Yes; and there is our *vis à vis* waiting for you at this moment," interrupted Eleanor, hastily. "How lucky that it is my good cousin Matilda, for any one else in the world would set about a report that poor Mr Grant's education had been so dreadfully neglected, he actually did not know the first (and only) set of quadrilles."

"Or rather let her say, that he forgot himself, and every thing else, in the society of Miss Fitz-Patrick."

Life had hitherto been a scene of cloudless joy to Eleanor; but who can exist many years on earth without experiencing that

> "The spider's most attenuated thread
> Is cord, is cable, to man's slender tie
> Of earthly bliss—it breaks at every breeze!"

A blow was impending over her head, so distressing and so unforeseen, that every remains of natural sensibility which had not been smothered by a vain and heartless education would have been called into affecting exercise, and might yet have produced a salutary influence over her mind, had she not already become an adept in postponing reflection, and in avoiding every painful emotion till a more convenient season, for she always maintained that when sorrow could be put to sleep it was madness to awaken it. During one of the gay parties *al fresco* at Douglas Priory, which were arranged more to suit an Italian climate than the capricious elements of the north, an unexpected torrent of rain fell with such sudden and impetuous violence, that before any one could reach the nearest shelter the whole party were completely drenched, and, amongst

numerous colds caught on the occasion, Lady Fitz-Patrick was seized with a violent and dangerous inflammation of the lungs. Powerful remedies were immediately resorted to, but her disease long defied the skill of several eminent physicians, and it was only after many weeks of severe suffering that her most alarming symptoms in some degree abated. Lady Fitz-Patrick had all her life wished to be considered by her friends as one whose health was in a state of interesting delicacy—she never could exactly name any complaint which affected her constitution, because the truth was that she scarcely knew what it was to be really ill, and no one imagined that in her clear black eyes, and light elastic form, there could lurk any cause for solicitude; yet whenever Lady Fitz-Patrick was at all out of humour, she left off a portion of her rouge, and complained of severe headache; when a fit of indolence overtook her, she breakfasted in bed; and if she wished to gain any point with Sir Richard, she usually adopted a pathetic tone of voice, and observed that, in her precarious state of health, no one could tell how soon it might be out of his power to grant her what she wished;—indeed, when any little vexation occurred to Lady Fitz-Patrick, she had a constant habit of exclaiming that she wished herself in another world, and would willingly die to be freed from all the troubles of life, but she attached no particular meaning or importance to the expression, except in as much as it seemed to give additional strength and pathos to the sentence; for death had been generally present to her thoughts merely as a painful termination of life—of all its occupations and enjoyments. If Sir Richard's dinner failed to please him, or if the hairdresser did not arrange her curls well, she fretted herself into a fever about her trials; and when Lady Olivia occasionally

suggested to her that few had so happy a lot, she seldom acknowledged the fact, but undervalued the annoyances of every one else, and exaggerated those she encountered herself, till she had completely justified herself in feeling the most miserable of human beings, whenever she was pleased to consider herself so.

There cannot be a more correct estimate of people's relative happiness than to ascertain what is looked upon as their principal misery, so many of us believe that our own particular vexation in life fully entitles us to consider existence a burden, and death a certain relief from some unutterable woe; for next to the pleasure of being envied, there is nothing more agreeable to nature than to be pitied, or, in short, to be an object of notice in any way. One lady is ready to die because her husband is not promoted; another, because she cannot rise to the circle of society she aims at; and a third, on account of her son refusing to marry the person she had chosen, or her daughter not being so brilliantly established as she expected; and if such a person be reminded of poor, suffering, bed-ridden fellow-creatures, who have been enduring poverty and privation for years, with pious submission and patience, she will say, assuming a look of sensibility, that mental sufferings are much more difficult to bear than those of the body, and that probably these unfortunate people having no powers of reflection, feel nothing but the actual pain they endure, to which the wonderful influence of habit has perhaps long since inured them. Such had been often Lady Fitz-Patrick's mode of reasoning; but when long and trying sickness came, with its dark train of suffering and depression, she found by bitter experience what it was to be in the iron grasp of a power which prostrated at once the energies both of her mind and body. Impatiently did she long

to regain that unbroken health which she had once been so ready to disown, and far from feeling desirous now to counterfeit languor or weakness, she was the first to flatter herself with having entirely recovered, and to propose that her medical attendants should be dismissed altogether, after which a considerable interval elapsed before she renewed any complaint of ill health, so that, to an unobservant eye, like Sir Richard's, she appeared unusually well, and, to his great surprise and satisfaction, she began from this time forward to profess the most robust health, and to be rather piqued and irritated if any inquiry more particular than a passing "How do you do" was made into her progress towards convalescence. "I think none but the royal family are entitled to issue continual bulletins of their health," said she one day in a tone of impatience. "Do forget that I have been ill, for it is a tiresome subject, and always makes me nervous. I nearly embraced Charlotte Clifford to-day in a transport of gratitude, because she was the first person for a month who forgot to put on a grave face, and to ask me if I had entirely recovered."

Sir Richard Fitz-Patrick was in the middle of a late breakfast one morning in Moray Place, when, to his great astonishment, Lady Olivia Neville entered the room, and silently drew in her chair beside him, with a tremulousness of look and manner which were quite at variance with the calmness and self-possession of her usual appearance. Some minutes elapsed before she could command her voice sufficiently to articulate, and Sir Richard gazed in speechless surprise at her varying colour and quivering lips, till at length she was enabled, in a low and almost inaudible voice, to explain, that on her arrival in town, a few minutes before, she had been unexpectedly met by Lady Fitz-Patrick's maid, who

wished it to be known that some of her mistress's very alarming symptoms had lately returned, and that if immediate remedies were not instantly adopted, a confirmed consumption might be the consequence.

"Impossible!!" exclaimed Sir Richard. "Sophia told me herself, this morning, that she had never felt so well in her life as of late, and I am sure you will allow that she is not the person to make light of a real illness, when she so long rejoiced in the credit of an imaginary one."

"You do not perceive that while her indispositions were trifling she wished to excite sympathy, but now that Sophia is probably alarmed in earnest, she would gladly convince herself and every one else that there is no cause for apprehension," said Lady Olivia, anxiously. "But believe me, dear Sir Richard, her case does require the most immediate care, and I only trust we have not become conscious of it too late."

"You are not usually such an alarmist, Olivia," replied Sir Richard, incredulously, while his knife and fork played an audible accompaniment to his words. "I would not believe an abigail upon her oath, if the subject were of more importance than the colour of a ribbon. Sophia's constitution is really admirable," continued he, carefully cutting an additional slice of ham, "but she was certainly disappointed at my not consenting to build a new close carriage this season, as well as the britschka, and I have observed her coughing occasionally since then; it will be very inconvenient, but I must certainly indulge her whim rather than be bored in this way. You know there is nothing in the world she likes better than flirting with an illness."

"I am unwilling to shock or distress you, Sir Richard, especially when so totally unprepared." said Lady Olivia, in a tone of profound emotion; "but Collins assures me

that her mistress had been spitting blood for some time past."

Sir Richard's knife and fork dropped from his hand; he looked at Lady Olivia in silent amazement, and the colour mounted to his forehead with agitation and surprise. A moment afterwards he rang the bell violently, and paced with rapid steps up and down the room.

"Send to Dr Mansfield instantly, and say I wish to see him without delay," said he to the butler, who entered in state with a relay of muffins; "and desire Mrs Collins to come here."

The butler stared, bowed and withdrew, but not without casting a lingering look behind, in order to catch, if possible, the cause of his master's unwonted neglect of breakfast and evident agitation, but not a sound reached his ready ear, for Sir Richard maintained a gloomy unbroken silence, and Lady Olivia respected his feelings too much to think of interrupting it.

Several of Lady Fitz-Patrick's family had formerly died of consumption, but confident hopes were entertained that she had long survived the age when it attacks the constitution, though no period of life can be considered secure when that insidious disease is inherent in the blood. The complaint which is called consumption in youth merely changes its name to "decline" in more advanced years, and it soon became painfully evident to every one that her life was in imminent danger. She alone closed her eyes to the real truth, and could scarcely be prevailed on to allow that her health required any unusual attendance, or that a physician of more than ordinary skill should be consulted. When Dr Mansfield was at last called in, he found reason to complain, as he had often done before, that his patients undoubtedly mistook him for an undertaker, as he was never summoned till

all hope was at an end. In the case of Lady Fitz-Patrick he appeared far from being sanguine, though still he did not desire her friends utterly to despair, provided she could herself be prevailed upon to pay necessary attention to his prescriptions, for he discovered at once that the difficulty would lie there, as she seemed determined to shut her own eyes against every conviction of danger, and she evidently thought that, as long as it could be concealed from others, she might persuade herself it had no actual existence.

"All I ask of you is, to make me well before Lady Montague's concert, next month, Doctor, for I must hear Eleanor perform her trio there, and nothing shall prevent me from going," said Lady Fitz-Patrick, anxiously.

"I fear you must relinquish all evening dissipation for this season, and confine yourself entirely to the house," replied Dr Mansfield, gravely. "Your ladyship's case requires very serious attention, and to avoid all society and excitement."

"Impossible, Doctor! I cannot live without them!" exclaimed Lady Fitz-Patrick, indignantly. "Do you think I could hybernate like an insect all winter in my own drawing-room, and be buried alive here before I am dead? it is the most barbarous idea that ever was proposed; and you surely remember that none but the greatest criminals are condemned to solitary confinement. I shall be like one of the prisoners in Plato's cavern, with my back to all the world, only watching the distant shadow of what is passing, and wearied to death."

"Your own family and a few intimate friends are, of course, excepted from my injunction," continued Dr Mansfield. "With a domestic circle such as yours I should imagine that nothing could be wanting to make home agreeable."

"Why really, Doctor, one would suppose you thought me as delicate as Brummell, who caught cold from having a damp stranger shown into his room. Sir Richard must be all day at the club, for I never could consent to detain him with his feet upon the fender, and a thermometer in his hand, counting the degrees of heat; and though Lady Olivia is more than kind, and tries to suit herself to me as much as possible, still I am ashamed to confess, there is no subject in the world upon which we feel an equal interest; and since I am conscious of this, though she does her best to conceal it, of course that rather spoils conversation between us. Her goodness, therefore, in coming to stay with me at present is not quite such an advantage as you might imagine, for I am still without any one in the house who is exactly fitted to be my constant companion, and I must positively be allowed to leave my door ajar for some of the world to steal in at occasionally, and beguile the weariness of staying at home."

"But," persisted the worthy and excellent Dr Mansfield, "I hear in every house the most enthusiastic description of your accomplished and beautiful daughter, whom I have not yet had the pleasure of seeing, and from all that is said I think we may safely trust to her numerous resources and lively spirits for bringing as much cheerfulness into society as would be consistent with the quietness and repose which are essential to your recovery."

During Dr Mansfield's daily repeated visits from this time, he invariably found Lady Fitz-Patrick attended by a young lady of surpassing loveliness, and of such gentle, attractive, and interesting manners, that he ceased to wonder at so much being said of Miss Fitz-Patrick's fascinations, and he took an early opportunity one day,

during her temporary absence from the room, to express in the warmest terms how fully she had realized his utmost expectations.

"That young lady is my niece," replied Lady Fitz-Patrick languidly. "Have you never seen Eleanor? She is very much engaged at present with the Miss Montagues, who are rehearsing for their concert, and as my daughter is to be one of the principal performers, she has very little time to spare for me. In fact, I only saw her yesterday for a single moment, and she has not looked in this morning yet. Matilda Howard is, as you say, an excellent girl, and comes here constantly; indeed I fancy she has no other engagement, and it makes a variety for her to sit an hour with me sometimes."

There was nothing in the world to which Lady Fitz-Patrick more resolutely shut her eyes than the superiority of Matilda's disposition to Eleanor's, for she had long since prophesied that Lady Howard, with her methods and systems, would transform our heroine into a mere piece of mechanism, or a clipped hedge-row, without one trace of nature remaining; and neither she nor Lady Howard herself would have been willing to imagine that a judicious cultivation of the heart and understanding by Miss Porson, or the enlightened and instructive conversation of Lady Olivia, had been the sole means, under Providence, of forming a character, the Christian consistency and feminine gentleness of which shone out on every occasion with the softest and most attractive lustre. No one could do otherwise than love Matilda, though few could appreciate the depth of feeling and of principle upon which the superstructure of all her outward conduct was built. In her modest character, the root was hidden of which the blossom and the fruit were so lovely, and many acknowledged their fra-

grance who knew not their origin, and would have been unwilling to recognise them as having been planted and watered by the unseen influence of that Spirit, without whom little else but the most noxious and poisonous weeds can be expected to flourish in the human heart, and with the blessed influences of which it shall "bring forth its fruit in its season, his leaf shall not wither, and whatsoever he doth shall prosper." No one ever had a heart more filled with humility and kind affectionate feelings than Miss Howard; and on every occasion where complaisance could be shown without any sacrifice to duty, she was willing to relinquish her favourite wishes, without so much as letting it be known that she had done so.

"Eleanor, my love," said Lady Fitz-Patrick, eagerly calling her daughter back one day as she was leaving the room, "this French novel has put me quite into a feverish state of interest. As it wants but a few pages to the end, and my sight is so affected by fever, using it longer is out of the question—pray read aloud the remainder."

"Excuse me, mamma! it is really impossible! I have never practised my part on the harp for that duet which Lady Howard wishes me to play with Matilda to-morrow, and I dare not delay doing it any longer."

"My dear, I must not suffer you to touch the harp at present; if it were a piano-forte I should not care, but there is no escape from the sound of a harp, and every chord will go through my brain like a knife."

"Really, mamma, with both drawing-room doors shut you could not be much disturbed," said Eleanor sullenly, "and unless I can appear to advantage at the concert I shall not go at all."

"Then take your own way, child, only you ought to be charged, as travellers are at a Spanish inn, 'for noise

made in the house—so much.' I wish you would have relieved my mind first about the catastrophe of this book."

"I wonder that no steam-engine has ever been invented yet for reading aloud to invalids," said Eleanor impatiently. "I finished the story last night, and could not bear to hear it again so soon. It is the most dismal tragedy imaginable. Louis kills himself in a fit of jealousy, and Laurette disappears mysteriously."

"Stop! what are you about, spoiling the whole interest at once," exclaimed Lady Fitz-Patrick impatiently. "You know, Eleanor, I cannot bear to anticipate, so let me rather try what my failing eyes can do, now that they have rested a few moments. But here comes that excellent creature, Matilda, who is always a kind and useful friend in every emergency. Pray read to me for half an hour, my dear girl, and it will be really doing an act of charity."

"With the greatest pleasure!" said Matilda brightening into an animated smile, and hastily throwing aside her bonnet. "I brought the Memoirs of Oberlin with me this morning, which you seemed to think might be interesting, from the sketch I gave of their contents yesterday, and perhaps you would like to hear some parts of this volume to-day."

"Indeed, Matilda, I have very little attention at command just now," said Lady Fitz-Patrick languidly. "My mind is so low and nervous, that I ought to prescribe something amusing, and if the truth must be told, this French book has so engrossed me that nothing else can be thought of till it be finished. If you will let me hear the end, I shall then allow you to read me asleep with the other."

Matilda hesitated for an instant, and a momentary

doubt arose in her mind what it would be right to say or do, but Lady Fitz-Patrick placed the novel in her hand with a gesture of impatience, and seeing that the conclusion was only a few chapters distant, she concealed her disappointment and prepared to begin.

"We shall certainly tell aunt Olivia upon you for an arrant novel reader after all!" exclaimed Eleanor, laughingly escaping from the room. "I always thought you were so at heart."

"Now proceed, Matilda," said Lady Fitz-Patrick with increasing impatience. "I left off at that sentence in the 403d page, where Edwin says to Laurette, 'he would sacrifice his life with pleasure at that moment, if it would save her the shedding of a single tear.'—Go on!"

Matilda continued reading, with unwearied assiduity, the apparently unaccountable sorrows of Edwin and Laurette, till death mercifully put a period to their woes, and brought her task at the same time to a conclusion, after which Lady Fitz-Patrick consented to undergo one or two pages of Oberlin's Memoirs, remarking in a not very encouraging tone, that "any thing was better than being left to her own thoughts."

Matilda's clear harmonious voice, and the simple unaffected interest with which she now began to read, irresistibly attracted her aunt's attention, who became insensibly affected and touched by the beautiful portrait of Christian heroism which was so touchingly developed in the volume before her, and she listened with a degree of increasing animation, which gratified and encouraged her niece, beyond the most sanguine hopes that she could have entertained of success, while time flew by on its swiftest pinions unnoticed by either of the party, till at length the door was hastily thrown open by Eleanor in full equipment for riding.

"Matilda!" exclaimed she eagerly, "here are our ponies at the door! Fly, and get ready to mount."

"Pray do not interrupt her, Eleanor, we are so comfortable now," said Lady Fitz-Patrick earnestly. "I have not felt so well entertained for ages, and really wish you would leave us to ourselves."

"I scarcely think of riding to-day," added Matilda, in a tone of indifference.

"What a strange whim!" exclaimed Eleanor, "you could talk of nothing but our excursion this morning, and I know Lady Amelia expects us both to luncheon. Ah! there is Mr Leicester waiting on horseback to escort me, and actually Sir Alfred Douglas with him!! that is beyond my utmost hopes; would you believe it, Matilda! and what a splendid horse he is riding! It is the black hunter Skyrocket, that we admired so much once, and I told Sir Alfred that you had been proposing to work him in worsteds, as a match for the Turkish Janissary. Good bye! Shall I say that you were too much interested in a novel to join the party?"

"No," replied Matilda colouring, "there will not be any occasion to mention me at all, as I may perhaps never be missed."

"Now, Eleanor, set off; for to say the truth, you and your admirers are the greatest bore in the world at present, so pray do not keep them waiting any longer," said Lady Fitz-Patrick. "Matilda and I shall enjoy ourselves exceedingly when you are gone, though the time was formerly when I should have thought myself very ill off to remain behind on so glorious a day as this, and with such a party to join. Well, Matilda, you certainly have an odd taste for so young a girl, but your book amuses me better than could be expected, and I know there is nothing you delight in so much as reading."

Greatly as Matilda was supposed to enjoy her occupation, she could scarcely suppress a sigh of regret as her pony was led off to the stable, and giving an anxious look from the window, she saw Eleanor gracefully mounting hers, and giving some lively narrative to the gentlemen in waiting, at the conclusion of which Mr Leicester gazed up and bowed reproachfully to Matilda, but Sir Alfred seemed so occupied in checking his fiery courser, that he merely threw a momentary glance towards the place where she stood, and whether he observed her or not, was a problem which her thoughts were engaged in solving, while her voice was mechanically exerted for the entertainment of Lady Fitz-Patrick during the following half hour; but she was in some degree recompensed for the sacrifice of her morning's amusement by the warmth with which the invalid thanked her at last for relieving the oppressive ennui of her sick room, and by the earnestness with which she entreated her to return often, and always to bring a book, as she thought the one Matilda had selected was by no means dull, and would do good both to the head and the heart.

The panic which Dr Mansfield occasioned to Lady Fitz-Patrick about the state of her health, rendered her extremely prudent for some time, and she deserved all the praise she claimed, on account of the strict seclusion in which she lived, and which was rendered far more tolerable than could have been anticipated, by the assiduous and considerate attentions of Lady Olivia Neville and Matilda, who conformed themselves as much as possible to her taste, at the same time that they gradually led her on to feel some interest in that one subject which ever lay nearest to their hearts, and which was connected with all that occupied or interested them. Still, as Lady Fitz-Patrick's cough abated, her courage rose;

and when the day of Lady Montague's concert arrived, she allowed herself to be persuaded by Eleanor, that as the weather was mild, and the house only a few doors off, it would be beyond human prudence not to go there, while it was absolutely necessary she should once more enjoy society, and add to the eclat of her daughter's appearance by the splendour of her own. That so imprudent a step should ever be contemplated, had never crossed Sir Richard's imagination, till Lady Fitz-Patrick unexpectedly entered the dining-room all radiant with diamonds and smiles, in the most exuberant spirits at the prospect of her speedy release.

"Well, Sir Richard, I thought I should surprise you," said she, seeing that he allowed his soup to cool for several minutes, while he fixed a bewildered stare on her splendid ornaments, as if he could scarcely believe the evidence of his senses. "The fact is," she added in a tone of girlish vivacity, "I can stand this no longer; and as I can die but once, you may marry again, and see that my successor is as much addicted to flannel and sofas as you please."

"I may as well send a hearse to bring you home after midnight," replied Sir Richard, swallowing his dinner with a degree of heedless rapidity, quite contrary to his ordinary rules of gastronomy. "If Dr Mansfield had prescribed a strait waistcoat he would have done wisely."

Lady Fitz-Patrick was rather pleased than otherwise to observe her husband so unusually excited, as it seemed a proof of his regard greater than she had anticipated on such an occasion, and she proceeded to the concert in the highest glee, receiving compliments on all sides, which were worded in the terms that are of established custom for ladies who are somewhat on the wane. "I never saw you look younger or better in my life." It

was an evening of ecstacy to the emancipated prisoner, who claimed and received the congratulations of all her numerous friends, among whom she was universally popular.

> But pleasures are like poppies spread:
> We snatch the flow'r, the bloom is fled;
> Or like the snow falls in the river,
> A moment white, then melts for ever.
>
> Or like the borealis race,
> That flit ere you can point their place;
> Or like the rainbow's lovely form,
> Evanishing amidst the storm.
>
> BURNS.

CHAPTER XIII.

Yet does one short preparing hour,
One precious hour remain;
Rouse thee, my soul, with all thy pow'r,
Nor let it pass in vain.

HYMN.

BITTERLY did Lady Fitz-Patrick mourn, through many a long and suffering hour, the indiscretion which had led her to Lady Montague's concert, for the prognostics of Dr Mansfield were too surely realized, and a violent relapse of inflammation on the following day put a seal to her destiny, and consigned her to a bed of sickness, which there seemed to be no hope of her ever leaving alive. Time passed rapidly on, but each returning day seemed to render that doom more inevitable, for her respiration became painfully oppressed, her cough sounded hollow, and for a length of time she suffered under extreme feverishness, which was accompanied by excessive weakness and occasional delirium.

The first object that greeted the eyes of Lady Fitz-Patrick, on a temporary suspension of acute agony, was the benign countenance of Lady Olivia Neville, bending over her with a look of affectionate solicitude; and as the exhausted sufferer pressed her hand in token of recognition, Lady Olivia silently kissed her cheek, and quietly resumed her place near the bed. Miss Barbara immediately started forward to claim her sister's atten-

tion also, exhibiting an ostentation of grief and anxiety which was plainly intended to impress on Lady Fitz-Patrick the state of imminent danger to which she had reduced herself. "I always feared, Sophia, that it would come to this," said she, in a sententious voice. "What could tempt you to venture out at such a risk? If it had been Eleanor, one need not have wondered, but you must have known better, and I could have told at once what would be the consequence myself."

"Barbara," whispered Lady Howard in a sarcastic tone,

> 'You would rather she should die,
> Than your predictions prove a lie.'

Pray time these reflections a little better."

"We are bound at all seasons to proclaim the truth boldly, whether it be acceptable or not," replied Miss Neville angrily; "and it is well for Sophia to have some one near like me who will speak out what is unwelcome, as this is no time to be silent. She will soon see all that this world can do for her."

"Be gentle as well as apt to teach," whispered Lady Howard reproachfully.

Lady Fitz-Patrick turned impatiently away, and Lady Olivia looked at Miss Neville with an expression of gentle remonstrance, saying, "We shall see, Barbara, on this occasion, what God can do for those who trust in Him. Your prayers and mine have not been neglected, I am confident, while Sophia has been too ill to recommend herself to His care; and now we must all unite in one common endeavour to see our own real state as sinners, and by fixing our affections more devoutly than ever on His service and on Himself, to prepare our hearts for what His wisdom may ordain."

"I wish you could hear dear Mr Harvey on that sub-

ject," interrupted Miss Neville; "and I cannot but hope we may prevail on Sophia to see him some day SOON." Miss Barbara here laid a marked and melancholy emphasis on the word SOON, and looked expressively at Lady Olivia, who appeared as if she were perfectly unconscious of her meaning.

"Pray, Barbara, how long have you attended Mr Harvey?" asked Lady Howard in a sneering tone. "Last year you thought the only tolerable preacher in the world was, 'dear' Dr Grange, and he had been recently promoted to your favour vice Mr M'Tavish, who was then equally 'dear' for the time. You appear to be of a new sect every season, and will probably become at last an Any-thing-arian, which is the worst and last stage of all."

"If you only heard Mr Harvey," said Miss Neville, "I am confident you would be quite carried off your feet by his eloquence."

"Thank you, I prefer remaining on them," replied Lady Howard satirically; "I like all my feelings to stand on good solid ground. But, Barbara, I am going to make a very safe promise, which will never be claimed —as soon as you can produce a well authenticated certificate of having attended the same preacher for an entire year, without wandering, I shall actually accompany you to hear him myself."

"A year is a long period to anticipate, when some of us may not perhaps live a month," said Miss Neville, glancing towards Lady Fitz-Patrick. "It is well for you all to be prepared; and dear Mr Harvey sweetly remarks, that every night in his life he rejoices to find himself a day nearer the time when all his troubles, vexations, and sorrows shall be ended."

"That sounds to me extremely like peevishly quarrel-

ling with the gifts and bounties of a merciful Providence," said Lady Howard indignantly. "What right has Mr Harvey to set up for afflictions and distresses, when he is in fact one of the most fortunate of men—from whom I would rather expect to hear a hymn of thanksgiving than the language of complaint? As we are told that God loves a cheerful giver, He will surely be best pleased also with a cheerful receiver of what he is pleased to bestow; and though St Paul, amidst the most unprecedented dangers and sorrows, and after a miraculous vision of our Saviour, was longing to depart, yet life is always held up to us in Scripture as a gift we should be thankful for. Length of days is a promise attached to one of the commandments: and even the good King Hezekiah prayed to have his prolonged. I know it has become a sort of fashion with some of your set to talk of life as an intolerable burden; but I should not suppose that those persons are best prepared for the blessings of heaven who are most discontented now. What do you say on the subject, Olivia?"

"I think that, provided men are resigned to the will of God, they may have a preference either way; but as death is a penalty for sin, it is a part of that penalty that we should fear it. To those who trust in a crucified Saviour, and to the mercy of Almighty God, he has promised dying strength for a dying hour," said Lady Olivia. "There are many things every day to wean a Christian from the natural love of life; for who would not long to be relieved from the power of sin and temptation? But yet there is much communion with God to beenjoyed here, and great delight in viewing his works of creation and providence. We must beware of presumptuous impatience; for we see that even our blessed Saviour himself recalled his beloved Lazarus to

earth, and thought it a benefit conferred to prolong his existence here, though none can doubt that the friend of Christ was prepared for glory. Let us therefore humbly endeavour to follow the excellent advice of Milton, 'Nor love thy life, nor hate it, but what thou livest, live well: how long or short permit to heaven, and patiently attend thy dissolution.' "

Lady Olivia Neville took an early opportunity of imparting to Lady Fitz-Patrick, with tender and considerate affection, the apprehensions that were entertained by her medical attendants of a fatal termination to her malady; and during the long and agitated silence which ensued on the part of her dying friend, she offered up inwardly the most fervent aspirations to God for that strength and consolation from above which she saw that no human power would be adequate to bring at such a moment. For several days afterwards Lady Fitz-Patrick continued to be wrapt up in solitary reflection, and shrunk from every attempt which was made to draw her into any expression of feeling; but she earnestly entreated Lady Olivia to remain with her, and never seemed at rest except when she was within sight, or when her place was supplied by the gentle and affectionate Matilda Howard. One evening, at length, Lady Olivia overheard the voice of Lady Fitz-Patrick repeatedly murmuring to herself, in a low and solemn voice, "Oh God! have mercy on my soul!" till at length, moved beyond all power of forbearance, she pressed the hand of her suffering friend in her own, and gazed into her countenance with a look of such tender affection, that it irresistibly asked for confidence.

"Olivia," whispered Lady Fitz-Patrick, in a tone of deep despondency, "I have but one subject of pleasure to think of at this moment, and it is, that you will here-

after reap in a better world the reward of all your kindness to me here. I can now appreciate in some degree, the anxiety and sorrow which my past life must have occasioned to a heart such as yours; for who that loves another and values an immortal soul, would not tremble to anticipate such a dying hour as mine?"

"Dearest Sophia, why should you say so!" replied Lady Olivia, bending over her pillow. "It may yet be an hour of comfort, of peace, and even of joy. Oh! do not hastily cast from you the offers of pardon, even in the eleventh hour, that the gospel brings to all without exception."

"Not to those who have rejected it during their whole lives, and would embrace it only when they have no other resource," said Lady Fitz-Patrick. "No; the labourers in the vineyard had been waiting all day, and availed themselves of the first opportunity that was offered them, but I have daily rejected many. The thief on the cross had never heard of Gospel mercy till the hour when he accepted it; but what excuse is there for me? I dare not think of it! To look back on my past life fills me with remorse, and to look forward—Oh! I can see eternity in all its boundless extent before me, and it is an eternity without hope!"

"Do not say so—do not think so for a single moment, Sophia! it is a device of Satan—in health he led you to presume, and in sickness he would teach you to despair; but think of the mercy held out in the gospel to every sinner, and remember that it is the first token of being fit to receive it when we are conscious of our helpless necessity. Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find. Call upon the Lord while he is near, and turn unto Him who will have compassion, and to our God, who will abundantly pardon."

"Olivia, if I had sooner felt your kindness as deeply as now, it would have been well for me," said Lady Fitz-Patrick mournfully; "but for my few remaining days, I would avoid the agonies of unavailing repentance. If my sins seem so great and aggravated in my own eyes, what must they be in the sight of Him before whom the very heavens are unclean, and who charges His angels with folly?"

"True, Sophia—most true! and yet we, who feel ourselves heavy-laden, are told where to find rest, and those who go to that certain refuge shall never be cast out," replied Lady Olivia. "Do not view your own situation in the worst light, but remember the many promises which are held out to those who mourn for their guilt. It has been beautifully remarked, that our sins, which, like shadows, look small at the noon of life, like shadows also lengthen at its close; but dark as they may all appear, we should be comforted by reflecting, 'when trouble is near, God is not far off;' and that He who sent His Son to die for us when we were enemies, will surely not refuse pardon to those who seek for it with truth and sincerity in his own appointed way."

"You recall to my mind those beautiful words which I have so often sung in church, with a careless, absent mind:—

> 'As long as life its term extends,
> Hope's blest dominion never ends;
> For while the lamp holds on to burn,
> The greatest sinner may return.'

Oh! why cannot I apply these words to myself, and cling to the mercy that they promise! Tell me, Olivia, that I may venture to do so! Say, if you can, though I have only begun to trim my lamp when the cry is heard, and the bridegroom is coming, that still you do not think

the door is for ever closed against me. Speak some comfort, if it be possible, for I know you would not deceive me, and my own thoughts are all dark, and confused, and desponding."

"Dear Sophia, compose yourself; such agitation may bring on a relapse, and I have much to say that will soothe and console you," said Lady Olivia affectionately. "The whole gospel is addressed to those who see their need of pardon, as you do now; and can it be possible to think of the tears that our Saviour wept over the lost sinners of Jerusalem, without feeling confidence in His compassion, and in His willingness to forgive? It is not that we have to wait for God's mercy, but He is waiting to be gracious to us; and His language continually is, 'Turn ye! turn ye! why will ye die?' Pray to Him then, Sophia; let the whole language of your heart be prayer, and rest assured of a gracious answer; for our very thoughts are heard in heaven, and not a sigh of penitence can escape from your breast without gaining the sympathy of that holy and merciful Saviour, who yet retains

'A fellow feeling of our pains:
And still remembers in the skies,
His tears, his agonies, and cries.'"

"Speak on, Olivia! why do you become silent? I could listen for ever, or at least during the few hours that remain to me on earth," added Lady Fitz-Patrick, with a sudden alteration of voice. "Let me hear all you can say, for my moments are numbered, and they are precious while you are here."

"But we must be prudent in using your strength at present, and ought to pause, Sophia, though my heart is so full that I would willingly proceed to many more sources of encouragement which are still within our

reach. You have been the subject of my anxious solicitude for so many years, that I have often been tempted to think, like the mother of St. Augustine, that it was impossible for the subject of so many prayers to be finally impenitent. I have lived to see all my hopes on the point of being accomplished; and now, though I must speak to you no more for a time, I shall join my supplications to yours in asking that a work of grace may be perfected in your heart before we are finally separated."

The countenance of Lady Olivia Neville assumed an expression of serene and heavenly devotion, while she silently engaged in fervent prayer; and Lady Fitz-Patrick's eyes were fixed upon her with a look of grateful affection, until at length they heavily closed with the languor of disease, and she fell into a feverish slumber, from which she did not awake during the evening.

From this time there was much that appeared hopeful to Lady Olivia in the temper and conversation of her interesting patient, who felt herself to be hovering between a present and future world, and who endeavoured to place her trust in Him who rules over both.

"Olivia," said she one day, in a tone of nervous agitation, "I awoke this morning perfectly free from pain, and unconscious of my peculiar circumstances, when suddenly the remembrance rushed into my thoughts that I was on my death-bed. It was a dreadful moment. Oh! why is that fear of death so implanted in our hearts? why are we not spared, like the animals, all consciousness of its approach?"

"Many have thought it holds out a tacit promise of immortality, that whereas the beasts which perish remain unconscious of their inevitable doom, men are taught by their fears to anticipate the change and to prepare for

it. But a Christian can often, though not always, rise superior to nature, and view the nearest approach of death with calm and tranquil faith."

"I am convinced that you could, Olivia, and that at this moment you would take my place without one pang of regret, but you have employed a lifetime to prepare for this one hour, and I——" added Lady Fitz-Patrick, closing her eyes with a look of speechless anguish, "Oh! think, as Young says, 'of a slow, sudden death' like mine—'how dreadful the deliberate surprise,' unprepared, unfit as I am."

"But what does Young go on to say?" replied Lady Olivia, with solemn earnestness. "'Be wise to-day, 'tis madness to defer.' You must not lose the time that remains, my dear Sophia, in lamenting that which is already gone—your sorrow now is not without remedy, but hereafter, when time shall be no more, then our repentance will indeed be hopeless. Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation, but we have no promise for another day, and may not be allowed another hour for preparation."

"If an implicit trust in Christ be sufficient, I feel it with my whole heart—for what other dependence could I look to?" said Lady Fitz-Patrick. "But if I am accepted, it is indeed unmerited mercy, for in myself I have no claim."

"But, dear Sophia, can you suppose that at the day of judgment any human soul will have to say, I trusted in Christ and am rejected?—Oh no! We may conceive how great was the work of redemption, when we remember the world was created in six days, but during four thousand years the salvation of man was prophesied, before that hour when Christ declared on the cross that it was finished; and can we then trust in that work too implicitly?"

It is to gentle natures such as that of Lady Olivia Neville that the task is a trying one of representing the judgments as well as the promises of God; but she was not one of those who could save her own feelings at the hazard of another person's welfare, or be satisfied with seeing her friends building upon any foundation of which they had not cautiously ascertained the security. During many long and interesting conversations, she pointed out to Lady Fitz-Patrick, with unwearied fidelity, the means of our salvation. She showed in strong colours the undeviating holiness and self-denial which are essential in a disciple of the cross, and she took peculiar pains to convince Lady Fitz-Patrick, that no mere temporary excitements can deserve the name of religion, for it is only to be recognised in that work of the Holy Spirit which produces a calm and steady principle, influencing the whole character and conduct.

"Our Saviour, standing as Mediator between God and man, holds out on the one side pardon, but on the other side there must be obedience, for he is our king as well as our prophet and priest, and no mere temporary excitements can suffice," observed Lady Olivia. "You may perceive amongst the friends who surround us, that we prize most the affection which is fixed and unalterable; but those who show us great vicissitudes of fervent affection at one time, and of comparative coldness at another, are generally, when put to the test, very little to be depended on."

"True," replied Lady Fitz-Patrick; "and how different is your description of real religion from the idea that my poor sister Barbara would wish to give me of it! I can bear with her now, Olivia, for I pity her, as I pity every one who is not like you, and I believe she means well by me at present; but she is never satisfied unless

I am in a state of vehement emotion, and complains of my coldness when I feel incapable of rousing myself to the most fervent expressions of repentance and devotion. There is something so tempestuous in Barbara's religion, that I greatly fear she will some day be shipwrecked altogether."

"It is surely a very mistaken view of what we should aim at," said Lady Olivia. "The promise of Christ to his disciples is '*Peace:*' 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you;' and who that knows the serenity of a heart at peace with God, would exchange such a blessing for all the raptures of a heated imagination! It is easy for people to excite in themselves that sort of temporary intoxication, but it is not in the strength of man to persevere, without assistance, in a consistent path of holiness and self-denial."

"You will be gratified, my best and kindest friend, to know," said Lady Fitz-Patrick, "that I have felt more truly tranquil for the last few days than I ever remember to have been throughout my whole life. The sufferings of the body are nothing compared to those of the mind, and that is the exchange I seem to have made now, for I have found what was always wanting to me before, an object sufficiently important to engross my whole thoughts and affections—mine have all been hitherto wasted on what has perished in the using. How strange it is to reflect, that I cannot so much as remember now many things which once occupied me far more than the salvation of my immortal soul, and that till now I have been only acting happiness, not enjoying it."

"It has often occurred to me," answered Lady Olivia, "that as past pleasures vanish so completely from our recollection, so also do our past transgressions; and I frequently make it the subject of my prayers, that God

will mercifully pardon all my forgotten sins, which are probably far more numerous than those that I have observed and repented of. For all of these there must be an atonement, either in the propitiation of our Saviour now, or else in our own everlasting condemnation on that awful day, when not one of our offences will escape the remembrance of Him whose eye is in every place."

"Is it not truly astonishing, then, that there should yet be mercy for me? but I feel it to be the case," continued Lady Fitz-Patrick, in a tone of heartfelt emotion. "I may yet be permitted to trace back a whole lifetime of vanity, and to see every year of its offences blotted out, and my follies all to be 'remembered no more.' I believe few are in circumstances to make them feel more deeply than I do at this moment the unspeakable mercy of the Gospel. In your society, Olivia, I have often had a transient wish to become such a one as yourself; yet the prayer of my heart was like that of St Augustine, 'Let me be converted, but not yet.' I delayed from day to day, from week to week, and from year to year; but now every hour that strikes brings me visibly nearer to the presence of God. Were his ways like the ways of man, I should be shut out for ever from peace, and hopelessly and most deservedly rejected."

"But it was well observed by an ancient author," said Lady Olivia, in an encouraging tone, "that it might tire the hand of an angel to note down the pardons that God bestows on one penitent sinner; and if we can but cast a dying look of faith to the cross of the Redeemer, we shall still be like the children of Israel, who saw the brazen serpent and were healed."

At this moment Sir Richard Fitz-Patrick entered, and his unexpected appearance changed the current of the conversation, though it was not without a sigh of regret

that Lady Fitz-Patrick relinquished a discussion of that which seemed the only topic in which she now had any personal interest.

Nothing was so much the subject of Sir Richard's care as to prevent Lady Olivia from ever being left a moment alone with the invalid; for he felt a sort of general misgiving, that though she on no occasion intruded the subject of religion on his own notice, she might be putting such things into Lady Fitz-Patrick's head; and he was resolved that, as far as he could accomplish it, she should leave the world without any previous apprehension; and respecting what might befall her hereafter, it never rested a moment in his thoughts. "What a happy release it will be!" was Sir Richard's usual phrase, which he applied habitually to every acquaintance indiscriminately, whenever their death seemed inevitable; and though he had used the expression all his life, he never took the trouble of attaching any particular meaning to it; but in the case of Lady Fitz-Patrick, he seemed resolutely determined to persuade himself and her that she was in a fair way of recovery.

"Ah, Sophia! you are continuing better, I hope," said he, avoiding to look at her emaciated countenance. "We want nothing but a little warm weather to set you quite up again, and the new chariot will be home in time for your first airing."

A thought glanced across the mind of Lady Fitz-Patrick, that it would be in a scene which Sir Richard appeared little to anticipate that his carriage would next be required; but unwilling to give him unnecessary pain, she merely smiled, and thanked him for his considerate attention to what she had once been so anxious for. But she resolved to take an early opportunity of imparting

to him her serious conviction that she had but a short time to live upon earth, and to express all her wishes respecting her children, and her deep solicitude upon his own account. There was an expression of unwonted sensibility in the eye of Lady Fitz-Patrick when she looked at him, and something touching in the tone of her voice, which became obvious to the most superficial observer; and Sir Richard, who dreaded above all annoyances anything approaching to a scene, prudently resolved to sound an early retreat.

"I am glad to have found you so well, Sophia," he said, trying not to hear her incessant cough. "My friend, Sir Colin Fletcher, has sent me a haunch of venison this morning, and I must drop in at the club, to pick up a few friends, who would like to partake of it next week. Perhaps you may be sufficiently recovered before then to join our little party; and in the meantime here come Eleanor and Matilda to supply my place beside you."

"Poor Fitz-Patrick!" said the invalid, as he hastened from the room; "he always cultivated the art of seeing and believing only what he pleased; and as long as I breathe he will expect me to recover."

"But I almost think, mamma, that you might be well, if you would only think yourself so; for I have very often had coughs that seemed quite as bad," remarked Eleanor. "And indeed I never thought you would have submitted to be quacked in this way," added she, making a transient grimace of disgust to Matilda, as she glanced towards the dressing table, which was loaded with phials of medicine, while the room smelled powerfully of fumigations; but her cousin busied herself in arranging some flowers which she had brought in her hand, without appearing to observe what was said.

"How rarely you come to see me now, Eleanor!" observed Lady Fitz-Patrick in a tone of heart-stricken grief. "It is when I see you, my child, that I feel all the bitterness of death. I could have wished to live a few more years for your sake, to undo my own work; for now, alas! I feel how truly I have ruined your heart, and that, if you are less affectionate than might have been expected, the fault is mine. Yes, Eleanor, I reap as I have sown. This world only has been continually set before you; and can I wonder that it has engrossed your affections, even to the exclusion of myself? How often did I say that your appearance and accomplishments were all on earth that I felt solicitous about; and my utmost wishes have been granted, only to shew me their unjustifiable folly. I have been answered like the Indian who prayed for water, and found the whole Ganges turned into his garden. You have exceeded all I ever expected or desired. The shell is indeed lovely, Eleanor; but, alas, for the heart that can look upon a dying mother, and yet leave her to the care of another, as young, but more affectionate than yourself!"

"I am very sorry, mamma, to have been prevented all this morning from coming to see you," stammered Eleanor, in great confusion; "but I breakfasted with Lady Amelia Douglas, who detained me to luncheon, and yesterday you know how much I was engaged"—

"Yes, Eleanor! yes!" replied Lady Fitz-Patrick, taking her by the hand, and looking in her face with an expression of the tenderest pity; "I never told you that it was a duty or a pleasure to sacrifice your wishes for another, and why should I expect you to have learned it? I have been hasty, my child; but the time is fast approaching when all your mother's faults will be forgiven.

I trust, however, they will not be forgotten, Eleanor, as they may yet be a timely warning to yourself."

It was one evening during the following week that Eleanor was about to withdraw from her mother's room, at the usual hour of retiring, when Matilda followed to the door, and anxiously entreated her to return. "We think my aunt much worse to-night," said she; "and as Dr Mansfield seemed rather apprehensive himself, you would of course wish to stay, in case she has any very serious relapse."

"How very extraordinary that you should be so alarmed!" replied Eleanor, pausing. "Mamma appears to me particularly well this evening; for her eyes and colour are perfectly brilliant, and her voice sounds clearer than it has done for several days: I think you must be mistaken; and I was up so late last night at the concert, that you would need to hold my eyelids open if I were to remain much longer; but I will send Louise to inquire in half an hour how you think my mother is."

Matilda stole silently back into her aunt's room, and took up a book to beguile the time, while she waited with Lady Olivia, in painful apprehension, for the time when Dr Mansfield had thought it probable that Lady Fitz-Patrick might have one of those alarming attacks of breathlessness to which she had recently become liable. No words can describe the night of fearful agony which ensued, during which Matilda kneeled for hours on the bed, to support the almost unconscious sufferer, who knew not the hand that was ever ready to administer to her wants, though still the soothing voice of Lady Olivia Neville seemed to give her comfort when she whispered words of consolation, or when she offered up a short but emphatic prayer, for help in this hour of extremity.

When Eleanor entered Lady Fitz-Patrick's room on the following morning, she found her mother supported almost erect upon pillows, and clasping the hand of Lady Olivia, with a look of intense suffering, while her loud and convulsive breathing seemed as if the next moment must terminate her existence. Eleanor stood as if she had been transfixed to the spot with terror, when she glanced at her mother's countenance, on which the grey cold hue of death was already gathered, and, uttering a sudden cry of astonishment and grief, she rushed forward, throwing herself on the bed, and burst into an agony of tears. Unconscious of all around, she wrung her hands, and sobbed aloud with vehement and frantic grief, while her whole frame seemed to be convulsed with agitation, and the words she would have spoken were inarticulate, and died on her lips. It was the first time she had felt the irresistible conviction that her mother was lost to her for ever, and it burst upon her with all the accumulated anguish of a sudden surprise. The thought had never before been allowed to dwell on her mind for a moment, and now she felt the blow with all the bitterness of hopeless and unexpected grief. It was the first sorrow she had ever known—the deepest that nature could have called her to endure; and in a paroxysm of amazement and terror, she buried her face on the pillow beside Lady Fitz-Patrick, and fell into a violent fit of hysterics, which she could not attempt to conquer or control.

"Take her away! take her away!" gasped the expiring mother. "O take her away, or I shall die—it kills me to see her thus. Give her comfort if you can, Olivia, but take her from me now."

Eleanor was hastily removed by the attendants, and borne almost fainting from the room, followed by Ma-

tilda, who tried, with all the gentleness of her nature, to soothe and compose her agitated and afflicted cousin.

"Dearest Eleanor, your mother will live for some time yet; there is no instant danger," said she, clasping her weeping friend in her arms, and bursting into tears. 'This has been a frightful shock! we ought to have prepared you better, but I was coming to your room as soon as possible to break it to you. Be comforted, dear Eleanor, for she will not always suffer as you see her now; she will be easier soon."

"Do not speak of comfort to me, Matilda! I shall see that face—that look of mortal agony, to the very borders of the grave," cried Eleanor, covering her face with her hands, and shuddering at the recollection. "I hear her breathing even here!—dreadful! dreadful! death itself would be preferable to what I feel at this moment!"

"Oh no, Eleanor! there is consolation, if you will but receive it. Think that your mother is safe—that she will be happy—that time has been given her to prepare; and that your loss, great as it is, will be a gain to her. Those only can be said to weep who weep without hope; but you, dear Eleanor, will at last feel how much cause there is to rejoice as well as to mourn: 'Weeping may endure for a night,' as the Scriptures say, 'but joy cometh in the morning.'"

"Matilda, you may well be comforted, for you have acted the part of a daughter, but I can only feel like one. Oh no! you can never experience the wretchedness of unavailing self-reproach—she is dying, and I can never never shew her kindness and affection again. It is an awful thing to live in such a world as this!" exclaimed Eleanor, suddenly clasping her hands with an expression of helpless anguish. "Hitherto I have known life only in a mask, but these are its realities."

"We have seen good at the hand of the Lord these many years, dear Eleanor, and shall we not receive evil also, without forgetting his former mercies? It comes to us now in the saddest form, and so unexpectedly; but yet we should remember that it is those whom God loves the best that he chastises, for he sees that we need it. You know it was the language only of human pride, 'I shall see no sorrow;' but Christians are told that their sufferings, which last but for a moment, are ordered to prepare them for an eternity of joy; and I cannot but think, Eleanor, that this sharp affliction has been sent on a mission of mercy to you and me, teaching us both an early lesson of measuring time against eternity, and choosing between them. Oh, think! if those sufferings which appear to us now so dreadful are indeed sent as testimonies of love, what would it be to sustain God's eternal and unmitigated vengeance? All we can know of misery on earth is but the faint shadow of that from which the Son of God has redeemed our souls, if we will but hear his message of mercy; and the more deeply you feel distress and self-reproach at this moment, the more eagerly should we try to avoid it hereafter, by seeking support and direction from above at a time like the present, when we need it so much, and when I am sure it would be given you, with unsparing abundance, by the merciful hand of Him who has told us to 'call upon Him in the day of trouble, and he will deliver us, and we shall find rest unto our soul.'"

The sweet and gentle tones of Matilda's voice fell upon the ear of Eleanor with a soothing influence, and though but little of what she said was noticed or comprehended by her painfully pre-occupied mind, yet the endearing and affectionate manner of her cousin seemed as refreshing to her heart as the dew of heaven upon the

parched and desolate wilderness. The tempest in Eleanor's mind became stilled, the throbbings of her bosom had ceased, and her eye was assuming an expression of interest and attention, when Miss Neville suddenly entered the room, looking more than usually excited and consequential.

"So, Eleanor," she exclaimed, "with all these fine feelings, you have nearly put an end to your mother altogether!—It is sad, indeed, to see a mind so undisciplined; but I always told poor Sophia what it would come to if she did not take my advice more in your education. I have only to say at present, that the Doctor declares you must on no account return to the room again, as the least excitement would be instantly fatal, and it is only wonderful that your last visit did not prove so at once. I hope at least that you have the heart to feel this as you ought."

Matilda looked imploringly at Miss Neville to stop the current of her reproaches, but Eleanor clasped her arms round the neck of her cousin, saying, in accents of mournful despondency, "Do not stop her, Matilda! Aunt Barbara's upbraidings are more tolerable to me than those of my own heart. I deserve all she can say, and more if it were possible."

Miss Neville looked for a moment at her niece with surprise, and struck by the change in her aspect, and the anguish of her voice, she hesitated what to do, and then silently left the room, while Eleanor relapsed into a state of the wildest agitation, and wept in the arms of Matilda through many an hour of dark and hopeless sorrow, unable to extinguish from her memory the agonizing picture of her mother's altered countenance and expiring struggles.

"Dear Eleanor! let us try to look beyond this hour

of suffering, and to recollect what an exchange it will be from the scene of agony you witnessed to an eternity of glory and happiness," said Matilda, embracing her; "we may well mourn for ourselves, but all will soon be over that she has to endure. How consoling it is at this moment to remember, that

> 'The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
> Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.'"

For some days Lady Fitz-Patrick was reduced to such extreme debility that her mind wandered in a continual state of delirium, so that she recognised no one; and Eleanor, at the earnest instigation of Lady Olivia, again ventured into the room and sat by the bedside of her mother in silent wretchedness and depression, which it required the whole fortitude of her nature to endure.

Often did Lady Fitz-Patrick's wandering thoughts recur to the scenes of former days, when she talked of gay parties and entertainments, which she fancied it was time for her to rise and rejoin. She spoke of her daughter at one time with the vanity of former days, and the next moment she mourned over her unkindness and neglect. Scenes of amusement so painfully brought to Eleanor's thoughts were now remembered with loathing, and she wondered to think how entirely they had once engrossed and satisfied all her wishes.

"There are awful moments in our existence, Matilda, to remind us of what we are," said she one evening, placing her trembling hand in that of her cousin. "I have lived the last few years of my life with scarcely a thought to remind me of the great and holy God, who can shake the very heavens over our heads, and the earth beneath our feet; but can I ever forget the solemn lesson of this sad hour?"

At length one evening Lady Fitz-Patrick was suddenly restored to perfect consciousness—all suffering seemed to be suspended—she breathed with apparent ease, and her cough had entirely ceased, so that, with the sanguine disposition of youth, Eleanor's spirits rose, and, snatching at the first gleam of hope, she kissed her mother's cheek, whispering her prayers and her expectations that such a change for the better must certainly be followed by a rapid recovery.

Lady Fitz-Patrick looked at Eleanor with mournful earnestness, and shook her head. "No, my child," said she, solemnly, "THIS IS DEATH! Tell me, Dr Mansfield," added she, turning towards the place where he sat, "how long is it probable that I may survive, for the period of my sufferings must be near?"

"Can you bear to be told the real truth?" asked the Doctor, doubtfully. "I am most unwilling to cause any agitation at present, as you are scarcely able to bear it: and I trust and believe you have little more to suffer."

"I wish to know your whole opinion without disguise," replied Lady Fitz-Patrick, in a calm, collected tone of voice.

"Then, madam, I must inform you, that from the symptoms which have recently appeared, it is extremely improbable you can live to see another day."

Lady Fitz-Patrick covered her face with her hands, and a solemn pause ensued. The most death-like stillness reigned throughout the room, which was only broken by deep sobs from Eleanor, who threw herself into the arms of Lady Olivia, sure of finding there all the sympathy and support which she so greatly needed. The awful silence was first broken by Lady Fitz-Patrick herself, who fixed her eyes on the pale and

sorrowful countenances around, and finally rested them with melancholy tenderness on Sir Richard and Eleanor. "Let me look for the last time upon those I love, and bless them with my latest breath," she said. "Before that setting sun appears again, I shall see you no more! the veil will be withdrawn which hides eternity from my sight, and I shall have appeared in the presence of my Maker! Oh! how often have I seen it rise and set without a thought how soon it must light me to the tomb! Olivia, the best friend I have ever known, think what a dark eternity would now have stretched out before me, if you had not led me to the knowledge of a Saviour. Amidst all your past sorrows, this is surely something to have lived for. I believe it is as great a trial to you to have your life prolonged, as it is to others when theirs is shortened, but you have a heart to feel rewarded now, for your prayers have been answered."

Large tears started into the eyes of Lady Olivia Neville, and coursed each other down her cheeks; she made a powerful struggle for some moments to subdue her feelings, but at length, overcome with emotion, she sunk back upon her chair, and wept aloud.

"The time was once, Olivia, when your tears would have moved me deeply," continued Lady Fitz-Patrick, in a calm voice; "but now the apathy of death is stealing over my senses, and I must hasten to a close. I leave my daughter to your care, and may she soon owe as much to you as I do, for my sole remaining wish is, that she shall live and die such a one as yourself. Oh! why did I not sooner know wherein her happiness would consist! for it is the nearest approach that sinners can make to a state of retribution, when they see the mischief of their advice and example to those they love, and when they see it—as I do—too late."

"Not so!" interrupted Lady Olivia in a soothing tone; "there is yet time. Commit your child to the care of a merciful God, and be at peace. The prayer that you make for her now will be heard and answered hereafter; and be assured, Sophia, that I shall fulfil your sacred trust to the best of my ability. In so far as Eleanor will allow me, I shall supply a mother's care and affection to her."

"And more! oh! far more!" exclaimed Lady Fitz-Patrick. "I have already explained my wishes to Sir Richard, but he is now so buried in grief that I see he cannot listen to me; he knows however that my whole peace of mind rests on the hope of your repairing all my errors towards Eleanor. My beloved child," continued she, gathering up her remaining energy to address her daughter, "never—never forget this scene, and remember that the only words of wisdom your mother ever addressed to you, were from her dying bed. It seems to me but yesterday that I was such a one as yourself, full of bright hopes and sanguine expectations. Oh, Eleanor! will you be taught by my experience, or must you reach such a state as this before you learn that the world is transient as a summer cloud, and that all which is substantial or important is comprehended in that one word—eternity! The whole created universe could not hold me back for a single moment from the summons that awaits me—in a few hours my eyes will be closed for ever. Let me hear you say, Eleanor, before I die, that we shall meet again; and let our prayers be united for the last time, that it may be so."

Lady Fitz-Patrick sunk back exhausted, but her lips moved in fervent supplication, and she fixed her eyes on Sir Richard and Eleanor with a look of mournful interest. Gradually her strength seemed to sink, her pulse became

imperceptible, her breath was inaudible, and it appeared as if life were totally extinct, when she suddenly opened her eyes for an instant, and placing Eleanor's hand in that of Lady Olivia, she pointed towards heaven with a momentary gleam of satisfaction, and expired without a struggle in the arms of Sir Richard.

When Eleanor stood next day beside the corpse of her mother, and gazed with intolerable anguish on that countenance which had so often beamed upon her with indulgent kindness and partial affection, every moment of her past existence seemed to rush in busy remembrance to her thoughts, filled with the most touching proofs of tender affection, and a thousand instances of her own petulance and ingratitude stung her to the heart with bitter remorse. She then felt that all past omissions were now irreparable, and the trifling irritations which had seemed at the moment to justify her, were for ever expunged from her memory. All seemed desolate and forlorn within her breast, from which she felt as if peace and joy were finally banished. "Oh! that my mother could but return to me for one hour!" thought she in the bitterness of her heart. "Oh! that I could but once tell her that my heart is breaking with sorrow and remorse!"

Lady Olivia Neville and Matilda watched over Eleanor with unwearied kindness. In a thousand ways they saved her feelings and anticipated her wishes, apparently forgetting their own sorrow in sympathy for hers, and the consciousness of such kindness was a soothing balm to her agitated spirit, especially as their considerate attention resembled that of Job's friends when he was first afflicted: "They spoke not a word, for they saw that her grief was great."

Lady Howard had but little time to consider her

niece's feelings, because she was so busy about her mournings, and all the distracting bustle which usually succeeds a death in any family, devolved upon her willing hands. She answered letters of condolence on the broadest black-edged paper; and in the most beautifully-turned periods, gave directions about the interment, and laid down the law upon crapes and bombazeens to such a succession of milliners, that casual observers might have supposed it was for a wedding rather than a funeral that Lady Howard was preparing, and that the depth of her own grief and Eleanor's would be estimated precisely according to the depth of their hems. Matilda felt astonished to find how much it was absolutely necessary to say and think upon the subject, as she had never before experienced any family distress, and imagined that the world itself would seem to stand still on such an occasion; but, on the contrary, she was incessantly called off from the affecting recollection of her departed relative, or from the interesting task of consoling Eleanor, by imperative calls, to shew her respect for Lady Fitz-Patrick's memory, in deciding whether her frills should be of *crepe lisse* or *tulle*, and whether her bonnet looked best transparent or opaque.

"Maria," said Sir Francis one day, peeping over Lady Howard's shoulder, when she sat in the agonies of composition, writing an elegant effusion of sensibility to her friend Lady Montague—"when I die, pray omit that favourite sentence in all your letters about having 'quitted these sublunary scenes.' I have a particular dislike to all such hackneyed phrases being used about me, in the same degree that I cherish an antipathy to the immense bows of black crape which every Scotchman who can call himself your cousin will feel privileged to mount upon the back of his hat, and to parade through the

streets after my decease. Here is a Mr Macindoe dead in to-day's newspaper, 'much and justly regretted,' which I daresay he is, and you will see all the Macindoes, if there are any such people, flaunting about next week in enormous bows, and probably writing, like you, about his having 'quitted these sublunary scenes.' Poor Sophia would have been the first to laugh at your splendid epitaph, but one genuine tear is, in my humble opinion, worth a whole quire of such sensibility. I have always disliked the 'Oh!' and 'Alas!' style of composition."

CHAPTER XIV.

Alas ! all must for death prepare !
What has he left,—and who's his heir ?

ELEANOR FITZ-PATRICK felt oppressed with the sense of a dreary insufficiency within herself to regain any gleam of former peace. The chain which had bound her to the earth seemed suddenly broken, and the world was no longer, in her eyes, only a scene of joy, where she was to act a few splendid triumphs, and to live through an unclouded summer of youth and happiness. She had hitherto been wandering in the mazes of a romance, as unlike sober sad reality as a mirage in the desert; but now its illusions seemed all to be dispelled, and as one of Lady Fitz-Patrick's last actions had been to part with Miss Marabout, who was immediately engaged as "finishing governess" at Lady Montague's, Eleanor lost at once all the resources in which she formerly found relief from reflection, and nothing remained but a depressing void within, which was succeeded by listless despondency, so dark and cheerless, that she gladly turned to the conversation of her aunt as a relief from her own desolate feelings, though the interest she took in what was said seemed so faint and uncertain, that it would have discouraged any heart less sanguine and less patient than Lady Olivia Neville's, who nevertheless continued perseveringly to adapt herself to the varying spirits of her beloved charge, and to direct her thoughts as much as

possible to every topic that could be expected to cheer and console her, in the remembrance so continually present of that departed mother whose loss she seemed every day more acutely to deplore.

"Let us follow her in thought to that world where she is now rejoicing, Eleanor, and where we shall probably so soon rejoin her," said Lady Olivia one day, in reply to an observation of her niece's. "We think but vaguely of any distant country which has merely been described to us, but when one of our own family has gone there, what a new interest is attached to it; and now is our time to reflect upon that place of spirits to which your mother has been called. I have never yet lost any dear friend, without the consolation of thinking them so truly prepared for heaven, that there we shall meet again; and I would part with every one I love upon earth, to feel the same blessed assurance on their account; for I cannot but tell you how often, when I lay myself down to rest at night, it is with the most joyful anticipation of that hour when the glories of heaven shall first be revealed to my emancipated soul. We are too apt to imagine, Eleanor, that the rest which is promised to us in future, is 'that of a stone at the bottom of a well;' but the Scriptures on the contrary teach us to anticipate it as a state of active enjoyment, in which all the purest pleasures of our nature will be continued without the possibility of sin or sorrow ever invading our happiness again. Who that has felt the wretchedness of conscious guilt would not acknowledge that there is no suffering equal to it, and that to be delivered from sin is really to be freed from the chief misery of existence?

"The more we become fitted for heaven, Eleanor, the more grievous appears our smallest offence against God,

for the feelings of a Christian in this respect are compared to the sensitiveness that people acquire about the cleanliness of their dress. A fine lady will feel more pain at the smallest speck on her gown, than a sloven will do who is an object of disgust to the most casual observer; and a Christian is often in the depths of affliction for some defect or omission which another who was less conscientious would scarcely notice, but which in his case, makes him long the more eagerly for that time when he shall join the spirits of the just made perfect. Now is the crisis of your life, Eleanor, whether to begin early that course of pure and holy devotion which no one on his death-bed has ever been known to regret having pursued, or whether you will relapse into the same course of idle self-indulgence and thoughtless extravagance, against which your mother's last words were designed to warn you. My heart sinks with anxiety when I reflect that you have still the choice to make. Hitherto affliction has not led your heart to God—you are overwhelmed with grief, but not yet seeking the remedy—your whole soul appears enervated, but you might find strength by seeking it aright—your life passes on without object, but there might be a motive sufficient to invigorate your exertions—your time is unoccupied, but it is time given for an important purpose —your affections, which are now blighted by the loss of your dearest earthly friend, might be fixed on one who would never leave you nor forsake you. I pray for you, Eleanor. Oh! do not forget that the sorrow of the world worketh death."

Lady Olivia's words were listened to with respectful attention by her niece, but they seldom appeared to excite more interest than if they were spoken in some foreign language that she did not understand; still

she was so totally unaccustomed to examine into her own motives and feelings, that Eleanor fully believed she had become all that Lady Olivia could possibly wish. The pomps and vanities of a present world seemed to have lost their attraction, therefore she fancied that it was religion which had raised her above their influence, and she beguiled her solitary hours by forming fanciful schemes of benevolence, which proceeded, she thought, from the charity of a renewed heart. If Eleanor Fitz-Patrick's situation had continued unchanged, it is probable that the gradual influence of Lady Olivia's affectionate counsel, and the example of Matilda's active habits, might have made a permanent impression on her mind, and led her to see and acknowledge, that, of all the miseries in existence, a life without duties and without occupations is the greatest. But a sudden and unexpected change about this time took place in Eleanor's circumstances, which altered the whole current of her thoughts, and of her future prospects.

Sir Philip Barnard had frequently declared that he could not exist in the foggy climate of Britain; but still nothing was farther from his thoughts than actual death, when he was seized by sudden apoplexy one day after dinner, and expired without a groan, to the grief and consternation of . . . . . his solicitor, who had been engaged for some time in drawing up a will, in which the bulk of his fortune was bequeathed to Matilda Howard, with a few insignificant legacies to friends, but in which the name of Eleanor Fitz-Patrick seemed unaccountably omitted. As this last settlement, however, contained the trifling deficiency of being neither signed nor witnessed, recourse was naturally had to Sir Philip's previous will, which he forgot to cancel, and in which Eleanor Fitz-Patrick was named, after her deceased

mother, as the heiress to his estates of Barnard Castle in Inverness-shire, and Enderby Hall in Cumberland, both of which she inherited unconditionally on her coming of age, though, in the meantime, she was placed as a ward in Chancery, and under the personal guardianship of Sir Richard Fitz-Patrick, or, failing him, of her nearest male relative.

To describe the unbounded raptures of Eleanor at the news of her immense succession, would baffle all power of language; and she seemed at once transported into Fairyland, where the wildest dreams of imagination were to be at once and perpetually realized. Visions floated before her brain of presentations at Court, excursions abroad, and living like a feudal queen in the Highlands. Her mind was like a kaleidoscope, which varied its glittering prospects with magical celerity, and a shining galaxy of diamond ornaments and sparkling jewels crowned the whole, accompanied by the distant expectation of seeing countless coronets laid at her feet. Eleanor's state of excitement became so great, that she could scarcely sit still during the day, or close her eyes during the night, but wandered about in a continual ferment of ecstacy.

"You are worn out with too much pleasure, Eleanor, like the prisoners who were smothered with perfumes," said Lady Olivia one evening, seeing the young heiress look rather exhausted. "I have waited in the anxious hope, that when your first surprise was over, my dear girl, some more important thoughts would occur on the danger and real duties of your new situation. But I am disappointed in you still, Eleanor," added her aunt, mournfully; "no touch of seriousness appears yet arising, to remind you that money is only a means, and that unless we pursue some great and important purpose with

it, better far never to have incurred the deep responsibility of possessing that which must be so powerful an engine for good or for evil. I hear no plans for the advantage of others, no generous nor liberal things devised; but all you anticipate savours only of personal aggrandizement. Had I been the friend to announce your good fortune, as the world calls it, I could scarcely have wished you joy. In my own experience, the most unhappy people have always been the richest, because they were satiated with such pleasures as wealth could buy, and had not the heart to seek those that were better; surrounded with sycophants instead of friends, without any motive to active enterprise or intense study, pampered with luxuries to the injury of their health, courted for their riches instead of their virtues, exposed to the envious animadversions of the world, and attended on their very death-beds for interested expectations rather than domestic affection. Dear Eleanor, if you could but view it for a moment, as you must do when the lapse of years shall make a separation inevitable from all that now seems so precious, you would fervently seek to 'make unto yourself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when you fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.'"

Eleanor listened in solemn silence, and assumed a suitable look of gravity for the occasion; but it was evident that she paid no more real attention to Lady Olivia's words than to the rain that was rattling on the window panes.

"It has long been a favourite opinion of mine, that real happiness prevails most among the middle classes," continued Lady Olivia; "they have none of the hardships of poverty, and the very privations they endure in common, and the mutual sacrifices that they are called

to make, endear families to each other, and rivet that domestic affection, which is the first and greatest ingredient of this world's happiness. An enormous income naturally isolates us from others, because, even if we feel generously disposed, our friends are no longer on terms of equality but of obligation. To be selfishly rich, is the most miserable existence that any one could condemn himself to, exchanging the glitter of external circumstances for the warmth of the heart's best affections. I could only be in danger of envying wealth, if I saw that it was enjoyed, in the sole way by which it could bring a blessing to its possessor, as a steward for the good of others; and that it might be said of me as of the ancient patriarch, 'When the eye saw me it blessed me, and when the ear heard me it bore witness to me.' Eleanor, I shall not probably live to see the use you make of wealth, for soon the place that has known me shall know me no more; but it is my solemn testimony to you in these circumstances, that from the exercise of liberality and kindness is to be derived the only real enjoyment of wealth."

On this and on many other occasions Lady Olivia saw, without surprise, but with deep regret, that all she could say was listened to as a wearisome task, and cast aside the next moment as deserving of nothing but oblivion; she therefore suspended what more she would have desired to remark, till the first intoxication of surprise should be over,—but that expected period never seemed likely to arrive. Scarcely six months elapsed from the time of Lady Fitz-Patrick's death, before Eleanor was restored by the joy of this succession to more than her usual brilliant spirits, and talked with perpetual animation of the splendid prospect before her. "They say every pleasure has a drawback, but I have not met

with one," she exclaimed, laughing, to her cousin, in the exuberance of her joy. "When people talked formerly of there being nothing perfect in this world, that was before I appeared in it."

Eleanor became once again only

> "That light unmeaning thing,
> That smiles with all, and weeps with none."

She might be heard all over the house humming her favourite opera tunes, evidently so elated that she seemed scarcely to think the earth was good enough for her to tread upon, and she immediately relapsed into her old unsettled habit of spending the day. She seldom finished any piece of music on the harp without starting off to tune her guitar, or to strike a few cords on the piano; she generally began half-a-dozen letters, which were afterwards left in the blotting-book, to be concluded when her inclination for writing returned; and though she occasionally threaded her needle, and sat down to worsted work, she had scarcely time to decide what shade came next in the pattern, before she flew to copy some Italian sonnet from a book into an album, or to read over her visiting list, in order to see who had last called to inquire for her; and she longed impatiently to bring back Miss Marabout on a visit in the house, that she might have some one to sympathise in the exuberance of her joy.

"Don't you envy me, Matilda?" she said one day, turning to her cousin, who was busily occupied in finishing a laborious copy of Lady Olivia's portrait in miniature, on which she had long been intensely engaged, while Eleanor, as usual, fluttered about the drawing-room. "It really was a lucky accident for me, that Sir Philip had not signed that strange will he made afterwards, if he ever seriously intended it"

"I daresay it was fortunate for me also," replied Matilda, in a tone of perfect sincerity. "I should of course be happy to try the experiment how a large fortune would suit me; but so very little could be added to my enjoyments, that it quite reconciles me to the present state of affairs. I remember hearing it remarked, that many people were seeking happiness, like an absent man looking for his hat, when it is already on his head; and it would be very much like my case, were I to fret myself now on account of the disappointment; therefore, dear Eleanor, you need not feel anything on my account as a drawback to your pleasure on this occasion."

Nothing was farther from Eleanor's thoughts than to suppose that it could detract in any degree from her joy to have supplanted Matilda, as that circumstance, on the contrary, rather added a zest to her own good fortune; and it soon became the object of her continual and ceaseless desire to stir up in the gentle, unambitious mind of her amiable cousin, a feeling of rivalship and of envy, which it was impossible ever to implant in a soil so carefully cultivated, and so filled with every blossom of good and elevated feeling. Eleanor became prodigal of her money in personal expense, but no generous impulse ever led her to such acts of liberality or benevolence as might have made Matilda feel the desire to go and do likewise. She covered herself with trinkets —she filled her room with novels, old china, and *bijouterie*—she multiplied albums, piping bullfinches, and musical boxes—and eagerly longed for the day when she might cast aside her mourning dress, and blaze out in all the brilliance of unrivalled splendour and fashion. Eleanor was on all occasions ready to spend, but never to give; and the only unalloyed pleasure which wealth

can bring to a generous mind, was one of which she was totally incapable, as she felt no gratification in conferring happiness, and would have experienced no more satisfaction in giving away a sum of money than in casting it into the fire.

"Matilda," said Lady Howard one evening, "I think Eleanor will one day be smothered beneath a mountain of gold bracelets, like the woman we read of in Roman history, she has bought so many. Does your cousin never seem to think of presenting one to you? I remember how eloquently she used to talk of the generous things that poor Sir Philip ought to do towards you both; but she seems to have forgotten all her bountiful opinions now that they should come into action."

"Eleanor knows you are so liberal to me that I require nothing, and therefore it never occurs to her," replied Matilda.

"Well," said Lady Howard, "I shall not theorize about what rich people should do till I am tried with a large accession of fortune myself, and then we shall see whether it has the usual effect of shutting up my heart instead of opening it. But you really deserve something, Matilda, for bearing our disappointment so much better than I did. Let us yet hope it will be compensated, in a small degree, by Lady Barnard when she dies, since your unwearied patience with her, and your daily visits there, deserve the utmost gratitude."

"I am sorry you expect anything from that quarter, as it will lead to certain vexation," replied Matilda smiling. "You can have no conception how completely Lady Barnard looks on my attentions as a matter of course, and how much more offended she is by any imaginary omission than she is pleased with my utmost exertions. I merely go from a sense of duty and from a feeling of

compassion, as I would visit any other person so helpless and lonely, but without the most transient idea of ultimate advantage."

It turned out soon afterwards precisely as Matilda Howard had foreseen. Lady Barnard sunk gradually into the grave, under an accumulation of infirmities, during which her sole support and consolation were derived from the unceasing assiduities of our heroine, who became so essential to her comfort that she could not bear to let Matilda go for an hour out of the room; and she expired in her arms, leaving the whole of her fortune to a distant cousin, whom she had never seen, merely because he was HER COUSIN, and to Matilda nothing, except the pleasing consciousness of having persevered, through every discouragement, in an act of disinterested usefulness.

Miss Fitz-Patrick became, from the period of her unexpected succession, so consequential in manner, and so desultory in conversation, that it was often the utmost effort of principle in Matilda to bear with her patiently.

"I wonder what o'clock it is!" exclaimed Eleanor one day, in the midst of an audible yawn, after having lounged away most of the morning in Lady Howard's drawing-room. "Busy, as usual, Matilda; what a drudge you are! always working at something, as if your daily bread depended on finishing it before night. Do let me see you five minutes in idleness, if it were only for the sake of a little sympathy in my weariness."

"By all means," replied Matilda, hastily arranging her work-box and closing it. "I was watching for an opportunity to tell you a most amusing incident that diverted me this morning."

"O delightful! do relate it!" said Eleanor, sitting

down in her favourite place, which commanded a view of the window, and of a large mirror, where her own figure was reflected at full length. "I like nothing so well as a perfectly new story, before the gloss is off, and when it is still damp from the press."

"But will you for once bestow undivided attention upon me? It is nothing without some previous details," replied Matilda; "and I shall be so mortified if you lose the point."

"Lose it!" cried Miss Fitz-Patrick, examining her rings, "how could I? You know my attention never wanders for an instant when any one is speaking to me."

"Are you sure of that?" replied Matilda, with a sly glance of reproach. "I think of late, Eleanor, you have occasionally seemed absent without leave."

"Have I?" said the heiress in a supercilious tone. "Why, really one has so many things to think of. But now for your story, which I am dying to hear. Do begin with saying, 'Once upon a time,' which was always my favourite commencement when we were children, because it plunged immediately into the incident."

"Well, then!—Once upon a time, which means yesterday morning, I went to see old Lady Evans—"

"By the way, that reminds me," interrupted Eleanor, "that I wanted to ask how many sons Lady Evans has?"

"Her children are all dead, but she has two grandsons at Eton."

"What a disappointment! I always fancied you had an admirer in that house, because you go there so constantly. In the very last novel I read, the heroine was continually paying charitable visits to an old lady; and then it came out that there was a handsome son in the Life Guards, who had returned home upon leave, and of course they married at last."

"Certainly it was quite unavoidable; but no such dashing *denouement* awaits me, unless I delay till one of the Eton boys has finished his grammatical studies. We must be disinterested sometimes, you know, Eleanor; and I really like poor Lady Evans extremely."

"But now for your story," continued Eleanor, yawning. "I quite delight in hearing you tell one."

"As I was saying, then, I went yesterday to see old Lady Evans."

"How far is it to her cottage?"

"One mile and a half."

"Did Miss Porson go also?"

"Yes."

"Was it not dreadfully wet and foggy?"

"Yes."

"I spent the entire day within an inch of the fender, shivering and grumbling all the time; but now go on."

"I went, then, to Lady Evans"—

"Is she rich?"

"Not very."

"How much has she?"

"Perhaps a thousand a-year; but I never heard exactly."

"Has she a carriage?"

"Yes."

"And does she keep horses?"

"No."

"Well, now, Matilda, I am so anxious to hear your story."

"I have only got as far as my expedition to Lady Evans"—

"*A propos*, how old is she?"

"Eighty-two."

"Was she ever a beauty?"

"No; I rather believe not."

"Whom did her daughter marry?"

"Sir Thomas Forrester."

"What did Lady Forrester die of?"

"Inflammation."

"Had she any children?"

"Only two."

"But, Matilda," continued Eleanor, glancing into the mirror, "when shall we get on with this story of yours?"

"As soon as I get leave," answered her cousin gayly. "You criticised my excessive patience with poor Lady Barnard's deafness, but really Eleanor, your fit of curiosity this morning is ten times more insupportable."

"Then I will not interrupt you again if I can help it; so do go on."

"When I was at Lady Evans' cottage"——

"Ha! ha! ha! there is that old cat, Lady Susan Danvers, walking along the street with such beauty airs, it would make any one die. The wind is blowing her bonnet off, and her parasol is turned inside out—ha! ha! she has asked a carpenter who was passing accidentally to help her across the street! and she looks like a vessel in a breeze, with every sail set! But what were we talking of? Oh, go on with your story, Matilda; why are you stopping?"

"I waited till you were done laughing and could listen. Lady Evans said to me in her good-humoured way—"

"Oh, Matilda, do come here!" cried Eleanor. "What a sight! there is old Sir Colin Fletcher, in a new equipage that might be the Car of Venus, it is so light and airy: I wish he would give me a drive in it. And only look at those piebald horses of his!"

"Had you a wish ready when they came in sight?"

asked Matilda! "for you know, Eleanor, whatever we are wishing for at the moment of a piebald horse appearing it is sure to happen, according to the old Highland superstition."

"Then I must have been wishing myself a duchess, for that is what I always desire above every thing; a coronet at the corner of my pocket-handkerchiefs, and to be called 'your Grace' at every word, would be my idea of perfect happiness. But now, for the last time of asking, pray finish your story."

"No, Eleanor," said Matilda laughing: "I really must not undertake my task again; it is impossible to hold your attention for a minute now. Yesterday I tried in vain to interest you, and began three different sentences in the most attractive manner; first, I said, 'what an extraordinary event had happened,' which you did not hear me relate; next I told you 'that it was the drollest incident in the world,' but you felt no curiosity; and at last, intending to be quite irresistible, I commenced with saying, 'that I had never laughed so much in my life as at the story I was going to tell.' Now, on not one of these occasions did you hear me out; and poor Lady Evans' sayings and doings must be laid on the shelf also, till you are in a listening mood, if that ever occur again."

"How very cross of you Matilda, when I am so interested," said Eleanor languidly. "I wonder what very pretty foreign-looking children these are passing with their long dusty curls fluttering in the wind, and such affected airs. I like to see conceited children, it gives them such a look of distinction."

As wealth is the only gift in which one man can precisely estimate his superiority to another, because it can be brought to demonstration at once, and must of course be conceded without dispute, rich people are apt to

flatter themselves that in all other respects their pre-eminence shall be as readily acknowledged, though the measure of their attainments cannot be so accurately ascertained, and Eleanor Fitz-Patrick found no difficulty in persuading herself that she excelled Matilda in every gift of nature as much as she did in those of fortune, and that the disparity would be as glaring in the eyes of all the world as it appeared to be in her own; yet she felt a secret and unacknowledged jealousy of her cousin, which all her self-love could not entirely disarm, and a degree of pique to see herself so totally unenvied, which led her to try on many occasions if she could not inflict petty mortifications on Matilda's vanity. These strokes fell, however, as harmlessly on Miss Howard as the javelins in the fairy tale, which were turned into roses when they touched what was lovely or pure.

"Ah!" exclaimed Eleanor one day, in a tone of excessive animation, "I really believe that Sir Alfred Douglas is leaving his card for me! I wish the servant had shown him up stairs. He certainly has the most dignified appearance imaginable, and rides the handsomest horses in the kingdom. Now, that would be a conquest worth making. I am quite wearied of Major Foley and all the common tribe of men, who are sure to be pleased with whatever I think, say, or do; as for my former favourite, Mr Grant, he has become so odd and whimsical, I scarcely know what to think of him now: but there is something so grand and inaccessible about Sir Alfred, that I can never attend to any one else when he is in the room. How strange it is that a person who has so much conversation for gentlemen can scarcely produce a syllable to a lady! Positively, during all my parties at the Priory, he never said a word to me, except to inquire for you, Matilda. Do not flatter

yourself, however," added Eleanor, seeing the brilliant colour which suddenly overspread her cousin's countenance, and which our heroine vainly endeavoured to conceal—"Sir Alfred evidently did not care in the least whether you were dead or alive, and merely wished to find a pretext for speaking to me; but he is not at all a lady's man, and I like him the better for it. People say that Lady Amelia has contrived to inspire into him the most unbounded horror of flirting misses and manœuvring mammas, with the amiable intention of continuing her own regency at the Priory as long as possible; '*mais les difficultés font naitre les miracles;*' and I am resolved that my next victim shall be no less a personage than Sir Alfred Douglas himself, who is really like a royal eagle compared with the chattering magpies that have been surrounding me lately. I like his odd, whimsical misanthropy; and then that stern, forbidding look, with which he stands aloof from every body at a party, is extremely interesting. Was it not with you, by the bye, Matilda, that I saw him talking one evening at the Priory for nearly an hour? I recollect being astonished at the moment, and always forgot to ask what he could possibly be speaking about, for you both looked so grave and prosing."

Matilda's worsteds had become excessively entangled, and she was so intently occupied in counting the stitches of her pattern, that it was some minutes before she could look up to answer her cousin's unexpected inquiry, and as Eleanor seldom waited for an answer to her numerous questions, and cared little for what any one else had to say, she rambled on to some completely different subject before Matilda could speak, and therefore the topic of discussion which had engaged the attention of Sir Alfred Douglas and our heroine on a previous oc-

casion must for ever remain a mystery, though it is not supposed to have been quite so dull and tedious as Eleanor imagined, because on several occasions afterwards it was again renewed, and seemed to be supported on both sides with rather less "suspended animation" than was usually to be observed in the tone and manner of Sir Alfred, who seemed to be attracted by the retiring gentleness of Matilda's manner, and amused by the naiveté and frankness of her observations; for there was a transparency of character, and a dignified simplicity, which made her, young as she was, an object of respect as well as of interest to all those with whom she felt sufficiently acquainted to converse.

It was rare indeed to meet with one so lovely, who was unconscious of her own charms, and indifferent to their effect—graceful without affectation, and pleasing without an attempt at display—always eager to oblige—perfectly self-possessed, and with the most entire command of her attention to whatever should engage it at the moment; her accomplishments always ready for the service of others, her opinions open as the light of day, and her feelings alone shaded from the eye of common observation, but always ready to act on every kind and generous emotion, and known in all their intensity to the few whom she could confidently trust; her conversation abounding in good sense and information, but flowing easily on without the smallest effort, untainted by pedantry, and unsullied by satire; a heart expanding to every benevolent feeling, and a countenance beaming with intelligence. Such was Matilda Howard; but whether the reserved and fastidious Sir Alfred Douglas had perceived, or could appreciate all or any of these graces in her character and appearance, no one had time to conjecture, as Lady Amelia was about this time seized

with a sudden inclination to visit the Continent, and made an earnest request that her son would be her escort on the occasion. If Sir Alfred excelled in any thing, it was in devoted attention to his mother, and he at once acceded to this apparently unaccountable whim, by preparing to accompany her abroad. His last visit before leaving town, was to Lady Howard, who received him with the greatest *empressement* of attention, and overpowered him with Continental recollections as soon as she understood he was going abroad. She told him where the dinners had been bad ten years before, when she had travelled through Germany and Switzerland herself—she revived all her raptures about the scenery on the Rhine—shuddered at the remembrance of the roads—went into ecstacies about the gallery of Dresden—described a concert at Vienna, and talked of her intimacy with as many ex-kings and ambassadors as might have done for a congress; but still Sir Alfred looked absent and *égaré*. Lady Howard was surprised, as she seldom took so much trouble to be agreeable with so little success, and she resolved therefore to try a new ground.

Sir Alfred's "favourite aversion" had always been for female politicians; but totally unconscious of this, Lady Howard plunged at once to her utmost depth in politics. She prophesied that great changes must take place in the country before his return, remarked that the volcano would burst very soon, and bury the whole constitution of the country beneath a heap of ruins—wondered who was the author of the HB. caricatures—described some of the most entertaining of them, and expressed her serious apprehensions for the House of Peers, and her decided opinion that in case of a revolution, the safest and best refuge would be found in Canada. Sir Alfred Douglas seemed inaccessible to

alarm, and remained calm and inattentive during the whole stream of Lady Howard's declamation; but still he sat on, and she began to wonder much at the duration of his visit, and rather to grudge the trouble of trying to amuse a visitor who seemed totally un-amuseable. Yet he looked so distinguished and so intelligent, that she felt assured there must be some Promethean torch that could awaken him into life if she only knew where to light it, and she was not one to be intimidated by difficulties.

"I see you are glancing towards my daughter's portfolio," said she, following the accidental direction of Sir Alfred's eyes. "She has been busy all this morning copying a likeness of poor young Arundell for his mother, which is tolerably successful, but this sketch of the Priory that she had promised Lady Amelia is a total failure—she does not mean to send such a mere daub."

"Let me take it," said Sir Alfred, hastily rolling up the drawing, "it will be a precious recollection to me of ——— of ——— what will never be absent from my thoughts."

"By all means," replied Lady Howard, rather astonished at such unexpected eagerness. "My daughter is spending the day with old Lady Evans, or she would gladly have added a few touches to increase the effect."

"It could not possibly be improved," replied Sir Alfred, abruptly taking leave and hastening out of the room with a degree of agitation in his manner which more than ever astonished Lady Howard.

"I really think," she said to Matilda in the evening, "it is full time that Lady Amelia should take her son to the Continent, for he is becoming very eccentric. This morning he sat above an hour in my drawing-room, neither speaking nor listening. He seems to care no

more about the state of the nation than my lap-dog, and actually smiled when I told him how soon the Protestant ascendancy would be at an end—his eye was fixed on the door during the whole visit, as if he had been meditating an escape, or expecting an apparition, and he took leave of me so suddenly at last that I had scarcely time to charge him with my kind regards to Lady Amelia. I suspect he has something upon his mind, and that a little change of scene will be the surest remedy, unless his case be incurable. Perhaps, like the statue of Pygmalion, he is at last to be awakened by the torch of love."

"Perhaps he may," cried Sir Francis, looking up from his newspaper—

'He that fights and runs away
May live to fight another day;'

What say you to that, Matilda?"

Amongst the many important changes which were consequent on Miss Fitz-Patrick's unexpected alteration of circumstances, there was one for which she had been so totally unprepared, that it became the subject of continual astonishment, and led to endless conjectures on her own part, which were confided to no one except her trusty and sympathizing cousin. From the time when Eleanor's brilliant inheritance was first announced to the world, her lively and agreeable admirer, Mr Grant, entirely relinquished his visits. When they met in society, he no longer paid her those attentions which had formerly been the source of so much pleasure and amusement—he avoided handing her to dinner—never took wine with her at table—discontinued asking her to dance, and averted his eye instantly when he had made her a distant bow. If Eleanor exerted herself by any efforts to address him, he replied with a degree of absence and restraint quite unusual, and the moment another gentle-

man came up to address her, he instantly withdrew. The young heiress was at first surprised, then distressed, and finally irritated at so unaccountable a change, but still it was a subject of mortification and astonishment that never escaped her thoughts. Surrounded as she frequently was by almost every other gentleman in the room, there appeared yet to be a blank, for she missed his lively humour, and the joyous laugh with which he had been accustomed to echo all her sallies of vivacity.

"What can be the matter with Mr Grant?" whispered she to Matilda one evening at Lady Montague's, when he was standing aloof, while a whole troop of officers were officiously searching for her shawl, and calling her carriage. "This is the strangest whim! I must find out what it all means. Mr Grant, you once had the most remarkable genius for putting on a cloak gracefully, but I suppose the art is entirely lost, or you would offer to assist me now."

"Miss Fitz-Patrick," replied he, vainly attempting to force a laugh, "I need a cloak for my own feelings, and I can wear one no longer. Farewell!—a long farewell! —circumstances have changed, but feelings never can. I am about to travel, to go any where that I may forget. I trust you will enjoy all the happiness you merit, and then it will be perfect."

Having said these words in a hurried voice of deep emotion, he threw on his hat and instantly disappeared.

"Matilda," said Eleanor, taking her cousin's arm with a bewildered look of agitation, and hastening rapidly into the carriage—" tell me, Matilda, what you think of this? Speak to me—say something. I am so completely taken by surprise. Poor Mr Grant! he really looked like a person who intended to shoot himself."

"Oh no, Eleanor! I have no idea, to be sure, how

people look who are going to shoot themselves, but Mr Grant is only going abroad, you may depend upon it. I can solve the whole enigma of his conduct, and I truly respect him for it. He was evidently long since attached to you, when there seemed no disparity of situation, but now he is conscious that with all your brilliant gifts, added to a splendid fortune, he ought not to presume upon any previous claim he might have urged to your preference, and therefore he has resolved on absenting himself as his best hope of forgetting you."

"He might at least have consulted my own opinion whether my happiness would be most promoted by his forgetting or remembering me; but after all, 'whatever is, is right,'" added Eleanor, in a tone of some pique. "Mr Grant, a year since, would scarcely have equalled the expectations of my friends, and still less now; but, Matilda, if he had every requisite, there are certainly not many to compare with him for fascination of manner and appearance."

"If you think so, Eleanor, wait till he returns unchanged, as I am confident he will do, in a few years hence. When you have more experience of the world and its ways, he will probably feel justified in renewing the intimacy; and I can imagine no greater pleasure, after such a succession of fortune as yours, than to reward the disinterested attachment of one who has every thing to recommend him except the wealth which you possess in such abundance, and who has now shown so painful and difficult an instance of integrity and right feeling towards yourself."

"Why then does he go?" exclaimed Eleanor indignantly. "I never gave him the slightest discouragement, nor made any alteration in my conduct, for I always did prefer his attentions to those of any other person."

"That is the very reason of his conduct, Eleanor; for I am convinced he thinks you not yet old enough to make a final decision, and he is exactly the sort of person who would feel it dishonourable to surprise you into any premature engagement."

"Matilda, what retaining fee has Mr Grant given you for being his advocate?" said her cousin, smiling; "I am sure you deserve a liberal one."

"I am anxious that you should see the business in its proper light, as all your future happiness may be involved in it, Eleanor, as well as your best chance of being disinterestedly loved. Till lately you scarcely noticed any one at parties as you did Mr Grant, and at that time he had no scruple in gaining your affections, as his own had evidently been bestowed in advance; but now he sees you surrounded by many admirers (or I should rather say suitors, I fear), some of them having superior claims"

"Pshaw, Matilda! how can you speak such nonsense about any of the trash who attend on me now being comparable to poor Mr Grant—poor in a double sense, and yet, thanks to his own care, I have made a narrow escape of being positively romantic, and throwing myself away upon a mere love-match; for, to say the truth, if he had only made a regular plain declaration, as any body else would have done, I am not at all certain what would have been the consequence. How I laughed some months ago when he sung, with so much comic humour, that favourite song of his, 'The bashful lover!'

> 'Ye swains! did you ere such a simpleton know!
> I'm in love, and yet have not the heart to say so!'

He little thought how soon the words would apply to himself, for he was not at that time precisely the person from whom one would have expected such dif-

fidence. As for all you say of my other innumerable would-be lovers, there is not one whose motives I cannot see as plainly as if these were engraved on their foreheads ——————"

"In letters of gold," added Matilda slyly.

"Yes. And let me tell you it is by no means pleasant. Formerly all the attention I ever received was homage due to my own individual merit; but now the whole race of disinterested victims have deserted like Mr Grant, and I have only in my train such men as Lord Alderby, who does not know whether I am tall or short, or fat, or thin, but who has a title and no estate, so that mine would suit him exactly. Sir Charles Campbell is another who cannot afford to marry gratis, because, like all Scotch proprietors, he has built so expensive a house that he can never afford to inhabit it. Colonel Pendarvis, who is living in poverty till his old aunt dies, and would like to keep better hunters in the meantime. I am told he books up a regular register of young ladies, with their fortunes and expectations—elderly misses who are actually in possession, and young girls whose fathers are still in the way. Lord de Mainbury, whose estate marches with mine in the Highlands, is also a link in the tail, not to mention a whole squadron of handsome Irish officers, and a perfect troop of younger brothers, who have been reckoned good-looking and agreeable at home, and are recommended by their mammas and aunts 'to try the heiress,' or rather, perhaps, 'to start for the Fitz-Patrick plate of 1000 guineas for all ages and pedigrees.' Formerly I used to have in my suite half a hundred pleasant younger brothers, with any one of whom I could laugh off half an hour every evening, without thinking more on the subject; for we separated with the mutual consciousness that neither party could afford to fall in

love: but now every one of these youths has found out that he was all along desperately smitten with me, and I cannot be civil to one of them without having a proposal on the spot. It is really torturing; and at parties, instead of a careless 'how d'ye do?' as formerly, I see nothing but angry and despairing glances."

"I am sure, if Mr Grant heard you, he would allow that there is no deficiency in knowledge of the world," replied Matilda, laughing; "but it is a great advantage to be so completely on your guard."

"Yes," said Eleanor bitterly. "I am more than a match for them all, Matilda, and that you shall see hereafter; meantime my delight is to teaze and punish every mercenary who enlists himself under my banner. Last night I made the corpulent, gouty Lord Alderby go down a country dance of a mile long, and he nearly went off in an apoplexy when he reached the end. I asked him about fifty questions in a breath, and he panted, and gasped, and tried to smile and reply, but it was impossible. To-day I have requested Sir Charles Campbell to copy out the music of a whole opera, and to let me have it before Friday; so he must sit up two or three nights, I should hope, to accomplish his task; and Lord de Mainbury has rashly undertaken to procure me some white roses for the fancy ball, though I am confident there are none to be found at this season in any conservatory throughout the country. If it had been midsummer I should have longed for a snow-ball. Gold is the axis on which our world turns now, Matilda; and I scarcely know yet whether to laugh or cry on account of the predicament it places me in. It was like gilding a diamond to give me money, which has actually obscured my real attractions."

"Best to take the cheerful side of every thing," re-

plied Matilda in a lively tone. "You have really revived the ancient times, Eleanor, when a beautiful princess could send her lovers to the utmost extremity of the world, merely to gratify her whims. You have not yet demanded the beard of the Great Mogul, or the Emperor of China's front tooth; but I daresay they might be had for the asking. I had no idea it would have been so well worth while in these days to have lovers, as the abolition of tilts and tournaments left no way, I had feared, for your admirers to signalize themselves; but if you always carry a talisman about to tell who is the most sincerely attached to you, I still think it will be the one whose preference was spontaneous, and totally untainted by the consciousness of your wealth."

"It was a vulgar, mercenary idea of Mr Grant's to suppose that riches could make any difference, if we had truly liked each other," continued Eleanor, with some agitation. "Those who mutually bestow their affections have exchanged what is worth all the wealth of all the world."

"Very romantic on your part, Eleanor; but Sir Richard would not perhaps have viewed it so disinterestedly, and the world certainly might have said, that at eighteen we are too young to judge for ourselves."

"True," replied Eleanor sighing. "It is best not to be pledged so soon, and I have always been rather ambitious for myself, as you know.—Mrs Grant!!! that would never have done! I was long since resolved on no account to marry a man who had only one syllable to his name—it sounds so insignificant; and I must be in the peerage."

"Yes; I remember saying last year that you would one day deserve the epitaph of some old courtier in former times—

'Here lies one who ne'er preferred
A Viscount to a Marquis yet.'"

"But, Matilda, at the same time I really wish there was a general war, because it is such a bore the whole Continent being open for our discontented beaux to escape to whenever the slightest whim disgusts them. Now Sir Alfred Douglas is emigrating also; and I suppose, like Mr Grant, he is afraid of asking me too soon."

"Have you any reason to imagine that he is attached to you?" asked Matilda, looking intently out of the window.

"All the reason in the world," replied Eleanor with animation. "An intimate friend of Lady Amelia's told me in strict confidence, that his mother had mentioned to her, under seal of profound secrecy, that she took him abroad because he had become ardently devoted to 'a young lady with whom he lately became acquainted,' and she does not wish him to marry yet." Selfish old cat! Now, Matilda, who else could it be except myself; for my informer seemed to hint that it had some kind of peculiar interest for me, when she disclosed all that was prudent at present? You know it can be neither of the Miss Montagues, because I heard him say to you that their conversation was double-distilled nonsense. We are certain that it is not Lady Caroline Benson, as you will recollect his remarking, in that dry, diverting, sarcastic tone of his, that he never could look at her without tears in his eyes, since the time that he had lost his favourite walking stick with a head on it. Besides these, it is neither of the Miss Seagraves, because he abhors the whole five; so who else could it possibly be, Matilda. unless you flatter yourself on the subject? and I acquit you completely there."

At the idea of having any rivalship with her cousin,

Eleanor gave a laugh of derision, which was faintly echoed by Matilda; but a crimson blush mantled in her cheek, and rose to her temples, with such suddenness and brilliancy, that it could scarcely have escaped Eleanor's notice, if our heroine had not been gazing intently in a different direction, apparently absorbed in admiration of a pair of hackney coach horses, which were driving opposite to the window.

Whether the cousins ever afterwards discovered the real object of Sir Alfred's preference, can only be known at some future period, as he and Mr Grant have both remained abroad for some time, and separately gone through the usual routine of travellers—a volcano at Mount Vesuvius—a fête at Torlonis—a robbery on the Alps—an overturn near Baden—a bath at Emms—a descent into Herculaneum—and a voyage in a gondola at Venice. But as it would be unfair to anticipate too large a proportion of the very interesting and original narratives, which will, of course, on their return, instantly appear in Albemarle Street, we shall only further mention, that they have both already purchased a larger collection of indifferent pictures than either of them has walls for, and sent home several statues, which may hereafter be very serviceable in the family as wig blocks.

CHAPTER XV.

Strange to conceive how the same objects strike
On different minds—

"Aunt Olivia," said Eleanor one day, assuming an amiable look, "you were saying a great deal to me last month about doing some generous and useful actions, now that my means are so enlarged; and as every thing you suggest is deserving of implicit attention, I have the pleasure to announce that several plans of the kind have occurred to me, of which I know you will approve."

"How glad I am to hear it!" said Lady Olivia, raising herself up with some effort from the sofa on which she had reclined, and looking with hopeful interest towards Eleanor. "It always gives me pleasure to be told of kind intentions; and if you will communicate them to Matilda and me, we shall be happy to hear an account of your projects."

"In the first place, then, I intend to build the most picturesque little school-house in the world, near Barnard Castle. It is to be a rough log-hut with wide casements, the plan of which I shall get from some architect, and thatched on the roof, covered with creepers, and standing in a beautiful situation close to the lake."

"My dear Eleanor." the very description is enough to give one rheumatism," said Lady Olivia, smiling. "Such a place might be endurable for six weeks of summer, but you have no idea of a Highland climate; and

during autumn and winter it would be necessary to have an hospital for all the coughs and colds that would be caught. You might easily have something quite as pretty, and more substantial."

"It is truly discouraging to be met with objections at my very outset," replied the young heiress, peevishly; "but the whole affair is arranged in my own mind, so that I would rather abandon the scheme entirely than alter it. The girls shall be dressed in a sort of uniform —frocks of the Barnard tartan, with white tippets, and transparent white muslin bonnets. If any of them are tolerable looking the effect will be beautiful."

"For a few weeks, Eleanor," added Lady Olivia; "but my dear girl, you have too much good sense not to be conscious that the whole plan is more like a scene on the stage than a scheme that is to be acted in real life, and in the wilds of Inverness-shire. Pray revise it, with corrections, taking into consideration nine months of cold weather, and a large proportion of short days and of Scotch mist."

"It is nonsense to attempt pleasing anybody," cried Eleanor impatiently. "I thought, aunt Olivia, you would have been the last person on earth to prevent my establishing a school, when your own has been so successful; but another of my plans is beyond criticism certainly, though it requires your consent. You know, my dear aunt, how long I have been raving about the beauty of the cow-herd's daughter here. It distresses me every day to see that lovely girl, Nanny Muckleraith, —what a name for a beauty!—weeding amongst flowers, not one of which is so fresh or so blooming as herself; and, poor thing! she is wretchedly dressed too. I have the same pleasure in looking at a fine face as at a fine picture; and my object is, with your permission, to have

this young Hebe taught dress-making, and to promote her into the situation of my own maid."

"Dear Eleanor, this is a very kind impulse of feeling on your part," replied the gentle Lady Olivia, colouring with embarrassment, and hesitating how to express herself in the most conciliatory terms: "I wish it were possible to comply with your wishes, but so many painful lessons were long since given me against being romantic in my charities, that I can see nothing but the danger of evil and of much future regret in your proposed plan. Nanny is certainly very beautiful, and, what is still more uncommon in that rank of life, extremely graceful, so that formerly I was often much tempted to notice her at school more than would have been prudent. I have since considered whether any thing could be done to improve her circumstances, and would have spared no effort to do any real good; but nothing seemed so advantageous as Millar's present way of supplying her with ample employment, along with the elder sister, and leaving them under protection of their father's roof. In my house she might have been carefully superintended, but any arrangement in this world which depends upon the continuation of life to me must now be of a very temporary nature. In your service she would evidently attract more notice than is desirable; for I never saw the person yet who passed her in the garden without noticing that delicate profile and brilliant colour. On the whole, as you desire to do an act of kindness, let me entreat that instead of Nanny you will patronize her sister Martha, who is also an excellent girl, and who has not the disadvantage, as I may really call it in their situation, of being so remarkably handsome."

"Excuse me there, aunt Olivia!" exclaimed Eleanor. "You spoil my whole romance in a moment, which I

really cannot consent to. Martha is merely an every-day, hard-working, good sort of girl, in whom I could take no interest whatever; but Nanny would look like a fairy gliding about my dressing-room. I stop her every time we meet on the road, merely to see her bright smile and brilliant eyes, and she would be a constant object of interest to me. Have you no compunction, my dear aunt, to think that such a complexion is broiling in your garden every day under the blazing sun, or else smoked like a Westphalia ham in that little cottage of theirs? Only think if some lady could transfer such an appearance to herself, what a price would be given at any auction in Bond Street for that porcelain skin; why, Nanny might set up her carriage on the price that would be gladly offered by some London lady of quality for her brilliant colour."

"In spite of the broiling sun!" added Lady Olivia; "but I have often told you, that open air, on any terms, is better for your colour than a hot drawing-room."

"Perhaps," continued Eleanor, with growing animation, "she might make some great conquest at last—a butler, or a shopkeeper, or even a lord! for more unlikely things have occurred; and it is really mournful to watch her weeding turnips or planting potatoes. Yesterday the weather was very cold, and she came actually dressed in an old great-coat of her father's, and such a bonnet! but still she seemed pretty; and at that moment I determined to search out some old gowns to give her, that she may look decent, poor thing! Don't be alarmed, for they are neither gauze nor tulle," added Eleanor, catching a glance of anxiety from Lady Olivia; "my present consists merely of three sober, sensible old silk dresses, of such dingy colours that I wonder how they ever got into my wardrobe at all."

"My dear girl, I am truly grieved to interfere with your very kind and warm-hearted wishes," said Lady Olivia; "but let me hope, when all is considered, you may agree with me in thinking it best to leave Nanny in the station originally assigned by Providence, for it was only after mature reflection that I came to the same conclusion. Her parents are of the very lowest description, poor and ignorant, but very honest and industrious. Their family is numerous; and by having the two eldest girls educated suitably to their circumstances, I have given them the means of being useful at home, besides that they both earn enough for their own comfortable subsistence. If we bring Nanny conspicuously forward in the capacity of your maid, she would be surrounded by a thousand snares to vanity and lightheadedness, without being under any efficient guardianship. Even if she did at last form as great a connection as your most romantic wishes could suggest, it would raise her beyond the level of all those to whom she is now attached, without probably adding to her happiness. My object is, gradually to increase the comforts of her whole family, as they are remarkably deserving people; and if you wish to show the girls a kindness, it would be real charity to give both Martha and Nanny good warm duffle-cloaks for the winter, as I know they are in such want of comfortable clothing that Mrs Millar is at this moment sending them a supply of blankets and of worsted stockings."

"What a burlesque upon my plan!" exclaimed Eleanor, shrugging her shoulders, and unable to help laughing; "I do hate the dull realities of life! When I intended Nanny a coronet, you limit me to a grey duffle-cloak!"

"Which will make her more really contented than the other, you may depend upon it," replied Lady Olivia.

"I am a great enemy to raising people from their original station, because whatever number you exalt above their natural rank, the same number of others must be proportionably depressed to fill up a vacuum in the lower grade of society, which causes a much more extensive degree of suffering than of pleasure. Nanny and her mother spin a great deal for me, because I like to keep up the good old fashion of spinning-wheels; and it makes Millar more than happy to fill her presses with their manufacture."

"And it really is delightful," said Matilda, "to pass through Ashgrove village in a summer evening, when all the porches you have raised for them are glowing with roses, and to watch the poor women basking in the sun at every cottage door, and listening to the music of their own spinning-wheels. I am amused to see that no rank in life is exempt from a spark of vanity; and last week Mrs Muckleraith invited me to step in and inspect her yarn, for she boasted it was unrivalled in the village; and that 'her ladyship' always ordered what she spun to be manufactured for the dining-room."

"Very true!" replied Lady Olivia; "and I pay her rather more than any other person for doing it so well. Mrs Muckleraith's yarn might all be passed through the eye of a needle, it is so smooth, and I like to see her honest satisfaction when she brings it home."

On the Saturday after this conversation, Lady Olivia took the young heiress by the hand with an affectionate smile, saying, "You have made two very happy girls to-day, Eleanor! I saw Martha and Nanny equipped with new cloaks, and literally in ecstacies of joy at their unexpected acquisition, which they said the good young lady had given in so kind a manner that their pleasure was never to be forgotten."

"They must have been raving!" exclaimed Eleanor in amazement; "I gave them nothing! the whole affair went completely into oblivion, after you prostrated my castles in the air so cruelly. I like to have no medium, and would either have done every thing or nothing for Nanny. What could the girl mean?"

Lady Olivia stole a glance towards Matilda, who was watering some geraniums near the window, and discovered at once from her heightened colour that she knew more about the cloaks than her cousin; but with affectionate regard for our heroine's modesty on the subject, she made no remark that indicated suspicion.

"I have not abandoned my plan of promoting the young beauty yet, however; I shall make another attempt to gain your consent," continued the heiress. "What you said, aunt Olivia, during our former conversation, of people being raised from their natural rank, reminds me of my present admirer, Lord de Mainbury, whose late wife was an actress; but they allege she had performed the part of queen so often on the stage, that she used rather to overdo her dignity as a peeress, and sometimes call to the astonished footman at dinner, 'Bring me a vase of beer!' I should never be able to supply the place of so magnificent a person, and do not therefore mean to undertake it."

"We may trust you on the score of assuming sufficient consequence for any situation, Eleanor," replied Lady Olivia, in a rallying tone. "But do I hear you really falling into the very error you were complaining of lately in other young ladies, that they are always professing an intention to refuse proposals which have never been made, and boasting of the number of gentlemen whose attentions they have been obliged to discourage."

"Yes! Charlotte Clifford told me of fifteen rejected

addresses on her own list during last winter; but as for Lord de Mainbury, there is very little to boast of in his preference, as we all take rank in his estimation rather according to our purses than our pedigrees. Indeed his own lineage is not very exalted, for Mr Grant, who is so capital a genealogist that he can trace everybody's origin to a pedlar or a coal-porter, assures me that Lord de Mainbury's grandfather made his fortune by collecting rusty nails in the streets of London."

"Indeed!" said Lady Olivia. "I heard once of a poor man who lived near Salisbury-plain with no other means of subsistence than by gathering the wool that was accidentally torn off the sheep's backs; and guess, my dear girls, how much he died worth?"

"I can't conceive!" replied Eleanor eagerly; "was it L.10,000?"

"Or perhaps, L.500?" asked Matilda.

"He died not worth a farthing, and was buried by the parish!" replied Lady Olivia, good-humouredly smiling to see them both so taken in.

As the time passed on, it appeared to the anxious and affectionate heart of Matilda Howard that there was a very obvious and rapid decline in the health of her beloved aunt, who frequently consulted Dr Mansfield, and seemed to contemplate the probability of closing her earthly career at an early period. She avoided harassing the feelings of her family, however, by very frequently speaking on the subject, which nevertheless came out in accidental allusions sometimes, being so completely impressed upon her own mind that she scarcely remembered it might be strange and unexpected to the friends around her. Often with tears did our heroine watch that fragile and drooping form, which seemed like a lily in the field to fade so imperceptibly before her eyes, she could scarcely say at what hour the sad alteration com-

menced, or in what degree it advanced. Still the same affectionate smile which she was wont to see, invariably greeted her entrance, but much of its animation had fled, and was succeeded by the languor of extreme weakness. Though Lady Olivia pursued her former occupations, she evidently did so with a great deal of effort and difficulty which was quite unusual, and Matilda's young heart swelled with emotion when she thought that in all probability the time was not far distant when she should have to deplore the loss of one who was connected in her affections with every remembrance of former happiness, and with every hope of future joy.

Nearly a year had elapsed from the period of Lady Fitz-Patrick's death, and Eleanor had begun to complain that there was nothing to mark the lapse of time except a very frequent recurrence of Sundays. "The days fly rapidly past, and yet they are tedious," said Eleanor, yawning. "I should like to have an unlimited command of sleep, that one might slumber away all the superfluous hours that hang heavy on hand."

"You would like, as somebody said, to lengthen your life and shorten your days," replied Matilda; "but how gladly I would take off your hands any spare minutes, having often wished there could be an act of Parliament to make every day forty-eight hours long instead of twenty-four, there is so seldom time to do half what would be desirable."

"And I always go to bed early to have an hour less of weariness on hand, but it will be very different when we emerge into society again," said Eleanor; "in the meantime, pray give me your receipt for never tiring."

"The best of all plans is to allow yourself no rest except what consists in a change of employment," replied Matilda. "My aunt always advises us to interest our-

selves in as many innocent objects of pursuit as possible. She has no objection to people being eager about collecting autographs, or seals, or pebbles, or butterflies, whatever they can acquire a taste for, and, in short, to do any thing rather than nothing, provided there be no sin in it, for she says a stagnation is more to be avoided than any other disease of the mind. It is always better 'to wear out than to rust out.'"

"Very true," answered Eleanor, yawning, "if one had anything to do that was worth while; but you know very well, Matilda, that it is, as your father declares, the merest humbug in the world for ladies to talk of being *usefully* employed."

"We may at least try," said Matilda smiling. "The way to shoot high is to aim at the moon, and let us not be discouraged from attempting anything by the impossibility of doing much."

"I suppose you would hold up as an example to me Cowper's Mrs Unwin, who found the day too short for knitting and darning stockings; but whatever I do, it always makes me feel that it would signify nothing to myself or to any one on earth, if it were never done at all."

"How would you like to have been in the prison at Ghent, where the culprits had to pump water out of their dungeons all day, or it rose up and drowned them?"

"Why, they had at least a motive to work for, which I have not."

Another of the family besides Eleanor seemed about this time to stand in need of excitement, and to be pining in restless inactivity, and in unwilling retirement at Ashgrove, which had once been only a scene of peaceful contentment and active usefulness. Miss Barbara Neville had during some weeks made an

entire revolution in her habits of life, before it became obvious to Lady Olivia Neville that she laboured under considerable depression and uneasiness. She was denied to her whole coterie of visitors; even 'dear' Miss Rachel Stodart failed to gain admission when she called. Her sighs for the first time in her life were not meant to be audible; she scarcely wrote any letters for a fortnight, and when she did make the effort of speaking, which was very seldom, she seemed absent, and was considerably less sententious and decided than formerly. Lady Olivia felt completely puzzled, and rather alarmed to think what could have caused so sudden a metamorphosis. Though fast declining herself into a state of extreme weakness and debility, she became warmly interested in watching its progress, and in trying to lead Miss Neville gradually to an explanation of her present feelings. Ever the first to 'hope all things,' Lady Olivia flattered herself that the realities of religion had at last appeared to her guest in all their magnitude and power, so that the littleness of sectarian spirit, and all her love of excitement and display, would at once disappear like exhalations of earth before the morning sun. Lady Olivia allowed herself to anticipate the time, though she had little hope of living to see it entirely realized, when sober truths and simple doctrines would be exchanged for the visions of a heated imagination—when schemes of benevolence would be brought to the test of rational possibility—when books of practical piety and evangelical truth would be preferred to those abounding in speculations of wild enthusiasm and daring presumption—when Mrs Hannah More would be held in superior estimation to 'dear' Miss Rachel Stodart, and Archbishop Leighton quoted with more reverence than Mr Harvey, and when she might hope to converse without any danger of her taste

being outraged by Miss Neville's continual use of technical expressions, and her judgment being obliged to oppose on all occasions the views and sentiments which her heart could not approve.

Lady Olivia now became every day more anxious to gain Miss Neville's confidence, and whenever her bodily powers admitted of exertion, she tried many arts of conciliation and kindness to encourage her into an explanation, but in vain, for though she appeared several times on the point of speaking openly, she invariably checked herself with an appearance of embarrassment, and turned the conversation entirely off from the point to which Lady Olivia had ingeniously brought it. The case seemed hopeless; and as the countenance of Miss Neville continued to be clouded with an increasing expression of anxiety and chagrin, Lady Olivia at length resolved that false delicacy ought not to prevent her from ascertaining whether she could be useful to so near a connexion by any means in her power, feeling desirous that no effort should be wanting which friendship or kindness could suggest on the occasion, whatever it might be, to relieve the mind and to restore the spirits of her visitor. One day, therefore, when she was confined to bed by indisposition, and Miss Neville came to bid her good-morning, she took her by the hand with a look of affectionate interest, and asked whether any thing of a distressing nature had occurred lately, and entreated her immediate confidence, saying it was impossible to foresee how long she might be spared to offer her sympathy or assistance, and she could not any longer remain silent on observing that the depression which had for some time been obvious in the manner of Miss Neville continued so long undiminished.

"Nothing has happened that need distress ME," re-

plied Miss Barbara, in a tone of pique and irritation, which seemed quite inexplicable to Lady Olivia; but as her conduct and feelings were frequently rather an enigma to her friends, this was less remarkable on the present occasion.

"I do not wish to intrude on your confidence, Barbara, and shall never inquire into the subject farther than is agreeable to yourself," continued Lady Olivia, in the languid tone of extreme exhaustion; "but I merely wish to take this opportunity of hinting, that if it be possible to afford relief or consolation in any way, you need not hesitate to claim my good offices, and my utmost exertions for the short time that I now expect to survive."

"You are quite mistaken. I have only met with a little surprise, but it is not of the slightest consequence to any one," replied Miss Neville in a voice of great reserve; and Lady Olivia, with ready tact, instantly started a different subject of conversation, and supported it with all the animation she could command, endeavouring to suit what she said as much as possible to the taste and sentiments of her companion, and to avoid any debateable ground which might have led to a difference of opinions. Lady Olivia Neville seldom argued with any one when it could be avoided, for she had generally found that it merely turned to a keen contest of talent, and in religion especially she knew that if the light were brought in, the darkness must necessarily be expelled; but to argue for victory was invariably mischievous, because, even though it were easy to confute, the real object should be to convince. "The beam pour in, and time and skill will couch the blind," was the plan on which Lady Olivia always acted. She had therefore tried, for some time past, to attract Miss

Neville's attention towards the great doctrines of the gospel—thus by instilling truth to expunge error; and one day Miss Neville listened with some appearance of interest, apparently glad to escape from her own thoughts by any expedient that might occur, and was beginning to relax from her usual air of conscious superiority, when their conversation was brought to an untimely end by the drawing-room door being thrown open, and Sir Francis and Lady Howard were announced. Miss Neville started up with a look of most obvious vexation, and gave a hasty glance at the opposite door, with evident intentions to escape, but she had scarcely time to make a hurried step in the direction of her meditated flight, before her retreat was cut off by Sir Francis, who laughingly intercepted her, declaring loudly that it was not fair to exercise her self-denial upon him.

"Positively, Barbara, you must remain!" cried Lady Howard, in a tone of the greatest animation. "I wish to hear every thing about Mr Harvey's marriage. What a strange business it is! you have been very close and uncommunicative not to let me into the secret, and I assure you it is quite a disappointment, for I had really begun to look upon him as a future brother-in-law of my own. Now, draw in your chair in a sociable way, and tell us all about it."

"I know nothing on the subject, and never concern myself with other people's affairs so much as you do," replied Miss Neville peevishly.

"Then, let me announce what I hear," replied Lady Howard, laughing. "You will be perfectly charmed at our friend's good fortune. The bride is a very rich widow, with an enormous jointure; but she is extremely plain, and, I am sorry to tell you, a strict Roman Catholic. I am told that she changed her church about nine

times, and was always, like the men of Athens, seeking for some new thing, till she became so bewildered at last, that her mind hovered between total infidelity and Popish superstition; but some cardinal at Rome persuaded her that his was the true original church, and she felt glad to be spared any longer forming her own opinions, and altering them again.

'Now Madam, if it be a lie,
You have the tale as cheap as I.'"

"Miss Rachel Stodart and I have had very great doubts lately of Mr Harvey being quite sound in his views," said Miss Neville, gravely.

"I doubted his soundness always, Barbara, and yours too," said Sir Francis, dryly; "but the whole of your coterie are to blame for making such an idol of him. The pope himself has never been considered more infallible than Mr Harvey was by you and your clique a few months ago. I never shall forget dropping in accidentally one evening to see Tom Stodart, and finding a circle of about twenty ladies sitting round my old friend Frank Harvey, who was dealing out sentences to them like an oracle. The attention of the whole party was so breathless that you might have heard a pin drop, and not one of his audience became conscious of my presence till I had nearly escaped. In most learned professions, a long apprenticeship is necessary before we begin to practise—a grocer cannot sell currants without having previously graduated, and not one of you ladies would employ a milliner who had not gone through some long probation, but any person may become a Drawing-room Expositor upon the shortest notice."

"It reminds me of what Dr Johnson once jocularly said, that every man might be a minister who could gather a congregation," said Lady Howard.

"I can answer for it, that a year ago, Frank Harvey had never studied any notes but those of his own bank, nor thought more deeply about any book than his book of unclaimed dividends," continued Sir Francis; "so you may imagine how I was astonished to perceive his sudden metamorphosis, and that I am less amazed than you are at his relapse into an undue admiration of money in whatever form it may court his acceptance."

"I hope this will be a lesson to you for life, Barbara," observed Lady Howard, in a most irritating tone of dignified remonstrance, "and that from henceforth you will avoid all Theological Adventurers, and return into the beaten track—not wandering at random, as you have hitherto done, after any stray preacher who may happen to please your taste."

"I am happy to say you will be disappointed then," replied Miss Neville dryly. "Your hopes on my account are entirely mistaken, as I have decided for some time past to join Mr M'Alpine's congregation."

"What!" exclaimed Lady Howard, in a voice that seemed almost incredulous with astonishment, "the manufacturer from Glasgow?"

"It is of no avail remarking on the subject, as my mind is made up finally," interrupted Miss Neville sternly. "You never heard a preacher so original in the world, probably, as Mr M'Alpine. His wife is a sweet, superior woman; and upon some very difficult texts she has made an important discovery."

"Discovery, indeed!" replied Lady Howard satirically. "I hate discoveries in religion, Barbara! I always thought your next step would have been into the new Roman Catholic Convent, but that will be a grand piece of excitement for you on some future occasion. Nothing is so delightful to our nature as making a sen-

sation, and since it cannot be done often in the usual course of things, people who indulge their taste for excitement must step aside from common custom occasionally."

"Custom is the law of fools," said Miss Neville dryly.

"We heard some time ago, that your friend Mrs M'Alpine was going to establish a school in Greece," said Sir Francis, "but probably she had not many qualifications for an undertaking so responsible, and at any rate I suppose she has abandoned the plan by this time."

"Not at all," answered Miss Neville, with a singular mixture of triumph and embarrassment in her expression of countenance. "The truth must be told sooner or later; so it is as well to mention now, that I have some thoughts of accompanying the mission myself."

A considerable pause ensued, and a silence fell over the party that might almost be felt. Glances of consternation and wonder were exchanged by Miss Neville's astonished auditors, but not one word could be spoken for some minutes. Lady Howard was the first to recover herself.

"Barbara! I have often heard that every human being is out of his right mind about something, and I begin to believe it," said she gravely. "We may as well follow Byron's advice at once, if people go on in this way:

"'Shut up the sane—let the mad go free.'"

"I almost anticipated something of this kind, Barbara," added Lady Olivia, in a tone of calm regret. "It grieves, but it does not greatly surprise me."

"Indeed you are scarcely so much shocked and astonished as I anticipated," replied Miss Neville, looking rather disappointed at the composure of Lady Olivia's

tone and manner. "I expected you to be violently opposed to the plan."

"No, Barbara," said Lady Howard. "You are come to that period of life which is commonly called 'years of discretion,' if ever you are to reach them at all, so I shall not presume to interfere with any schemes, however strongly we disapprove of them; but I should like you for once to hear what Olivia says upon the subject."

"You know already, Maria," said Lady Olivia, "my extreme veneration for such missionaries as go out under proper sanction, with proper qualifications—those who, after spending a long time in fitting themselves for their laborious and important station, leave all the blessings of civilized society, and all the comforts of domestic life, to spend and be spent in their Master's cause. It was such persons as these who first brought the light of truth to our own islands; and we owe the same benefit, as a debt, to all nations where our influence can extend —missionaries, like Schwartz, and Brainerd, and Marshman, and Martyn, who were prepared by deep experience, by years of fervent prayer, and by laborious study, to fulfil the solemn duties they had undertaken, and who exhibited a consistent example of all the patience, the virtue, and the self-denial they lived to inculcate; but the persons you mention have had little experience, and no education to fit them for so vast a responsibility, and therefore they can be scarcely better than blind leaders of the blind."

"Listen, Barbara," said Sir Francis slyly, "and you shall hear a plan which has this moment occurred to me, well deserving of serious consideration: it would combine all the advantages you expect from this expedition to Greece, without any of the evils. I have a small village on my estate in Argyleshire, where the inhabitants

are as idle, ignorant, and dirty, as any savages you could possibly desire to civilize. It has often been my wish to establish a school there, and if you will study Gaelic instead of Greek, you shall have the best cottage on my estate; and it would be really agreeable to have so cheerful and pleasant a neighbour at my shooting-box, when I go there for a few weeks in autumn."

Miss Neville rose with an air of offended dignity, when she perceived the jocular light in which Sir Francis was disposed to view her project, and stalked majestically out of the room, without intending to bestow any mark of attention on those she left behind; but Sir Francis started up to open the door, and good-humouredly insisted on shaking hands, which she accordingly did, with the worst grace imaginable, and hastily made her exit, not even looking at him, or appearing conscious of his attempt at conciliation.

"Poor Barbara!" observed Lady Howard, "her love of excitement is like the mark on Blue-Beard's key—rub it out on one side, and it starts forth in another, where you least expect it."

"I have long known," said Sir Francis, resuming his seat, "that it is possible for people to be amiable without being religious; but I do maintain, that no one should pretend to be religious who is not amiable, because I think it an impossibility, and a libel upon what they profess, which must do mischief to all who see them. Why should any one go abroad to teach who cannot set a good example at home? but to be sure, that is by far the most difficult undertaking of the two, just as it was the chief difficulty of the monarch to continue great in the eyes of his valet, who knew him best. I see more and more every day how the world is deceived in its estimate of people, who do not even intend to mislead their neigh-

bours; and I am resolved, on all occasions, to suspend my opinion of any one who has the reputation of sanctity, till I hear it confirmed by his wife, his mother, his sisters, or his children."

"What would become then of poor Mr Harvey?" said Lady Howard; "for I know that he preserves a stern and remorseless silence on the subject of religion towards his deaf old father, who differs from him in opinion, but who would attend with pleasure, if he conversed with him as he does with strangers. He would be exceedingly thankful, I have no doubt, if, by any miracle, his father became converted; but there is less excitement in attempting the task himself, which is a mere common duty, than there is in bestowing his care as a boon elsewhere; and after paying the old gentleman a hasty visit occasionally, he flies off to the obscure garret of some poor pensioner, whom he exhorts and consoles with untiring zeal. Charity in his case should begin at home, though of course it should not end there."

"Be not righteous over much," said Sir Francis in an under tone.

"There is no text of Scripture so frequently quoted as that," said Lady Olivia; "but few seem afraid of infringing on the injunction that follows: 'Be not over wise.' It is the ostentation of these qualities, and not the existence of them, that I think we are cautioned to avoid."

"Nothing perplexes me so painfully as the faults of really good, pious people," said Sir Francis Howard. "There are a few whom I would be willing to esteem sincere, were it not for the strangest inconsistencies, which sometimes astonish, and always shock me."

"You see only the strength of the disease, but not the efficacy of the remedy; and so long as a symptom

of evil remains, you are apt to blame the medicine instead of the patient," replied Lady Olivia. "We often expect, with sanguine hope, to find perfection in Christians; and when defects appear, let us not blame religion instead of nature. What would these people become without the purifying influences of Gospel truth! and how little we can know the tears and the anguish with which they may have deplored those very sins which have offended us. Christians are to be tried, like gold, in the fire; but still they continue in the furnace of temptation and of sorrow during the whole period that their life is prolonged. The heart cannot be perfected till we are translated to a new existence. I have often admired the tombstone of Klopstock's wife, on which two wheat sheaves are carved, lying carelessly together, and this motto is engraved, 'the fruit shall ripen in heaven.'"

"What I object to most seriously in modern enthusiasm is, that it seems to raise people above natural duties and public opinion. The Scriptures tell us to avoid the very appearance of evil," said Lady Howard; "but many people now are selfishly indifferent to the effect their conduct may have upon the belief of others, and would brave calumny itself rather than put the ordinary curb of social custom upon themselves. Their favourite text most frequently quoted is, that the godly shall suffer persecution; and their very plain inference is, that all who are persecuted must be godly. Good bye, Olivia; I am sorry to deprive you of the pleasure of my company so soon, but I have an appointment with Millar on the interesting subject of a newly invented jam or jelly, which we are to sit in judgment upon this morning; but I leave you Sir Francis, and I know he will be delighted to renew our discussion about the observance of Sunday; 'for e'en though vanquished he

can argue still;' and I know he dislikes less to be conquered by you than by any one else in the world, as you bear your honours so meekly."

"Then to say the truth, Olivia, I am still decidedly of opinion that too much legislation on the Sabbath, either in families or in nations, is injurious," said Sir Francis, drawing in his chair with a positive look; "and you will probably be shocked to hear that, much as I respect religion, I never wish myself in the House of Commons except to vote against any measure for rendering people religious by act of parliament."

"And if wishing for a vote would give me one," replied Lady Olivia in a lively tone, "I should take the opposite side, so we may consider ourselves as having tied off, and carry on our debate with closed doors at home."

"My idea is," said Sir Francis, "that you cannot force people to be pious; for, as the vulgar proverb says, 'You may take a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink.'"

"Yet if you keep water out of his reach entirely he will perish; and therefore, though you cannot produce the thirst that would make him enjoy it, you must render it accessible to all," said Lady Olivia. "We must either oblige those who defy the law of God to observe in some degree the outward form of a Sabbath, or they will inevitably force others to break it, and in such a case we need scarcely say which deserves protection most. If a poor man could work during the twenty-four hours of every day, there would be many indigent persons whose desperate poverty would induce them to undertake it; but would you call that man enthusiastic or interfering who came forward to convince the poor exhausted creatures that they would be actually no richer on ac-

count of this addition to their labour—that their masters were wrong to exact it of them—and that they destroyed their strength and shortened their lives by it, besides defeating that wise purpose of Providence, who has appointed that rest shall invariably succeed to labour?"

"Ah! that is an extreme statement of the case," replied Sir Francis. "Bodily rest of course they must have; even my best hunters cannot work every day of the week, and I should have to keep more of them if it were not for the interval of a day in seven to refresh both them and myself."

"But rest, Sir Francis, is quite as necessary for the soul as for the body; and can we be too earnest in desiring that the toil-worn mechanic shall have one day in seven to elevate his mind above the brutes that perish, by remembering that he is immortal—to anticipate that time when, the curse of sin being removed, he shall no longer be called to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, but when he shall enter on that kingdom of rest and glory to which the rich and the poor are alike invited?"

"Do you seriously imagine, Olivia, that the poor people you describe would make so exalted a use of their leisure as your fancy has pictured?" answered Sir Francis. "It is quite unlike your usual good sense to be so poetical, especially when we consider that the persons who are chiefly to benefit by your supposed day of complete leisure and meditation are postboys, butchers, bakers, coach-drivers, and fishmongers, who would most likely all spend it in the ale-house."

"We cannot help that certainly," replied Lady Olivia; "I would only desire to remove every incentive to secular business on that day, and then let each individual act on his own personal responsibility, as he shall answer for himself alone at the day of judgment. If you could

but witness, Sir Francis, as I have seen it, a Sabbath of rest enjoyed amidst the humblest dwellings of the pious poor in this neighbourhood, when heaven seems to gain its dominion over earth, and the busy cares of life are hushed into sacred repose, your heart would glow with new feelings of gratitude to God, that He has provided such a foretaste of heaven for those who have little else to render life endurable except the hope of another and a better."

"Yet they must often be at a loss how to occupy the time. Even in the upper classes, with every resource of reading and conversation, how heavily the day hangs upon our hands."

"That is too true in some cases," replied Lady Olivia. "To a devout Christian in the higher circles every day is in some degree a Sabbath; he has leisure at all times to indulge his religious affections, to read, to reflect, and to pray. But to a poor man who can truly estimate the enjoyments of a Sabbath, there is, amongst a thousand other advantages, the pleasure of contrast; and in no respect do you see how truly the Great Creator knew what was good for those he had made, than in viewing the peace and happiness, and even the refinement of intellect, which are introduced into the poorest hovel by a due observance of the Sabbath. I do not pretend to say in what manner it might be best promoted; but I think that every detail connected with that subject ought to undergo the anxious consideration of those who could ascertain how each regulation would bear upon the temporal or eternal welfare of those whose best interests are at stake; and this is the only subject, Sir Francis, on which I am really a politician."

"So much the better. I think a female politician is as unnatural a being as a man-milliner; and I never hear

ladies discussing the government of this country without thinking of the fly that felt competent to criticise the cupola of St Paul's. I would never willingly allow ladies to take a newspaper in their hands—let them keep to their piano-fortes."

"Not so fast, Sir Francis," replied Lady Olivia, smiling. "You will allow that every lady should inform herself on the history of her own times, though with no more idea of influencing its political management than a passenger in the London mail would entertain of directing the coachman how to drive it."

"To be sure!" replied Sir Francis. "I enjoy amusing nonsense beyond all measure; but the dull pompous nonsense that some ladies deliver out, by way of enlightening one on the state of the nation, would make a hyena laugh. My better (or worst) half is always groping in the dark to find out her own meaning after she gets upon politics. When she treats of paper currency or the corn laws, I have seen her flounder on wonderfully well, but she is dreadfully bewildered in discussing our foreign policy. I have seen her very fluent, and almost intelligible, on tithes and corporations, for she has really got up the subject so thoroughly that I sometimes almost begin to fancy she understands it; and you can have no idea how her eyes glitter with animation when a convenient opportunity occurs to introduce her favourite opinions. Indeed she does it so skilfully, and they come in so often *à propos* to every thing, or to nothing, that it often reminds me of the cosmogony of the world in the Vicar of Wakefield. Let ladies study the political economy of their own families—the ways and means in their housekeeper's bills—the foreign policy of their visiting books—and the pension list of such of their poor dependants as they can themselves relieve; let them

abolish all slavery amongst their servants and children—let them wage a perpetual war against all domestic disorders—and let them also establish a treaty of commerce with their milliner and dressmaker on the most advantageous terms. I am a keen advocate for every thing being done 'in order;' and as men are initiated more systematically into the labyrinth of political economy, it may be conceded to us, without supposing any particular pre-eminence of natural intellect, that we shall know our trade best, and take a more comprehensive view of the whole business, than those who merely pick up a little superficial knowledge of it in conversation, or from a perusal of the leading article in some newspaper, which is probably a blind partisan of one party or other. Many keen politicians act like the Irish judge, who said he did not like to hear both sides of a question, because it confused him.

"Lady Olivia, before I go," said Sir Francis Howard with gravity which was quite unusual in him, and which greatly surprised her, "let me tell you, for I know how happy you will be to hear it, the pleasure I have enjoyed lately from seeing more of your protégée and pupil, Matilda. She reads to me frequently now, and we generally fall into conversation afterwards, when she always contrives to make herself entertaining, and has several times mentioned remarks she has heard from you, or circumstances which you have told her, that have made more impression on me than you would suppose. If my girl is in any respect what is estimable, she owes it to you, and I cannot refrain from saying how warmly I feel it now, and how much more deeply I may be sensible of the advantage hereafter, when years and infirmities shall have made me more dependent upon the amiable qualities and mental acquirements of those around me. She

is a Christian after your own pattern, Olivia, and I almost think that in time she will make me one also."

As Sir Francis and Lady Howard departed from Ashgrove, and advanced along the garden walk, Lady Olivia followed them with her eyes, which were filled with tears of deep sensibility. All great emotion has a melancholy tone, which often rises, when the heart is touched, to holy feelings of solemnity, and always in her mind turned directly to sentiments of reverential devotion; "My prayers are heard, and my work on earth is done!" thought Lady Olivia Neville, while a profound sensation of thankfulness and peace diffused itself over her thoughts. "My strength is daily diminishing, and my days will soon be numbered, but another has been raised up to fill my place in that labour of love which has so long been nearest my heart; and when I am called, as will soon be the case, to continue my existence in brighter scenes than these, may my supplication for her and for them be remembered and answered till we meet to part no more.

'The race appointed I have run;
The combat's o'er, the prize is won;
And now my witness is on high,
And now my record's in the sky.'"

CHAPTER XVI.

Forgive the wish that would have kept thee here,
And stayed thy progress to the realms of bliss.

It was about the middle of April, when Eleanor Fitz-Patrick set out with Sir Richard to take possession of "her property," as she delighted to call Barnard Castle, and there she was received with an uproar of joy by the numerous tenantry; bonfires blazed on every hill, and a succession of joyous festivities ensued, with bagpipes, tartan, and whisky *à discrètion*, none of her guests being members of any temperance society, or else having obtained for themselves a temporary dispensation from its discipline.

Meantime Sir Francis Howard, who had recently purchased a small estate near Kelso, for the benefit of hunting at the Scottish Melton, became impatient to proceed there, but several circumstances combined to detain him in Edinburgh, which produced a happy reprieve to Matilda, who dreaded to leave her beloved aunt in so precarious a state of health, because it almost seemed to her apprehensions as if such a separation would be final.

Sir Francis Howard was one morning snatching an early breakfast in Moray place, impatiently anticipating a delightful day's hunting near the Roman Camp, as the weather was propitious, and he had sent forward his favourite hunter "Topsy-turvey," which had long been celebrated for its fine action and unrivalled speed. Matilda always stole down when she knew that her father was going any distance to cover, as she then in-

variably found him in brilliant spirits, and she poured out his tea, and laughed at all his jests with the keenest enjoyment, which pleased and amused him so much, that he was usually in a jocular mood when Matilda and he were together alone, and every day increased the pride which he evidently felt in his daughter, and the gentle influence which she acquired over his mind and affections.

"I hate the sight of you, Matilda," said he, laughing, "for you make me feel so ridiculously old that I almost think you should be introduced as my sister. It astonishes people to see a good-looking young fellow like me with a grown-up daughter, and actually some of my brother sportsmen begin to inquire for you already, as if they meant to become victims. Only imagine how awkward it will be if my old friend General Cleveland were suddenly to turn round upon me with a proposal, —or the venerable Lord Holyrood; for the older a man is the younger he chooses his wife to be, as if it struck the balance of years between them."

"Papa, I wish no harm may happen to us, for you are perfectly *fey* this morning, as the Highlanders call it," replied Matilda. "I really never saw you in greater spirits, and that new horse has so untameable a temper, and so ominous a name, that I am always terrified when you mount him."

"Pshaw, nonsense! if I attended to every body's fears and anxieties, I should soon be like the Irishman who declared that this world was no longer a safe place for him to live in," said Sir Francis. "What can a girl like you be supposed to know about horses—if you see a tolerable head and tail, with a few graces that would fit him for Astley's, the merest Rosinante in the world would pass for 'a perfect love;' but my hunters must have good legs to carry me across such a country as

this, or they are fit for nothing, and 'Topsy-turvey' would take me over a garden wall with ease, if I put him up to it. Even an ox-fence at Melton is a mere joke to him, and he always brings me forward in time for the finish."

"He is a splendid-looking animal, certainly," replied Matilda, "and as wild as if he had only been caught in an American prairie an hour ago. What is to be the name of that young hunter you bought from Major Foley yesterday?"

"I called him Laurel, because he is a bay," replied Sir Francis.

"Papa, that pun is quite as atrocious as the one you put Sir Colin Fletcher out of countenance about long ago, when he told mamma she seemed musically inclined, as she was eating hautboys. Mr Grant has called his new horse 'Business,' because then, wherever he goes, he is always out on business. I suppose you will have a brilliant field to-day, the weather is propitious, and I have observed several weather-beaten scarlet coats passing already."

"Yes," said Sir Francis with animation; "I pity every man in the world who does not hunt this morning, for the most perfect felicity is to ride such a horse as mine on such a day. I need not even say, like Madame de Pompadour, when she drank off her glass of cold water, 'Oh! that this were a sin, to give it a relish!'"

"What an odious woman!" exclaimed Matilda. "It is shocking to see any one assume the gay prerogative of saying, even in jest, what is wicked, especially when we remember, that for every idle word a solemn reckoning is to be made hereafter."

"Yet, Matilda, people who are resolved to shine in conversation must generally speak at random a little,

without weighing what they say too carefully, for it is very true '*que la confiance fournit plus à la conversation que l'esprit.*'—But I must be off, so good bye, my dear girl, and take care of yourself. I still hope to have ten years' good hunting, in spite of your distrust about Topsy-turvey's temper; and after I grow old and heavy, we shall enjoy a quiet trot together along the road occasionally, or a canter by the sea-side; meantime, you may always depend upon my staying at home with you in a hard frost, when we shall read and talk together for the future till it thaws again."

"Thank you, papa—ten thousand thanks for your welcome promise," cried Matilda eagerly. "I would live upon an ice-berg for the next month to enjoy your society there."

"I cannot quite return the compliment, Matilda, but I do say, that there is no one with whom I would rather spend a rainy morning by the fireside, and I hope we shall enjoy one yet, if you are not the first to desert, but I know of somebody who will try to eclipse me in your good graces soon, and who is very well deserving to succeed. I must say no more at present, but you may depend upon one thing, that Eleanor, with all her fortune, will never find his equal. Adieu for the present, and solve my mystery if you can," added Sir Francis, giving one of his most *riants* glances towards his daughter. "Your mother knows nothing about it yet, but I prophesy that when the sky falls we shall catch larks."

When Matilda was alone, she thought with astonishment of all that Sir Francis had said before he left the room; but when she reflected on his insatiable love of a joke, and the rallying tone in which he had spoken, she found it impossible, as she had often found it before, to ascertain whether he was in jest or in earnest; but her

conjectures and meditations were suddenly put to flight by the unexpected re-entrance of her father himself, whose expression of countenance was entirely altered from its usual hilarity to a look of anxiety and extreme agitation.

I wish all may be well at Ashgrove," he said hastily. " Your aunt did not look well when we were there on Friday, and this note for you has been sent by express. The man who brought it is a stranger, and he says that his orders were to ride at full speed."

Matilda held out her trembling hand for the letter, and tore it open with a palpitating heart, for she augured too surely the nature of its contents, which were worse than her utmost anticipation of evil. Our heroine read with grief and consternation a few lines from Millar, to say that Lady Olivia had been suddenly seized during the night with a succession of fainting fits, which had been so alarming that immediate apprehensions were entertained by Dr Mansfield for her life.

" Order the carriage instantly!" cried Sir Francis, in a hurried voice to the servant, while Matilda sunk into her chair, nearly insensible with agitation. " And tell Bingham I shall not hunt to-day, so he may put up the horses. Matilda," added he with a look of profound emotion, " Lady Olivia may probably not be able to see me, but I must accompany you to the cottage, for I wish to show the utmost respect to one whom we have both so much reason to venerate and love. Say nothing to your mother at present; she has not risen, and would detain us for an hour about her keys and directions to the servants. I never saw any one in my life so unconscious of time, but I shall leave a message, and she can follow."

It was no ordinary feeling that could have induced Sir

Francis to relinquish so readily his day's hunting, but without casting a transient thought of regret upon the loss, he threw himself into his travelling chariot beside his daughter, and drew down all the blinds. They proceeded in melancholy silence along the road, for Matilda's heart was too full to speak, and the way had never before appeared so endlessly long. It was the first time she had ever approached that house without the most joyful anticipations; and when she remembered the affectionate smile which had invariably greeted her arrival there, a fresh burst of grief overpowered her, to think how probably that smile would be wanting now and for ever.

A group of poor people surrounded the door when their carriage drew up, whose distressed countenances showed evidently that the rumour of Lady Olivia's danger had already reached them, but they all respectfully drew back when Sir Francis and Matilda passed. The old butler could not look up when he opened the door, and Millar appeared at a short distance with her countenance bathed in tears, and beckoned for Matilda to come instantly to Lady Olivia's room. "She has asked for you several times, and will be so happy you are come at last."

"How is my aunt?" said Matilda, in breathless agitation. Without waiting for an answer, she hastened into her bed-room, but could not for some minutes advance farther than the door, overpowered with emotion, and deeply impressed by the scene which she there contemplated. The tranquil and serene countenance of Lady Olivia Neville had become so entirely colourless as to be scarcely distinguishable from the pillow on which it rested. Dr Mansfield felt her pulse with a look of deep concern and anxiety, while her eyes remained intently fixed on the white-haired and venerable Mr Arnold,

who was audibly engaged in prayer. Matilda's eye finally rested on a figure nearly concealed in a remote part of the room, evidently shunning observation, and so buried in uncontrollable grief, that some moments elapsed before she recognized Miss Barbara Neville, whose countenance seemed convulsed with weeping, in all the desolation of natural, unaffected sorrow. Nothing could be more solemn and affecting than the prayer of Mr Arnold, nor dictated by a spirit of deeper humility and implicit confidence in the mediation of Christ, as our only access to the mercy of God, and in the influence of the Holy Spirit, as the sole means of fitting us for glory and happiness hereafter. Lady Olivia closed her eyes in heartfelt acquiescence when he concluded, and seemed to be silently engaged in fervent supplication.

"My kind friend," she said at length, in broken accents, "it cheers me to hear once more that voice which so long assisted my devotions at the house of God. Tell me, Dr Mansfield, for I can hear it with thankfulness and composure, when do you expect that my existence here shall come to a termination? It appears to me very near."

The good and sympathizing doctor mournfully declared, that from the state of extreme exhaustion to which his patient was so suddenly reduced, he feared her anticipations were but too correct, and that he apprehended a few hours would probably close her earthly career."

"At last," said Lady Olivia, slowly turning her eyes towards Heaven, with a look of unspeakable solemnity, "Glory be to God, I am prepared!"

Her thoughts were some moments afterwards recalled from the feeling of intense anticipation with which they were occupied, by an irresistible call on her sympathy; for Matilda Howard approached with a countenance

already haggard by the recent shock, and clasping the hand of Lady Olivia in her own, she kissed it with passionate eagerness, and rivetted her hold as if she would thus have endeavoured to avert the stroke which was about to separate them, while she gazed in the face of her departing friend with a look of tearless anguish.

"Be comforted, dearest Matilda," said Lady Olivia, feebly. "Forget your own sorrow for a moment, and think how soon I shall be with Christ. Seek him continually, and we shall meet again. It is a sad separation, my child. It grieves me to reflect that you will have sufferings and sorrows of your own to endure, and that I shall not be here to sympathize with you. But oh, Matilda, think how short is the 'for ever' of this world, and weep as though you wept not, for all will soon be at an end; but the immortal soul which has been sanctified by God, will remain blessed throughout eternity. Speak to her, Mr Arnold; you know all, and I can say no more. She needs consolation; for I can tell all she suffers in losing a friend, whose best earthly comfort she has so long been considered. My own children never were dearer to me."

"Blessed! oh, how blessed! are the dead that die in the Lord!" said Mr Arnold, impressively. "Soon shall we all stand, as our beloved friend does, on the verge of eternity: may our hope be as humble, and as secure. We sorrow now, but we must also rejoice. My dear young lady, would you delay the wearied courser when he reaches the goal?—the worn-out traveller, when he gains the summit of the mountain?—or the tempest-tossed mariner, who finds refuge at last in his long-desired haven? Why then should you grieve for Lady Olivia? Think only of the blessed exchange that awaits her from a life of sorrow to an eternity of blessedness.

"Yes," replied Matilda, bursting into tears. "I know that well; but for my own sake—for the sake of all who are dear to me—for every one on earth except herself—I must——dearest aunt, I must be allowed to weep."

"Nor would I forbid it, my beloved Matilda," answered Lady Olivia, tenderly. "Your affection has long been one precious gem, amidst the wreck of every earthly attachment; and there is no human being who would not feel soothed, as I do, by the consciousness that tears such as yours will follow my silent dust to the grave, and sanctify my memory in your remembrance."

"Yes—for ever!" sobbed Matilda. "What will life be without you? Oh! how cheerless and lonely!"

"I know what it is to weep in solitary grief," whispered Lady Olivia, in a tone of exhaustion; "but much as I feel for you, I would not banish one sorrow that our heavenly Father sees to be necessary, if it can but give you hereafter such peace and joy as I have at this moment, and which I know to be only the commencement of an eternity as blessed."

Matilda clasped her hands, and silently looked towards heaven, with an expression of intense devotion; but could not speak.

"Poor Eleanor! she is much in my thoughts tonight," added Lady Olivia. "Tell her, Matilda, my last prayer for her was, that she may not be tempted to make this world her portion, or ever to think that it can satisfy an immortal soul. She has much to mislead her now; may the Almighty direct her heart aright. You may both have many years yet of earthly happiness to come, and I earnestly trust it will be consistent with your good," continued Lady Olivia, after a long pause to recover strength. "But should it be otherwise, then rest assured, my child, that the furnace of suffering is also

a furnace to purify. I now look back, and rejoice to think, that by affliction I have been prepared to leave this world without regret, except for YOU and our beloved Eleanor. It seems but yesterday since my widowed heart first told me that life must henceforth be a long course of solitary mourning; but, Matilda, all that is said of our fleeting existence seems now but a faint emblem of its rapid flight—the path of an arrow—the vapour that appeareth for a moment—the weaver's shuttle—and the track of a vessel on the tide"—— ——

Lady Olivia's voice became inaudible from weakness; but while Matilda glanced at the calm and sanctified expression which beamed on the countenance of her aunt, when thus recalling the memory of sorrow, now eternally at an end, she felt that it must indeed have been sent in mercy, when the fruit was so blessed.

Dr Mansfield enjoined repose for some hours; and after his departure perfect stillness reigned throughout the apartment, where sorrow and anxiety were too keenly felt to be audibly expressed. Even amidst the depth of her own affliction, Matilda could not help giving an occasional glance of compassionate kindness towards Miss Neville, who remained with her face buried in her handkerchief, leaning on the table, and perfectly immoveable; but our heroine could not venture to intrude upon the privacy which she so evidently courted, seeing she never raised up her head for a moment, except when the distant tones of Lady Olivia's voice were audible, and then she listened with breathless attention.

Towards evening, having apparently recovered some strength, Lady Olivia opened her eyes, and fixed them for some moments, with an expression of the tenderest interest, on Matilda, who arose and silently kissed her pallid cheek.

"Is your mother come?" said Lady Olivia, with some difficulty. "Let me see her and Sir Francis once again. I know how they both would value my blessing."

Matilda hastily withdrew, and a few moments afterwards she stood between her father and mother beside the couch of their expiring friend, who faintly turned to them with a transient smile of heartfelt kindness.

"May the best mercies of Heaven rest on you all!" said she fervently, "and when your mortal bodies are called to pay the universal penalty, as I am about to do, may your immortal souls be at peace as mine is, with the hope of pardon and everlasting life through Christ our Saviour."

Sir Francis solemnly bent his head in token of entire acquiescence in the prayer, and a deep sob from Lady Howard, told more than words could have done, the depth of her grief.

"Barbara," said Lady Olivia, faintly extending her hand, "I know you are not far distant."

Miss Neville instantly approached with averted countenance, and making a vain attempt to assume the appearance of composure; but after struggling with her feelings for some moments, she covered her face with her handkerchief, and burst into tears.

"Maria," continued Lady Olivia, gently clasping the two sisters' hands in her own, "before my eyes are dimmed by death, let me see you both united in heart—let me die in the hope that you will hereafter be kindly affectioned one towards another."

She looked with an air of anxious entreaty towards Lady Howard, who struggled for some moments against her long-cherished aversion, and against the ruling pride of her heart, but at length nature and feeling prevailed, and being moved above all by the sight of Miss Neville's unfeigned distress, she clasped her in her arms, while

they wept together with a degree of mutual sympathy which no other event could have produced.

"Sir Francis, I have provided that she shall want for nothing but kindness: that I cannot now supply," said Lady Olivia, looking earnestly towards him, while he stood near the bed with an expression of profound emotion. "Matilda will do much, but you and Maria might do still more."

"Your wishes are sacred to us all," replied he, mournfully; "but, alas! who shall supply your place, Olivia, to her or to any of us?"

"He who never leaves nor forsakes us. Oh! seek Him, Sir Francis, and then no sorrow will deserve the name. We part in sadness; but in His presence let us meet again with joy. I would be alone now,——nature is exhausted," whispered Lady Olivia, almost inaudibly; "Matilda will remain, and let you know when any change takes place."

Sir Francis kindly and considerately drew the arm of Miss Neville within his own, and supported her out of the room in silence, followed by Lady Howard. Suddenly Barbara turned back, moved by an irresistible impulse of emotion, and having once more kissed the cheek of Lady Olivia, she rushed out and hastened to a solitary apartment, where sinking on her knees in an agony of grief, she consigned herself to the indulgence of deep, unmitigated sorrow; and hours fled and darkness closed unheeded, for still she wept, while memory continued to pour in its tide of tender and affecting recollections. Meantime Miss Howard remained immoveably stationed beside her aunt in almost breathless silence, till at length she called her forward.

"Matilda, my child, my last earthly care! can I do

nothing for you ?" said Lady Olivia, rousing the little strength that remained, after resting for nearly an hour, and looking fondly at her niece. "I have solemnly committed you to Him who has been the unfailing resource of thousands in all ages, now rejoicing before the glorious Trinity of Heaven. It is a multitude whom no man can number, and, oh ! how blessed is the prospect of soon uniting my voice in that perpetual anthem of praise which ascends in ceaseless gratitude to him who loved the souls of men !"

Lady Olivia remained for some time in silent and elevated meditation, while her eyes shone with serenity, and the colour faintly tinged her countenance, producing momentary life and animation.

"I shall see that benignant and holy Saviour who visited this world of sin for our sakes; I shall behold his prophets and apostles, and the holy men of every successive age whom I have loved and honoured; I shall meet again those dear ones of earth who were never absent from my thoughts. I go to such joys as the heart of man cannot conceive ! And yet, Matilda, though we see as through a glass darkly, enough is revealed of our blessed prospects to show that an eternity amidst the choicest blessings of this world would be less than nothing in the balance. I pray, my child, that you may follow me, and whether the path along which you are led to glory be strewed with roses or hedged in with thorns, it will matter but little if the Holy Spirit be your guide and comforter. Shall it not be so, Matilda ! Shall not a few years restore us to each other ? Then let us now thank God that my passage is short and easy to the glories of eternal day."

Matilda could not reply, but she slowly sunk on her

knees beside the couch of Lady Olivia, who breathed forth a prayer so profoundly touching, so full of cheerful faith and holy resignation, so abounding in bright anticipations of the future, and in deepest tenderness for those she left behind, that before the sublime strain of her adoration and praise was concluded, Matilda felt as if she were herself on the verge of eternity, and as if no worldly sorrow could ever reach her more.

It was long after midnight when Miss Howard, who had lighted her candles and remained stationary by the bed of her aunt, wrapt in serious meditation, and occasionally reading the Holy Scriptures, became suddenly struck with surprise at an unusual quietness which reigned in the room—not a breath was heard—not a sound was uttered, but the stillness of death seemed around her. Slowly and fearfully she drew aside the curtain and gazed into the bed. One glance was sufficient to reveal the dreadful truth, and Matilda discovered, with a degree of awe too solemn for the indulgence of any human emotion, that the spirit of Lady Olivia Neville had fled for ever. Her lips were parted, and still bore the traces of a peaceful smile—her eyes were turned towards heaven, and the colour yet lingered in her cheek. The pillow was unruffled, and one hand rested loosely on the quilt, while the other was placed beneath her head in the attitude of deep repose.

She slept, indeed, for it was the sleep of death, in which her body was to await that call which shall restore our slumbering dust to a GLORIOUS RESURRECTION.

In vain my fancy strives to paint,
The moment after death,
The glories that surround the saint,
In yielding up his breath.

This much—and this is all we know—
They are completely blest,
Have done with sin, and care, and woe
And in the Saviour rest.

One gentle sigh their fetters breaks,
We scarce can say they're gone,
Before the willing spirit takes
Her mansion near the throne.

Faith strives, but all its efforts fail
To trace them in their flight,
No eye can pierce within the veil
Which hides that world of light.

NEWTON.

THE END.

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