



Bodleian Libraries

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

This book is part of the collection held by the Bodleian Libraries and scanned by Google, Inc. for the Google Books Library Project.

For more information see:

<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks>

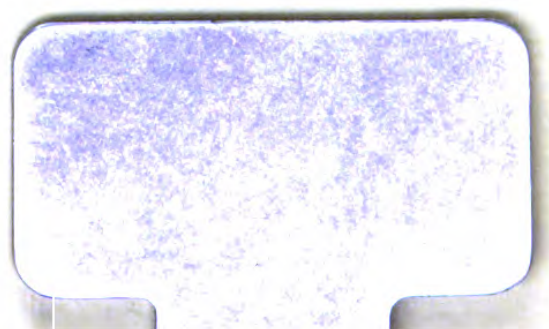


This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) licence.

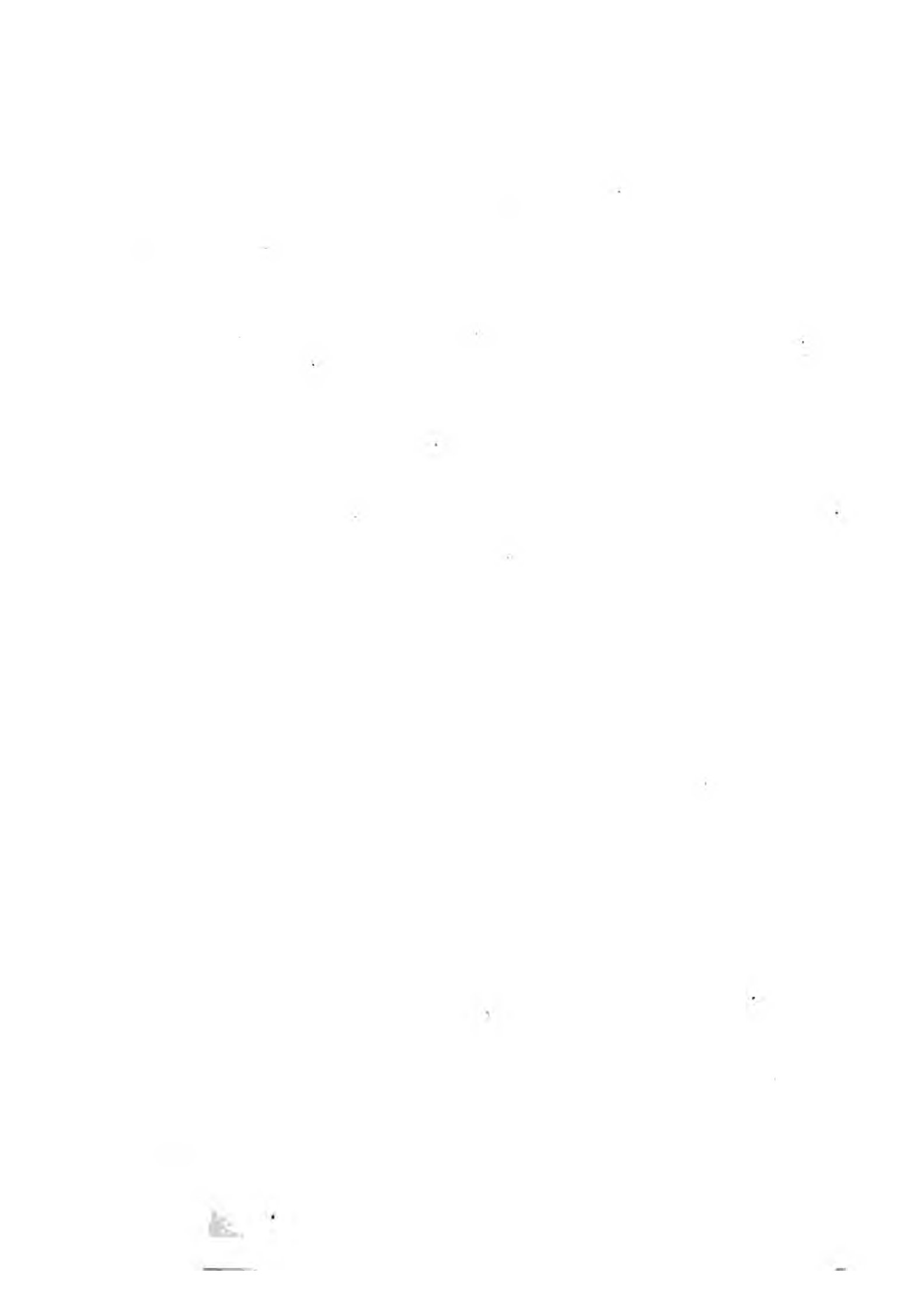
SUSAN
AND
MAGDALENE

1489.
f. 2592.

1489 f. 2592











SUSAN AND MAGDALENE.

SUSAN AND MAGDALENE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
'THE COUSINS RECONCILED.'



EDINBURGH: WILLIAM OLIPHANT & CO
LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO.

MURRAY AND GIBB, PRINTERS, EDINBURGH.





SUSAN AND MAGDALENE.

HOW glad I am to see you here again, my dear Magdalene!’ said Susan Lambert, as she placed a chair near the fire for her friend,—a smiling baby at the same time in her arms.

‘Not so happy as I am, be assured, Susan,’ replied Magdalene, shaking hands with her once more, ‘coming from a land of strangers to this well-known place. But there is a little stranger to me here,’ added she, looking more closely at the baby; then holding up her hands, said, ‘Will you come to me, baby dear?’

The infant held out its little arms, and went willingly to her, and was tenderly pressed to the warm heart of its mother's friend. 'May the God of your parents bless you, dear little one,' whispered she over the babe. 'And what is your name, baby? for that I have never been told yet.'

'Her name is Magdalene,' replied the mother. 'She is *your* name-child, and I only wish she may be like you.'

'*My* name-child!' said her friend, in a tone of surprise. 'How kind that was, dear Susan! But why did you not tell me?'

'You see,' replied Susan, 'it was some time before it was quite fixed. Donald rather wanted her named for the first child we lost. I did not feel the same about it as he did, but I said little till I saw if the baby and the mother were to be spared. I had suffered so much that I had been taught to look on everything here as uncertain. It was longer than usual before

she was baptized, I continued so ill, and little had been said on the subject till near the time.'

'And her father wished her named for little Mary,' said Magdalene, 'who was taken away after a passage through this wilderness of three short months?'

'Yes,' replied the mother, while she breathed a sigh, as she thought of her first babe. 'But I am not fond of that. It appears to me as if you thought you had lost for ever the one that is gone, if you give the same name to another child. Now, I hope my little Mary is in heaven with her Saviour, and that we shall meet again. It is true we know little of the eternal world,' added she, passing her hand over her forehead, 'and it may not be as parent and child; yet surely it will be as *one* for whom I shall ever feel a peculiar love.'

'And what did Donald say to that?'

inquired Magdalene.

‘He said my thought was new to him,’ replied Susan; ‘but he liked it, and then it was soon fixed that the wee thing should have your name. You will not like her the less?’ added she, looking affectionately at her friend.

‘Oh, Susan,’ replied she, ‘how great is this kindness,—what the sight of you again to me, after this long absence! Oh that we might not have to part again!’ She leant her head over the baby, and dropped a few silent tears. Susan also wiped her eyes. Both friends had been in sorrow since they parted, and the remembrance of past suffering mingled with the joy felt at meeting once more.

Two elder children now entered the cottage. The mother took the infant, and Magdalene renewed her acquaintance with her little friends, and produced much from her ample pocket, that gave delight, and called forth sounds of joyous mirth.

‘Which way did you come?’ inquired Susan after a little time, ‘for I have been often at the turn of the road hoping to see you, and each time had to come back disappointed, and thinking it long.’

‘I came down the other way,’ replied Magdalene, ‘by the manse and the church, just that I might see all at once. The door of the churchyard was open, and I went in for a little while; that kept me later than I need otherwise have been. I had wearied so much to see one spot; and yet when I made out my wish, my heart was like to break, so many thoughts rushed into my mind at once.’

‘Oh, Magdalene, you should not have gone there alone!’ said her friend.

‘It has done me no harm,’ answered Magdalene, ‘and the first sight again of all in this dear place is over now. But oh, it was a sad breaking-up when my dear father was taken from us! But this is not

right ; I did not mean to speak of anything sad so soon.'

'We have much to hear from each other,' said Susan, looking sorrowfully at her friend. 'But I wonder what is keeping Donald now; he promised to be home early to-night; and I cannot let you wait your tea any longer, whether he comes or not. You look very tired, and will be the better of something to refresh you. Run, Tommy dear,' added she, addressing the eldest child, 'and look if you see your father coming yet.' The little boy returned from the door of the cottage almost immediately, calling out, 'Yes, mother, there he is,' then ran out again to meet his father.

Magdalene received as cordial a welcome from Donald as she had before done from her friend Susan, and her heart was full of thankfulness at being once more with these kind friends of her early and happiest days.

The next forenoon, after Susan had arranged all her little family affairs, and Magdalene had visited one or two of her old acquaintances in the village, the two elder children being out at school, and with only the baby to disturb them, the friends seated themselves at work together, Susan saying, 'We must lose no time, then, since you can stay only a fortnight with us. We shall never feel satisfied with that short visit, Maddy; but, first of all, tell me what your plans are. Do you think you will try the school next summer?'

'I will just tell you all my history, and then I must have your advice and Donald's. But he was saying to me this morning, when you were busy with the bairns, that I should ask the minister's advice about trying the school; he could tell me whether it would be likely to succeed or not, better than any one else. You see, Susan, I am just drawn two ways; for Miss Mowbray

wishes me to remain with her: you know she is to be married whenever she comes of age, and she wants me to continue to be her maid.'

Susan. 'But is your health good enough for that situation?'

Magdalene. 'I am a good deal stronger now, and have not much to do.'

Susan. 'Is she a pleasant lady to serve, and do you like her?'

Magdalene. 'I like her dearly. She has many faults certainly; but she is a sweet, pleasant lady for all that, and she has been very kind to me. But the chief point is this, you see there is little religion in that house. I have no help to what is right. I stand as it were alone, and I think it would be better for the concerns of my soul to be back here with my pious friends, and able to attend church regularly. And if a little school would succeed, I think I could be very happy in trying to be useful

in that way; but I am unable for any great fatigue, and sometimes of late I have felt a doubt as to whether I would be quite right in giving up my place, for what might be very uncertain.'

Susan. 'Does your uncle know anything about your plans?'

Magdalene. 'Not much, but I think he would not object either way. And he is very kind in always urging me to return and live with him.'

Susan. 'You will not think of that?'

Magdalene. 'Oh no; I was very unhappy when I lived at the farm. It did not suit me; there was such a constant bustle, and they have all such rough noisy ways.'

Susan. 'Are they not religious people?'

Magdalene. 'I think my uncle is a truly pious man. I don't wish to judge of the others; but surely *this world* has a great hold of their hearts, at any rate. You

know my parents were very holy and gentle in all their ways, never a harsh word said to one of us. I went to the farm, you remember, with a heavy heart a few weeks after my father's death, and the breaking-up of our happy little family. I had never been parted from you before, and everything was so different, my heart was like to break. Then, after I met with that severe hurt on my foot, I suffered great agony of body, and was so very ill that at times I thought death might be near. But oh, then I knew how to feel grateful for early instruction, and that God my Saviour was a known refuge to my soul before the days of sorrow came. I had little earthly comfort, but the Lord was with me. During that year of illness I learned more of my religion, and of my own heart, than I had done all my life before; and I could say with David of old, "It is good for me that I have been

afflicted." I often thought what would have become of me, if bereavement that touched the heart, then severe illness had come upon me, and my soul in a state of spiritual darkness and doubt!

'You were spared that anguish at least,' said Susan with emotion.

'What would have become of me, without the comfort of my religion at that time! I was confined to one little garret, mostly to bed, for six long months, and often in severe suffering.'

'A garret!' repeated Susan.

'Oh, I must explain that; it was no want of kindness, it was my own choice. When I was first ill, I slept in the room with some of the others. The little garret was almost empty. I had often gone there for a quiet corner to read my Bible in, and liked it. After I was very ill, the noise of the house disturbed me greatly, and I asked my uncle if he

would let me be carried up there. He thought it might be cold, and waited till he asked the doctor, who said it would be much better for me; and my good, kind uncle carried me up himself with as much care as any woman could have done. I was very quiet and comfortable there, and had a window that was a great pleasure to me, I saw so much of the country from it. Often too, after I got rather better, I watched the sun rise, and always thought it did me good when I saw it. If all was sad to me on earth, all was bright above. The sight of that glorious object, the beauty of everything under the influence of that soft light, led me to form higher ideas of the power of God, and to read with delight the passages of Scripture on that subject; and then to remember that He who created all things,—that the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity,—hath also revealed himself as the Father of

the fatherless, and saith, "that He will dwell with the poor and contrite heart;" that poor and unworthy and lowly as I was, if I had an interest in Jesus my Saviour, I should never be forgotten of Him. Oh! this was the hope that supported my soul; the sweet comfort that I would not have parted with for all this world could have offered me.'

'Had you no fear of death?' inquired Susan.

'Oh no, not then. I thought at times that I could willingly face even a stormy passage to reach the haven of eternal rest, to cease at once from sin and suffering. When I was first ill, I felt some alarm: the dread of possibly having deceived myself, of supposing myself a Christian on too slight grounds, led to deep self-inquiry, and the prayer of David was the constant language of my soul: "Search me, O God, and know me; search me and

try my heart; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." I knew the only way of salvation. I endeavoured to seek it in that way. And while all was dark in my outward circumstances, my soul was granted spiritual light and peace.'

'Your heart was early and fully given to God, Magdalene, and you tell me only what I should have expected. You never had that *worldliness* which has occasioned misery to some of us.'

'Oh, Susan, you do not know my heart; it is full of sin.'

'I know what your conduct has been, both in years of prosperity, when you endeavoured to lead others to be holy like yourself, and afterwards in adversity, most unlooked for; and our Lord hath said, "The tree is known by its fruit." But go on with your history. I believe the doctor who attended you was a pious man?'

‘Yes, a real saint. I wonder that I have been so long with you, and have not told you how much gratitude I owe to him. I am sure if I had been the first lady in the land he could not have paid more attention to the case than he did. At one time he brought a great Edinburgh doctor, who was passing through the village, a friend of his, to see me. He said the case was not a common one, and he wished more advice. The wound was open then ; and my bed was moved, with me in it, near the window, and a long examination followed. And oh, how gentle and kind they were to me !’

‘Did they put you to pain ?’

‘Yes, a good deal that day ; but they told me first, and explained that it was needful to ascertain how far the injury extended. About a fortnight after, the same doctor came again, and then they thought better of me, and encouraged me

very much, and began to give me things for my general health, and by slow, slow degrees I got a little better ; but I suffered a great deal, and was often cast down, though my faith was not permitted to fail. As soon as I was able to read, the doctor kindly lent me books of all different kinds, both religious and amusing, that afforded me great pleasure. And oh, Susan, I used to think how much you and I are obliged to the ladies who took the trouble to instruct us in our youth. I found delight in reading about a number of things that my cousins could not take the smallest interest in. I often wondered how they could bear to think about the same tiresome things over and over again, and never wish to hear of anything new, nor of the wonderful truths that travellers inform us of about our fellow-creatures of other nations and countries. Just gossip, gossip, about the neighbours. Oh ! I

wearied of that. But I must tell you more about that best of doctors, and how he found me one day. I was vexed at first, but it all led to my after comfort. At the time I knew of you ill and suffering here, I was greatly cast down; and oh! then I saw how rebellious my heart was, how unwilling to submit for you and for myself to the will of God. I longed to be with you, and I knew that, after Donald, no one could have felt for you and soothed you like the friend who had shared all your former joys and sorrows; but, alas! confined to one spot, I had no power to be of use to you, and was well aware that every thought you turned to me, at a distance and in distress, would only add to your grief. It was a Sabbath morning; every one had gone to church except the servant who was left with me, and a person to attend to the cows, etc. The church was some miles distant from the farm. It was

a lovely, calm morning, and the stillness of all around was delightful to me; but my wayward heart, instead of improving the time as I ought to have done, looked back to former happy days, when I also was able to go up to the house of God, and contrasted past times with my then painful circumstances, and was ready to say, "All these things are against me." I wept bitterly, and believing there was no one near to observe me, did not check the tears which seemed to relieve my oppressed heart. Judge of my confusion when I heard the door of my room open, and looking up saw the doctor come in. He looked surprised, and sat down by me, saying very kindly, "Are you worse to-day, Magdalene?"

'I answered, "Oh no, sir," and tried to compose myself; but never shall I forget the look of compassion he fixed upon me when he said, in the gentlest tone of voice,

“Poor thing! are you suffering in mind, then, as well as in body?”

‘I thought I knew what he meant, and tried to assure him I was not; but his kindness overcame me: by this time he had my pulse in his hand, and my foolish tears were a real distress. At last I made an effort, and said, I was not in spiritual distress, but my situation was painfully changed; and that I had a dear friend who was in great distress—she had lost a little child, and I could not go to see her. Do you know, Susan, the good dear doctor’s eyes were moistened when he tried to comfort me, and asked a few questions about you. “Is your friend a Christian?” he inquired. “Oh yes, sir,” I said. “Then you must not mourn too much,” he added. “Her child is taken to heaven and to God, perhaps to teach her that she must have no idols, and that He who bestowed the blessing had a right also to remove it; and be

assured this sorrow, if sanctified, will only bring her soul nearer to her God." He repeated one or two passages of Scripture, in a manner so solemn that I became quite composed. It was after that visit that he often led me to speak on religious subjects; and he was of great use to me, and showed great kindness to a poor stranger, who had no claim on him, for which I trust his God will abundantly reward him. But I must get quicker on with my story: it was the doctor that told Miss Mowbray about me, and first sent her to see me; and she supplied me with fruit and nice things when I was very ill, by his advice. It was in that way she got acquainted with me; and then, after I recovered, when her maid was turned off for dishonesty, she asked me if I would supply her place; and there have I been for nearly six months.'

'But you have gone over that part of your story too quickly,' said Susan, smiling.

‘How long had you been at the farm when you met with the hurt? We have been parted three long years!’

‘Three long years, indeed,’ replied Magdalene; ‘and how often have I longed to see you, as weeks and months passed on! I had been above six months at the farm when my foot was crushed by the wheel of the cart; for a whole year after, I may say that I was very ill; the last months of that time I was able to sit up, and was carried out sometimes; but when mild, warm weather came again, then I began to recover my health, and tried to be of some little use in the family. But I determined not to remain there, for I really was not happy, and no *duty* required me to do so. I wished to provide for myself, and was very pleased to go to Miss Mowbray, since she thought I could suit her, and it made my leaving the farm quite easy.’

‘Were they sorry to part with you?’ inquired Susan.

‘My good uncle, I think, really was,’ answered Magdalene; ‘and indeed every one was good and kind to me there.’

‘A certain youth particularly so, was there not?’ said Susan, laughing.

‘Who said that?’ inquired Magdalene, blushing deeply; ‘and who was he?’

‘His name is Walter, I believe,’ said Susan, replying to the latter, but not to the former inquiry.

‘Poor Watty!’ said Magdalene; ‘he is so simple, he cannot keep his own secrets.’

‘What ailed you at him?’ asked Susan.

‘Nothing ailed me at him as a cousin and a friend,’ replied she; ‘he is a well-disposed good-tempered fellow.’

‘But as a husband?’

‘Oh, that again is quite a different thing.’

‘And what did the family say to that matter?’

‘Indeed, Susan, to tell you the truth, that touched me very much, when I found they would all have wished it; and I thought it a great compliment that parents and sisters would have bestowed their eldest son and brother, that they all think so much of, upon me.’

‘It was very kind,’ said Susan, ‘and they were very wise; but had that no effect?’

‘It had great effect in this way, that it made me very anxious to leave the farm.’

Susan laughed. ‘That will not do, I see. But were you not frightened to go to that great house full of people and servants?’

‘I should have been very frightened to have gone at the time I left this, but somehow I felt as if I had grown about ten years older during that long illness,

I had so much time to reflect about many things. A number of different circumstances, too, that perhaps no one could fully understand but myself, led me to see it would be right for me to go, and I thought the path of duty would be the safe one. I have found it so. I knew also that I was not obliged to remain long, if I was unable for the place. I have very little to do with the servants, and the house-keeper is a real fine body. I sit in my young lady's dressing-room, and sleep there too, and sewing is my great employment.'

The baby had been laughing and crowing in Magdalene's arms for some time, and now was so restless that she got up, saying, 'I cannot speak sense any longer at present, Susan; I must play with my sweet little name-child now. Oh, bairn! I shall be sorry to leave you!' added she, pressing the infant to her heart.

Susan wished her babe had chosen to

sleep a little longer on that day ; but since it was not so, she put away her work and prepared for the return of her husband. Magdalene went out to the little garden singing gaily to the baby. ‘My dear and only friend,’ thought Susan, as she saw her fondling the child, ‘it will be sore work to part with you again.’

For some days following, the two friends had little time for any private conversation. Old acquaintances heard that Magdalene had arrived, and flocked to see her. At length one evening, after they were left alone, Magdalene shut the door of the cottage, saying,

‘I do wish nobody else would come ; and yet how ungrateful I am ! Every one has met me with a kindness I had no right to expect, and how I should have rejoiced to see any one of these old friends at the farm ! Oh, how difficult it is always to feel right, to subdue selfish wishes !’

‘Don’t be too severe on yourself, Magdalene; you have been quite kind and hearty with them.’

‘I am sure I have wished that party away for the last hour then; and what a deal of nonsense we have spoken! That Jessy, who is grown up since I left this,—she has a bonny face,—but, oh! she seems silly, poor thing.’

‘She is a gabbing thing, but she is not a bad lassie after all; she has a warm heart; none will be forgotten that she likes.’

‘I am so wearied,’ said Magdalene, placing herself in a low arm-chair; then instantly starting up, she ran to the cradle, exclaiming in a voice of alarm,

‘Susan, the infant is not there! the cradle is empty!’

The mother turned with a look of terror; but at the same moment Donald entered with the child in his arms.

‘What a fright I got!’ said Susan in a trembling voice.

‘What alarmed you?’ asked her husband.

‘The empty cradle,’ said Susan.

‘Did you not know I had the child, Susan?’ said her husband, sitting down kindly beside her,—‘did you not see me come in from the room there when these noisy women’s tongues were going all at once as they were standing at the door before they went away?’

‘I saw you come in, but I did not observe you take the child; and little Tommy is so fond of lifting her, I am terrified sometimes.’

Magdalene now had the baby, and seemed quite to have forgotten her fatigue.

‘Now, sit down, Maddy,’ said her friend; ‘you were very tired but a little ago, and you will be the worse of carrying about that heavy bairn so much.’

‘Oh no,’ replied Magdalene, smiling, ‘that will do me no harm. It is that you are so gay here, and see so much company, and I have been used to a very quiet life since I went to Stoneford.’

‘I wonder who the folk come to see!’ said Susan, laughing.

‘Well, I have news for you to-night,’ said Donald, looking kindly at Magdalene. ‘I have been at the manse, and the minister has fixed to-morrow at one o’clock, for you to go and see him.’

‘I shall be glad to see him again,’ said Magdalene. ‘Did you ask him about the school?’

‘Yes I did, Maddy. He thinks you but young yet for that plan, and would rather advise your remaining with Miss Mowbray for a time; but he will tell you himself.’

Magdalene looked very grave and thoughtful.

‘ Will you be sorry to stay on with your young lady ? ’ inquired Donald.

‘ Oh no, I would be very sorry to leave her, ’ answered Magdalene ; ‘ but you know the other has been my favourite plan for a long long time. I would be near you all, I would get to church every Sabbath, and it might be better in many ways for myself.’

‘ And, Maddy, could you afford to get all things needful to begin a school ? ’

‘ Oh yes, Donald ; I have untouched all the money that my father left me. My kind uncle never would let me use a farthing of it. He treated me just like a child of his own, all the time I have been with him, in every way.’

‘ He is a good man, and will be none the poorer of that, Maddy. But did you ever see the gentleman that Miss Mowbray is to be married to ? ’

‘ Oh yes, often.’

‘ The minister knows him a little, and



has a very good opinion of him ; he thinks him very well disposed. It seems the young people have been long attached to each other, and that Mrs Mowbray was very ill pleased because your young lady refused a lord, somebody with a grand name ; is that true ? ’

Magdalene laughed. ‘It is all quite true ; but how in the world does the minister know ? ’

Susan. ‘What kind of lady is the mother ? ’

Magdalene. ‘Indeed it is not very easy to tell you ; but if you just saw her for an hour or two, you would have some guess. She is more taken up about her dress and her looks, than the youngest beauty could take the trouble to be. She sometimes puts paint on her cheeks—rouge as they call it ; a thing I had heard of, but never seen till I went there.’

Susan. ‘Oh, dreadful ! That cannot

be a good place for you to be in, Maddy.'

Magdalene laughed. 'I will not put it on, Susan.'

Susan. 'I hope not indeed, but I wish the minister would think you old enough to begin the school; you would be safer here than seeing such strange things.'

Donald laughed heartily at his wife's fears. 'Maddy is seeing the world, that is all, Susan,' said he.

Susan. 'Well, Donald, and are you not afraid that she may be injured by living with foolish people, and seeing such things?'

Donald. 'I do not think she has been injured yet, Susan; but I must hear more about the family before I can fully judge.'

'Men are so cautious before they give an opinion,' said Susan, smiling; 'you have got mine, Maddy.'

Magdalene. 'And feel all its kindness,

Susan ; but I do not think seeing that lady could injure the youngest Christian, she is so trifling and silly, and often cross. Indeed I don't think she has forgiven Miss Mowbray yet, for refusing Lord Mountford. I wish she could meet with some old lord that would make love to herself. I am sure she would marry him, and then my dear mistress would be free of her.'

'Free of her ! What sort of a way is that to speak of a mother and daughter ? I am thinking, Donald, that is some harm Maddy has got seeing the world,' said Susan, laughing.

Magdalene. 'It is very wrong to speak in that way ; but yet, Susan, if you only knew what a foolish, useless mother she has been, you would blame me less.'

Donald. 'The minister told me that your lady had been much injured by her foolish, worldly mother ; that her own good sense is now leading her to correct

many faults, but that she will always have much difficulty with her mother.'

Magdalene. 'It is all most true. Miss Mowbray has a great deal of good sense and feeling. She says she was a spoiled and ruined child, and that it is but a short time since she began to know the truth about anything. But she is very clever, and will do all she thinks right now; and kind kind has she been to me. I think, however, that her mother is not very fond of me.'

'There seems no love lost in that quarter,' said Susan, laughing.

Donald put some more questions to Magdalene, and still felt satisfied that she had not received any injury from her intercourse with others; but rejoiced in seeing her faith stronger, and her religion more established, than when they parted three years before.

The time seemed long to Susan on the

following day, when her friend went to pay her visit at the manse. She did not return for two hours after the time she expected her home. At length Susan put on her bonnet and shawl, took the baby with her, and set out to meet her. She soon obtained her wish, and saw Magdalene coming to her with a light step and a cheerful countenance.

‘I have stayed longer than you expected, Susan,’ said she.

Susan. Yes; but I see you have liked your visit, and that is enough.’

Magdalene. ‘They have been all so kind to me; and what am I that the minister and his wife should take an interest in me and my little concerns!’

Susan. ‘You were one of the flock committed to his care, and have a claim to his spiritual help. But what does he say about the school? I am anxious to hear that.’

Magdalene. 'You will be disappointed, Susan. He advises me against that for some years, and thinks I should remain in my place. But he has said a great deal to me that I find very encouraging, and I can just feel willing to do what he considers best at present.'

Susan. 'But tell me all he said about the school. What is his chief objection? If you are young, you are as steady as some older folk.'

Magdalene. 'He has told me another reason for delaying. There are a great many new ways of teaching of late years that have not reached our retired village yet, and he says anything begun here now must be on a new plan. He has been making new arrangements in the parish school that are succeeding very well. And, Susan, he has told me about a wonderful school in Edinburgh, and desired me to go and see it when I am there. And if I

should wish to be taught the plan, I am to let him know, and he will get me permission to attend. But it will not be this year, I think, that I could do that, for we are not to be long in Edinburgh, and I shall have a great deal to do ; but I should like to see this school at least.'

Susan sighed. 'I see it is settled now then, and I am sorry for it.'

Magdalene. 'I scarcely know what to wish. I think I should be frightened to attempt the school yet. I must not be idle, and should be thankful that so comfortable a situation is provided for me.'

Susan. 'Indeed we should, and I am very selfish ; but it is so pleasant to have you with us again, so like old and happy times.'

The following day was the Sabbath, and a time of peculiar enjoyment to poor Magdalene, listening to her own beloved minister, under whose faithful instructions

spiritual light had first dawned upon her soul, and spent with her dearest friends. She thought it fortunate that her future plans had been determined on before that day, otherwise she would have felt it even more difficult to decide on remaining at a distance from all the privileges which her dear native place afforded. During the years in which the friends had been parted, Susan had lost a child and her father, a venerable old man, who lived with Donald and her, and whose pious conversation and example were a blessing to all connected with him. He was taken away after a severe but short illness. Magdalene was very desirous of hearing more about his last days than she had yet done; but when she alluded to the subject one evening, Susan had been so much overcome, she was afraid of leading to it again. Of her little child, Susan had spoken more easily. Magdalene evidently saw that her friend

had suffered deeply. At times she was led to suspect that she had also known spiritual sorrow, and she felt anxious to ascertain the truth. The first quiet opportunity that offered, she said, half smiling, 'I think, Susan, you are not so frank with me as in former days. You have got all my history, and can you think I am less interested in knowing yours?'

'Oh no,' replied Susan, 'nor will you find me less open, when I begin to tell you mine; but a great deal of it is very painful, more so than you suspect.'

Magdalene. 'Say nothing of your dear father, Susan; Donald will tell me about him.'

Susan. 'There is no painful thought connected with him, Maddy; you mistake me. It was no thought of him that over-set me the other evening, it was of myself: how unworthy I had been, and how much you had been deceived in me.'

‘Deceived in you!’ repeated Magdalene, in a voice of surprise.

Susan. ‘I mean you had thought of me a great deal better than I deserved.’

Magdalene looked earnestly at her. ‘What do you mean? I have thought there was something I did not quite understand, dear Susan; what is it?’

Susan. ‘When sorrow came on you, Magdalene, it found you a Christian, and able to take the holy consolation the gospel offers to such; but, alas! when trouble came upon me, it discovered to my alarmed mind that I was a Christian in name only, not in heart.’

Magdalene. ‘Oh, Susan, how can you say that?’

Susan. ‘I say only the truth. It is easy to get knowledge, and to speak about what is right; but the heart given up to God—oh! that is another thing; and so I have found it, I can assure you. Brought up as

I had been, it was impossible for me to remain ignorant; but I had only a name to live, the heart was dead.'

Magdalene. 'Not that, Susan; you speak too strongly.'

Susan. 'Well, then, if once it had been alive to spiritual things, too surely the cares of this world, and—ungrateful as I was—perhaps its pleasures also, had hardened and deadened it.'

Magdalene. 'What led you to see this to be the case?'

Susan. 'The opening of my mind to my true state was gradual. You know I suffered greatly when watching my poor little Willy before his death. You remember what an engaging child he was; he became more so as he grew older, and was just wrapped round my heart, as it were. For two months his sufferings were very great. Night and day I watched him. Sometimes when I listened to my father

and Donald, who felt for the dear child as much as I could do, when they spoke of sin as the cause of all trial and all suffering, I was struck with things they said; and I saw that my husband could bear the trial with a faith and a submission that I could not. That led a little to looking into my own heart; then, after my child died, my father's conversation was of some use to me, and I was led deeply to condemn myself. I saw my husband afflicted, but his heart seemed only brought nearer to God, and full of love and confidence. I could not feel so. It was but two months after the child's death that my father was taken from us after a few days' illness. He had been in perfect health, and nothing could be more unexpected; but he was ready to depart when his Master called him, and his last days were, like his life, peaceful and holy. The shock was dreadful to me; and after all

was over, between grief and anxiety respecting my own state, I was in great distress of mind. The prayers of the minister did not suit the state I was in, and gave me no comfort. My dear husband's were much the same; indeed, his mind seemed almost in a state of constant communion with heaven for a time after my father's death. During his illness he had conversed a great deal with him. While I was thinking only of the body, and fretting, and trying everything I was told might be of use, Donald knew from the doctor there was no hope, and was watching the mind of the departing saint; and, like the mantle of the prophet, I think something of my father's holy feelings have remained with him. As for me, this was the struggle of my heart: "My soul cleaveth to the dust."

Magdalene. 'You could not have used, you could not even have understood these

words, unless you had been a Christian, Susan.'

Susan. 'I don't know that; my thoughts clung round my child and my father taken from me. I rebelled against the hand that chastened; I thought of God, and my soul was troubled.'

Magdalene. 'Did that continue long?'

Susan. 'I was in great distress for some months. Oh, Maddy! I thought much of the days of our youth; but even then I was fully aware that you were more steady, that your heart was more devoted to God than mine ever was.'

Magdalene. 'Oh, Susan, I don't like you to say that.'

Susan. 'I speak truth, Maddy. I had the same form, but the spirit was wanting, and the result proved it was so. Don't you remember the dance we were invited to one summer? Nothing would persuade you even to *think* of going, and I went,

and still more, I liked it. The same thing continued. I took *all* of this world's pleasures that I dared; while you saw that to serve God and this world was impossible, and you renounced the one, and chose that better part which shall never be taken from you.'

Magdalene. 'Did you apply to the minister in your distress?'

Susan. 'I wished to do it, but at first my courage failed. I spoke to Donald, but it made him so unhappy when he thought me suffering any spiritual sorrow, that I could not bear to vex him. One morning, poor fellow, he came back from his work in about an hour, just to see how I was. I did not expect him home till dinner-time, and he found me weeping very much. He was in such distress about me then, I could not bear to see it; and I tried after that to appear as cheerful as I could, and attend to my duties, and be

right as far as possible. It was seeing I must not speak to my husband, that led me to apply to the minister. He was kind to me and very faithful; but he did not lessen my sins to me as you would do, Maddy. On the contrary, he said my advantages had been very great; and reminded me that I had voluntarily joined myself to the church in early youth, and taken upon me the profession of a Christian; that, as far as others could form a judgment, there appeared to be a work of grace then upon the heart; and that my guilt was only the greater if I had forsaken that Saviour whom I had once known and loved, and in whose service I had found pleasure; but that I had reason to thank God, that while my heart had forsaken Him, I had not been permitted to act in any way that could bring reproach on my Christian profession. You may think it strange, but my heart went so along with

every word he said, that his plain and faithful dealing did me more good than all that Donald had said to comfort me. I suppose, from being more accustomed to deal with afflicted souls, the minister knew better what I needed. After speaking to me very plainly of how guilty I had been, he showed me the only way of return to God, and to the path I had forsaken; and was so full in the encouragement he gave me from the Bible, that, after the first conversation I had with him, I never felt so unhappy and desponding. He was very kind to me, and saw me often at that time; and he entered with so much feeling into all I had suffered, that I can never be grateful enough to him. After he knew I was in such sore distress, he would often come in as he passed, sometimes just for a few minutes, and at other times he would stay and converse with me, and treated me with so much gentle-

ness, that soon I could open all my heart to him.'

Magdalene. 'Was it long before you found comfort?'

Susan. 'Yes, a long time. Oh! I deserved to be kept in doubt and darkness, but *hope* kept me up from the time I spoke to my minister, and he made me understand a great many things better than ever I had done before; and I found pleasure in reading, and gaining more enlarged views of spiritual things. When I began to see more clearly the infinite value of that blood which cleanseth from all sin, I was no longer afraid to see my own guilt. Before then I vainly wished to lessen it to myself; but now I was willing to see that I had sinned against light and knowledge; that I had forsaken my Saviour in a thousand ways; that if I was a child at all, I was "a backsliding child," one peculiarly guilty, and, as such, I desired to return, with deep

humility and penitence to the Lord my God.'

Magdalene was moved to tears as her friend painted the distress she had passed through. 'I did not know you had suffered so deeply,' said she.

Susan. 'Oh no, Maddy; it was not as if you had been with me. I could put nothing of that kind in the few letters I wrote you. You had enough to bear yourself without my adding anything, and I knew well how you would have felt for me.'

Magdalene. 'You were very patient after you lost your first dear little infant; what do you think led you to be less watchful than formerly?'

Susan. 'I was thought patient, but I am sure I don't know if it was right submission; the heart is terribly deceitful. Others thought well of me, and I suppose I began to think too well of myself. I had

a good deal to do in my family, and was anxious to do it well, and I became worldly-minded. I forgot that our religion is not a lesson to be learned once for all, like many other things, but that it is a holy principle, which must be daily maintained by communion with God, and increased by those means which He has appointed; that it must pervade the whole soul, till all its powers are brought under its sanctifying influence; and thus, when the heart is right, the fruits of holiness will appear in the life and conduct. Oh, Maddy, at one time I had not the least idea of what that text means: "Every thought being brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Now I can at least earnestly desire to understand it, and to attain to that measure of holiness,—to have my whole soul subdued to the will of my God.'

Magdalene. 'How much has to be changed in these sinful hearts of ours!

how sad it makes one feel at times! Did the constant return of family worship never awaken you to more serious thought?’

Susan. ‘Oh no. I was completely in a state of self-deception: I thought myself very religious, and should have been very sorry if worship had been omitted; but, alas! I rested in the form only, the spirit was wanting: secret prayer was neglected, and misery awaits the soul that forsakes that duty. If my children are spared to me, how I shall warn them of the danger of possessing a mere form of religion! and yet,’ added she, in a melancholy tone of voice, ‘can I warn them more than I was myself warned, and did it save me? It is God alone who can touch the heart, and keep it humble.’

Magdalene. ‘On looking back now, Susan, would you say you were not a Christian in those days when we went to the house of God together, and conversed



about what we were taught there,—days which I now look back upon with almost unmixed pleasure,—not that I could wish to return to them, because I am conscious my mind is now much more advanced in many respects?’

Susan. ‘I can scarcely tell; it was you who always led to everything good, and many a time I checked you in doing so. You thought it was from reserve, but in truth it was more from a heart cold to the subject. I liked one or two preachers that roused me; and you know I was surrounded by everything good. Our minister thinks, like you, that I was a Christian then, but that the work never had been deep in my heart. I am sure of one thing, that my religion then was altogether different from what it is now, weak and feeble as the holy principle still is in my wandering mind. At that time I had not the slightest idea of what living by faith

really is. Doubtless, I supposed that I believed all I read in the Bible, and would have said that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of sinners; but so to believe as to rely only on Him for righteousness and strength, to feel that without Him I could do nothing, to be humbled in the dust under the consciousness of sin and weakness,—oh! I knew nothing of that. I had to learn all after having for many years professed to be a Christian. Alas! I fear there are but too many in the same state of false security and delusion, engrossed with the business and cares of this world, pleased with themselves because they fulfil their duty to husbands and children, while the first and chief duty is forgotten, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart.” Oh, if this motive influenced them more, both husband and children would feel the blessing of it.’

Magdalene. ‘I believe so; but you have

surprised me greatly by many things you have said.'

Susan. 'I shall explain to you the reason of that, Maddy. You were always too partial to me, and thought too well of me. We loved each other, we were always happy when together, we went to church together, and you just thought me as good as yourself when I was no such thing.'

Magdalene. 'How can you say that, Susan? The minister admitted you at the very same time to the Lord's table: he never would have done so unless he had been quite satisfied with you.'

Susan. 'Do you remember how perfectly faithful he was,—how he warned us that though we had sufficient knowledge, and appeared to him to be such as might approach that sacred ordinance, yet that the heart was unknown to him—that God only saw what was passing there, and left it with our own consciences whether to

partake or not? I have often often thought of that time. If I sinned then, the minister was free from blame; the sin was mine only.'

Magdalene. 'You did not sin, my dear Susan. I think you forget how faint the beginnings of religion may be, how feeble at first that faith which yet may be real and sincere.'

'You are perhaps right,' replied Susan thoughtfully; 'but it matters not, if I am indeed a Christian now, in heart and conduct. I was going to ask, Maddy, if you remember our old friend Janet Boyd, who died last winter?'

Magdalene. 'Yes, quite well; she was a fine body.'

Susan. 'She was that. When I conversed with her, it often struck me how differently I had been dealt with, and how gently. The intercourse I had with her was of great use to me, particularly the

last year she lived. What a life of constant trial she had spent, poor body! She told me all her sad story after she came to live here.'

Magdalene. 'Tell me about her, Susan. I remember feeling so much for her, because she was unable to read; and I remember yet how moving it was to see her harsh-looking countenance softened and struggling with tears while we read the Bible to her.'

Susan. 'Not being able to read was a sad loss to her. She told me she had never been at school excepting for six months; she had a stepmother who was not very good to her, and she went to service a perfect child, to assist in a farmhouse, and herd the cows, I believe. Her father lived far away in the Highlands. When she married she came to B—— with her husband, who was a Roman Catholic. During a few short years he was kind to

her, and she was happy with him. But then her comfort was at an end; he got acquainted with a light-headed young woman, who got about him, and induced him to leave his poor wife and children. He left B—— with the wicked creature, and from that day Janet never heard of him again, and never knew what became of him. Think what an awful trial that was to endure! She was left with two little boys to provide for. One was always rather a sickly child, and died before he was twelve years old. The elder one was a great comfort while he remained with her; but he enlisted, and went abroad with his regiment. He continued to write to her, and was always an affectionate son, and dearly did she love him. Before her death she had not heard from him for several years, and knew not what to think. Poor body, the last kind letter she received from him was always

kept in her Bible ; and though she could not read the holy book, the care with which she kept it as her greatest treasure showed her value for it. It was always wrapped up in a clean handkerchief, and put into a corner of her chest. At one time she was very ill, and Donald and I went to see her as often as we could, and took any little thing to make a variety to her, for she could eat almost nothing. Whatever part of the Bible I might read to her, she would always say before she let me shut the book, " You will read my ain twa chapters to me." These were the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters of the Gospel by St John ; and how I have seen the tears drop into her lap as she listened to the sacred words of our Lord ! I am sure she had the chapters distinctly in her memory, but she loved to dwell upon them. She was in great poverty and distress, poor soul ; and at one time

was so very ill, we could not bear her to be living alone, so a cousin came and took care of her for a while; but as soon as ever she was able again, she liked best to live alone. She had kind neighbours, who did any little thing she needed for her. She had lived in the same house for thirty years, and everybody gave her a good character, and liked her. You remember how bad and desolate-looking her low room was? Well, she had the very strongest attachment to that place. I used to think she afforded one proof that it neither requires a good house, nor a beautiful situation, to excite a local attachment in some minds. When I spoke to her against living alone, she said, "I like it best. When the door is shut, I like to think there is none here but God and me; then I am happy." How many would feel alarm in thus realizing the presence of God with them! and how frequently

have I thought of this poor friend of ours, the truth and sincerity there was in everything about her! But what I was going to tell you, Maddy, is this, Do you know she was refused admittance to the Lord's table!'

'Refused!' repeated Magdalene. 'Is that possible! and who was that by?'

Susan. 'We will not mention names; but I rather think you know whose church she attended. He was a Dissenter, and a much thought-of person in the town of B——. She liked his preaching better than that of any one else, and often stood in the passage to hear him. Well, she went to him, and applied for admission; but when he found that she could not read, and could not answer some of the questions from the Assembly's Catechism that he put to her, he said little more, but I think refused her very harshly, and, worse than all, he never said she might return to him, or

inquired anything more about her.* And oh! bitter bitter were the tears she shed when she came here from him that night. I was ill at the time, and she sat down at my bedside and told me her great and sore disappointment. Most bitterly she wept; and I thought, Oh, how unlike is that minister to the Master he professes to serve! When did the Lord Jesus ever send away sorrowful any who came to seek spiritual help from Him? I tried to comfort her; but she was so cast down, so dejected and discouraged, that I did not know what to do. When Donald came in, I whispered to him the cause of her grief. He was greatly surprised, but immediately spoke kindly to her, and he had more influence with her than I had. He asked her if she would stay till after worship, and he would see her home. She answered him in a voice so touching, it thrilled quite through

* A fact known to the writer.

me : “ How can you show so much kindness to a poor outcast like me, banished from the Lord’s presence ! ”

“ “ Oh no, Janet,” I said, “ not that ; no human being has power to do that.”

“ “ No, Janet,” said Donald, “ no earthly power can shut out the soul from God, and you must not be so much cast down at what has happened to-night. I feel for you as a fellow-Christian the same, and think of you just the same as I did before.”

‘ While Donald spoke, poor Janet had her face covered with her hands, in a state of despondency ; but when he said this, she took away her hands, and gave him such a look, and then said, “ Is that possible ? ” “ Yes,” he said, “ it is certain ; and, Janet, I speak to you before that God who is ever present with us, and who sees both your heart and mine.” She grasped his hand with great emotion, and, looking up, said earnestly, “ May God

himself reward you for these words. We hear of being a cast-away: surely the minister has treated me as one; and yet, can one that loves the Lord Jesus be a cast-away?" "Oh, never, never, Janet," said my husband, touched to the heart at the state she was in. "Our Lord hath said, 'He that cometh unto me shall in no wise be cast out.' You have come to this Almighty Saviour; you have no hope of acceptance before God but in Him; you see yourself to be a lost and helpless sinner, and your faith rests on Jesus Christ alone; have you any other hope?" Janet answered in a low, solemn tone of voice, "None whatever. I am a guilty sinner; my condemned soul has fled for refuge to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I desire to be washed in His blood, to be sanctified by His Holy Spirit; and by believing in Him, and obeying His will, I have found peace to my weary soul." Donald took her hand, say-

ing, " Well, my Christian friend, who can take from you that peace which God has given? This is a sore trial, but your faith and hope must not fail. Our ministers, you know, are but sinful men, and will at times fall into error. I blame your minister without hesitation, for he has caused grief when he should have dealt tenderly with a suffering spirit. Had he invited you to return to him, and offered to instruct you, and made himself really acquainted with your history and your spiritual state, I would not have blamed him for asking you to delay; but as it is, he has in this instance been but an unfaithful pastor." By this time Janet was quite composed; but there was a kind of solemnity in her appearance that was striking. Her whole soul had been in agony, and now it seemed as if the voice of the Lord had calmed the tempest, and spoken peace; the darkness and the anguish were passed away;

faith and hope again revived. I shall never forget that night, and the impression she made upon me. How truly is it said, "A wounded spirit, who can bear?" Donald reminded her of the deep waters that many saints had passed through, and spoke to her in a very encouraging way. And then at family worship, you know, he just suited all the service to her; and the next day she said "that the Lord had given him words to touch her very inmost heart, and heal the wound that a rough hand had made there." Donald took her home that night. It happened to be beautiful moonlight, and he made her look up to the heavens, and soothed and comforted her with passages from the Bible; but she had gone through so much, that she was ill after it. Donald saw her often till I was able to go. She seemed quite in comfort of mind; but to show you how deeply she had suffered, she never again, either to Donald or to me,

alluded to that night as long as she lived ; but from that time her heart seemed just bound to us, she loved us with such warmth. I have seen her hold my hand to her heart, and shed tears, while she said, “ To think of all you have done for me, and all the kindness you have shown me, you two young creatures ! but the Lord put it in your hearts, and He will reward you for it.”

Magdalene. ‘ Poor Janet ! Was she ever a communicant ? and did she attend the same church after that, and walk so far as to B—— ? ’

Susan. ‘ She never was a communicant. And the effect her minister’s conduct had was this, she never went even to hear him preach again, and never mentioned his name that I know of. She went with us afterwards ; but I was terrified she would not understand Mr Nairne, she had been used to a person so different. But I was mistaken ; she soon liked him dearly, and was never

absent from church when able to attend. Poor body, she never again spoke of wishing to be admitted to the Lord's table, and we did not like to say anything. Donald told Mr Nairne all about her ; but he said, as her circumstances were so peculiar, that unless she mentioned the subject herself, perhaps it would be as well to say nothing. If she wished it herself, he would see her immediately and judge of her fitness. Had she been a younger person, he would have advised differently ; but she was old and frail, and her mind might again have been distressed by the needful examination of a stranger. Mr Nairne saw her often during her last illness, and was fully satisfied with her. He said he liked to converse with her ; to see a strong mind that had struggled with such difficulties, and gained a degree of knowledge that astonished him.'

'Poor Janet ! I wish I could have seen her again,' said Magdalene, sighing.

Susan. ‘She often spoke of you, Maddy; and she said that *you* would be a *steady* Christian; that you seemed early to have experienced a measure of enjoyment from your religion; that nothing this world could offer would ever make you forget.’

Magdalene appeared greatly surprised. ‘Did she say that of me?’

Susan. ‘She did indeed, and spoke of you with much gratitude and affection.’

Magdalene. ‘Oh that it may prove true!’

The conversation of the friends was here interrupted, but the subject of it continued fully to engage Magdalene’s thoughts; and that night she could not sleep for hours, the history of her old friend made such an impression on her mind. Next day, again, she talked over its minute particulars with Susan, asking numerous questions about her.

The happiest days of our existence pass quickly away, and poor Magdalene soon

found that only three days more of her fortnight's visit remained. To pass every moment with Susan was her wish ; but she had been desired to return to the manse before she went away ; and once more, too, she must visit the grave of her beloved father, the spot where she hoped her sleeping dust should also rest, till the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, and death shall be swallowed up in victory.

Magdalene determined to go early to the manse, and do everything that day, that the remaining part of the time might be devoted to Susan. Her friend was even more sad at the prospect of parting than Magdalene was. Of a more reserved disposition, she made fewer friends ; and after an absence of three years, she met Magdalene as if they had only parted the day

before ; and however good she might consider others to be, she could feel for no one else as she did for this dear friend.

About the time Susan expected her to return, she was greatly astonished by seeing a carriage stop near the cottage ; and a smart footman came and inquired if she was Mrs Lambert, and if Magdalene Mason was with her. He then informed her that Miss Mowbray was passing through the village, and wished to see her maid.

Susan went immediately to the carriage, and explained that Magdalene was absent, but could be sent for if she was wanted.

The lady inquired if she was Magdalene's friend, and said she was unwilling to give her trouble, but would visit her a little if she had no objections, and give her a message for Magdalene.

Susan was happy to have an opportunity of seeing Miss Mowbray. She knew the house was all in good order, and

invited the lady to come in with a very pleased countenance. Miss Mowbray gave some orders to the servant, and then entered Susan's neat cottage.

'How comfortable everything looks here!' said she, sitting down; 'and what a sweet baby! Come near me that I may see her, for she would perhaps not come to me.'

Susan did as she was desired, hoping her babe would conduct itself with propriety.

'Well, has Magdalene been very happy since she came here?' asked Miss Mowbray, after playing with the infant for a little.

'Yes, ma'am, I think so,' replied Susan; 'and we have been very happy indeed to see her again.'

'Do you expect her to return soon?' asked Miss Mowbray; 'for the truth is, I do wish to see her for half an hour. It is

business in part that has brought me here to-day. Our plans are in some measure changed of late; and I think Magdalene might perhaps be of use to me before she leaves this, if I could explain to her what is wanted.'

'I shall send for her immediately,' replied Susan; 'she would wish me to do so.'

'I am sorry to interrupt any of her pleasures,' said Miss Mowbray, 'yet it is necessary, I believe. Employ the servant, if he can be of any use to you.'

Susan civilly declined that offer, but despatched a little boy to find Magdalene, and then returned to the lady, whose appearance greatly pleased her.

'Now answer me truly,' said Miss Mowbray, 'do you think your friend is happy with me, and do you know of anything that might add to her comfort, that may be in my power to do?'

'Indeed, ma'am, I believe she is very

comfortable,' replied Susan, 'and I am sure she likes her mistress.'

'I rejoice to hear you think so,' said Miss Mowbray. 'She is a perfect treasure to me; and now, indeed, I look upon her more as a friend than anything else. I always wished to get a person as my attendant who had been well brought up and better educated, and I find Magdalene to be more completely what I wished for, than I ever hoped to procure. But her plan of teaching a school makes me dread her leaving me.'

'She has given up that plan at present, ma'am; she is thought rather too young yet,' replied Susan.

'I am delighted to hear that,' said Miss Mowbray, 'and I hope soon to be able to make her more comfortable than has hitherto been in my power.'

'Do you go to Edinburgh soon, ma'am?' asked Susan.

‘Next month, I believe,’ answered Miss Mowbray.

‘And it will be long before you come back to this part of the country, I doubt, ma’am?’

Miss Mowbray blushed, but answered gaily, ‘There are changes before some of us, Susan, and at present it is quite uncertain when we may return here; yet perhaps it may be before very long—but all looks so peaceful around you, I doubt not you could give some excellent advice about being a good wife.’

‘Oh, ma’am,’ replied Susan, ‘that is very easy where there is much love.’

‘But without that ingredient?’ said Miss Mowbray.

‘Oh, then, ma’am,’ replied Susan, ‘it must be a weary bondage, and I pity the woman that ventures on it.’

‘Yet many do, I fear,’ said Miss Mowbray, ‘though more it may be amongst the

heartless and ambitious of the higher ranks, than amongst your simple, perhaps happier neighbours.'

'I am sure I do not know, ma'am,' said Susan; 'but I have seen it done, and misery follow.'

They were now interrupted by the appearance of Magdalene, who entered hastily and out of breath.

'I hope there is nothing the matter, ma'am,' said she, looking anxiously at Miss Mowbray.

'Nothing whatever, Magdalene,' said Miss Mowbray, 'I only wish to see you for a little; but sit down, you look very tired.'

'I was frightened somehow, ma'am, that is all. I don't know why, I am sure; but it seemed so strange that you should be here.'

'I came in search of you, Magdalene. Mamma and I are paying a visit to some

friends of ours who have come to reside in this neighbourhood. We intend to return home in two days, and shall take you with us, as we pass this way. Susan, you will not like to hear that?’

‘I shall be very sorry to part with Magdalene certainly, ma’am; but this has been a happy fortnight, and we are much obliged to you,’ replied Susan. She then left the room, and shut the door.

‘Now, Magdalene,’ said Miss Mowbray, ‘I must tell you the object of my present visit here. I believe you know that Mr Stewart’s poor sister was very ill when you left me.’

‘Yes, ma’am,’ Magdalene replied. ‘I know you were in anxiety about her.’

‘She is gone,’ said Miss Mowbray, while tears filled her eyes; ‘she died about ten days ago, and has left two little orphan children.’

‘Mr Stewart will be their friend, ma’am,’

said Magdalene. 'Could they have a better? and I suppose they are yet too young to feel the loss they have sustained.'

'They are,' replied Miss Mowbray in a gentle tone. 'Mr Stewart was with his sister for some time before her death: he is appointed sole guardian to these little girls; and after the last sad duties were over, he took them home with him as his adopted children. An aunt of his is now with them, but cannot remain long; he therefore wishes and hopes—' Miss Mowbray hesitated and stopped.

'To give them another aunt as soon as possible,' said Magdalene.

'Yes, Magdalene,' said Miss Mowbray; 'and we go to Edinburgh next month, that matters may be over as soon as I am of age. But,' added she thoughtfully, 'ill brought up myself, how unfit am I for such a charge as this!'

'Oh, ma'am,' replied Magdalene, 'the

children are very fortunate: they have a kind uncle, and I am very sure he will give them an affectionate aunt.'

'Yes,' said Miss Mowbray earnestly, 'I can take them to my heart, and at least hope they may never feel the want of a mother's tenderness and care. But, Magdalene, to assist me in this duty, I wish you to undertake the charge of those dear children.'

'And not attend you, ma'am?' inquired she.

'If you could manage to do both, with the assistance you might require in the nursery, I should greatly prefer it,' replied Miss Mowbray; 'if not, I cannot be selfish; the children must have your faithfulness and care.'

'I shall do just as you consider best, ma'am,' answered Magdalene. 'How old are the children?'

'The eldest is four, the other about two years old,' replied Miss Mowbray.

‘Then, ma’am, if I have proper assistance in the nursery,’ said Magdalene, ‘you require very little attendance, and I think I could undertake both. I should be sorry to give up attending you, ma’am.’

‘Well, Magdalene,’ said Miss Mowbray, ‘you shall have what assistance you like; and my object in wishing to see you to-day, was to inquire if you might be able to find in your native village a girl brought up as you have yourself been, in whose truth and good principle we might place confidence. Do you know of any one?’

‘Susan can help me in this, ma’am,’ replied Magdalene; ‘from my being so long absent, I know at present less about my old acquaintances.’

‘Make every inquiry, then,’ said Miss Mowbray, ‘and you can let me know your success when I return. Should you find any young person that you think might suit, let her be here when I call for you, that I may

judge of her manner and appearance. Her temper and disposition you will inquire about, and, above all, her *truth*; no untruth must ever be near those children. I have suffered too much myself from that evil.'

'Have you ever seen the children, ma'am?' inquired Magdalene.

'Frequently,' replied Miss Mowbray; 'they are sweet little creatures, and the oldest is extremely pretty. I knew and loved their mother,' added she in a softened tone, 'and she left with her brother a most affectionate, most gratifying message to me; but I feel unworthy of the confidence she placed in me.'

'Oh, ma'am,' replied Magdalene, 'you are going to improve every day now, and prove yourself worthy of the regard and confidence of the very best people.'

'To this lady, and to yourself, Magdalene, I owe much,' said Miss Mowbray.

‘The one my equal in birth, my superior in all else ; the other a simple country girl, and my maid, but far superior in all that is valuable in the sight of Heaven ; both of these friends given me were Christians. They loved me, not because the riches of this world had flowed upon me — that selfish, empty regard, of which I had seen but too much. They loved my better interests ; they ventured to speak truth, and to condemn my conduct and point to the right path. At first I felt resentment, but real love touched my heart, not much used to meet with that, except in one too-partial instance. I reflected, and slowly awakened as from a sleep, and discovered the indulged, the flattered heiress, to be in truth a proud and thoughtless, a selfish and unworthy—’

‘Oh, my dear lady!’ interrupted Magdalene, ‘do not speak in that way ; I cannot bear it.’

‘It is truth, Magdalene,’ said Miss Mowbray, smiling sweetly, ‘and you have assisted me in the painful discovery.’

‘Oh, ma’am, do not say so,’ replied Magdalene, with tears filling her eyes; ‘I cannot bear that.’

‘My good Magdalene,’ said she, ‘have you not often entreated me, and with persuasive tears, to read the Bible?’

‘Yes, ma’am, I could not be wrong in that, when I saw you had been neglected.’

‘Well, Magdalene, does not the Bible give light to the dark mind? does it not condemn as guilty much of my past life? Yet, without that painful conviction, what could have humbled my proud heart, and led me to behold myself a perishing sinner, without hope but in that Almighty Saviour, “who suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God”?’

Magdalene wept tears of joy and grati-

tude while she heard her much-loved mistress express herself in this manner. She had observed great improvement in conduct; she knew the Bible was daily studied; but she knew no more till now, for the first time, and all her anxiety was at once taken away. The Lord Jesus was evidently known and trusted in, and that was all her desire. She wept so much that Miss Mowbray at length said, in a gentle tone of voice,

‘My good Magdalene, I hoped to have given you pleasure by showing you that now I trust that Divine Saviour whom your soul loves, is also my Saviour,—that my confidence rests only on Him; but why then these tears?’

‘You have given me pleasure, my dear dear lady,’ said Magdalene; ‘the sweetest, highest pleasure my heart can feel. Oh, how I have prayed for this!’

Miss Mowbray was moved with Mag-

dalene's emotion. 'Do you say you have prayed for me?'

'Oh, times without number, ma'am,' replied she.

Miss Mowbray shook hands affectionately with her, saying, 'My heart thanks you, Magdalene.' Then added thoughtfully, 'How very little do people of the world know about Christians—the singleness of their motives, their hearts, how high their standard! Alas! how shall my heart be purified from the contamination of past years, the evils of pride, of vanity, the worldliness so deeply rooted, so long fostered and indulged!' She stopped and sighed deeply.

'A holy and living principle will subdue the evil of your heart, and reign there, my dear lady,' said Magdalene earnestly, 'until at length it will bring every desire, every thought, into obedience to the will of Christ.'

‘What a blessed state!’ said Miss Mowbray, again sighing deeply. ‘But oh, at what a distance does it appear to my view! Heaven itself must be attained ere that can be.’

‘It must,’ replied Magdalene, ‘for sin dwells in the best of saints while in this world; but when the redeemed spirit gets away from its earthly prison, then shall the struggle with sin cease for ever.’

Miss Mowbray looked earnestly at Magdalene for some moments, then said, ‘You often remind me of the lady we spoke of, the departed sister of Mr Stewart. Does religion make Christians become very like each other? There might be a sameness in that.’

‘Oh no, ma’am,’ replied Magdalene; ‘religious people are very different from each other, I can assure you. It improves, but does not change the natural character. But their standard of right and wrong is

the same; the spiritual hopes and fears which agitate their hearts are the same; and this alone can occasion what may appear any resemblance between one highly born, and the child of a pious cottager.'

'I think,' said Miss Mowbray, 'that in similar circumstances you would have received a person much in the same way in which that lady received me, when I was first introduced to her acquaintance.'

'How was that, madam?' inquired Magdalene with great curiosity.

'I shall tell you, Magdalene, and you shall say if I judge right. On the very first evening on which we met, she said to me, with great kindness of manner, "Now there must be no awkwardness between you and me. We are to become very near relations. I am most anxious to become acquainted with you, and on my part shall commence this endeavour by telling you a

little truth. You are, I know, perfectly aware, that some enemies of yours have endeavoured to instil into my mind prejudices against you. Such wicked and unkind attempts, you will find, have had a contrary effect from that which was intended. Then, my dear," added she, "I have heard of you from my brother, of the future near relation he hopes to give me; but indeed, my dear, had I believed his account, I could not have expected to see you clothed in flesh and blood, but to appear in some angelic form, never to be approached by a mortal being such as I am. So my determination is this, to cast to the winds all these false impressions, and judge entirely for myself." Now, Magdalene, confess, would you not have acted the same under such strange circumstances?'

'I think the lady acted quite right, ma'am,' answered Magdalene, greatly

wishing to inquire a little more about the lady; but Miss Mowbray now got up, gave her some further directions, spoke kindly to Susan as she passed to the carriage, and soon drove away from their sight.

‘She is a pretty and a sweet-looking creature,’ said Susan, as she and her friend returned into the cottage, ‘and I am very glad I have seen her.’

Magdalene then told Susan about the servant she had to inquire after, and heard from her of one she hoped might suit the situation, and who could easily be there when Miss Mowbray returned.

‘You look very thoughtful,’ said Susan to her friend on the evening after Miss Mowbray had visited them.

‘My mind is a little confused, I think,’ replied Magdalene; ‘I have heard so many things to-day. The family did not intend going to Edinburgh till November; now

we are all to go next month. The second of November is my young lady's birthday, and the marriage is to take place in a day or two after.'

'Could she not marry till she comes of age?' inquired Susan.

'Yes, she might,' replied Magdalene; 'and her chief guardian is so fond of Mr Stewart, he was quite willing that it should take place last winter. But you see Miss Mowbray has a great deal of money, and she cannot make all the arrangements she wishes till she is her own mistress, and she wished all these sort of things done before she is married.'

'Will her mamma live with the young couple?' asked Susan.

'I am sure I hope not,' answered Magdalene; 'but I do not know. They intend to go to the country immediately, and she surely won't do that, for she likes all kinds of amusement and gaiety.'

‘What, the old lady!’ said Susan in surprise.

‘Some ladies never become old,’ replied Magdalene, laughing. ‘Wait till you see her.’

‘Truly,’ said Susan, ‘that lady does not owe you much gratitude. I never saw you seem to dislike any one so much before.’

‘I never saw any one like her,’ replied Magdalene, ‘but just herself, or I should have thought the same. But it is not right to dislike any one, and I hope I don’t do that. But, Susan, you should give me some instruction about managing children, from your experience.’

‘You don’t require any help,’ said Susan, smiling; ‘you know you were always considered to have a better way with children than I had, and your *reason* for everything. And remember, even when you were quite young, our friends used to say that children were always so good and so happy

when they were with you, it was a sure proof you had a good way with them. And you know you have been thinking of teaching a school, but you are to be given another important charge first.'

The friends had a great deal to tell Donald when he returned home that evening; and Magdalene got some useful advice from him about the church she should attend when in Edinburgh, and on many other subjects.

The following day poor Magdalene felt very sad. She was soon to leave her friends and her native place once more, quite uncertain when, if ever, she might return to them again. She thought it fortunate her visit had not been prolonged, so many painful feelings oppressed her heart; while yet she felt grateful for the very comfortable situation provided for her, and she loved her young lady with warm and devoted affection. But once she had pos-

essed a happy *home*, which she most dearly loved. She could not look upon the house of her mistress as a *home*, and melancholy thoughts of being a stranger and solitary visited her heart. ‘I *ought* to be *willing* to feel as a stranger and a pilgrim in this world,’ at length said she to herself, ‘and to wish for no home but the mansions of my Father’s house above. And if I can be of the slightest use in leading any immortal soul to look beyond the trifling cares and concerns of this passing world, and to prepare for death and eternity—oh, what an honour would that be! My dear young lady says that I have awakened new thoughts in her mind,—that I have been of use to her. Is it possible?’ As the idea presented itself to the mind of Magdalene, she was melted to tears, and soon felt willing to forsake all that was dear to her, and devote herself to the service of her mistress and those orphan children, hoping the Lord

would be with her, and bless her while in the path of duty made so plain before her. She reflected, she prayed, and her mind was strengthened and encouraged. Though grave and serious during that evening, yet she was able to support her friend Susan's spirits, and converse on many interesting subjects. Susan had always been accustomed to be dependent on Magdalene, and when they met again, had soon fallen into old, and to her pleasant, habits; but perhaps it was better for the discipline of Susan's mind that she was separated from her friend. Donald was often engaged with important matters, and she was obliged to exert more the energies of her own mind, than if Magdalene had always been near to think for her and save her trouble.

About the time appointed, Miss Mowbray arrived to take Magdalene away, and, to the great satisfaction of the latter, she came alone.



‘Mamma has been persuaded to prolong her visit till next week,’ said Miss Mowbray; ‘but as we expect some friends on business to-morrow, I am obliged to return home.’

Miss Mowbray was pleased with the modest and gentle appearance of the young woman, who was waiting to know her fate. She was engaged, and desired to join the family in Edinburgh, to Magdalene’s great joy, who hoped she would find in her a useful assistant and a pious companion.

Miss Mowbray came loaded with gifts for Magdalene’s friends. A pretty shawl for Susan, a number of things for the baby, and a large volume of travels for Donald, to amuse them in the winter evenings.

Magdalene felt grateful for this kind remembrance of her dear friends; Susan looked modest; and the baby, attracted by the bright colours of the shawl, pulled and drew it, and seemed determined to appropriate it to herself. Magdalene was in

readiness, and having a long stage before them, Miss Mowbray could not keep the horses standing

‘Farewell, then, Susan,’ said she, ‘and farewell, sweet babe,’ kissing the infant; ‘we shall meet again whenever we return to this part of the country. Till then I shall endeavour to make your friend comfortable; and if it should ever be in my power to be of use to you, be assured you have only to let me know, and it will give me pleasure to be so.’

Susan poured forth her heartfelt thanks, and then watched the carriage that conveyed away her dear friend and her sweet young lady, till distance concealed it from her sight.

‘Well,’ thought she as she returned to the cottage, ‘it is over now; but it has been a happy fortnight.’



